



**POPULAR CULTURE:
READING FROM BELOW**

**ПОПУЛАРНА КУЛТУРА:
ПОГЛЕД ОДОЗДОЛА**

Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference
Зборник на трудови од меѓународна научна конференција



Institute of Macedonian Literature – Skopje
Институт за македонска литература – Скопје
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Institute of Macedonian Literature – Skopje
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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AS MEANS FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CULTURES AND AS A BASIS FOR ADVANCEMENT OF MULTICULTURALISM

MARIJA LEONTIK

Translated from Macedonian language into English language by Krste Iliev, M.A.

Abstract: There are different definitions of multiculturalism and ways of application. We consider that multiculturalism should create conditions and climate for application of culture, individually and in the society, both in our and other culture groups, which will lead to the tearing down of cultural barriers.

Multiculturalism represents new understanding of culture, which presupposes that we are obliged to start with reformation of our multicultural practice. My contribution to this process as a professor of Turkish language consists of publishing two bilingual children's books (Turkish-Macedonian) in Macedonia. This effort has been going on for the last ten years, due to the fact that the publishing houses do not usually publish bilingual editions. As a result of this effort, several Turkish-Macedonian books have been published intended for the youngest and dearest. By getting acquainted with stories, songs and pictures, children will start to develop the awareness for multiculturalism, and, encouraged by their teachers and environment, they will be able to apply it in their daily lives.

Key words: intercultural dialogue, intercultural practice, bilingual children literature.

1. Introduction

In general, anthropology is a science about humans, the human nature and human society in the past and the present. Anthropology is concerned with analysis of man from biological, cultural, linguistic, and archeological perspective, i.e. it describes fully what being a man has meant in the past and the present.

Culture appeared as a consequence of human evolution, rendering the human unique. Culture has exerted a great influence on man and human societies, due to the fact that it can be learned, shared and handed over to next generations. Everything that man has learned and acquired from certain culture, with regard to manners, understanding, thinking and believing, is used for his survival and accommodation, and for making changes in the society where he lives. That's why there is a difference between the culture of two different generations. This is most accurately explained by Rick Potts (Schulz Emily, Robert Levenda, 2009, 18), who believes that "at the foundation of culture there are five elements: 1. Transmission – copying of attitudes by observing or by instructions; 2. Memory – traditions cannot be transmitted without memorizing new attitudes; 3. Repetition – ability to reproduce or imitate certain attitudes or learned information; 4. Innovation – ability to invent new attitudes; 5. Selection – ability to choose

between attitudes that are to be retained, or rejected.” As a consequence, every cultural tradition is open for changes and further development.

Anthropology is concerned with the study of the relationship between the cultures, and enables us to understand multiculturalism as a process in which the awareness of difference and dialogue with the *others* are its core values. The way of achieving dialogue and understanding is by developing cultural sensitivity. Every member of a given culture that possesses cultural sensitivity, by studying and understanding the *Others*, can understand himself better. If these characteristics do not develop due to the cultural differences, there can be a disruption and cessation of communication or a cultural shock.

2. Development of multiculturalism in children

Multiculturalism is differently defined, interpreted, understood and above all applied. For many, multiculturalism represents free expression of their national, ethnic or religious culture in a society comprising different cultural groups. Consequently, all members of these groups partake in the preservation and recreation of the national, ethnic and religious culture of a given town, linguistic community or social category as pupils or teachers, employees or employers. In our view, this is an outdated concept that includes life of one next to another, but excludes life of one with another. We consider that multiculturalism should create conditions favorable for the application of culture practices both on ourselves and the others, in our and other cultural groups, which will eventually lead to tearing down of cultural barriers.

The means for establishing dialogue between the cultures are various: conversation, writing, reading, translation, art, festivals etc. Music, arts and literature are types of art that enable direct feeling and experience of other cultures, and simultaneously add aesthetical value from *Other* cultures to one's own.

Multiculturalism is a new understanding of culture according to which we are obliged to start with reforming our own multicultural practice. Teachers can realize the reformation of their multicultural practice through:

- conversation on different topics, that highlight cultural differences and interferences;
- presentations, where children describe themselves, their family and their place of living;
- listening to music from different nations and cultures;
- individual and group singing of songs from different peoples;
- individual and group poetry reading from different nations and cultures;
- reading of stories, tales, fables and legends from different nations and cultures;
- staging of plays from different nations and cultures;
- solving riddles from different nations and cultures;
- drawing inspired by songs, short stories, or tales from different nations and cultures;
- making and writing cards for the most important holidays, celebrated by children from one group or class;
- collective celebration of birthdays in the group or class;

