



## IMPORTANCE OF FAIRY TALES IN TEACHING VOCABULARY AT THE EARLY STAGE OF LEARNING ENGLISH

**Babajanova Kamuna Ismailovna.**

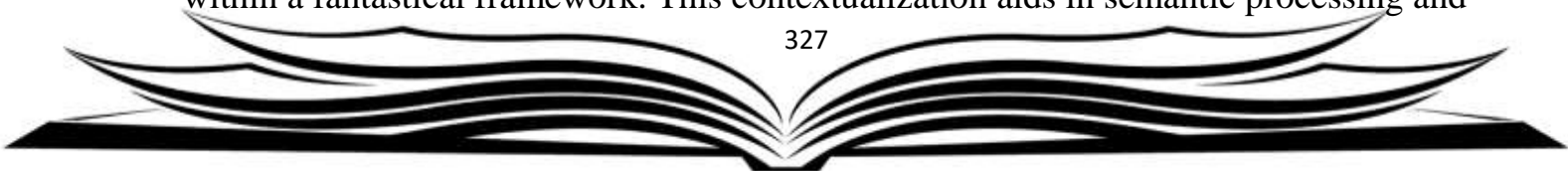
Senior Lecturer at Nukus State Pedagogical  
Institute named after Ajiniyaz.

**Abstract:** This article examines the significant role of fairy tales in teaching vocabulary to young learners at the early stage of learning English. By drawing upon principles of language acquisition, cognitive development, and educational psychology, it explores how traditional narratives contribute to effective vocabulary instruction. The discussion highlights how fairy tales support contextualized language exposure, reinforce word retention through repetition and rhythm, and stimulate emotional and imaginative engagement in learners. As timeless cultural and pedagogical tools, fairy tales offer rich lexical input, aid in the internalization of grammatical structures, and foster a lasting interest in language learning. The paper concludes that integrating fairy tales into early English language instruction provides an accessible, memorable, and culturally meaningful pathway to vocabulary acquisition and broader language development.

**Keywords:** fairy tales, vocabulary acquisition, English language learning, early childhood education, language development, storytelling, contextual learning.

In the formative years of a child's education, the process of language learning plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive and communicative abilities. Among the various tools available for teaching English to young learners, fairy tales stand out as one of the most effective and enchanting means of introducing new vocabulary. These traditional narratives, filled with magical characters, memorable plots, and culturally embedded morals, provide an immersive and emotionally engaging context in which children can encounter and internalize words and phrases. Their enduring appeal and educational potential make fairy tales an invaluable resource for teachers seeking to enrich the vocabulary of learners in the early stages of English language acquisition.

The effectiveness of fairy tales in vocabulary instruction stems from their inherently rich and repetitive language. Unlike isolated vocabulary lists or abstract drills, fairy tales present words in meaningful contexts that reflect real-life usage, albeit within a fantastical framework. This contextualization aids in semantic processing and





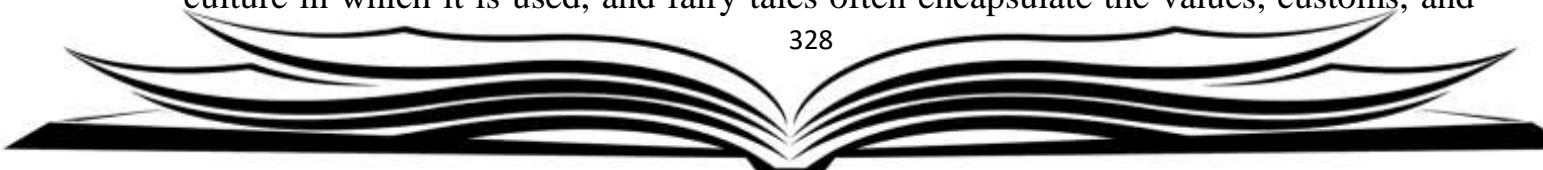
retention, allowing learners to grasp not only the definitions of new words but also their usage patterns, connotations, and collocations. For example, in the story of “Little Red Riding Hood,” children repeatedly encounter verbs like “walk,” “run,” and “knock,” adjectives such as “little,” “big,” and “bad,” and nouns like “forest,” “wolf,” and “basket.” These words are not presented in isolation but are embedded within a compelling narrative that holds the child’s attention and supports comprehension.

Moreover, the repetitive structure of fairy tales—featuring recurring phrases, patterns, and refrains—enhances memorability. Phrases such as “Once upon a time,” “And they lived happily ever after,” and “Mirror, mirror on the wall” become linguistic landmarks in the learner’s mind, helping them develop a sense of rhythm, sentence structure, and phraseology in English. The predictability of these patterns also provides cognitive scaffolding for language learners, especially those at an early stage, by allowing them to anticipate linguistic forms and meaning. Repetition, as supported by language acquisition research, reinforces memory consolidation and contributes to the automatization of vocabulary recall, which is essential for fluency.

From a cognitive perspective, fairy tales align well with the developmental stage of young learners. Children at early stages of learning tend to process language holistically, often relying on visual imagery, emotional association, and story-based recall rather than analytical reasoning. Fairy tales cater precisely to this mode of thinking. The vivid characters, dramatic events, and moral dilemmas present in tales like “Cinderella,” “Hansel and Gretel,” or “The Three Little Pigs” stimulate the child’s imagination and emotional response, which in turn enhances their attentiveness and motivation to learn. When vocabulary is tied to emotions and imagination, it is more likely to be stored in long-term memory and used spontaneously in communication.

