

Awareness in Folk and Fairy Tales of Pre-Service Elementary Teachers: Basis for Restructuring Learning Experience in Teaching Children's Literature

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Abstract: Contaminations in folk and fairy tales occurred as popular media reduce their value into mere entertainment. The sensationalization and disneyfication of this traditional genre alienate children and teachers to its purpose of providing vicarious experiences to expose children into basic human predicaments. Hence, this study determined the level of awareness on folk and fairy tales of 59 freshman and sophomore pre-service elementary teachers in a state university at Malvar, Batangas, Philippines. Primarily, it dealt with the respondents' profile in terms of age, sex and year level; their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales in terms of nature, purpose and structure; and the relationship between their profile and level of awareness on folk and fairy tales with an end goal of restructuring learning experience in teaching Children's Literature.

By employing the correlation-survey type of descriptive research and using a researcher-made questionnaire, the researcher found that the respondents were aware of the nature, purpose and structure of folk and fairy tales. However, the study revealed that they were not familiar that folk and fairy tales can be associated with other disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, were less aware that folk and fairy tales subconsciously introduce children to problematic nature of life, and were less aware that popular media alter the details of folk and fairy tales. The result also showed that there was significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. This study calls for the development of a course of action to restructure the teaching of Children's Literature in pre-service teachers' training.

Keywords: traditional tales, folk and fairy tales, teaching Children's Literature, pre-service teachers.

Citation: Richard M. Bañez. 2018. Awareness in Folk and Fairy Tales of Pre-Service Elementary Teachers: Basis for Restructuring Learning Experience in Teaching Children's Literature. International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research, 2(7): 152-162.

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Introduction

Folk and fairy tales are creative writings which capture the life, culture, behavior and practices of the people. They are created from the imagination of man based on the reality of life. Folk and fairy tales are used to convey moral values and to educate and instruct children. An acquaintance with an understanding of characters found among these tales can help a child to construct the concept of being human. He can come to know more clearly who and what he is reaching out, imaginatively, for what he might become.

In connection with this, folk and fairy tales affect the development of children when it comes to identity. Children are curious in nature and as they move about and explore, they start to ponder the difficult problem of personal identity. The characters in the stories help children in determining how and what it means to be male or female or to be young or adult. It also contributes to the ability of the child to know the difference between the reality and the unreality, the good and the bad, and even the strength and weakness of men which lead to the awareness of children in cultural norms about the world in which they live.

Most of the teachers are familiar with folk and fairy tales. They use it to familiarize the children with words and entertain the latter through various activities but their familiarity with other aspects is often neglected. As folk and fairy tales are trimmed down from valuable authentic material to a form of entertainment, teachers are unable to recognize its potential of exposing the children in social dilemmas and existential issues through vicarious experience that can train them to be self-sufficient individual and critical thinkers. Today, children have mediocre understanding the importance of folk and fairy tales as they only regard these as forms of entertainment (Andersen, 2010).

There are also changes that affect the effectiveness of folk and fairy tales. Contaminations had occurred such as revisions and alterations. Popular media have altered the characters and the plots of some folk and fairy tales reducing their values into mere entertainment. The intended purpose of these traditional tales has been lost as their characters are endowed with seductive traits and disturbing sexual behaviors when transformed into movies. Their plots are exaggerated with numerous fight scenes promoting extreme violence and gore. The authentic or genuine version of folk and fairy tales with its true meaning had been falsified and undervalued.

These days, fairy tales kids are familiar not with the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Anderson, but with Walt Disney. The disneyfication alters the details of some stories for the demand and trend of time. Unlike the genuine version of folk and fairy tales, Disney does not provide roles for adolescents appropriate to their lives, but uses media tactics to revise and entertain, rather than retell the stories. These folk tales have a definite structure. From the folk tale, one learns one's role in life, one learns the tragic drama and dilemma of life, the battle between good and evil, between weak and strong. There is a curious distortion of all these qualities in Disney's version (Friedmeyer, 2003).

In this matter, the researcher used three components of literature namely: nature, purpose, and structure to serve as sources and guides in analyzing and interpreting folk and fairy tales for better instructions. Nature refers to the deeper meaning relevant to one's experiences in life, themes that may relate to other disciplines, religious ideas which may be associated to universal concepts, and literary approaches that may be critically studied for evaluation and interpretation. Purpose shows the effects of the stories to one's direction in life by introducing children to the problematic nature of life and presenting opposite polarity in characters to enlighten themselves and to help children construct goals and aspirations in life. On the other hand, structure is based on a quest, a journey or a series of trials and forfeits, the setting and details about when and where events took place. Also, the fairy tales' endings which are often neglected are most important (Bettelheim, 2010).

