

PROJECT – CORRELATION TEACHING AT THE TEACHERS' COLLEGE

Vesna Grahovac-Pražić
Sanja Vrcić-Mataija

Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka,
Branch – Gospić

Summary – The article presents the analysis of the project-correlation teaching with students at the teachers' college. The aim is to establish awareness of autonomy and permeation of various arts and finding procedures for transfer from one medium into another. By encouraging creative expression and critical thinking through the process of dramatization of a text and the application of the survey method, the need for evaluating art from the point of view of its means of expression was emphasized. The story *The Dancing Dress of the Yellow Dandelion* (*Plesna haljina žutog maslačka*), by Sunčana Škrinjarić included in literature, media and methodology courses and was observed through the literary and theatre discourse.

Key words: theatre, literature, teaching, student, art

INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that in primary teaching and teaching at the teachers' college, there are situations where a literary work is identified with other works (film, theatre performance and similar) based on a template, most likely under the influence of the media. There is also more frequent filming of literary texts, primarily fairy tales in the form of animation films. Identification of a theatrical performances, film, or literary work is not appropriate, and substituting reading with watching is not desirable. The worth and faithfulness to one work of art cannot be the criterion for the artistic value in another medium.

By creating a project through which students would develop the awareness of the autonomy of art and their relationships, we have included a theoretical and practical approach which expects participation and creative expression of students

who become active participants in the teaching. Through correlation¹ access to a selected literary work is enabled from several points of view, and future students get an insight into the methodological approach to literary, media and theatre art. Through project teaching students became involved in creative activities of dramatization and putting on a puppet performance. Through courses, *Children's Literature, Media, and Croatian Language Teaching Methodology*, an approach towards a selected literary work was applied with the aim to become aware of the autonomy of a work of art, characteristics of expressive means of a particular art, procedures of transfer from medium to medium in order for students to become competent for professional and methodological teaching.

We have chosen the story *The Dancing Dress of the Yellow Dandelion*, by Sunčana Škrinjarić, which is mandatory reading for the second grade of primary school according to HNOS (The National Educational Standards) and the Curriculum for primary schools from 1999, which is also a mandatory reading for first grade of primary school according to HNOS, and on the repertoire of the theatre *Žar ptica* in Zagreb as a musical dance acting show

APPROACHING A LITERARY WORK

In the late 70s of the 20th century, Sunčana Škrinjarić with her stories moved away from the structure of a classical fairy tale creating a world where the relationship between the real and fantastic is more similar to the fantastic story than the classical fairy tale. The same applies to the thematic-motivational sense since she introduces something new into the Croatian children's story², bringing back to life, as with Andersen, simple objects from our environment through anthropomorphization. In the collection of stories *Two Smiles*, she brings to life a beach umbrella, flowers, a cloud...»*Everything that occurs in a person's life, also occurs in the worlds of other creatures. The author gives people characteristics to the other world, characteristics of people who think, who are happy, sad, who love and who hate. Her miraculous world is interwoven by imagination and reality, the possible and impossible, truth and lie, good and evil.*» (Težak, 1994, p. 90)

The story *Dancing Dress of a Yellow Dandelion* is contemporary according to its structure, theme, characters, the relationship between the real and fantasy is more similar to the fantasy story than to the fairy tale³ since the two worlds are

¹ Project teaching was founded on the principles of correlation and integration (Rosandić, 2005, pp. 633-683)

² The term story implies a superior literary type including oral and artistic short prose with elements of the miraculous or fantastic.

³ Dubravka Zima defines the difference between the fairy tale and the fantasy story: "The key difference between fantasy story and a fairy tale, whether folk or artistic, would be the difference in structure, where structure of a fantastic story is two-layered and divided into two levels of events, the realistic and fantastic, while the fairytale is characterized by one – the fantastic level

present in it (both worlds exist in the realistic framework, however one is given characteristics of the fantastic). The realistic world is the world of people, children to which the narrator in several situations refers to as (“It happens every year at the same time, except that we, people have difficulty finding out on what night and where the dance takes place, because flowers are mysterious...”) (Škrinjarić, 1994, p. 37).

