

**NARRATIVES IN ACTION: USING ENGLISH CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE TO DEVELOP EFL COMPETENCE
IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**НАРАТИВИ В ДІЇ: ВИКОРИСТАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ДИТЯЧОЇ
ЛІТЕРАТУРИ ДЛЯ РОЗВИТКУ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ
В УЧНІВ ПОЧАТКОВОЇ ШКОЛИ**

Tetyana Blyznyuk

Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University, Ukraine

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0558-2201>

Larysa Krul

Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University, Ukraine

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1437-7469>

Abstract. This study investigates the use of English children's literature as a pedagogical tool for developing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) competence in primary school learners. Based on analyses of student teaching practice and the academic courses *Methods of Teaching English in Primary School*, *English Literature for Children*, *Children's Literature*, and *Foreign Children's Literature* at Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University, the article explores how narrative-based instruction supports the development of lexical, grammatical, communicative, and sociocultural competence in primary school learners. The study is situated within the competence-oriented principles of the New Ukrainian School and CEFR A1–A2 descriptors, emphasizing integrated language development, emotional engagement, and learner-centered approaches.

The instructional intervention involved the systematic integration of short, age-appropriate literary fragments, including fairy tales, short stories, and adapted classics, into regular EFL lessons. Structured pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities, complemented by digital tools, audiobooks, and interactive platforms, provided multimodal support for comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and communicative practice. Narrative-driven tasks promoted authentic language use, emotional engagement, and participation in meaningful classroom interaction.

Findings demonstrate that narrative-based instruction effectively supports the holistic development of EFL competence in primary school students, providing repeated exposure to lexical and grammatical patterns while fostering communicative and sociocultural skills. Children's literature enhances motivation, attention, and emotional involvement. The integration of digital mediation further strengthens autonomous learning and multimodal comprehension. Overall, the study highlights narrative-based approaches as a theoretically grounded and practically viable strategy for primary EFL instruction, particularly in contexts requiring emotional and educational support.

Keywords: children’s literature, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), primary school learners, narrative-based instruction, EFL competence.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in primary school has increasingly focused on learner-centered, meaningful, and competence-oriented approaches. Among these, the integration of narratives and children’s literature has gained particular attention due to their potential to provide authentic language input, emotional engagement, and contextualized communication. English children’s literary texts – stories, fairy tales, and other narrative fragments – create a natural environment for language acquisition, supporting the development of lexical, grammatical, and communicative competence in young learners. By embedding language learning within meaningful narratives, teachers can move beyond isolated language drills toward holistic EFL competence development.

For primary school learners, narratives serve not only as linguistic material but also as a cognitive and emotional scaffold. Stories stimulate imagination, encourage prediction and interpretation, and foster empathy, all of which contribute to deeper language processing. In EFL classrooms, children’s literature enables the integration of reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills while maintaining high levels of motivation and learner involvement. Despite extensive research on storytelling and literacy development, there is limited empirical evidence on how fragments of English children’s literature can be systematically embedded into competence-based EFL instruction in primary school contexts, particularly under conditions of educational disruption.

This study is guided by the following research questions: 1) Which components of EFL competence (lexical, grammatical, communicative, and sociocultural) are most effectively developed through the systematic use of English children’s literature in primary school EFL instruction? 2) How does narrative-based instruction influence primary school learners’ motivation, emotional engagement, and participation in communicative activities during English lessons? 3) What role does digital mediation (QR codes, audiobooks, and interactive platforms) play in enhancing comprehension, engagement, and communicative use of language within literature-based EFL learning?

The observations presented in this research were drawn from analyses of students’ teaching practice in primary schools and were based on the materials of the academic courses *Methods of Teaching English in Primary School*, *English Literature for Children*, *Children’s Literature*, and *Foreign Children’s Literature*, which are studied by Pedagogy Faculty students at Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University.

The relevance of this study is particularly significant in the context of wartime Ukraine, where education continues under conditions of uncertainty, psychological

stress, and social disruption. During the period of martial law, children's reading – especially literary reading – has not diminished; on the contrary, it has become more popular and meaningful for young learners. Books and stories serve as a source of emotional stability, escapism, and psychological support, helping children cope with anxiety and maintain a sense of normality. In this context, children's literature has acquired not only educational but also therapeutic value.