The teaching of folk and fairy tales plays a very important role in the development of a child. Thus, institution honing the skills of pre-service elementary teachers can initiate efforts in redirecting the instruction of Children's Literature by examining their awareness on folk and

fairy tales which can serve as solid bases in planning and restructuring learning experience in the mentioned course. This can create reservoir of teachers who would carry out the primary purpose of teaching folk and fairy tales.

The cited rationale serves as the main reason in conducting this study on pre-service elementary teachers' level of awareness on folk and fairy tales in a state university at Malvar, Batangas, Philippines as these students will be the future elementary teachers who can introduce Children's Literature to their students and to find the possible ways to enhance their understanding regarding folk and fairy tales. This can aid the pre-service elementary teachers to make their students realize the relevance of the study of literature to the learners' lives. This realization can help students to connect with the nature, structure, and purpose of children's stories which can lead to literary appreciation.

As authentic or genuine version of folk and fairy tales with their true meanings had been falsified and revised throughout the years through the popular movie versions, the real purpose of folk and fairy tales in children's lives had been diminished and least considered in teaching. With this, the researcher came up with a course of action that can be beneficial to the students, teachers, and future teachers to better understanding the value and the significance of folk and fairy tales.

Objective of the Study

This study determined the level of awareness on folk and fairy tales of freshman and sophomore pre-service elementary teachers in a state university at Malvar, Batangas, Philippines. Specifically, the study described the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and year level: their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales as to nature, purpose, and structure; the relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales; and the proposed course of action to restructure the teaching of folk and fairy tales.

Material and Methods

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive method of research specifically correlational study. Descriptive-correlation method is designed to determine the correlation or degree of relationship between two traits, behaviors, or events and when found correlated, changes in one is associated with changes in another. The said method was utilized to determine if the profile of the respondents had significant effects on their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. The researcher deemed this method appropriate for the present study as it provided opportunities for the correlation of the variables under study.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of 38 first year and 21 second year pre-service elementary teachers in a state university at Malvar, Batangas, Philippines. Total enumeration of the pre-service elementary teachers was utilized as respondents of the study; therefore, no sampling design was employed. These respondents best suit this investigation because one of their subjects is Children's Literature. Hence, they have direct experience of the thrust of this study.

Research Instrument

The researcher gathered relevant information about the study and formulated questionnaire which served as the main instrument. This researcher-made questionnaire measured the

respondents' level of awareness on folk and fairy tales in terms of its nature, purpose and structure. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part includes the respondents' profile in terms of age, sex, and year level. The second part is composed of 15 items or statements that show the respondents' level of awareness on folk and fairy tales according to its nature, purpose, and structure. There are five items for each category.

Before administering the questionnaire to the respondents, it underwent content and face validation by experts who are an educator with doctorate degree in English Language Studies, and two experienced literature professors who are holders of master's degree in their respective specializations. To be able to interpret the computed mean and the overall mean, the following mean ranges with their corresponding interpretations were used: 3.25-4.00 Strongly Agree/Highly Aware; 2.50-3.24 Agree/Aware; 1.75-2.49 Slightly Agree/Slightly Aware; and 1.00-1.74 Disagree/Not Aware.

Data Gathering Procedures

Permission from the Associate Dean to use the pre-service elementary teachers as respondents was sought before conducting the study. In this regard, a letter of request was prepared seeking approval for distribution of the questionnaire to the target respondents. Arrangements were also made with the course professors regarding the distribution of the copies of the questionnaire. The researcher personally explained to the respondents the purpose of the study and the mechanics in answering the questionnaire. As soon as the copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, the responses were tallied and tabulated for statistical treatment of data. The assistance of statistician was sought to ensure the precision of statistical decision, computation and tabulation.

