



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FOLK TALES: A MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE



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Executive Summary

The project, “A Comparative Analysis of Folk Tales: A Multicultural Perspective”, focuses on 24 folk tales from the partner countries, Turkey, Greece, Estonia and Slovenia on thematic basis and their comparative analysis along with the related activities.

The project is devoted to mirror and highlight the unique oneness composed of many in the structure of the European Union. Thus, the main aim of the project is to create multicultural, intercultural and cross-cultural awareness among the people of diverse geographies, cultures and languages while at the same time reminding people of the riches of their own cultural heritages. This is an efficient way to improve intercultural cooperation and communication in order to triumph over prejudices, “othering”, discriminations, intolerance and xenophobia that avoid people from appreciating and enjoying the perfect diversity within the matchless unity.

In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to integrate these ideas and knowledge into educational system from the earliest stages, so the end-products of the project are mainly intended for the students from kindergarten to the 8th grade, and audially and visually impaired students are also covered within our target group to be included into the mainstreaming of multicultural education. Teachers, teacher trainers and teacher trainees are also included in our target group, naturally, along with the parents and the people who are interested in literature and cultural studies.

The consortium formed within this framework consists of specialists in the fields of literature, the teaching of language and literature, early childhood education, bioethics, drama in education, aesthetic arts in education, intercultural adult education, intercultural and minority education, ELT, children’s literature and preschool education, which enables the project team to make use of an eclectic approach including cognitive, communicative and constructive methods in the preparation of the end-products. Different methodologies and approaches have been used in the preparation and the application of workshops by different partners thus enriching the teaching possibilities in various ways.

The end-products of the project have been planned to be a book of compiled folk tales, a dubbed and sub-titled CD for audially and visually impaired students and a web-page. When the project is on the half-way, the book and CD are still in progress while the web-page is in full use since April 2008. The addresses of the website are <http://www.caft.info> and <http://www.caft.gazi.edu.tr> where one can obtain detailed information about the gist and objectives of the project, partnership meetings, workshops carried out in partner countries, dissemination activities and contacts. The website contains interactive games for students of different ages and grades along with extra exercises to be used in the teaching of the folk tales, cultural motifs and language. The website also has a forum page where scholars, academicians and teachers interested in the project and multicultural studies can share their own native folk tales, experiences, practices and ideas.

The final meeting after the completion of all the end-products has been organized as an international congress of comparative literature and the teaching of literature and language under the project title of “We Speak the Same Culture” in Ankara - Turkey between the dates of 29 April – 1 May 2009. Additionally, there will be dissemination and exploitation activities including seminars and sample workshops in a number of EU countries in order to introduce and disseminate the project products and to make the book a supplementary material for the teaching of language and literature in EU countries. Finally, the project team intends to expand the project into other EU countries by submitting another project as an extension of this project to cover the folk tales and folk tale traditions of different cultures and languages in the unified diversity of Europe.

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1. Project Objectives

The project, “A Comparative Analysis of Folk Tales: A Multicultural Perspective”, mainly aims to reflect the multicultural spirit of EU, which is a perfect unity of diversities, by making use of literature, especially anonymous folk tales. The strength of art in general and literature in particular lies in the fact that it has a universal dimension although it is shaped and expressed in the individual terms of the artists. That is, a work of art conveys a universal message in the mould of an individual experience. Within this framework, anonymous folk narratives have a greater function; they display the very gist and nature of cultures and civilizations –rather than that of individuals- into which they are born as the representations of the unwritten history of humanity. They convey the rituals, traditions and motifs of cultures throughout the ages and from generation to generation. They are the perfect embodiments of different cultures settled into diverse geographical locations with diverse social, cultural and political backgrounds, yet, all the folk narratives –regardless of the geography, culture and language in which they come to life- basically point to the common merits, virtues, moralities, values and value judgments which bring all people together under the umbrella of humanly values. Within this framework, the end-products of the project, which bring the folk tales of different cultures and languages on a comparative basis for the use of young learners, serve to display the variety of European cultures and languages brought together under the umbrella of “European citizenship” by still respecting their individual freedom and identities. Thus, at the basis of the project is a quest to raise a cultural, multicultural, intercultural and cross-cultural awareness among European citizens beginning from the early ages by leading them to get acquainted with and appreciate the cultural and linguistic diversity of EU geography while also having them recognize the value of their own cultural heritages. It will also give way to the overcoming of prejudices, the sense of “othering”, intolerance, lack of communication and xenophobia, which hinders intercultural cooperation and communication in many fields.