This pedagogical potential of narratives can be further explained through Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, which posits that emotionally supportive and low-anxiety learning environments facilitate more effective language acquisition. In this regard, children's literature provides comprehensible and emotionally engaging input that lowers affective barriers and supports EFL development, particularly under conditions of psychological stress (Krashen, 1982).

Against this background, integrating English children's literature into primary EFL lessons responds to both educational and socio-emotional needs of learners. Narratives provide a safe and engaging space for language practice interest in reading among Ukrainian children creates favorable conditions for literature-based EFL instruction, making narrative-centered approaches especially timely and effective.

The relevance of the present study is also substantiated by the key provisions of the State Standard of Primary Education, developed within the framework of the New Ukrainian School (NUS) reform, which defines communicative competence in foreign languages as one of the core educational priorities. According to the Standard, primary school learners are expected to develop the ability to understand simple utterances, communicate within familiar topics, and perceive a foreign language not merely as a subject of study but as a means of exploring the world. This competence-oriented vision necessitates the use of instructional approaches that provide meaningful, contextualized, and emotionally engaging language input.

The State Standard emphasizes the balanced development of the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – in primary foreign language education (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2025). In this respect, English children's literature and narrative texts offer a natural pedagogical framework for integrating all four types of speech activity within a coherent communicative context. Illustrated stories and short narratives correspond to the reading requirements of Grades 1–2, where learners focus on letter recognition, sound–symbol correspondence, and comprehension of short texts, as well as to the objectives of Grades 3–4, which include identifying main ideas and understanding narrative logic.

Furthermore, the NUS concept explicitly promotes the use of game-based methods, and integrated learning, all of which are inherently embedded in narrative-based instruction (Liashenko, 2021). Narratives function as a didactic bridge between language learning and social, cultural, and emotional development, thereby supporting not only linguistic but also sociocultural competence – another key requirement of the New Ukrainian School. Through engagement with characters,

plots, and moral situations, learners acquire language in socially meaningful contexts, which aligns with the Standard's emphasis on holistic child development.

In this regard, the integration of English children's literature into EFL instruction fully corresponds to the methodological principles of the State Standard and the NUS reform. Narrative-based learning creates a communicative environment that replaces formal, decontextualized language practice with authentic and developmentally appropriate interaction. Children's literature promotes cultural awareness and intercultural competence, exposing learners to diverse perspectives and values, адже "literature in the context of the EFL classroom is not only a tool to teach communicative skills but also a cross-curricular element in a learner's education" (Ortells, 2014, p. 102). In EFL classrooms, literary texts serve as authentic materials that bridge the gap between language instruction and real-world language use. However, many studies emphasize the importance of careful text selection and methodological scaffolding to ensure that literary materials are accessible and pedagogically effective for young learners. Despite the acknowledged benefits of storytelling and children's literature in EFL education, existing research reveals several gaps. First, many studies focus on general literacy development or reading skills, while the systematic development of EFL competence as an integrated construct in primary school learners remains underexplored. Second, there is limited empirical research examining structured models for integrating fragments of English children's literary texts into regular EFL lessons, particularly within competence-based curricula.

However, little attention has been paid to the contextual factors influencing literature-based EFL instruction in challenging educational environments, such as those shaped by social disruption or crisis conditions. In the context of Ukraine under martial law, the potential of children's literature as both an educational and supportive tool has not been sufficiently investigated. Addressing these gaps, the present study seeks to contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of narrative-based EFL instruction in primary education.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

In our study, we aim to theoretically substantiate and empirically examine the effectiveness of using English children's literature as a pedagogical tool for developing EFL competence in primary school learners. The research is based on qualitative analysis of students' teaching practice in primary schools and pedagogical observation of narrative-based EFL lessons.

The data were obtained through the analysis of lesson plans, classroom activities, and instructional materials developed within the academic courses *Methods of Teaching English in Primary School*, *English Literature for Children*, *Children's Literature*, and *Foreign Children's Literature* taught to Pedagogy Faculty students at Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University (Ukraine).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Approaches to Teaching EFL in Primary Education

Contemporary approaches to teaching English as a foreign language in primary education are grounded in learner-centered and competence-based paradigms. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) remains a dominant framework, emphasizing meaningful interaction and functional language use rather than the mastery of isolated linguistic forms. In primary classrooms, CLT is often complemented by task-based learning, game-based instruction, and content-integrated approaches, all of which align with the cognitive and psychological characteristics of young learners. These approaches prioritize motivation, emotional engagement, and contextualized input, recognizing that children acquire language most effectively through meaningful and purposeful communication.

