

Research paper

Children's Literature in Transcarpathian Schools for Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Since the origins of formal foreign language teaching, literature has always played an important role. Currently, modern language teaching trends suggest starting foreign language learning as early as possible; thus, the use of children's literature in foreign language teaching is undergoing a revolution. This situation encouraged us to examine the use of children's literature and the attitude of foreign language teachers to it. This article focuses on primary and secondary school English language teachers in a western county of Ukraine (N=118). The results of the qualitative research revealed that the teachers' general attitude to the use of children's literature is positive; they are aware of their advantages but still avoid using these materials. Most teachers do not apply children's literature in their foreign language teaching because the school curriculum is too congested and fast-paced, they do not have access to appropriate authentic children's literature, or they were not taught how to utilize authentic children's literature during their university years. Results suggest that teachers should be encouraged to use children's literature, though there is no universal solution. The first suggestion is for schools themselves to support teachers, but it would be a significant step forward if this approach were also to be taken in in-service training.

Keywords: children's literature; foreign language teaching; Transcarpathian Hungarian schools, language teachers

Introduction

National context – Ukraine

Our research deals with the role of children's literature (CHL) in teaching English as a foreign language in Transcarpathia, a western county in Ukraine. Due to its history and geographical location, many national minorities, such as Hungarians, live in this multi-ethnic part of the country. According to a survey (Tátrai et al., 2017), the number of Hungarians living there is around 131 000 people, and there are 100 Transcarpathian schools with Hungarian as the primary language of instruction. English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught in most of these schools, and these establishments provide the context of our research. In Ukraine, foreign language education starts in the first class (age 6) and is compulsory until the 11th form (Huszti, 2020). Since 2005, the language policy-making documents have been following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an international standard for describing language ability (Misechko, 2017). Not only do they comply with the standards set by CEFR, but the new 2005 language curriculum also provides the levels of knowledge that children have to achieve at the end of certain school stages (see Huszti, 2020). Currently, two curricula are employed in Ukraine (Foreign languages (Іноземні мови) – English, German, French, Spanish: Curricula for Forms 2-12, 2005; Shyian, 2018). Both documents are valid, except that the first applies to children who started school before 2018, while the second applies to those who started first grade according to the New

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Ukrainian School concept post 2018. This document clearly states that general secondary foreign language teaching aims to develop foreign language communication competence in direct and indirect intercultural communication, ensuring the development of other key competencies and meeting the child's various needs. This programme sets out the main tasks and objectives of foreign language teaching; it places great emphasis on listening comprehension of the content of authentic texts (non-pedagogical texts created for native speakers of a language, the language is not selected or graded) and reading comprehension of authentic texts of different types and genres (Shyian, 2018). Therefore, it is self-evident that authentic foreign language (FL) children's literature has an essential place in the educational process.

International context

The value of using CHL, stories, and the technique of storytelling in teaching contexts has long been acknowledged around the world (Bland et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2014; Ghosn, 2013; McKay, 1982; Wright, 2009) They are part and parcel of the teaching culture because children, by their very nature, love stories. Children's literature, stories, poems, rhymes, and songs are essential elements of mother tongue education. However, recently, an increasing number of teachers realize the significance of using CHL in teaching English as a foreign language because the well-selected stories adhere to the primary objectives in most countries for foreign language teaching to young learners: linguistic, psychological, cognitive, social, and cultural.

Prior to the 1990s, many of the storybooks used in elementary English language teaching classes were simplified editions of popular fairy tales and fables, or re-written versions, known as "readers" or "graded readers", for the specific purpose of language teaching. At the beginning of the 20th century, however, many teachers began using authentic storybooks, offering a rich source of authentic input. Children can be highly motivated by authentic storybooks because they feel a strong sense of accomplishment after working with a real English book (Ellis et al., 2014).

The role of children's literature in teaching English as a foreign language

In the study of literature, several definitions of CHL can be found. Throughout this paper, we use the term given by Bland and Lütge (2015, pp. 1), defining it to "cover all literature for children and adolescents, including oral literature, reflecting the eclectic interests of children." As such, we focus on English language literary texts that were not published for teaching purposes or any educational context primarily aimed for children.

An extensive body of scientific literature deals with the role of children's literature in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) or second language (ESL) (Ahlquist et al., 2015; Bland, 2019; Bland et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2014; Ghosn, 2013; Kovács et al., 2011; McKay, 1982; Pardede, 2021; Wright, 2009). While there is a significant amount of research focused on the role of CHL in teaching EFL, it primarily centres around the theoretical background and provides practical ideas. Most empirical investigations on the processes and consequences of utilising literature with children in terms of language and literacy have been conducted in a first language (L1) context.

A thorough analysis of the literature suggests that several directions and perspectives have been adopted to approach and analyse the benefits of CHL in language teaching. In the next part of our paper, we briefly summarise the main trends.

Firstly, one possible approach is extensive or free reading. A considerable amount of literature proves that it is an exciting and highly efficient way of language learning, demonstrating that the use of picture books improved learners' language strategies, motivation, confidence and reading skills (Krashen, 2014; Mason, 2014; Kolb, 2014).

Secondly, many studies have been published about the importance of motivation in language teaching. As children are naturally fond of stories, they are always eager to listen to stories. According to research, if reading motivation and reading for pleasure are encouraged, interest in reading in a foreign language can be sparked, which may positively impact the other characteristics that influence reading and related skills (Garvie, 1990; Ellis et al., 2014; Enever et al., 2006; Kreft et al., 2014; Slattery et al., 2001, Szabó, 2016; Wright, 2009).