Additionally, the end-products of the project will be multicultural and intercultural materials to be used both in the teaching of language and literature by also including the disadvantaged students – audially and visually impaired ones- into the mainstreaming of the materials. One of the notable aspects of the project objectives is the fact that the materials produced are very proper to be expanded in advance by adding up more and more folk tales from other countries and cultures by still underlying the prosperity of cultural heritages within the multicultural unity of EU.

Moreover, the project means to emphasize the cultural and linguistic diversity –especially focusing on less widely known cultures and languages- while at the same time providing both learners and teachers with a ground on which they can share their own native cultural riches and experiences by encouraging the wide and practical use of ICT via web sources knowingly prepared for the project.

Children of 6-14 including disadvantaged ones, teachers, teacher trainers, teacher trainees, academicians, parents and people interested in literature and cultural studies are all in the wide span of the project’s target groups. One of our basic objectives is to involve all the groups in the use and application of the project and the end-products as well as letting them to contribute to the improvement and expansion of them since we strongly believe that it is a must to start to raise such a multicultural and intercultural awareness of unity in diversity from early childhood while at the same time spreading the same sense and idea to all age groups covered in the above indicated target groups.

Once the end-products are in the mainstreaming of the pointed different and early levels of education, children will have the chance to get acquainted with the traits of other cultures and with their languages. They will gradually sense, perceive and conceptualize the existence of the people of different geographies with other cultures and languages than their own. Since

the book will provide them with a variety of activities in accordance with their age and conceptualization levels, they will be enthusiastic to learn more about other cultures and languages, which seeks to create a gradual multicultural awareness to lead to the conceptualization of the diversity in unity bringing them under the general notion of European citizenship. Learning about the traditions, cultures, rituals and daily routines of people of other geographies will be a fun for the students thus creating a friendly and tolerant atmosphere obstructing the formation of prejudices, intolerance and any form of discrimination in young brains.

In the same way, the elder groups involved in the project will be benefiting from the project's outcomes in two ways; in the first place, they will have the opportunity to get access into the spirit of other cultures, as well. They will learn about the experiences, practices, rituals and traditions of people living in socially, culturally and politically diverse geographies. It will give them the chance sympathize and empathize with them by offering pathways and bridges between cultures –which, indeed, already exist and it will lead to the establishment of cultural bridges, and cooperation on multicultural, intercultural and cross-cultural grounds going beyond prejudices, lack of communication and even xenophobia. Secondly, it will give way to a retrospective approach. People will revise and re-appreciate their own cultural heritages in this process, which will naturally result in a comparative and contrasting analysis between cultures, rituals, traditions, routines and practices and this will raise the multicultural awareness reciprocally.

2. Project Approach

The preparation of the project, its end-products and applications follow an eclectic approach especially following up communicative, cognitive and constructivist methodologies. Since the project addresses to a wide range of age groups, it seems wiser to make use of different approaches and methodologies with different age groups depending on the nature of the activity or the material used/taught. Indeed, the workshops carried out have basically been planned to evaluate the applicability of certain methodologies/approaches with particular materials at definite age groups in order to find and settle the most convenient activities and methods with the tales and age groups. The best results with particular tales are to be used in the book with the related activities and in the website with photos/recordings regarding the relevant grade(s).

The partner meetings were basically planned in order to evaluate the methodologies and results; during these meetings, the partners shared their own experiences along with dissimilar and diversified practices they have had. Moreover the partners attended the workshops carried by their partners when possible during these meetings, as well. Since the consortium is composed of academicians/scholars who are from different disciplines – although all are related to education-, the applications and practices were enriched by the suggestions and re-structured for the best result. As well as being a multicultural study, the project, thus, has also been settled on a multidisciplinary basis. In this way; both the partners have re-evaluated and enriched their own activities, workshops and applications under peer inspection within an internal observation system and they have also highly contributed to the improvement of the activities and applications in a reciprocal way.