In the recent years, primary EFL instruction has also been influenced by holistic and interdisciplinary models, which encourage the integration of language learning with literacy development, creativity, and social interaction. Such models stress the importance of authenticity and relevance, highlighting the need for instructional materials that reflect real-life communication and resonate with children's experiences. Researchers and practitioners provide various perspectives on approaches to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in primary education, emphasizing communicative competence, the use of narratives, and interactive methodologies. Using children's literature is presented as a strategic method to enhance both linguistic skills and emotional engagement. Conducting research on implementation of children's literature to enhance literacy in primary schools, scholars note that children's literature serves as a "dual-purpose tool: it engages students both emotionally and cognitively, fostering intrinsic motivation and a love for reading while supporting the development of critical literacy skills" (Sukma, Susanti, Rinadevi, & Yani, 2024). They see narrative as a gateway suggesting "visual and narrative elements of children's literature can effectively capture students' interest, providing a gateway to developing reading habits". Simultaneously, Ukrainian scholars (Sirko, 2024) prove that using literature allows students to "acquire vocabulary 'naturally', develop creativity and imagination, and acquire a life-long reading habit". According to her, introduction of fairy tales "activates a positive attitude of younger schoolchildren towards language learning," helping "effectively master new words and retain them in memory thanks to emotional involvement". G. Alkilani and Q. Zhang confirms that dramatic storytelling supports narrative organization and emergent literacy skills in preschool EFL learners (Alkilani & Zhang, 2025). Atay and Saraçoğlu demonstrates how story-based lessons foster interactional competence (Atay & Saraçoğlu, 2022).

Building on this perspective, I. Ghosn (2002) identifies four key reasons for using literature in primary school EFL: it provides authentic language input, fosters

emotional and cognitive engagement, develops imagination, and encourages learners to connect language with real-life contexts. Complementing this, recent research highlights the role of digital tools in English language teaching, demonstrating that multimedia and interactive platforms enhance learners' comprehension, engagement, and communicative use of language (Harsha Vardhini, 2023). Together, these studies support the integration of narratives and digital mediation in primary EFL classrooms, reinforcing both linguistic competence and motivational factors essential for effective learning.

As seen from the above, storytelling and narrative-based instruction play a crucial role in children's foreign language development by providing rich linguistic input embedded in meaningful contexts. Narratives support vocabulary acquisition, grammatical development, and discourse competence, as children encounter language patterns repeatedly and in varied communicative situations. Moreover, stories naturally integrate listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills, fostering balanced language development. From a cognitive perspective, narratives enhance comprehension, memory, and inferencing skills, while emotionally engaging content increases learners' motivation and attention. Story-based learning also contributes to the development of pragmatic competence, as children learn how language functions in social and cultural contexts. Consequently, storytelling has been widely recognized as an effective pedagogical strategy in early foreign language education.

Moreover, according to T. Kachak and T. Blyznyuk the role of narratives and storytelling is framed within a broader multidisciplinary and scientific context. While the provided text is an abstract and metadata rather than a full pedagogical guide, it highlights several key points: narrative as a core methodology, didactic and effective strategies, multidisciplinary impact, systematic potential, and full-fledged subject of scientific studies (Kachak & Blyznyuk, 2024). Thus, based on the source *Research of Children's Literature in Ukrainian Scientific Discourse*, multidisciplinary studies in the field of children's literature offer several specific benefits for developing EFL competence. These studies move beyond simple language acquisition to a more holistic and systematic understanding of communication.

A growing body of research highlights the pedagogical value of children's literature in English for Young Learners (EYL) and primary school settings, focusing on literacy development, communicative competence, and emotional engagement. Among the most notable are E. Sukma, N. Susanti, R. Rinadevi, and M. Yani (2024), whose studies confirms that children's literature effectively stimulates reading interest and supports foundational literacy development in lower-grade primary classrooms). I. Sirko (2024) explores the role of children's literature in teaching English to primary school children, specifically noting its relevance to linguistic and cognitive development. O. Bihych (2000), M. Prokopchuk (2020), and V. Redko, Yu. Fedusenko, N. Telychko (2009) investigated the formation of foreign language speech competence through various reading exercises and methodological approaches. T. Kachak and T. Blyznyuk (2018) analyze children's literature through

multidisciplinary studies, emphasizing narrative and receptive-aesthetic approaches in educational discourse and more. Findings demonstrate that the use of age-appropriate literary texts fosters positive attitudes toward language learning, enhances reading literacy, and supports the development of communicative competence. Children's books, fairy tales, and short stories are particularly effective due to their repetitive structures, predictable plots, and strong visual support.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

EFL Competence and Communicative Competence in Primary Education

Communicative competence is a central concept in foreign language education, describing a learner's ability to use a foreign language effectively and appropriately in real-life communication. Introduced by Dell Hymes and later expanded in applied linguistics, communicative competence goes beyond mere knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to include the ability to convey meaning in context, interpret messages, and respond appropriately in social situations (Hymes, 1972).