Thirdly, several studies have found that CHL aids in developing visual literacy and language learning competence. According to their results, CHL develops skills not limited to traditional language competencies, visual literacy, help to understand the verbal and visual connections, and interpretation of text illustrations (Burwitz-Melzer, 2014; Mourao, 2014, Bland, 2014).

Fourthly, as Bland (2013) suggested, the importance of English as a topic and exclusive focus of study is gradually decreasing, and content-based EFL classrooms (an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus) are becoming increasingly popular. Theoretical studies have found an important link between reading fiction in a foreign language and acquiring intercultural communication skills (Heggernes, 2021). CHL can develop International Communicative Competence (ICC), increase intercultural awareness, and boost positive images of the other, building an awareness of cultural diversity within children's immediate relationships worlds (Sowa, 2014).

Lastly, existing literature also emphasises the tight relationship between storytelling and creative writing, focusing on the effective dimension and empowerment of children's literature and culture through playful language (Maley, 2014; Bermejo et al., 2014).

But despite the many positives, several researchers believe that the utilisation of literature in teaching EFL is not exceptionally effective because of the special features of literary texts (complex language, unique usage, figurative meaning, etc.). Furthermore, the investigation of literary texts does not contribute to the learners' occupational and scholarly objectives (Hasan et al., 2017; McKay, 1982). Similarly, Savvidou (2004) identifies two reasons why language teachers find literature unsuitable for language classes. First, the creative literary style, such as poetry, may necessitate syntax and lexis manipulation, which distinguishes literary language from non-literary language. Second, readers of literary texts require more work to accurately understand the meaning of texts that are separated from their direct social context.

However, a growing body of literature investigates the benefits of applying literature as content in EFL and ESL classes. For example, in her review, McKay (2014, pp. 488) defines three main benefits of using literature in teaching languages: (a) literature demonstrates for learners the importance of form in achieving specific communicative goals; (b) using literature as content in the language classroom gives a perfect premise for integrating the four main language skills; (c) literary texts are valuable in raising students' and teachers' cross-cultural awareness.

If teachers want to use literary texts in the English classroom, books, stories must be carefully selected. As stated by McKay (2014), they should be treated in a way that encourages the reader to interact with the text on an aesthetic level.

Research design and Methods

With this directive in mind, the current study focuses on the use of CHL in Transcarpathian schools with Hungarian as the primary language of instruction. To the best of our knowledge, no one in Transcarpathia has ever investigated this topic, hence the findings of our study are unique and, not only bring attention to this existing gap, but also begins to resolve it.

The given research poses four main research questions:

- 1) What is the general state of foreign language teaching in Transcarpathian schools with Hungarian language of instruction?
- 2) Do teachers apply foreign language authentic children's literature when teaching EFL in Transcarpathia?
- 3) What is the attitude of EFL teachers to the use of children's literature?
- 4) What are the barriers to using children's literature in language classes?

Instrument

To collect data to inform the research questions, a self-administered questionnaire was developed. Based on our review of the literature, there is no available, standardised instrument currently existing to measure and evaluate the use of children's literature in teaching EFL. Therefore, a questionnaire consisting of 31 items, both closed-ended and open-ended, was developed. Additionally, it contains a five-point Likert scale ((1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree) in which teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements about the reasons for not using children's literature.

The first part of the questionnaire poses questions about the teachers' experiences with teaching, including general circumstances at the school where they teach (i.e. the number of English teachers at school, the grades where they teach, the number of lessons per week, the number of students in a class, the type of school, types of books applied by the English teachers, supplementary materials used by the teachers, etc.).

The second part of the instrument deals with the application of children's literature in the FLT process. It inquires about the participants' experiences using children's literature, uncovering reasons for avoiding this strategy (if avoidance is the case). In this part, we also asked our respondents to express their personal views and experience on using authentic CHL, as well as to provide information about their personal reading habits.

The final part of the questionnaire was focused on gathering demographic data, like gender, age, diploma level, and if they currently take part in any kind of education. Questionnaires were hand-delivered by the researchers.

Prior to official data collection, carried out between April – May 2019, a pilot test was conducted to identify questions that were not straightforward and to reveal items that might lead to biased answers. Five highly experienced researchers and colleagues were asked to fill in and comment on the questionnaire. Based on their reviews of the instrument, five items were corrected and modified.

Participants

The study participants are the English teachers working across the 100 Transcarpathian schools with Hungarian language of instruction. In efforts to gain insight from as much of the sample population as possible, 98 schools were successfully contacted, and 154 questionnaires were delivered. As a result, 118 teachers (76%) filled in and returned their questionnaires.

To process the data SPSS v22 statistical program and Microsoft Excel were used.

Results and Discussion

Several findings were drawn from the data, and in the following, we would like to discuss ones with significant implications.

Altogether 118 secondary school teachers took part in the survey: 109 (92%) females and 9 (8%) males. At the time of completion, 26% of the participants were in their twenties, the majority in their thirties (51%). In addition, 14% of the participants are between 41-50, and 9% of them are older than fifty years.

