

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH COMPARATIVE STUDIES
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Beginning with the third millennium cultural links between Chinese People's Republic and the Russian Federation started growing rapidly. This can be proved by the fact that more and more students from China willingly study in Russian institutions of higher education. Likewise, our students, professors and post-graduates have their training in Chinese Universities.

Vladivostok State University of Economics offers a lot of courses to 1050 Chinese students. At the Institute of Foreign Languages, there are quite a few students who intensively study Russian and English in order to comprehend different scientific and humanitarian courses offered at our Institute. Would-be linguists and translators, among other things, study such philological subjects as Russian-English comparative stylistics, Russian and English literature and translation. It is only natural that Chinese literary art should also be included into the curriculum, into the curriculum. This fact promotes better understanding of one another within a students' group and help representatives of different cultures to find common language, common interests, desire to know more about one another. The first steps have already been made, they have shown that such experiments can be expanded and in the years to come the programme would contain some more materials for comparative studies to make our students real "citizens of the world".

Thus this article concentrates on a comparative linguostylistic analysis of fairy-tales from the folk art of Great Britain, China and Russia. From the bulk of literature, which might be analyzed it was decided to choose folktales. Why folktales? As is known the existence of such tales is practically universal both in time and place. "A folktale travels with great ease even through language boundaries because it is characterized by a simple formula and by narrative motifs rather than by its verbal form." [1, p.424].

The study of folklore began early in the 19th century. The first folklorists concentrated exclusively upon rural peasants, preferably uneducated. Their aim was to trace preserved archaic customs and beliefs to their remote origin in order to trace the history of human thought ... As the study of folklore developed, an important advance was the classification of material for comparative analysis of fairy-tales and other forms of folk art [1, p.424].

The style and genre of a fairy-tale is very informative for mixed groups of students since it presents a peculiar, often fantastic narrative, on the one hand, and reflects values and beliefs on the other. *Style* can be regarded as a hierarchically organized structure consisting of two basic components: humanitarian and functional. Style and genre belong to the sphere of cultural conventions which dictate a certain choice of grammar and lexical means. Following St.Gaida we can say that style and genre exist as ready-made schemes or samples, and the realization of style and genre is based on the actualization of those schemes [2, p.29].

This information is very important for linguists and translators because their qualification presupposes the knowledge of different styles and genres, the ways of their generation and analysis. Today, the notion "genre" refers to the whole mass of texts, this or that genre is chosen by human conscience for perceiving and understanding reality [3, p.218]. The genre helps appreciate the world, the people, their values, ability to communicate, etc. The genre should be looked upon as a means of forming the outlook and through the latter as a means of finding a place in the world.

What is a fairy-tale when it is looked upon through these criteria? Can it influence one's outlook, widen it, help a person become a citizen of the world? Human outlook is so rich and various that when we deal with a fairy-tale we find a great variety of this genre in the folklore of different nations. Yet is there anything that unites them? Folklore, fairy-tales in particular, have imbibed in themselves the whole sum of the nation's observations which, in its turn, makes up the content of the national conceptosphere [4, p.86]. An integral part of the conceptosphere of any nation is the opposition like "good and evil", "truth and lie", faithfulness and betrayal", etc. [5, p.22]. It should be noted that the above mentioned oppositions have been discussed in works of many a scholar in Russia, Great Britain and, supposedly, in China, too.

We focussed our attention on the concept of native wit, humor, resourcefulness. Can the three nations: the Chinese, Russians and the British whose fairy-tales with this concept were chosen have anything in common? What ideas and thoughts can arise in the process of the thematic, structural and linguostylistic analysis of Chinese, Russian and British fairytales? We selected the following fairy-tales by random choice:

1. Chinese: Fox Basked in Tigers Reflected Glory [6].
2. British: The Lion-Hearted Kitten (retold by Peggy Bacon) [7, p.226].
3. Russian: Three Kalatches and One Baranka (retold by L.N.Tolstoy) [8, pp.6-7]. This choice of tales about animals in the first two cases and about everyday life of

ordinary people in the third is justified by the cognitive task of learning different kinds of this original genre. This knowledge will help our students to find answers to various questions connected with new and original attitudes. Are the three nations portrayed as self-critical? Is any of them more ironical than the two others? What about the mother wit? Is it equally strong in the three nations or are there more differences than common traits between us? All these questions can be answered after the comparative analysis of the selected material.