In the present study, EFL competence is operationalized as an integrative, age-appropriate construct that reflects primary school learners' ability to understand and use English for meaningful communication in familiar contexts. Drawing on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the competence-oriented principles of the New Ukrainian School (NUS), EFL competence is viewed not as the isolated mastery of linguistic forms, but as a dynamic interaction of linguistic, communicative, sociocultural, and affective components developed through purposeful language use (Council of Europe, 2020).

Within this framework, EFL competence comprises the following interrelated subcomponents: lexical competence (acquisition and contextualized use of vocabulary), grammatical competence (recognition and use of basic language structures), communicative competence (participation in simple oral interaction and interpretation of meaning), and sociocultural competence (awareness of language use in socially meaningful and culturally embedded situations) – see Fig. 1.

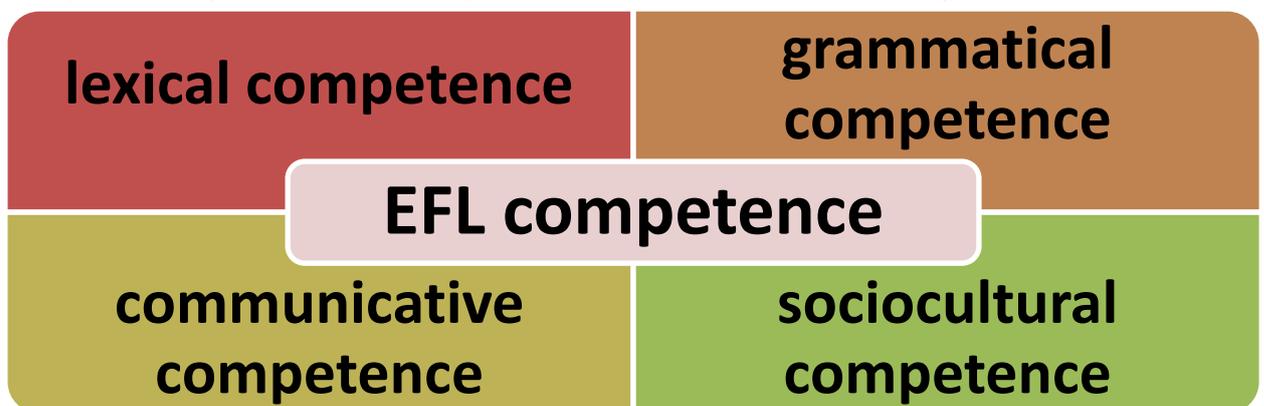


Figure 1. Structure of students' EFL competence
Source: created by authors based on (Council of Europe, 2020).

Narrative-based instruction is conceptualized as a didactic mechanism that targets these subcomponents in an integrated manner. English children’s literary texts provide authentic and emotionally engaging contexts in which lexical and grammatical patterns are encountered repeatedly and meaningfully. Through stories and narrative fragments, learners develop vocabulary and basic structures implicitly, while communicative competence is fostered through prediction, dialogue, role-play, and retelling activities. Sociocultural competence is supported by engagement with characters, plotlines, and moral situations, enabling learners to interpret language within social and cultural contexts consistent with the values promoted by the NUS.

Digital mediation further strengthens this model by enabling multimodal access to narratives. Audiobooks, QR codes, and interactive platforms enhance listening comprehension, support pronunciation, and allow learners to revisit language input autonomously, analyze performance data, and receive timely feedback (Genseruk & Martynyuk, 2019), help identify areas of strengths and weaknesses (Blyznyuk & Yatsiv, 2024). This multimodal dimension corresponds to CEFR’s emphasis on reception, interaction, and mediation, while also reflecting the NUS focus on learner autonomy, inclusivity, and digital competence. Consequently, in this study, narrative-based instruction – supported by digital tools – is understood as a pedagogically coherent approach that operationalizes EFL competence as an integrated, communicative, and developmentally appropriate construct (see Fig. 2).