Dissemination activities have been started from the very beginning of the project and they have been integrated into the partner meetings and local and native activities of the partners. For the future activities, seminars and sample workshops will be carried out in the selected countries. Additionally, the best practices will be carried out or be presented by power point both for the dissemination and exploitation activities and workshops to be actualized in other countries.

The key activity for the exploitation process is the international congress of comparative analysis and the teaching of language and literature, “We Speak the Same Culture”, to be held in Ankara, Turkey in April 2009 during which the end-products will be multiplied and mainstreamed for the first time. The project and its end-products will be introduced with a sample workshop supported by a panel and story-telling sessions in parallel with the nature, subject and the objectives of the project, thus giving inspiration to those attending to the congress to make use of the project products both in the short and long run in the related fields and studies.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The end-products of the project have been planned to be a book of compiled folk tales with their comparative analysis, a CD with four dubbed and subtitled partly animated tales –one from each partner country- for audially and visually impaired children and a website to support both the end-products and the objectives of the project. Accordingly, all the working and action plans, study visits, partner meetings and application processes have been designed and carried out to achieve the best results to be used in the end-products.

As the first step of the project, a kick-off meeting was held in Ankara, Turkey between the dates of 28-30 November 2007 during which the objectives and the working/action plan of the project were settled. Soon after the kick-off meeting, workshops at different levels took start in all partner countries since the best results of workshops would be the main source of activities in the book in advance. Workshops were carried out in two different ways; first, each partner carried out workshops in their own countries with the pre-determined levels using both their native and other partners' tales by also taking photos and shooting the best practices. Secondly, during the partner meetings, the results were shared and partners carried out workshop activities with their own native tales in one another's countries observed by the other staff of the project, when possible. During these workshops, students of different levels were introduced with the tales, traditions and rituals of different cultures in an attempt to raise a multicultural awareness; they tried to visualize and describe verbally or by drawing how they have conceptualized the characters, setting, cultural objects, and their productions were gathered in order to be used in an exhibition; they listened to the tales in the native language of the tale by a native narrator, giving them an insight about the linguistic diversity of Europe. The workshops, 80% of which is completed and reached over 300 people including students, teachers, teacher trainers and teacher trainees- have been a remarkable success in achieving one of the major objectives of the project; to create multicultural intercultural awareness by highlighting the unique unity in cultural and linguistic diversity of European society.

The second partner meeting in Greece between the dates of 26-30 May 2008 was turned into an international symposium under the title of "The Cultural Interaction of Folk Tales and Arts in Education" during which cultural bridges have been built by also emphasizing the necessity and possibilities of creating grounds for multicultural and intercultural cooperation and communication in order to promote an awareness in the conceptualization of different European cultures and languages and to take a stand against the intolerance, prejudices, "othering" and xenophobia which draw invisible yet strong boundaries among people dangerously. The seminar was attended by university teachers, teacher trainers, teacher trainees and university students of approximately 400 people.

All the partners have taken all the opportunities to disseminate the project via a variety of direct and indirect means and the project has been disseminated with meetings/seminars, TV programs, school/university journals, internet sources and newspapers. It is notable that although the project is only on the half way through, it has widely been disseminated reaching over 3000 people covered in the target group, which has tripled the short term targets of the project.

The last partner meeting planned to be held in Turkey in the second quarter of 2009 has been turned into an international congress of comparative literature and the teaching of language and literature with the project motto of "We Speak the Same Culture". Its pre-organization steps which are the design of the web-page and the gathering of the related mailing addresses have been completed and the congress was first announced on the project website on 15 October 2008 with all the related info including home page, call for papers, main topics, eye opener, the board and contacts. The mailing has also been started on 16 October 2008 immediately following the announcement. The congress will provide

academicians, scholars, teachers, teacher trainers, writers and intellectuals with an academic ground on which they can share their multicultural and intercultural studies, experiences and ideas by going beyond the cultural and national boundaries.