In the character of the boy who loves flowers and animals, and for whom the story is told, and the boy who shows up at the very end of the story (“Some playful boy blew into his sheer dancing dress and it scattered far along the paths.”) (Škrinjarić, 1994, p.39) there is a discretely interwoven ecological message⁴ which closes the circle of man’s presence within which the fantasy story occurs about a lonely dandelion. Due to the unselfishness of the elderly spider the dandelion lives the nicest dancing night. There is not much transposition between the real and the fantasy world except for the lyrical premonition of the possible human eavesdropping of the life of flowers which lives and feels just as man does. The fantasy story takes place among flowers, which prepares itself for the flower dance throughout the entire year. From the abundance of beautiful flowers (roses, forget-me-nots, snowdrops, hyacinths, orchids, lilacs, water lilies) a tiny rugged dandelion, lonely and sad is isolated, yearning for beauty and happiness of the other flowers. By developing the thought of whether man is judged according to his clothes, through the relationship of friendship, unselfishness and giving the answer is a positive one, under the condition that external beauty is accompanied by inner beauty. The lonely dandelion will get help from the old, ugly spider who in his life was never good, but realized in nearing death that his life was not happy, since he never gave and was never loved. The classical good – evil conflict is replaced by the relationship of good and evil in one character, central to the development of the story and which is metamorphosed in the moment of important life realizations. The spider character is psychologically and in narration motivated which makes this fantasy story different from the classical fairy tale where character polarization, typifying, and one dimensionality, as well as the absence of interest for inner life or psychology which are its basic attributes⁵. This is carried out in the narrator’s view which from the 3rd person turns towards a spider’s inner monologue: “I will make someone happy and it will make my death easier; it is hard to leave the world knowing that no one had loved you.” (Škrinjarić, 1994, p. 39) Death as a taboo in children’s literature is realized as a psycho-

of the narrating world (Zima, 2001, p. 169)

⁴ Dubravka Težak also refers to the moral of the stories by Sunčana Škrinjarić finding the most successful stories to be “those in which the moral is not explicit, but is implicitly woven into the story.” (Težak, 1991, pp.87-94)

⁵ On establishing a classical, modern fairy or a fantasy story see: Dubravka Zima, 2001, pp. 165-176.

logical motivation in character transformation; it becomes an excuse for the spider's change⁶, becoming aware and the road to happiness (the spider *dies of happiness and pride*).

According to the topic, but not expression, the story is similar to a legend about the dandelion and their sheer-white "dress" (every year the dandelions get and lose their dresses and the same is repeated). According to expression it is similar to a poem in prose with numerous lyricism⁷, simple and warm in the weaving of beauty, friendship and giving.

DRAMATIZATION

By applying the correlation approach in the teaching content, a particular teaching topic is approached from various points of view. Literary theory, stylistic, historical interpretation of stories by Sunčana Škrinjarić are methodically thought up, developed into other media and analyzed approach of the existing realizations in other media.

As a unique form of creative practice, with the aim of making a puppet show, the story by Sunčana Škrinjarićš *Dancing Dress of a Yellow Dandelion* was dramatized by third year students at the Teacher's College. Starting from the awareness "that dramatizations (pageants) are an important part of educational work which engage students' creative participation and broadens their area of research for literary text" (Zepalova/Rosandić, 2005, p. 549), we tried to get the maximum out of students' creative expression: from dramatization to the prose text, puppet making (students opted for Gignol puppets), to acting animation, creating the scenery and selecting the music. The dramatization was written and oral the finished product being the performance before students and teachers, with a remark that oral dramatization was much more successful than the written one. As a matter of fact, the students thought of the development, motivation (for the notion of death they adopted an appropriate euphemism – *leaving*), the conflict, idea (it is important to do good in life, because of others and oneself), division of

⁶ The motif of death is discussed here in the fantastic discourse which in its manner seems to be less painful, as a matter of fact, death is a possibility for obtaining knowledge. A similar motif is found in stories by Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić where it is in service of a greater cause – redemption of sins in Potjeh; it is a means for return of the Little Prince to the rose, a means of finding happiness of the little match girl... On death as a taboo topic in children's literature see: Dragica Haramija: *Death in prose for children and young adults*, in: *Taboo topics in literature for children and young adults* (Zbornik), KGZ, Zagreb, 2001, pp. 30-39.