Table 1. Teaching experience of participants

Years	1–3	4–6	7–9	10–12	13–15	16–18	19–21	22–24	25–28	29–31	32–34	35–38
Teaching exp.	14	21	15	11	16	16	6	6	4	2	5	2
English teaching exp.	18	26	10	15	15	16	5	4	5	2	2	0

The teaching experience of the participants ranged between one year and almost exceeding 35. However, it is important to note that not all participants had a generalisable experience, as several began their teaching career prior to becoming specifically English language teachers. Furthermore, the number of English teachers per school varies between 1 and 5; however, in the majority of cases (45 schools), there are two English teachers. There is a considerable variation in the number of pupils per class. In some cases, the number of pupils is as low as 3, while in two schools, the number of pupils reaches 33.

The participants work in varying levels of education: 5.9% primary school (Year 1-4); 34.7% lower secondary school (Year 1-9); 39% secondary school; 2.5% education and training centre (kindergarten and Year 1-11); 0.8% education and training centre (kindergarten + Year 1-4); 5.1% education and training centre (kindergarten + Year 1-9); 2.5% high school (Year 5-11); 5.9% lyceum (Year 8-11); 3.4% higher vocational training institute (Year 9-11).

As seen in Table 2 the number of teachers teaching in each school year is varying.

Table 2. Distribution of teachers by class

Grades	1	2	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Teachers	63	63	65	60	65	65	62	65	68	42	37

Table 3. Textbook use in different years

Years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Do not teach	57	54	53	58	53	53	57	53	50	78	83
Use textbook	54	62	64	58	65	63	58	63	66	38	32
Do not use	7	2	1	2	0	2	3	2	2	2	3

As seen in Table 3, some teachers do not apply textbooks at all. The highest number demonstrates that almost 13% of the teachers of Year 1 pupils do not use a textbook while teaching English. In an open-ended question, we tried to reveal the reasons for avoiding textbook use. The answers can be summarised as follows: according to the teachers, the available textbooks are a) boring, b) not authentic, c) too difficult (children in Year 1 cannot read, while the textbooks contain long sentences and grammar that are not understandable for children, too complex tasks, the number of unknown words exceeds the recommended amount per lesson), d) not age-appropriate for the pupils, e) does not contain sufficient exercises for practice, f) out-of-date. In cases where audio is available to supplement the material, it is g) not authentic, h) not available. On occasion, the textbook itself is simply not available at school, and the parents' financial position prevents them from purchasing it.

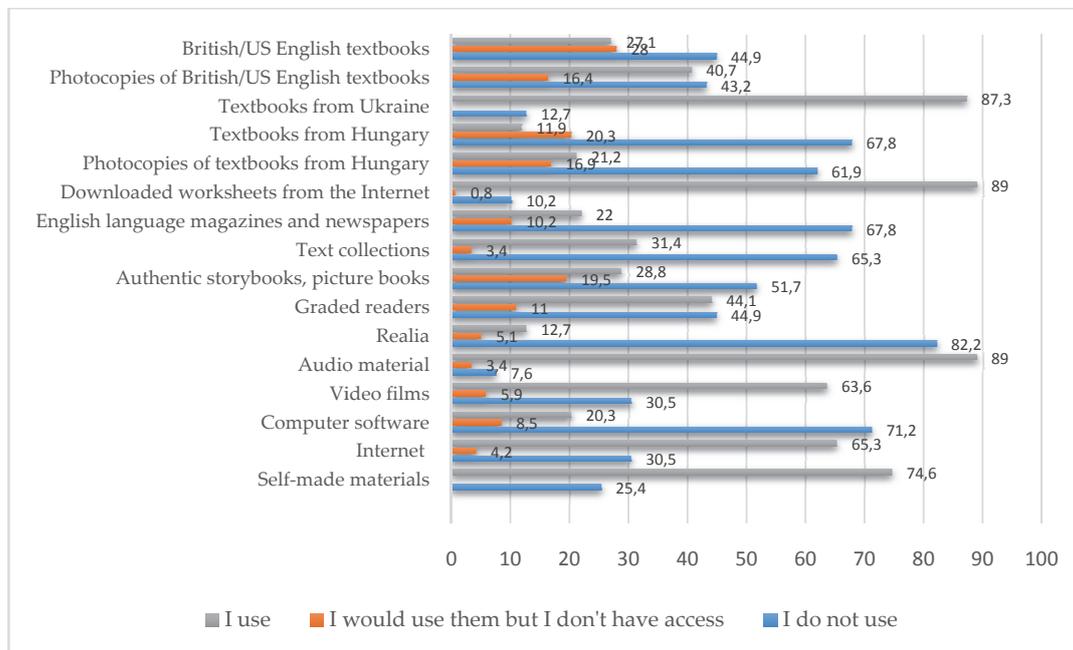
One of the questions in the survey also inquired about teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes toward the textbooks they use in class. 5% of teachers believe that their students enjoy textbooks, whereas 59% believe that the prevailing attitude is tolerance. However, 24% of teachers say that students detest textbooks and find them boring. Whereas 6% of teachers said they could not answer, while another 6% said they had alternative ideas. Based on the teachers' answers, more than a quarter of students do not like the textbooks available for their education. We speculate there could be various reasons for this, but first we must understand the differences between the teaching languages in these settings. Cyrillic letters are used in the Ukrainian language, while English and Hungarian use Latin-script, though Hungarian is an extension of it with almost double the letters than that of the English alphabet. Issues arise for those children with Hungarian as their mother tongue, as the vocabulary in their textbooks is written in both English and Ukrainian, but not in Hungarian. As such, they can only learn the new vocabulary through the state language (unknown to most of the children at age 6-7). At the same time, according to the curriculum, English should be taught mostly orally in the first grade. Secondly, the coursebooks are written for the Ukrainian context, which is still partly unknown to learners of the Hungarian minority at this age. Respondent # said, "*Students do not like textbooks published and supported by the Ukrainian state. They find it boring, "dry" and heavy. And ... they are also disorganised because the themes are not built on each other. In contrast, they prefer to work from textbooks published by Oxford [University Press], and I think they are more understandable, more transparent.*" Participant 13 highlighted: "*Children love books by foreign authors. But they find Ukrainian textbooks boring.*" Participant 28 wrote the following: "*The exercises in the textbook are not appropriate to their level of knowledge or are boring. Personally, I skip these things and only use the textbook for the more interesting parts.*" We would also like to highlight the opinions of two other teachers: Participant 80 also suggests that the textbooks are not engaging enough: "*They find it boring. Template-like difficult exercises, no Hungarian translation. There is nothing to motivate students to learn English. The types of tasks are repetitive.*" Participant 81: "*They find it boring. The Ukrainian edition textbooks are liked by children in lower grades but are considered boring by older children. They lack adequate audio material and are full of difficult and boring exercises. On the other hand, the British edition books are trendy and interesting. They like the exercises, the pictures and the fact that the texts reflect real British life. They also find the accompanying audio material fascinating, listening carefully to real British pronunciation*" Four language teachers also cited the lack of audio material as a growing issue. It is not entirely accurate, as there is available audio content for the textbooks, but it is unlikely that everyone has access to it.