The website of the project has been open since April 2008 and it has been permanently updated and expanded as the studies on the project have progressed. The website contains the following parts:

- **Homepage** : It contains a brief summary of the project and its objectives
- **E-books** : In this part is the folk tale traditions of the partner countries and the 24 tales in four languages – Turkish, Greek, Eesti and Slovene
- **Forum** : This page intends to create an academic ground for teachers and academicians from all over Europe to share their experiences and practices while also giving them a chance and inspiration to contribute to the project with their native tales.
- **Dissemination** : This page contains the details of the dissemination activities carried out by each partner with dates, places, photos and video recordings.
- **Activities** : (under construction) It will contain extra activities and exercises for the tales in the book as worksheets.
- **Working Studio** : It gives a detailed picture of partner meetings and applications with photos and video recordings.
- **Games** (under construction) On this page will be interactive games related to the folk tales in the book for different grades.
- **Partners** : This page contains the personal photos and CVs of the partners with contact addresses.
- **Contact** : Contact page gives the links to the institutions involved in the project.

The addresses of the web are

<http://caft.info>

<http://caft.gazi.edu.tr>

4. Partnerships

The formation of our project consortium is in a perfect harmony with the gist and nature of our project; that is, the project accentuates the significance of the multicultural and multilinguistic structure in the unity of EU while the members of the consortium also reflect this diversity with their national, cultural, linguistic and religious identities creating a sample microcosm of the EU, which is of great use and benefit for the execution of the project.

The project intends to bring the folk tales of people with different languages from diverse geographies with dissimilar cultures with a claim that there are still many similarities and parallels as well as differences between them when the values, value judgments, traditions, moralities and virtues pointed in these stories are taken into consideration. It has been the same within the consortium; people from completely different geographies have come together; they speak different languages; they belong to diverse cultures; still, they come together on a common ground to form a unity within which ideals, ideas, experiences, traditions and perspectives have been shared to display the vast cultural heritage of humanity within the particular folk tales of the partners. This situation makes the project and its execution to more down to earth since the members of the consortium have the opportunity to reflect their first-hand experience in the end-products of the project as a multicultural and multilinguistic environment and study.

It is also significant and deliberate that the partners are from the countries whose cultures, languages and even alphabets are not familiar to a great number of people in EU – the partners are mainly from the Eastern part of Europe- thus flashing the perhaps unnoticed or less noticed cultural riches within the coverage of EU boundaries.

Within this framework, while working together as members of diversified geographies, cultures and languages, the EU Educational program, Comenius Multilateral Projects has laid a strong and safe ground for our multicultural studies, cooperation and collaboration by also gathering people under the unifying umbrella of European citizenship in a strong sense of belonging. The project supported and sponsored by the EA has equipped all the members of our project team with the opportunity to express themselves, to display the riches of their culture and language, to introduce their traditional and folkloric elements within a unified European partnership in which their particular national identities are still preserved and respected.

Throughout the project, during our dissemination activities and workshops, we, as the project team, have also met teachers, scholars, academicians and university students who are more than eager to take part in different EU Educational programs, projects and activities. It has given us the chance to open new pathways for future multicultural and multilingual projects, cooperation and partnerships by letting people of different geographies get into direct contact when their fields of study have overlapped; within this context, Eskisehir Anadolu University – Turkey has found a partner from the University of Tartu – Estonia whereas another future project applicant from Gazi University – Turkey has collaborated with University of Volos – Greece in the field of pre-school education, which will build new cultural bridges between the countries, cultures and people under the roof of European partnership.

Apart from these, due to the interaction and communication established with people within our target group and groups outside of the direct project consortium –such as teachers attending to the seminars-, the members of the consortium have had the chance to experience cultural exchanges in a non-formal and authentic atmosphere and environment.

5. Plans for the Future

The future steps of the project will be taken according to our action plan in order to achieve the project objectives and to keep pace with our time scheduling. Our action plan for the second half of the project is tentatively as follows:

- **Completion of Tasks for the Book, the CDs and the Website by the Partners**

As stated in our agreed working plan, all the partners are to finalize their tasks related to the book, the CDs and the website by February 2009 at the latest. While the tasks are being carried out, workshops and teacher seminars related to the project will continue where and when possible.

- **Dissemination Visits**

Since the contents of the book and the web page have almost been completed, the dissemination visits will be started in December 2008 as planned in the application. The countries chosen for dissemination visits are tentatively Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Hungary. These countries have been chosen deliberately by considering their geographical locations in west and central Europe since the project consortium is mainly composed of countries of Eastern Europe.