⁷ Lyricisms are obvious in descriptions of flowers: «*And the dandelion puts on the dress as soft as the breath, woven with the secret skill of the old spider who dies from happiness and pride...*», in descriptions with which the psychological characterization is united with the characters: «*Everyone admired his dress, the most beautiful and most wonderful, the one into which the old spider had woven all the love of his austere heart which was hidden at the bottom.*», in the expression of emotions: «*As the jasmine and iris he caught pale moonlight rays which fell on the vast field and on the beautiful flowers on this unforgettable night.*»

roles according to characters which were psychologically developed through various modifications in their characterization where the influence of popular culture was felt ⁸ (with the aim of creating humorous effects⁹) from the world of omnipresent electronic media which encourage competition (e.g. feelings of jealousy, envy, gossip of other flowers in relation to the dandelion), but the stage directions were omitted, or modestly realized, in the written part of the dramatization (except for the music with Vivaldi's *Seasons*). This shortcoming (part of the dramatic text which is intended for actors, the producer and is related to the scene) was the motivation for noticing the differences between the dramatic and prose text, that is, the uniqueness of drama which has its regularities, language, poetry and also the ability to create its own world using various means and possibilities on one literary template, whether prose or drama. We have witnessed this by watching the musical – dance – acting spectacle *The Dancing Dress of the Yellow Dandelion* directed by Tihana Škrinjarić.

STUDENTS' RECEPTION OF A THEATRE PERFORMANCE

Upon reading the fairy tale, the carrying out the dramatization process and becoming aware of independence (and permeation, without identification) of the literary and dramatic discourse, with the awareness of the uniqueness of each, the students went to see the play based on the template *The Dancing Dress of the Yellow Dandelion* in the professional theatre *Žar ptica*.

The director, Tihana Škrinjarić, created a musical – dance and acting spectacle of the lyrical story of the little dandelion by profiling characters of flowers (rose, snowdrop, tulip, dandelion) according to their physical characteristics, realized through beautiful, visually attractive costumes and choreography which associates to the natural movement of flowers. In the attempt to tell the story through songs, movement, visual effects on the stage, particular elements of the story are realized (injustice, loneliness, altruism, happiness, giving, and victory), while other elements are suppressed due to the influence of the media in popular competitions which we face in various lights of popular culture and which often bring negative critical judgments.

The flowers talk through movement, music, song, and the narrator Cvijeta leads us through the story, thus taking on the role of media moderator in the com-

⁸ The notion popular culture encompasses a wide spectrum of popular occurrences in society (from fashion, media: life style affirmed through films, commercials, popular press); This occurrence is interesting to observe from the point of view of contextual practice of cultural studies: the dialogue between popular culture and art, one of the favorites of the young people today, especially the student population which takes on a criticizing attitude towards the constructors of electronic media.

⁹ Students had to pay attention to reception (the aim was not only to be liked by their peers, but primarily to children in who have the story in the curriculum). This need was justified also with research which have proven that children find the most exciting part of drama interesting events, happy ending, humor (Rosandić, 2005, p. 504.)