The research also tried to find out which textbooks are most commonly utilised by teachers. Again, we found that the vast majority of teachers use books published in Ukraine, with only a small number of foreign publications being used in different grades. For example, most teachers apply books by Alla Nesvit and Oksana Karpiuk, while foreign monolingual publications include Solutions and Headway 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press), New Opportunities (Longman).

During the research, it was important to find out what teaching aids teachers use when teaching English. The teachers' responses showed that the most commonly accepted teaching aids were downloaded worksheets from the Internet. These are relatively quick and easy to access, with a large number of free materials available. However, it is also interesting to note that 1% of teachers desired to use them but do not have access to such online materials, while 10% do not apply them at all. This suggests that there are still teachers in some parts of

Transcarpathia who do not have access to the Internet or lack technical equipment. The same is the case for audio materials: 89% of language teachers use them, but here 4% indicated that they do not have access to such materials, while 9 teachers (7.6%) do not employ them at all. The results are summarised in the following diagram (Figure 1.).

Figure 1. Percentage of teachers using different teaching aids



One of the most relevant research questions deals with the use of authentic children's literature. When ranking educational aids by frequency of use, authentic storybooks are only ranked 10th out of 16. Only 28.8% of teachers apply them in their lessons, 51.7% (61) do not use them at all, while 19.5% would utilise them but do not have access to them. The availability of CHL is a critical issue. Carefully selected texts are of vital importance in teaching EFL in elementary and secondary education. Unfortunately, in Transcarpathia, most school children do not have access to authentic foreign language literature in the classroom, let alone at home. It is partly because of the poor socioeconomic status of Transcarpathian people and, on the other hand, because of the limited access to foreign language books even at bookstores. Studies on the importance of the availability of literary texts in the United States (Hart et al., 1995) and Hungary (Lugossy, 2006) underline that without school support, it may happen that children would never see high-quality CHL books. Therefore, it is essential for schools to make some effort to compensate for the disadvantages of a lack of books in the home environment.

Our observations suggest that there is a certain resistance to the use of children's literature in foreign language teaching on the part of teachers. There are two possible explanations for this; (1) the study of children's literature is not an integral part of the literature courses in university teacher training, and (2) the methodological background for this is not taught in a separate course.

Another interesting aspect worth mentioning is the use, or rather non-use, of realia. Realia is a term used in education to describe objects from everyday life that are utilised in classroom training to help pupils understand diverse cultures and situations. 82.2% of respondents do not employ realia in the educational process. In foreign language teaching, realia are real-life things that are used in the classroom to illustrate and teach vocabulary or to help pupils learn and produce. Realia can be made up of nearly anything, including artefacts from the target language's native nation as well as objects from the teacher's own country (Satbergenova et al., 2017). These objects are typically more fascinating than textbook content, and they can cover topics that students are interested in. The employment of realia in the classroom provides a refreshing diversion from traditional classroom activities such as reading and writing.

The questionnaire included a separate open-ended question asking teachers directly whether they apply short stories and fairy tales in English lessons. The narrative responses to this question regarding the use of CHL were analysed using an open coding technique. The analysis of the narrative answers produced three basic categories and further explanations: 77 (65%) teachers use CHL in the English lessons, however, an overwhelming number of them emphasised that they apply it quite rarely.

Interestingly, three teachers highlighted that they do not use stories and tales other than what the textbooks contain, while 2 teachers also mentioned that they only use CHL as summer or home reading tasks. 28% (33) of the respondents said they do not apply CHL in their teaching repertoire, while 8 teachers decided not to answer this question. Those who do not use children's literature have also provided some noteworthy explanations and remarks. Five respondents alluded to about a lack of time, while the same number complained about too busy school schedules. One teacher finds this approach very useful but only uses it in private lessons. Unfortunately, this was not explained in more detail. Beyond this, it is also worth highlighting the two respondents who prefer fairy-tale films in lessons rather than storybooks, as they believe that this is more likely to capture the interest of pupils.