Results and Discussion

Pre-service elementary teachers' profile in terms of age, sex, and year level

This part of the study deals with the profile of the respondents according to their age, sex, and year level.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' profile in terms of age, sex, and year level

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age in Years		
22 and above	5	9
19 – 21	9	15
16 – 18	45	76
TOTAL	59	100
Sex		
Male	10	17
Female	49	83
TOTAL	59	100
Year Level		
Second Year	21	36
First Year	38	64
TOTAL	59	100

Age was considered as a profile variable to determine if there is significant relationship between the respondents' age and their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents when they were

grouped according to their age. Out of 59 students, five or nine percent of the respondents were 22 years old and above; nine or 15 percent were 19-21 years old and the remaining 45 or 76 percent were 16-18 years old. The result showed that majority of the respondents were 16-18 years old. Sex represents the number of male and female students who were taking elementary teacher education program. Out of 59 respondents, 10 or 17 percent were male while the remaining 49 or 83 percent were female. It can be gleaned that majority of the respondents were female. It only manifested that female were more interested to pursue education as their chosen career. This result indicating the disparity in numbers between male and female teachers resembled Lahelma's (2001) observation that most schools have been dominated in numbers by female teachers compared with their male counterparts.

When the respondents were grouped according to their year level, the table illustrates that out of 59 respondents, 38 or 64 percent were first year and 21 or 36 percent were second year. It can be gleaned that there was a decreased number of enrolment for pre-service elementary teacher in their second year compared with the first year. In Philippine education, many students who entered in tertiary level cannot finish their degree because of lack of financial support. This notion is affirmed by Bañez *et al.*, (2018) by stressing that poverty has detrimental effect on tertiary students' schooling which often leads to school dropout.

Pre-service elementary teachers' awareness on folk and fairy tales as to nature

The table below presents the respondents' level of awareness in folk and fairy tales in terms of nature. It shows that the respondents were aware on folk and fairy tales in terms of nature. This was further affirmed by the obtained overall mean of 3.11. With the highest mean of 3.22, the respondents agreed that folk and fairy tales may be studied critically using various approaches to interpretation and that evaluation and that folk and fairy tales abound religious motifs which lead to universally and personally meaningful associations. This view is supported by Bettelheim (2010). He stressed that fairy tales are bound in religious and cultural motifs; many biblical stories are the same nature as fairy tales. In examining the essential meanings and nature of folk and fairy tales, different approaches may be applied to such stories. These approaches call for critical evaluation and interpretation that may lead to underlining the common theme express in the stories.

Table 2. Level of Awareness on Folk and Fairy Tales as to Nature

Item Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Folk and fairy tales contain deeper meaning relevant to one's various moments in life.	3.08	Agree
2. Themes found in folk and fairy tales relate to other disciplines such as sociology and anthropology.	2.98	Agree
3. Folk and fairy tales abound in religious motifs which lead to universally and personally meaningful associations.	3.22	Agree
4. Folk and fairy tales from various culture may contain similar theme or motif.	3.03	Agree
5. Folk and fairy tales may be studied critically using various approaches to interpretation and evaluation.	3.22	Agree
Overall	3.11	Aware

With a mean of 2.98, most of the students were not familiar that folk and fairy tales can be associated with other disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. According to Zipes (2013), the anthropological and sociological studies reveal divergent tendencies which often complement one another: seeks to reconstruct the history of a tale by tracing, collecting and categorizing all its variants; the receptionist-biographical approach focuses largely on the specific input folk narrators make in retelling the tales and how they are influenced by their communities.

Pre-service elementary teachers’ awareness on folk and fairy tales as to purpose

The table below describes the respondents’ level of awareness in folk and fairy tales as to purpose. The overall mean of 3.16 signifies that the respondents were aware on folk and fairy tales in terms of purpose. The respondents strongly agreed that images formed from many great adventures in folk and fairy tales can help children to construct goals and aspirations that can provide them better direction in life with a mean of 3.41.

Table 3. Level of Awareness on Folk and Fairy Tales in as to Purpose

Item Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Images formed from many great adventures in folk and fairy tales help children to construct goals and aspirations that will provide them better direction in life.	3.41	Strongly Agree
2. Folk and fairy tales subconsciously introduce children to the problematic nature of life.	3.02	Agree
3. Folk and fairy tales provide opportunity for the children to associate themselves to either good or evil by presenting opposite polarity in characters.	3.03	Agree
4. Folk and fairy tales offer solutions in dealing with personal and social anxieties on the level of children’s understanding.	3.10	Agree
5. Folk and fairy tales enlighten children about themselves and help them attain personal growth.	3.24	Agree
Overall	3.16	Aware

With a mean of 3.02, most of the students were less aware that folk and fairy tales subconsciously introduce children to problematic nature of life. This view is affirmed by Mitchell (2010). He mentioned that fairy tales can help students to gain insights into some of people’s basic human tendencies. The stories can be analyzed in a practical way as a means of developing useful tools that may aid them in reflecting upon things that they observe and do in their daily lives.