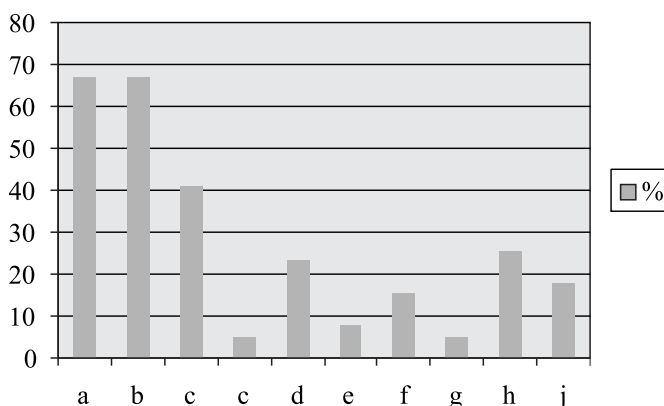
petition for Miss Flower. The dandelion's feeling of loneliness, the rose's ugliness, beauty and conceitedness, rivalry, the refinement of the old times is realized through the music and scenario at its best. However, the appearance of the spider, the key character in the story by Sunčana Škrinjarić, is touching, but in narration and scenario unmoving. The joy of triumph, giving and receiving, beauty (perhaps expressed bodily) and goodness have won the affection of the young, but also somewhat older audiences.

By conducting a survey after the play we wanted to check students' reception of the play, their awareness of the characteristics of the literary and theatrical discourse and their permeations. A survey was conducted on 39 participants (students) and contained six questions:

1. Select those statements which you believe were significantly realized in the theatre performance and explain why!

- a) »You can't tell a book by its cover«
- b) Pain, suffering, sense of rejection
- c) Loneliness caused by differences
- d) Death
- e) Unselfishness as redemption for sins
- f) The good and evil relationship
- g) Love as a rudimentary need
- h) The eternal and ephemeral relationship
- i) Flippancy of thought
- j) The beautiful and ugly relationship
- k) Relativity of true values

Considering that students could select more than one statement, we provide those answers which students selected most often:

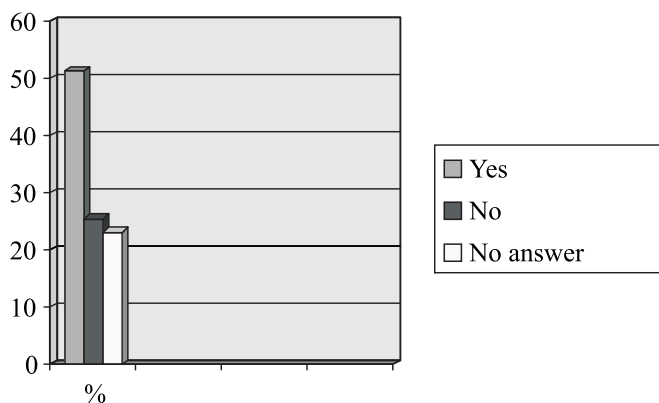


Graph 1

In observing the notion of beauty which is seen as a value category and the feeling of being isolated, loneliness due to having no status symbols such as beauty and nice clothes, students have singled out the most important issue which the play broaches, i.e., the fact those who have socially desired values are accepted (this question is also taken up in the story, but without a sense of rivalry and envy among the characters). A small number of students show insecurity in their selection.

The second question was asked with the aim of establishing the relationship between the literary part and dramatization and the ability to observe levels of transition from one art to another.

2. Has the dramatization opened up any new issues in the relationship between characters?



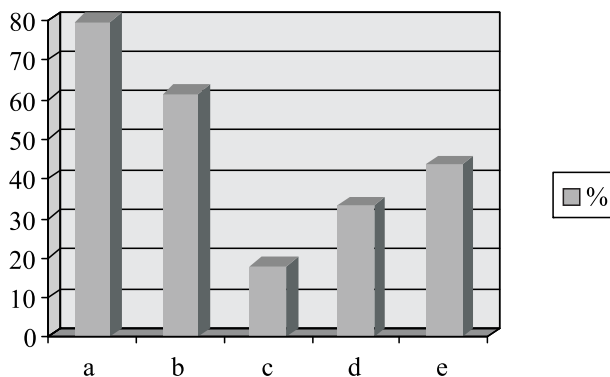
Graph 2

The percentage (51.3 %) indicates that participants are ready for communicating with dramatization and are able to differentiate between literary and dramatic discourse.