As mentioned earlier, to the best of our knowledge, there is no standardised questionnaire available for research on this topic. When designing our questionnaire, we tried to follow the guidelines of Dörnyei and Taguchi (2019). According to them, *“for made-to-measure research instruments that we develop for our specific research purpose, it is not always feasible to provide indices of every aspect of validity and reliability. Yet, even in cases where there are no resources and opportunities for elaborate validation exercises, we should strive for a questionnaire that has appropriate and well-documented reliability in at least one aspect: internal consistency”* (Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2019, pp. 93). Our questionnaire contains both qualitative and quantitative items. Qualitative data was analysed manually by employing content analysis procedures, while quantitative items were analysed using statistical calculations.

To explore the reasons why some teachers avoid stories in the teaching process, a multi-item Likert scale was designed. To check if the items measure the same target area (to measure the internal consistency) the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is a figure usually ranging between 0 and +1, and during item analysis we should aim at coefficients more than .70 in order to indicate reliability (Dörnyei and Csizér, 2012). The calculations confirmed the internal consistency of the 11-item scale: Cronbach Alpha=.993. (Table 4., Table 5.)

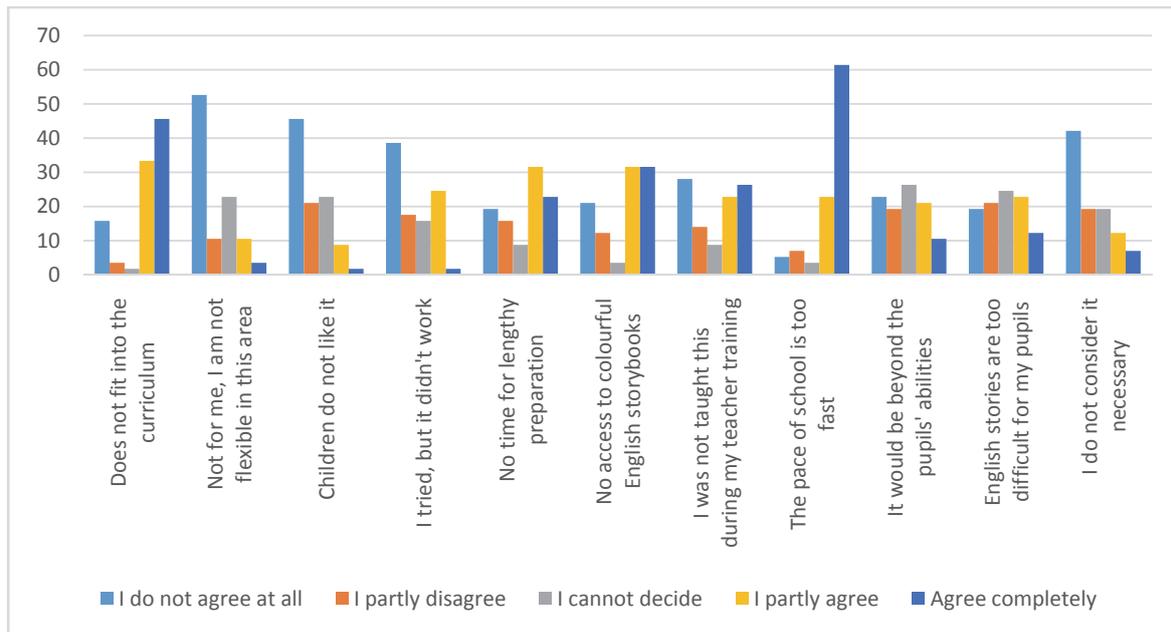
Table 4. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.993	.994	11

Table 5. Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Does not fit into the curriculum	60.25	998.819	.948	.942	.993
Not for me, I am not flexible in this area	61.15	940.472	.983	.979	.992
Children do not like it	61.16	941.982	.979	.973	.992
I tried, but it didn't work	60.95	952.732	.965	.950	.993
No time for lengthy preparation	60.52	977.824	.959	.942	.993
No access to colourful English storybooks	60.48	981.209	.959	.944	.993
I was not taught this during my teacher training	60.65	970.024	.962	.941	.993
The pace of school is too fast	60.06	1011.526	.963	.961	.993
It would be beyond the pupils' abilities	60.79	964.579	.969	.975	.993
English stories are too difficult for my pupils	60.74	966.896	.973	.975	.992
I do not consider it necessary	61.05	946.254	.981	.973	.992

Figure 2. summarises the responses to this question. By highlighting only the most essential findings, it is clear that most English teachers do not employ authentic stories in their classes due to the overburdening of the curriculum and the pressures of the school schedule.