Pre-service elementary teachers’ awareness on folk and fairy tales as to structure

The table below describes the respondents’ level of awareness in folk and fairy tales as to structure.

Table 4. Level of Awareness on Folk and Fairy Tales in as to Structure

Item Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Folk and fairy tale contain binary opposition represented by the hero and villain.	3.20	Agree
2. A set of common events occurs in many folk and fairy tales from various cultures.	3.14	Agree
3. Often the hero and heroine of folk and fairy tales is searching for love, acceptance, and wisdom with the help of a magical aide.	3.19	Agree
4. Popular media alter the details of some folk and fairy tales in consonance with the demanding taste of the mass.	3.10	Agree
5. Majority of the folk and fairy tales ends happily.	3.49	Strongly Agree
Overall	3.22	Aware

The table shows that respondents were aware on folk and fairy tales in terms of structure with an overall mean of 3.22. The respondents strongly agreed that majority of folk and fairy tales ends happily with a mean of 3.49. This view is further explained by Camp (2014). He explained that through Disneyfication and adaptations for alter media, Disney has left out key parts of the narrative in favor of over-sanitized, simple plots and cheery songs; cute, cuddly forest creatures; and a maintained status quo of middle class American values. In watching these films children are not receiving the same message, the same moral education that they would get from reading the tales. With the lowest mean of 3.10, most of the students only agreed that popular media alter the details of some folk and fairy tales. Some critics believe Disney affects the general perception of fairy tales, because Disney’s fairy tale films create a definitive fairy tale consciousness among their audience (Camp, 2014).

Relationship between the respondents’ profile and their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales

The relationship between the profile and the level of awareness on folk and fairy tales of the respondents were tested using the Chi–square formula. This is shown on the table below.

Table 5. Relationship of the Respondents’ Profile and their Level of Awareness on Folk and Fairy Tales

Variables	Computed Value	Tabular Value	Decision (Ho)	Interpretation
Age and Level of Awareness in Folk and Fairy Tales	62.678	12.592	Reject	Significant
Sex and Level of Awareness in Folk and Fairy Tales	30.140	7.815	Reject	Significant
Year Level and Level of Awareness in Folk and Fairy Tales	12.277	7.815	Reject	Significant

The table above disclosed test of significant relationship between the respondents’ profile and their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. In terms of age, the computed value of 62.678 was found greater than the tabular value of 12.592. This result made the researcher reject the

null hypothesis. This signifies that there is a significant relationship between respondents' age and their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. This implies that age affects their awareness on folk and fairy tales. This result was parallel to the study of Perez and Terrible (2006). They found out that there was significant relationship between respondents' age and their reading attitude. It was found out that respondents having an age of 16-17 years old possessed good reading attitude and interest toward literature.

As to relationship between respondents' sex and their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales, the computed value of 30.140 was greater than the tabular value of 7.815; thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the respondents' sex was significantly related to their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. This relationship between sex and awareness on folk and fairy tales can be traced to the conception that gender stereotypes exist among folk and fairy tales. Cekiso (2013) affirmed that folk and fairy tales are rich in portrayals of gender imbalance and gender stereotypes. These gender-biased portrayals challenge teachers to be sensitive and selective of the texts or stories to be discussed in the classrooms.

It was also supported by Perez and Terrible (2006). Their study revealed that sex influenced reading attitude. It was found that girls performed better than boys. Girls were interested in passive activities that they like to read. Boys were interested in more active tasks. Girls like to read more than do boys.

The respondents' year level was also correlated with their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. The computed value of 12.277 was found greater than the tabular value of 7.815. This signifies that respondents' year level was significantly related to their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. This relationship between year level and awareness seems to indicate that students' acceleration of grade level can increase their awareness on numerous concepts. This idea is supported by Hidayat (2015) who noted that people's increased awareness on certain concept is the result of their education; thus, acceleration in grade level which coincides with learning can increase one's awareness on numerous concepts.