In order to carry out the dissemination visits, e-mails have been sent to related universities/faculties and primary/secondary schools in the above mentioned countries. The project and its end-products will be introduced and disseminated by means of seminars and sample workshops when and where possible by emphasizing the objectives of the project. Additionally, the people attending to the seminars/workshops will be encouraged to contribute to the project by adding their own native folk tales and folk tale traditions as well as their own practices and experiences in multicultural and intercultural studies on the forum page in the project website.

- **Completion of the book and the CDs**

The book will be published only after the first one or two dissemination visits are completed by taking into account the responses in order to take a last chance to revise the products and their impacts.

- **“We Speak the Same Culture” – International Congress of Comparative Literature and the Teaching of Language and Literature**

The congress will be held in Ankara between the dates of 29 April – 1 May 2009 at Gazi University. Since it is going to be an international congress, it will give an opportunity to tens of academicians, scholars and teachers to share their knowledge, experiences and practices in multicultural and intercultural studies on an academic ground while also displaying the multicultural unity of European diversity in accordance with the very objectives of the project. Moreover since the abstracts and –tentatively- the papers presented are to be published, the results will reach to much more people in the field acknowledging them about our project and its end-products in advance.

For the time being, the congress invitation is to be sent to approximately 2000 addresses meaning almost 2000 people will visit our website since the congress page is designed as a link on the website, which will reach more people than we have planned for the dissemination target group.

Additionally, participants of the congress will also be heartened to contribute to the forum page by sending folk tales and writing their comments, experiences and practices in the field.

- **Local Dissemination Activities**

Following the completion of the end-products, each partner will continue to hold meeting/seminars and carry out sample workshop activities when and where possible in order to put the project products into the mainstream of education all through EU countries.

- **Exploitation**

For the exploitation process, three other countries –tentatively England, Spain and Romania- have been selected where the project and its end-products will be introduced to teachers, teacher trainer, teacher trainees and university staff in order to convince them to make use the book, the website and the CDs.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The gist of the project and its end-products are in compliance with many key EU policies, objectives and priorities in many aspects:

- The end-products and their application in class environments are directly related to the young people covered in Lisbon strategies. That is, the target group of the project covers young learners from 6 to 14 including the disadvantaged ones –audially and visually impaired ones- as well as the teacher trainees and teachers who are eager to follow up innovations in their fields. It is to take them into the coverage of lifelong learning programs promoted by EU policies and objectives. With the seminars, workshops and the international symposium, the project has reached a great number of young learners directly within LLP framework.
- The results and the end-products of the project will be disseminated and put into the mainstreaming of education by means of dissemination and exploitation activities in order to put the LLP project into practice as a reality.
- The main objective of the project has been to raise the multicultural awareness by highlighting cultural and linguistic diversity making a perfect whole within EU boundaries in compliance with Lisbon strategies. In order to actualize this, the end-products bring the traditional folk tales of diversified geographies, cultures and languages together on a common ground promoting multicultural and intercultural studies, collaboration and cooperation. With this project, different European countries can have the opportunity to reflect their individual and precious cultural heritages while at the same time getting the chance of learning and enjoying that of the others.
- The project indicates that people within the EU framework has the privilege of being a part of a perfect whole under the description of European citizenship where her/his freedom and individual identity are respected and s/he is free to express herself/himself freely in her/his own language in her/his own terms by using her/his own cultural heritage on a multicultural ground.
- Creating a mutual multicultural ground, the project also claims equality among the cultures as well as among people. Such an approach is to take strong stand against any form of discrimination resulting from ethnic, cultural, religious concerns as well as against “othering”, xenophobia, prejudices, intolerance, exclusion and lack of communication. Thus, the project also promotes a sense of respect for democracy, equality and human rights by letting the people of dissimilar cultures, geographies and languages get an insight into one another’s point of views to create sympathy and empathy among them.
- The web-page of the project has been designed both to introduce/disseminate the project and to support the book. So it requires to have and improve ICT based skills as daily practices for one who would be interested in or make use of the project or the end-products.
- The end-products to be produced aims to contribute to the enhancement of teaching materials for the teaching of language and literature for different grades and ages in compliance with the meaning of lifelong learning.