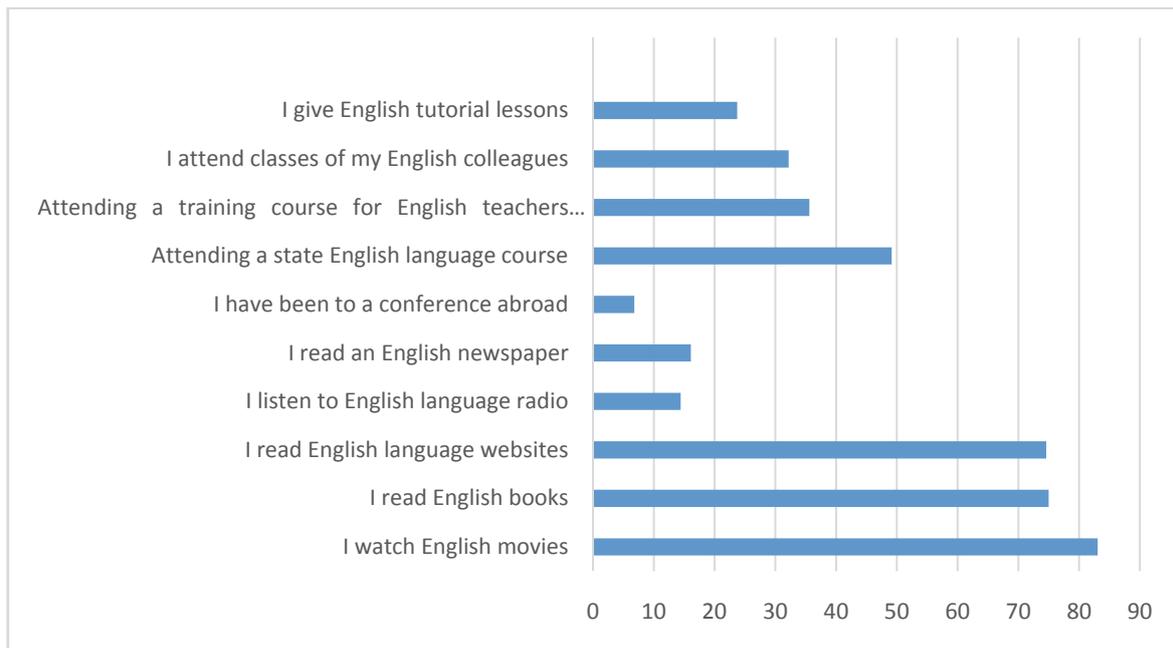
Figure 2. Reasons for ignoring children's literature

Around a third of teachers (32%) somewhat agree, and another third (32%) strongly agree, that they do not have access to colourful English storybooks. The availability of a wide range of storybooks is one of the pillars of this approach. To be feasible, teachers need to have a sufficient quantity of books available to choose the ones that are appropriate for the pupils' interests, age and language level. It is essential to select literary texts that have an engaging theme and that are not too difficult for the students. Furthermore, only if the text is understandable to children will they enjoy reading literature.

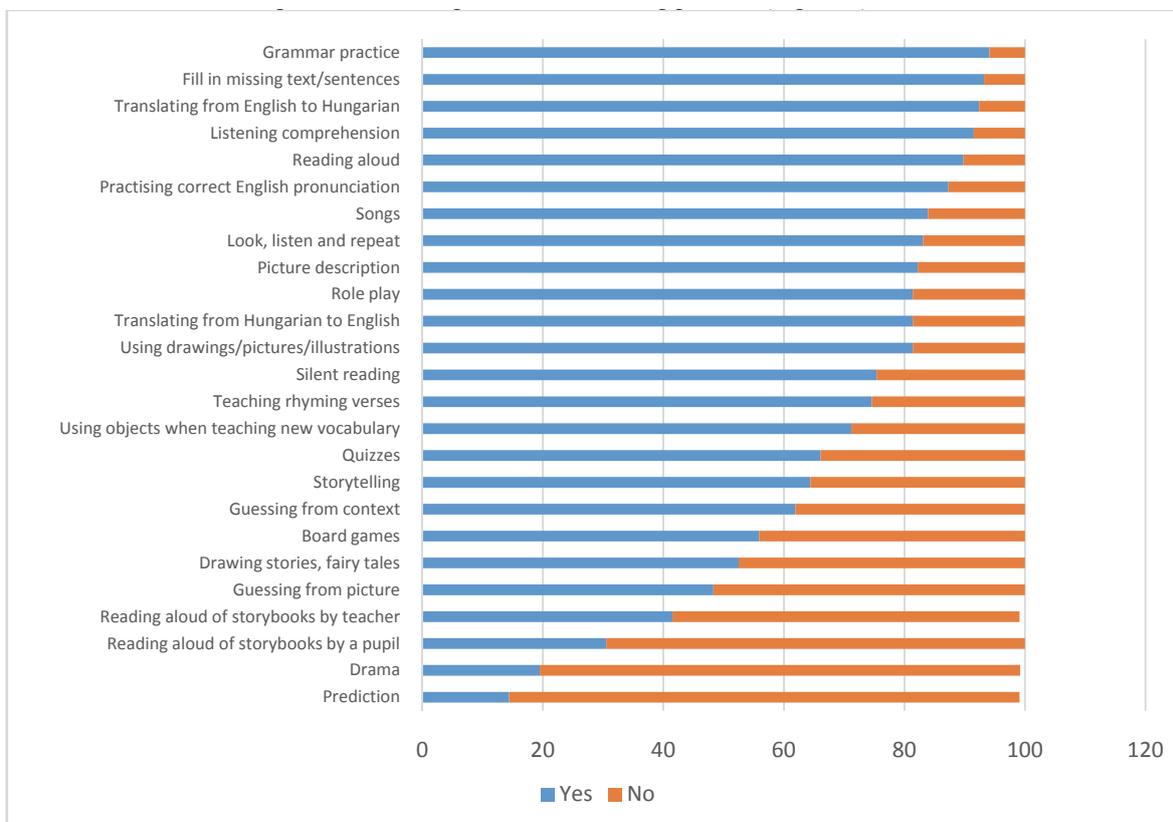
No major obstacles were found in the application of this approach besides the availability of books. While a time-consuming method, the rewards outweigh the inconvenience and the beneficial outcomes are worth the effort.

