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DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CREATIVE THINKING THROUGH FOLK TALES: A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. This article proposes a methodological framework for developing students' creative thinking through folk tales. It examines how narrative interpretation, alternative endings, character perspective shifts, and the transformation of story settings can be organized as creative learning activities. The framework connects text comprehension with idea generation, comparison of alternatives, and reflective revision. Particular attention is paid to open-ended questioning, collaborative storytelling, and assessment criteria addressing originality, flexibility, elaboration, and narrative coherence. The article adopts a theoretical and methodological approach; the proposed framework is intended for subsequent classroom evaluation. Its contribution lies in translating the educational potential of folk tales into structured activities that combine cultural learning with opportunities for independent creative expression.
Keywords: folk tales, creative thinking, narrative interpretation, alternative endings, collaborative storytelling, originality, flexibility, formative assessment.

Introduction

Developing creative thinking requires learning activities that allow students to generate alternatives, examine their implications, and improve their initial ideas. In language and literature education, this process can be connected with the interpretation and transformation of narratives. Folk tales provide material for such work because their characters, conflicts, repeated events, and resolutions can become objects of questioning and reconstruction.

However, reading a folk tale does not automatically constitute creative learning. If classroom activities are limited to reproducing the plot or identifying a predetermined moral, students may demonstrate comprehension without exploring alternative possibilities. The pedagogical challenge is to connect understanding of the original narrative with purposeful creative transformation.

Creative thinking also involves evaluation. The OECD framework distinguishes generating diverse ideas, generating creative ideas, and evaluating and improving ideas. Although developed for the assessment of 15-year-old students, these distinctions offer useful conceptual categories for planning narrative activities; they should not be transferred to younger learners without appropriate adaptation. OECD

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In folk-tale instruction, students may suggest several endings, reconsider a character's decision, or relocate a conflict to a different setting. These activities become educationally meaningful when students explain their choices and maintain a comprehensible relationship between events.

The aim of this article is to develop a methodological framework that connects folk-tale interpretation with creative idea generation, evaluation, and revision. The article addresses three questions:

Which narrative activities can provide opportunities for creative thinking?

How can these activities be organized into a coherent teaching sequence?

Which assessment criteria can distinguish creative development from simple plot reproduction?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

The article adopts a theoretical and methodological design. It combines a focused review of creativity research and educational frameworks with pedagogical modelling. No classroom intervention, participant recruitment, or statistical analysis was conducted. Accordingly, the results consist of a proposed instructional framework rather than measured changes in student performance.

The literature was selected for its relevance to creative thinking, classroom pedagogy, and narrative activity. The review was purposive rather than systematic: it does not claim exhaustive coverage of research on folklore education.

2.2. Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded through three stages. First, creative thinking was examined as a process involving the generation and refinement of ideas. Second, narrative operations were identified that could make these processes observable in students' work. Third, the operations were organized into a teaching sequence with corresponding assessment criteria.

The conceptual distinction between originality and appropriateness informed the framework. Runco and Jaeger's discussion of the standard definition of creativity provides a basis for treating novelty as necessary but insufficient: a creative response must also meet the requirements of its context. Get Access

For narrative tasks, appropriateness is operationalized as responsiveness to the assignment and sufficient coherence for the reader to understand the reconstructed story.

2.3. Selection of Folk Tales

The framework proposes that teachers select tales according to the following considerations: linguistic accessibility, a recognizable conflict, opportunities for alternative action, cultural relevance, and suitability for the students' age.

Teachers should identify the version being used because a tale may exist in several oral and written forms. A modern adaptation should not be presented as the only authentic version. Similarly, an illustrative story created for a lesson should be distinguished from a documented folk narrative.

The classroom examples below are constructed task scenarios. They illustrate the proposed method and are not reported observations.

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3. Results

3.1. Principles of the Proposed Framework

The methodological analysis produced a framework based on four principles.

Comprehension before transformation. Students need an adequate understanding of the original narrative before changing its events or perspectives. Otherwise, the teacher cannot distinguish deliberate reinterpretation from misunderstanding.