- collective celebration of holidays, in the group, class or with a group/ class from other school;
- collective school performance for different occasions in the group, class; or with a group/ class from other school;
- collective sport activities and visits to sport competitions;
- collective watching of films from various nations and cultures in the group or in cinema;
- collective visits to a play or ballet in a theatre;
- collective visits to libraries;
- collective visits to book fairs;
- collective visits to art exhibitions from different nations and cultures;
- collective visits to various manifestations, festivals and concerts;
- collective visits to cultural-historical monuments, museums, religious objects important for different nations and cultures;
- collective visits to playhouses, amusement parks and zoos;
- collective picnics to places where different nations and cultures exist;
- collective excursions to places where different nations and cultures exist;

The possibility for a teacher to realize the entirety of these activities is limited, but he/she can make a choice according to the possibilities of the institutions where he/she works and prepare a strategy for new possibilities. Of course, activities that can be realized within the group are most suitable for realization, the most common being: reading short stories and tales from different nations and cultures, individually or in a group, reading poetry and singing songs from different nations and cultures.

3. Bilingual books for children as an artistic dialogue between the cultures

As a Turkish language teacher, I have started the reformation of my multicultural practice with:

- Translation of children`s literary texts from Turkish into Macedonian language and vice-versa
- Compiling of bilingual literary children`s books that can be used as an additional literature in the teaching process.

This effort has been going on for more than a decade, due to the fact that publishing houses are reluctant to publish bilingual editions. As result of these efforts, the following Turkish-Macedonian books have been published, intended for the youngest and dearest.

1. Akbas, Ali. (2008). *Kuş Sofrası – Bird Low Table*, Skopje: TOPER (illustrated poem collection for children and youth).
2. Nesin, Azis; Alptekin, Berat Ali. (2008). *Türk Hayvan Masalları - Turkish Animal Tales*. Skopje: BATA PRESS (illustrated animal tales and fables for children and youth).
3. Ural, Yalvac. (2014). *Alacura Çayevi – Tea House Aladjura*. Skopje: AUTOPRINT (picture-book for children)

4. Ural, Yalvac. (2014). *Akıllı Minik ile Obur – The Clever Little Mini and the Grabby*. Skopje:AUTOPRINT (picture-book for children)
5. Ural, Yalvac. (2014). *Kulağımdaki Küçük Çan – The Little Bell in my Ear*. Skopje:AUTOPRINT (illustrated poem collection for children).



Past practice has shown that Turkish-Macedonian bilingual books for children have met good reception in Macedonia. Children accept bilingual books with ease. Through the world of tales, short stories, songs and pictures, they will develop awareness of multiculturalism, and, encouraged by their teachers and environment, they will be able to apply it in daily life.

Bilingual books for children enable direct linguistic and literary education and upbringing resulting it:

- Awakening of children`s interest for useful and thorough reception of literary texts that will lead to involvement of their reason and feelings, development of empathy and bolstering of their power of perception;
- Inspiration for dialogue with the classmates from the group or class about heroes representatives of a given culture;

- Development of ability to understand themselves and friends belonging to other nations and cultures;
- Development of feeling for equal importance of both book languages, that may become pleasurable during group reading etc.;
- Promotion of aesthetic taste and development of love towards literary texts from their nation and culture and towards other nations and cultures, which will lead to a sense of love, tolerance and respect among children from different national and cultural background.

Bilingual books, written by authors from different nationality, have individual, social, cultural and anthropological significance. In the process of reading books from different nations and cultures, children are acquainted with different lifestyles and ways of thinking, facing and solving problems, and gradually recognize their place in the society, develop their character and find their identity. The initial effect of these books is literary communication between the artwork and the reader, who subjectively experiences the text and develops aesthetic conscience. Another effect is that they provide the incentive for conversation among the children, children and teachers, children and elderly, thus developing artistic dialogue, which contributes to the development of group identity. Particularly rewarding are the conversations about the different way of life of the heroes, stemming from different cultures. Reading of same books in the group, class, or in schools throughout the country, and discussing about it contributes to the process of gathering mutual experience and cultural comprehension of the *others* and of that which surrounds us. In that way, the artistic i.e. literary dialogue among the children develops cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism.

4. Conclusion

Reading children`s books from different nations and cultures enables us to establish artistic, i.e. literary dialogue that can serve as the basis for development of cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism. In addition, contact with different books from different nations and cultures, provide the incentive for communication among children, thus enabling cultural exchange.

Differences enrich and refresh. That is why all children that live and are educated in multicultural environment have an obligation to understand that their culture, language and literature are beautiful in their own way, and contribute to the diversity and give additional hue to the world, where we live, work and create, thus increasing the creativity and the inspiration.

By the same token, children`s books from different nations and cultures that represent cultural richness will accomplish their individual, social, cultural and anthropological function.

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