Only two teachers said they employ stories in every lesson, 21 (18%) teachers use stories 1-2 times per week, while 58 teachers (49%) apply stories 1-2 times per month. Of the teachers, 32 (27%) indicated that they never use stories and tales in English lessons. Five teachers pointed out that they do apply stories, but only very rarely. The same question was also examined from the perspective of authentic texts. The results only slightly differ from the above. Five teachers use authentic texts in each lesson. The number of teachers who utilise authentic texts regularly is lower: 27 (23%) teachers use them once or twice a week, while 38 (32%) handle them 1-2 times per month. The same number of teachers never use authentic texts. These results can be compared to Chang's research, (2007), in which the frequency of storybook application was examined in the English lessons in a rural part of Taiwan. Based on a sample of 238 people, 10% of respondents use storybooks every lesson, while 15% never employ them. This result shows a much more favourable picture compared to the situation in Transcarpathia.

To maintain and advance their own English skills, most teachers (83%) watch films in English, while 75% read English books and another 75% read English websites. On the other hand, relatively few teachers listen to English language radio (14%) and read authentic magazines and newspapers (16%) and only 7% of the teachers had the opportunity to attend a conference abroad. These results are most likely related to people's socio-economic situation in Transcarpathia, but this was not included in the study (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Maintaining teachers' language skills

In addition to this, we also wanted to gather information on what exercises and activities teachers use most in the classroom to gain a better insight into the teaching process (Figure 4).

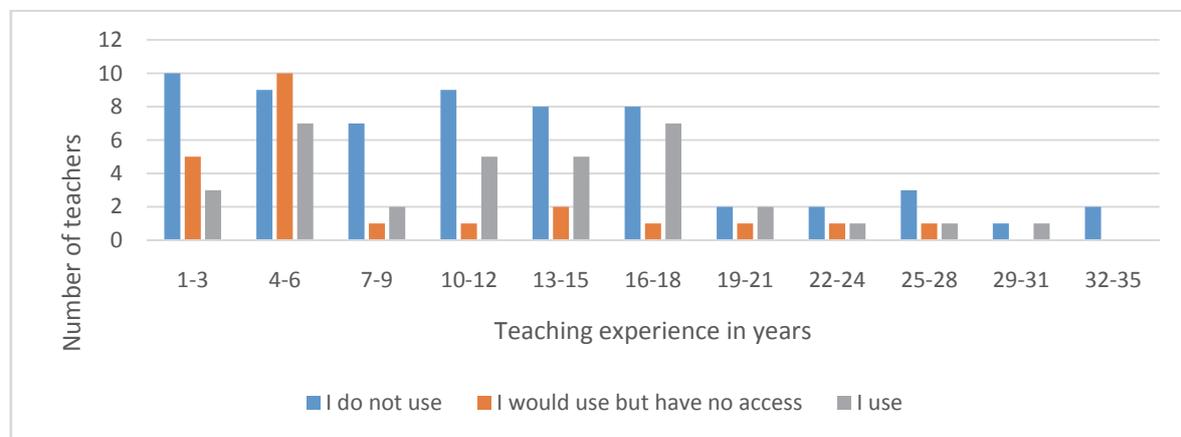
Figure 4. The most commonly used exercises and activities in English lessons, according to respondent teachers

Analysis of the data shows that they are largely consistent with previous responses. The use of children's literature and related activities in English lessons are relatively marginalised, not being the most frequently applied activities in the classroom. Primarily, traditional instructional methods are utilised, and the availability of resources is limited. It is important to underline that the use of non-traditional methods in foreign language teaching could have a motivating effect on learners, especially when discussing learners who are disadvantaged in some respects.

Teachers were also asked to evaluate the above-mentioned activities from the pupils' point of view: they had to choose the 3 lesson activities they thought pupils liked the most and least. Based on the responses, the three most popular were: songs (74 respondents); role-playing (53 respondents); and quizzes (34 respondents), while the three least popular activities were: grammar practice (79); translation from Hungarian to English (54); listening comprehension (40). Despite this insight, it has been demonstrated that the three least popular activities for students are also the three most frequently used by teachers.

Taking all of these aspects into account, we analysed the connection between the use of CHL and a) the teachers' teaching experience; b) their type of professional qualification.

Figure 5. Teacher's teaching experience and their use of CHL



Given the results, some connection between pedagogical practice and the use of children's literature is possible. The results may not be accurate due to the different numbers of teachers, but they certainly suggest that teachers who have been in the profession for a shorter period of time apply CHL more often. They may be more enthusiastic about trying new approaches, while more experienced teachers prefer traditional methods.

When examining the professional qualification of the teachers and their use of CHL, we could not find any possible connection, but it is also alarming that 7 teachers teach English without possessing a suitable professional degree.