The comments indicate the fact that the spider's role is not developed enough and the introduction of competition between some characters, especially the feelings of envy and jealousy in the relationship between the rose and the dandelion. The active character of the narrator is introduced as opposed to the story where he is not the participant in the action. .

3. Which creative forms of the theatre performance did you find to be the most impressive:

- a) dance
- b) music
- c) song
- d) acting
- e) set design



Graph 3

The answers were as expected since we are referring to a musical – dance play; the students and the young audience were moved by the music and dance. As culturally enlightened observers who know about the importance of the theatre, the students have observed the stage and its role in the play.

The fourth question relates to the role of the narrator in both media and reveals the dramatist's and director's views.

4. How was the role of the narrator realized in both media? Explain!

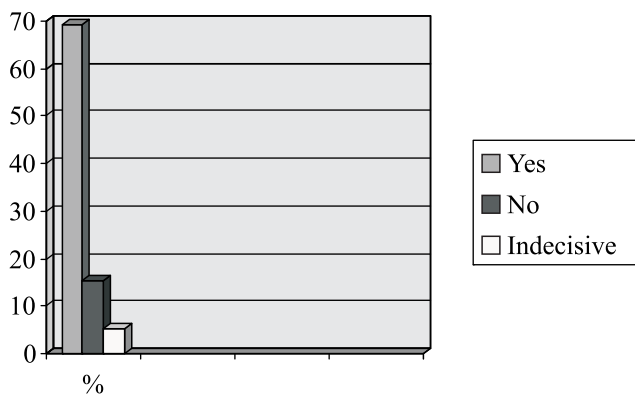
Although seven (17.9 %) of the students did not answer this question, the others have observed differences in the actualization of the narrator in both media. The omniscient narrator who is not involved in the action of the story and is not a character in the play is actualized in the character of media announcer.

Here are some explanations:

- the narrator in the story is invisible, and in the play the narrator is real and friendly
- *the narrator is emphasized in the play and is behind the scene in the fairy tale*
- *the man narrator got an accentuated role in the play even that of a sponsor to the flowers*
- *the narrator in the story is objective, and in the play the narrator supports the dandelion*
- *he has a role of narrator and master of ceremonies in the play*

The question in which students had to decide whether the performance enriched or impoverished the story and express their personal attitude based on impressions, knowledge and awareness, students opted for the play giving advantage to the visual medium which proves the fact mentioned at the beginning of the article about the vast influence of modern visual media and their criteria of likeness. They opted for the play regardless of the knowledge of greater elaboration of the story in comparison to the play.

5. *In what way did the dramatization of the fairy enrich/impooverished its literariness?*



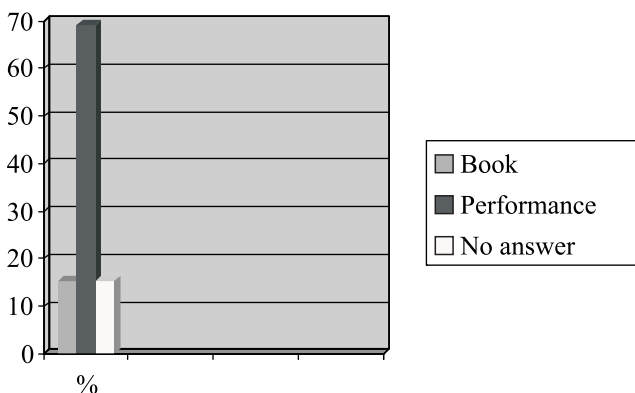
Graph 4

The graph shows that the participants recognized the theatrical upgrade in the play since they say that enriched literariness was shown at the level of stage elements and picturesqueness which the text cannot express the way the theatre can (e.g. music, dance, and costumes).