Multiple possibilities before selection. Students are encouraged to develop more than one response before choosing an idea for further elaboration. This separates exploration from immediate commitment to the first available solution.

Freedom within clear constraints. Creative tasks allow alternative responses while specifying requirements. For example, students may change the ending but must preserve the initial conflict and explain how it is resolved.

Revision as part of creativity. An initial idea is treated as a draft. Students assess its clarity and consequences, respond to feedback, and explain their revisions.

Alternative-ending tasks ask students to examine how a different action changes the resolution. An instruction such as Write another ending may be too broad. A more structured version is:

Create two endings in which the main character resolves the conflict without using the solution found in the original tale. Explain the consequences of each ending.

Students then compare the alternatives. One ending may depend on cooperation, while another may involve negotiation or a change in the character's priorities. The teacher directs attention to differences in the proposed solutions rather than merely counting sentences.

The task also distinguishes creativity from random alteration. An unexpected event can be original but remain poorly connected to the narrative. Students therefore need to explain why their ending follows from the preceding situation.

Perspective-shift tasks invite students to retell an event from the viewpoint of another character. A secondary character, an opponent, or an observer may interpret the same action differently.

For example, students can rewrite an encounter from the perspective of a character whose motives are not explained in the original version. They should distinguish information given by the text from details they have invented.

This activity combines interpretation with imagination. Students consider what the selected character knows, wants, and notices. Their retelling must reflect that perspective rather than reproduce the original narration with a different pronoun.

Research on drama pedagogy provides a related rationale for examining narrative transformation and perspective-taking. Celume, Besançon, and Zenasni discuss storytelling, enactment, and role-play within a theoretical model of creative-thinking development. Their model supports considering these activities as potential instructional resources, but it does not establish the effectiveness of the framework proposed here. frontiersin.org

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A setting-transformation task relocates a tale while retaining a central problem. Students might move an encounter from a forest to a town or reinterpret a journey in a contemporary environment.

Changing the setting requires more than replacing place names. Students should consider how available resources, social relationships, and possible actions change. If a traditional obstacle disappears, another obstacle must be developed for the conflict to remain meaningful.

A suitable instruction is:

Retain the central disagreement but place the story in a different environment. Identify three changes reuired to make the new version coherent.

This task encourages students to examine relationships between narrative elements.

3.6. Collaborative Storytelling

Collaborative storytelling organizes creative work around shared decisions. Students may generate ideas individually, compare them in a small group, and develop a joint version.

Individual preparation is important because immediate group discussion can allow confident participants to determine the outcome. Temporary roles—idea proposer, coherence checker, questioner, and recorder—can help distribute participation.

The final narrative should be accompanied by a brief account of the group's choices. This makes it possible to examine how alternatives were considered rather than assessing only the finished text.

The main limitation is the absence of empirical testing. The framework cannot yet support claims that folk-tale activities improve creativity, outperform other narrative tasks, or produce lasting transfer to unrelated subjects.

A future evaluation could compare the proposed sequence with conventional comprehension instruction while maintaining comparable teaching time and text difficulty. Students could complete equivalent narrative tasks before and after instruction. Independent raters would need explicit descriptors and checks of scoring consistency.

Such a study should examine both products and processes. Drafts, planning notes, explanations of alternatives, and revision records may reveal changes that a final text alone does not show. It would also be useful to investigate whether students apply the same reasoning to an unfamiliar tale.

Folk tales can provide a structured context for creative-thinking activities when instruction moves beyond plot reproduction. Their pedagogical use depends on connecting comprehension with alternative ideas, narrative development, evaluation, and revision.

The proposed six-stage framework organizes this process through interpretation, questioning, idea generation, development, evaluation, and revision. Alternative endings, perspective shifts, setting transformations, and collaborative storytelling offer distinct opportunities for students to reconstruct narratives purposefully.

Assessment should examine originality alongside flexibility, elaboration, coherence, and revision. The framework constitutes a methodological proposal; its effectiveness requires classroom evaluation.

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Its practical value lies in making the relationship between folk-tale instruction and creative-thinking processes explicit and reviewable.

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