Table 6. The professional qualification of teachers and their use of CHL

	I do not use	I would use but have no access	I use
English	36	11	16
English-French	0	0	1
English-Geography	7	1	6
English-History	10	2	5
English-Hungarian	2	3	0
Hungarian-English	2	3	0
Primary school teacher-English	1	2	0
French	2	0	1
German	0	0	2
History	1	1	0
Mathematics	0	0	1

Conclusions

In this paper, we have presented the most critical issues of our questionnaire on the use of CHL in teaching English as a foreign language. In conclusion, we provide a summary of the answers to our research questions.

Research Question 1 *What is the general state of foreign language teaching in Transcarpathian schools with Hungarian language of instruction?*

Overall, the teaching of EFL in schools with Hungarian language of instruction in Transcarpathia faces several difficulties:

1. A relatively small number of hours for English lessons compared to those schools with Ukrainian as the language of instruction (Huszt, 2020).
2. In some classes, the number of children in a group is too high, and they are not divided into smaller groups in English lessons.
3. In some schools, teachers teach combined classes (e.g. 2nd and 3rd grade) at the same time.
4. The supply of textbooks and teaching aids is inadequate in many schools: not all pupils have textbooks; audio materials and workbooks are not consistently available.
5. The language level and content of the available textbooks do not meet the requirements of modern language teaching: they are boring, uninteresting, sometimes too complex.
6. Children's literature in foreign languages is not easily available.
7. In seven cases, it was also found that teachers were not English teachers by professional qualification.

Research Question 2 *Do teachers use foreign language authentic children's literature when teaching EFL in Transcarpathia?*

Our second main research question, concerning the application of children's literature, was confirmed. EFL teachers do use CHL in the teaching process; however, they have to face some problems as well. The vast majority of teachers utilise children's literature and authentic texts in English classes 1-2 times per month; however, the way they are used does not always follow international methodological guidelines.

Research Question 3 *What is the attitude of EFL teachers to the use of children's literature?*

The general attitude of the teachers is positive; however, there are some unenthusiastic and pessimistic teachers present. They do consider the utilisation of CHL necessary, and there are ten teachers who think that CHL would be too difficult or beyond the children's abilities. They do not believe they are not flexible enough to use authentic tales, and they absolutely do not consider that children would dislike these stories. There were only two teachers who had already tried the use of CHL, but concluded it did not work for them.

Research Question 4 *What are the barriers to using children's literature in language classes?*

1. Authentic children's literature is not easily available in Transcarpathia. There are no bookstores with these types of material.
2. Preparation is time-consuming and, therefore, not an easy activity for teachers.
3. The school curriculum is overloaded, and the pace of school is too fast.
4. Teachers were not taught about this approach during their own teacher training.

Based on the findings, the following implications for teachers can be summarised:

- with carefully selected teaching materials (e.g. authentic CHL), teachers should enable children to consider, question, and interpret ideas from a variety of viewpoints;
- with the help of CHL, teachers can design interdisciplinary learning experiences for children that allow them to combine information, skills and inquiry methods from several topic areas.
- teachers should be more open to modern pedagogical approaches;
- they should pay close attention to pupils' needs and interests;

The main pedagogical implications of the present research may be that:

- story-based education needs to be more widely disseminated and promoted among practising teachers (e.g. in-service teacher training courses about the use of CHL);
- English teacher candidates should be encouraged to use CHL while at university (e.g. special courses, pedagogical practice);
- school management should support the purchase of foreign language CHL;
- it would be worth contacting parents who might be supportive in this regard;

The open-ended answers revealed that some teachers struggle to envision using a storybook for up to 4-5 hours at first. Teachers must have a lot of enthusiasm, imagination, outstanding classroom management skills, and flexibility to use a story-based approach that would result in professional and personal growth. However, kids often find it difficult to return to more traditional, explicitly written EFL materials, which tend to stay at the bland and utilitarian level of basic dialogues and daily activities once they have applied children's books. Storybooks address universal themes and provide opportunities for youngsters to experiment with ideas, feelings, and critical thinking.

Unfortunately, the results of the present research cannot be compared with the situation in Ukraine as a whole. In our literature review on the current situation in Ukraine, we have not found any empirical research on this topic that at least addresses similar issues to the ones we have examined. As this is a relatively new pedagogical approach, researchers in Ukraine are mainly concerned with the theoretical background and methodological recommendations on the use of CHL in foreign language teaching. Comparing the situation in schools with Ukrainian or Hungarian language of instruction is also not necessarily relevant due to fundamental structural differences. The number of hours of language teaching in schools for national minorities is the same as in Ukrainian-language schools. However, in the former case, this number must include the state language, the minority language and the foreign language. As a result, the amount of time spent learning a foreign language in national minority schools is reduced.

These results discussed above are in line with the research of Englund (2016), who investigated Swedish primary school teachers' methods and attitudes towards the use of children's literature in English lessons. The results are somewhat reassuring that there is still room for improvement in Transcarpathia.

We are aware that our research may have limitations. The first is the relatively small sample size, although these participants did cover the whole population. As a result, unfortunately, the number of responses does not always lend itself to serious statistical analysis, but we attempted to highlight some important possible connections. Second, because of the small number of teachers, the answers received must be treated with caution and not be overgeneralised to the population. Further data collection is required in order to gain a complete picture. In the next phase of our research, we hope to reveal the attitude of college students majoring in English to using authentic CHL in the teaching process, and we would like to compare and contrast their experience and views as freshly graduated secondary school students with the views of their former teachers.

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