Fairy-tales are created in the form stated as narration because all cultures have longstanding story-telling traditions. In order to inform listeners or readers about the world of the fairy-tale, narratives usually begin with an *orientation* [9, p.181]. This includes the time of the story, its spatial setting and the characters. In Russian linguistic tradition this relationship is called *chronotop* [10, p.311]. Let us define the *chronotop* in the three fairy-tales. The Chinese and British ones have analogous combination: an uncertain time in the past - forest - animals. As for the Russian tale its *chronotop* is as follows: an uncertain time in the past - a muzhik (a Russian peasant of former times) - a shop. The *chronotop* acquaints the students with the most essential preliminary details which will be developed later on. Our conclusion from the first step of analysis is the likely manner of opening the scene of action and portraying the characters against the background of old time. Let us present it graphically.

Table 1

Orientation (Chronotop)

British	Chinese	Russian
a) once b) a striped kitten c) the path in the forest	a) past time is implied (Past Indefinite tense is used) b) a tiger and a fox c) forest	a) once b) a muzhik c) road, a shop
<i>Corollary:</i> Thus our three nations have the same tradition in the compositional pattern of opening a fairy-tale.		

Once the story world setting is complete, the fairy-tale sets a *goal* to the hero (heroes) which involves a *problem* that prevents an easy attainment of the *goal* [9, p.182]. In the first fairy-tale the fox caught by the tiger had to use all its wit to escape a tragedy. In the second, the kitten did his best to avoid the unlucky fate of being eaten by a tiger. And at last in the Russian fairy-tale the muzhik had to subdue his hunger and eat up to satiate himself. It is only natural that the reader follows the characters' efforts to overcome the problem carefully. But this is evident only in case those problems are clear to the readers or listeners. So our aim is to find an answer to the question: Are the goal and the problem clearly expressed in the three fairy-tales? Isn't there any global difference in the mentalities of the nations under consideration? Only a thorough look at the content of the fairy-tales will give us definite answers. Let us study the following table to come to correct conclusions.

Table 2

Goal and Problem

British	Chinese	Russian
a) The kitten started out to conquer the world (goal) b) He met a big gray wolf (problem)	a) The tiger was about to eat the fox (goal) b) The fox distracted him by telling an interesting story (problem)	a) The muzhik wanted to satiate himself (goal) b) He still remained hungry although he ate three kalatches! (problem)
<i>Corollary:</i> In the observed fairy-tales the three nations build up their plot in a likewise manner which is suggestive of a lot of commonness in our perception of the world.		

The next step of analysis is to focus on the hero (actor) and watch the actions he/she uses to solve the *problem* and achieve the *goal*. This part of the magic story is called *resolution* [9, p. 183].

Table 3

Resolution

British	Chinese	Russian
By flattery the kitten saved himself from big gray wolf (and lived happily ever after)	By eloquence the fox managed to escape the fate of being eaten by the tiger	The muzhik bought a baranka (a little fancy bread in the form of a ring), got fed at last and was satisfied
<i>Corollary:</i> In the three fairy-tales the heroes found a way out of their difficulties which is suggestive of sharing the same values in the three mentalities and of striving to justice and a "happy end".		

It is interesting to find out how the characters evaluate themselves and their own behavior, the situation, the result to which they came at the end of the narrative. In the scheme of analysis this part is called *evaluation*.

Table 4
Evaluation

British	Chinese	Russian
The kitten was quite content with his own wit, and he lived happily ever after (implicit criticism of the big but silly wolf, the kitten's enemy)	The tiger didn't realize that it was him and not the fox that the beasts were really of (the narrator's mockery at the lack of the tiger's wit)	The man considered himself a fool thinking he could be full up at once with only one baranka (the storyteller mocks at the muzhik's lack of wit)
<i>Corollary:</i> As can be seen from this observation, he who is less witty and cannot demonstrate his ability to achieve the goal is equally mocked at in the three mentalities.		

If the reader (or listener) is a smart person he will make correct conclusions, understand the moral of the fairy-tale. Both Chinese and Russian students are able to realize the possible moral. But sometimes, nevertheless, the coda of a fairy-tale may include a sort of a moral lesson or a lesson of some other kind and we may read an *abstract* which brings us back to the title of the narrative. Let us turn to the final part of the fairy-tales.

Table 5
Abstract (the Moral)

British	Chinese	Russian
Implicit abstract: The world is open to those who are smart and well brought up.	Explicit: This idiom means relying on another's power to bully or frighten others.	Implicit: One must look at things soberly and correctly evaluate his/her demands.
<i>Corollary:</i> Whether explicit or implicit the moral lesson is always there and the task of the reader or listener to come to it either independently or (in childhood) with the help of adults.		

How are the students motivated to evaluate those beliefs which are contained in folklore?

The answer is evident: through the comparative analysis of the thoughts, behavior, self-evaluation of the characters which they undertake, the students realize that there are more common than differentiating features in our folklore. This work may be prolonged with other literary works: drama, poetry, works of fiction. Discussions in class prove that we are looking at things in a likely manner which is a very good sign of mutual understanding and cooperation.

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