The oral storytelling tradition inherent in fairy tales also serves an important phonological function. Listening to fairy tales read aloud—especially when read with expressive intonation, rhythm, and sound effects—exposes learners to the prosodic features of English. This auditory input helps children develop listening comprehension skills and phonemic awareness, which are foundational for both vocabulary learning and literacy development. As children hear and repeat words and phrases in context, they begin to associate sounds with meaning and develop a more intuitive grasp of pronunciation, intonation, and word stress.

Another crucial advantage of using fairy tales in early vocabulary instruction is their cultural richness. Learning a language is inseparable from learning about the culture in which it is used, and fairy tales often encapsulate the values, customs, and



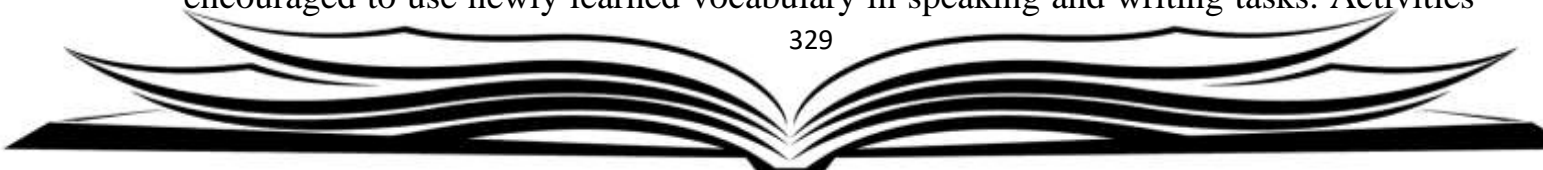


worldviews of English-speaking societies. Through exposure to classic tales, children not only acquire vocabulary but also develop cultural competence—understanding the symbolic meanings, references, and idiomatic expressions embedded in the target language. This cultural literacy fosters a deeper connection to the language and broadens the learner’s worldview, making language learning a more holistic and humanistic experience.

Fairy tales are also highly adaptable pedagogical tools. They can be used in diverse formats such as read-alouds, dramatizations, puppet shows, illustrated books, or multimedia presentations. Each of these formats offers opportunities to reinforce vocabulary learning in multisensory ways. For instance, a dramatization of “The Gingerbread Man” can involve physical actions and props, allowing kinesthetic learners to internalize verbs and nouns through movement and tactile engagement. Similarly, using picture books with rich illustrations helps visual learners connect words to images, reinforcing their semantic understanding. The flexibility of fairy tales also allows teachers to modify the linguistic complexity of the text according to the learner’s level, simplifying vocabulary and syntax where necessary without losing the narrative’s essence.

Beyond classroom benefits, the use of fairy tales also supports language learning at home and in informal environments. When children are exposed to English fairy tales through bedtime stories, audiobooks, cartoons, or picture books outside the classroom, they experience authentic, stress-free immersion in the language. This exposure reinforces vocabulary learned in class and encourages autonomous learning habits. Parents, even those with limited English proficiency, can participate in their child’s learning journey by reading simplified versions or watching animated fairy tale adaptations together. This family engagement not only strengthens the child’s language development but also nurtures a positive emotional association with English, turning language acquisition into an enjoyable, shared experience rather than a formal academic task. As such, fairy tales bridge the gap between formal instruction and real-life use, laying the foundation for lifelong language learning.

Furthermore, the integration of fairy tales into vocabulary teaching aligns with the principles of the communicative approach to language learning. Rather than focusing solely on grammatical accuracy or rote memorization, this approach emphasizes meaningful interaction, real-world communication, and learner-centered instruction. By discussing the plot, characters, and themes of fairy tales, students are encouraged to use newly learned vocabulary in speaking and writing tasks. Activities





such as retelling the story, predicting the ending, describing characters, or even creating alternative endings provide rich opportunities for productive language use. These communicative tasks not only reinforce vocabulary but also promote higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Importantly, fairy tales also create a sense of emotional security and familiarity that facilitates language learning. For many children, fairy tales are already part of their cultural or literary background, making them a comfortable entry point into English. The familiarity of the narrative structure and the predictability of the story arc reduce anxiety and increase confidence, allowing learners to focus more on language acquisition. This emotional comfort is crucial at the early stage of learning, where students may feel intimidated or overwhelmed by the new language. By embedding language learning within a familiar and enjoyable context, fairy tales create a low-pressure environment conducive to learning.

In addition to supporting vocabulary development, fairy tales can also serve as springboards for thematic units that expand linguistic input. A tale like “Jack and the Beanstalk” can lead to vocabulary lessons about nature, size, emotions, family, and actions. Teachers can design integrated learning experiences that build on the vocabulary of the story and connect it to other subject areas such as science, math, or art. This interdisciplinary approach enhances vocabulary retention by placing words within broader conceptual networks, thus promoting both language and cognitive development.

Despite their many advantages, it is important for educators to select fairy tales thoughtfully, ensuring that the content is appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of all learners. Modern adaptations and culturally diverse fairy tales can be included to reflect a broader spectrum of experiences and values. This not only enriches the linguistic and cultural content but also supports inclusive and equitable teaching practices.

In conclusion, fairy tales represent a powerful and multifaceted resource in teaching English vocabulary to young learners at the early stages of acquisition. Their rich language, engaging narratives, cultural depth, and pedagogical flexibility make them ideally suited for developing vocabulary in ways that are meaningful, memorable, and enjoyable. By leveraging the narrative, emotional, and imaginative dimensions of fairy tales, educators can create dynamic and effective language learning environments that foster not only lexical growth but also a lifelong love of reading and storytelling.





In a world where language learning is increasingly essential, the age-old tradition of fairy tales remains a timeless ally in the classroom.

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