The last question was:

6. *By comparing two different media, give your opinion on their aesthetic – notional values!*

The participants found this question as a selection between the play or the book, giving advantage, and aesthetic value to both.



Graph 5

Selecting the play was motivated by dance and musical elements, rhythm and dynamics of the staging. The greater number expresses their opinion by saying that the play is different. A small number of students admit that the play betrayed the text in the aesthetic – notional sense giving emphasis to external beau-

ty and a sense of rivalry. Admitting that at first they were thrilled with the superior performance, especially costumes and dance, students noticed that the issue of competition in the beauty of costumes was not solved and that the true values of the dandelion, the spider, the help of other flowers, the strength of unity and friendship were not emphasized. Only a few students noticed the elements of popular culture (competition, jury) in the play.

CONCLUSION

The content of primary teacher education curricula is well structured, but mostly, as in primary education, they are enclosed within courses and students are rather passive. The project – correlation approach was established through linking teaching content and teaching and through differences in organization which does not blindly follow higher education – teaching in terms of hours, and offers a possibility of education appropriate to school life and needs.

The approach to a required reading, in primary school and the teaching college, *The Dancing Dress of the Yellow Dandelion*, at the level of linking the course and incorporating content which are not entirely part of a particular course have proven to be justified, since the problem which was encountered solved with the aim of professional – methodical skills of future teachers. By active engagement of students into the work through project type teaching, the initial problem was gradually solved using various methods of work.

Becoming aware of the particularities of means of expression for various arts as well as various criteria which are taken into consideration in their evaluation was proven to be appropriate in working with students in the time of permeation of art and media, the predominance of the visual over the literary expression. The article shows that students were left with unanswered questions in the mentioned courses. The assessment of reception and communication, student work on the dramatization have shown that a great number of students became aware of the expression and belonging for each are, but also that this was the first time they had been involved in such contemplation and work. In comparing the two artistic achievements, the story and the theatre play, their permeation and differences in expression and aesthetic and notional sense, besides the psychological development of characters and lyricism of the story as well as the beauty of the author's words, the students gave advantage to the play realized as an acting – dancing – musical spectacle, taken aback by the beauty of the visual and acoustic experience. This makes them part of the era where the picture dominates in the leading position.

REFERENCES

- BLAGUS-BARTOLAC, G. (1999) Pragmatika medijskog diskursa, *Teorija i mogućnosti primjene pragmatolingvistike*, zbornik, pp.85-91, Zagreb-Rijeka
- DIKLIĆ, Z. (1989) Lik u književnoj, scenskoj i filmskoj umjetnosti, Zagreb: Školska knjiga
- FISKE, J. (1991) *Understanding Popular Culture*. London:Routledge
- INGLIS, F. (1997) *Teorija medija*, Zagreb: AGM
- PINTARIĆ, A. (1999) *Bajke (pregled i interpretacije)*, Matica hrvatska Osijek: Osijek
- ROSANDIĆ, D. (2005) *Metodika književnoga odgoja*, Zagreb: Školska knjiga
- ŠKRINJARIĆ, S. (1999) *Plesna haljina žutog maslačka*, Zagreb: Golden-marketing
- TEŽAK, D. (1991) *Hrvatska poratna dječja priča*, Školska knjiga: Zagreb
- TEŽAK, D. (1994) Čudesni svijet igre i mašte u pričama Sunčane Škrinjarić, pp, 124-125, Zagreb: Slon
- TEŽAK, D. (2001) *Bajke (antologija)*, Zagreb: DiVič
- TEŽAK, S.-TEŽAK, D. (1999) *Interpretacija bajke u osnovnoj školi*, Zagreb: PKZ
- ZIMA, D. (2001) *Moderna bajka u hrvatskoj dječjoj književnosti*, *Bajke od davnina pa do naših dana*, zbornik radova *Zlatni danci* 3, pp.164-176. Pedagoški fakultet Osijek: Osijek