Course of action to restructure the teaching of folk and fairy tales in Children's Literature

The researcher prepared course of action illustrated in Table 6. This aims to enhance students' skills in relating concepts in sociology, anthropology and other disciplines; increases the students awareness on similarities in theme, and the structure of folk and fairy tales across the world; develops students' skills in utilizing folk and fairy tales in guiding children to analyze and overcome the problems and enhance awareness of students in the transformation of folk and fairy tales into popular media.

The researcher arrived with the course of action after finding that the respondents were aware of the nature, structure, and purpose of folk and fairy tales. This course of action can be of great help to restructure the teaching of folk and fairy tales in Children's Literature. After its implementation in the entire school year, it is expected that the students can have enhanced skills in relating concepts in other disciplines, increased awareness on similarities in theme, motif, and structure, develop skills in utilizing folk and fairy tales in guiding the children to analyze and overcome problems, strengthened perception of students on the role of the polarities in characters, and enhanced awareness in the transformation or disneyfication of folk and fairy tales.

Table 6. Course of Action to Restructure the Teaching of Folk and Fairy Tales

Objective	Strategies	Persons Involved	Target Date	Expected Outcome
<p>1. To enhance students' skills in relating concepts in sociology, anthropology and other disciplines to folk and fairy tales</p>	<p>Integration of critical approaches in interpreting literature to general language and literature courses. Spearheading an educational exhibit showcasing the sociological and anthropological origins and influences in folk and fairy tales of varied nations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Dean • Language and Literature Instructors 	<p>Entire School Year</p>	<p>Enhanced skills of students in relating concepts in sociology, anthropology and other disciplines to folk and fairy tales</p>
<p>2. To increase students' awareness on similarities in theme, motif and structure of folk and fairy tales across the world</p>	<p>Inclusion of comparative analysis of themes, motifs and structures of world folk and fairy tales in the course outcome of Children's Literature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Dean • Language and Literature Instructors • Students 	<p>Entire School Year</p>	<p>Increased awareness of students on similarities in theme, motif and structure of folk and fairy tales across the world</p>
<p>3. To develop students' skills in utilizing folk and fairy tales in guiding the children to analyze and overcome problems</p>	<p>Conducting seminar on the art of storytelling and the role of vicarious experience in reading folk and fairy tales in helping children to overcome challenges in their lives Conducting a case study on the effect of telling folk and fairy tales to children's behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Dean • Language and Literature Instructors • Students 	<p>Entire School Year</p>	<p>Developed skills of students in utilizing folk and fairy tales in guiding the children to analyze and overcome problems</p>
<p>4. To strengthen the students' awareness on the role of the polarities in characters in</p>	<p>Conducting a literacy outreach program for children focusing on the roles of literary characters in modelling and instilling positive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Dean • Program Chair • Language and 	<p>Entire School Year</p>	<p>Strengthened awareness of students on the role of the polarities in characters in folk and fairy</p>

folk and fairy tales to children	traits Spearheading a workshop on creating influential literary characters in contemporary narratives	Literature Instructors • Students		tales to children
5. To enhance the awareness of the students in the transformation of folk and fairy tales into popular media	Inclusion of term paper on the Disneyfication of Folk and Fairy Tales in course outcome of Children's Literature. Facilitating a movie and textual review of folk and fairy tales showcased in theatre	• Language and Literature Instructors • Students	Entire School Year	Enhanced awareness of students in the transformation of talk and fairy tales into popular media.

Conclusion and recommendation

In the light of the important findings revealed in this study, the following conclusions were drawn. Majority of the respondents are 16-18 years old, female, and in their first year enrolled in the elementary teacher education program. The respondents are aware of the nature, purpose and structure of folk and fairy tales. There is a significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. The course of action made by the researchers can be used to enhance and strengthen the respondents' level of awareness on folk and fairy tales.

Considering the significant findings revealed and conclusions drawn in this study, the researcher suggested the following recommendations. Since sex was related to the awareness on folk and fairy tales, a workshop on sex-oriented story telling may be spearheaded to hone the skills of the students in presenting characters that will influence the audience on the sex roles in the society. Teachers may also strongly and consistently emphasize the importance of folk and fairy tales in one's life by reflecting and imparting to students the values and lessons in life gleaned from them. The course of actions proposed by the researchers may be implemented, monitored, and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness in enhancing the students' level of awareness on folk and fairy tales. Similar studies may be conducted to determine the level of awareness on folk and fairy tales utilizing different sets of variables.

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