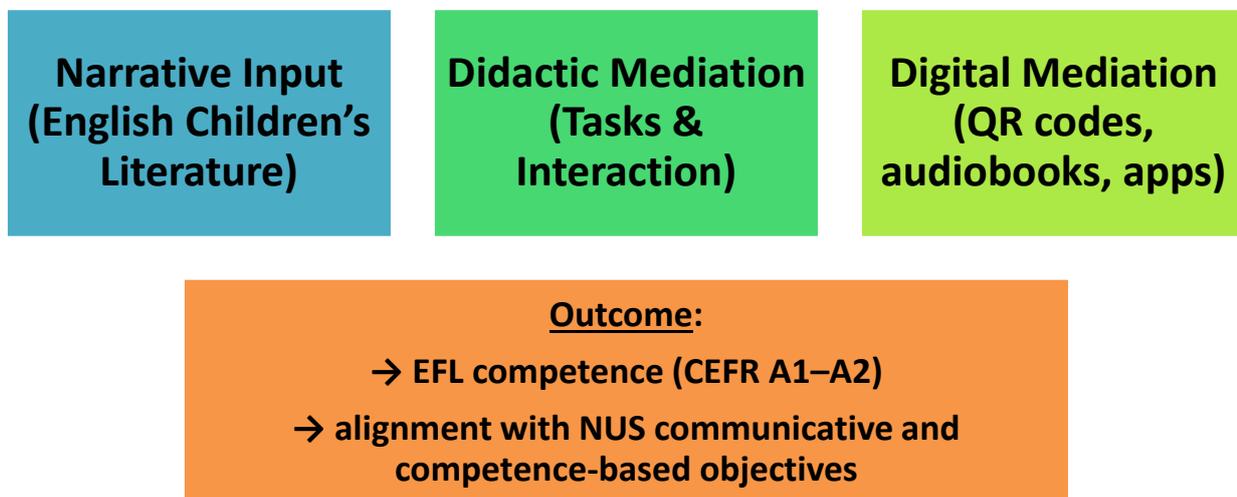


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Narrative-Based EFL Competence Development in Primary School

Source: created by authors based on (Genseruk & Martynyuk, 2019)

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between narrative input drawn from English children’s literature, didactic mediation through structured pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities, and digital mediation via multimodal tools (QR codes, audiobooks, and interactive platforms). Narrative-based instruction provides

contextualized lexical and grammatical exposure and fosters emotional engagement, while pedagogical scaffolding supports comprehension, oral interaction, and communicative use of language. Digital mediation enhances multimodal reception and learner autonomy. Together, these components contribute to the integrated development of EFL competence – lexical, grammatical, communicative, and sociocultural – in alignment with CEFR A1–A2 descriptors and the competence-oriented principles of the New Ukrainian School.

In primary education, EFL competence is understood as an age-appropriate, integrative construct that develops progressively through meaningful language use rather than through the isolated mastery of grammatical forms. It is adapted to the developmental level of children and emphasizes:

- understanding and producing simple sentences;
- participating in classroom interaction;
- interpreting short texts;
- expressing ideas in familiar, meaningful contexts.

Modern interpretations of communicative competence emphasize its holistic and learner-centered nature, particularly in the context of young learners. This often involves “oral interaction” and “visual perception,” where students use pictures and symbols to help decode the meaning of a text (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022). Here, narrative-based instruction stimulates curiosity and emotional involvement, which are critical for retaining new vocabulary and mastering basic language structures in a natural way.

Narrative as a Didactic Tool in EFL Instruction

Within this theoretical framework, narrative is conceptualized as a powerful didactic tool that supports the development of communicative competence in EFL learning. Narratives, including stories, fairy tales, and literary texts, provide authentic and meaningful contexts in which language functions naturally. As a pedagogical medium, narrative integrates cognitive, linguistic, and emotional dimensions of learning, making it particularly effective for primary school learners.

From a cognitive perspective, narrative constitutes a fundamental mode of meaning-making in human cognition. As Bruner argues, narratives enable learners – particularly children – to organize experience, construct meaning, and interpret reality through culturally and socially mediated stories, which makes narrative-based instruction cognitively natural and pedagogically effective in primary EFL education (Bruner, 1986).

From a didactic perspective, narrative-based instruction facilitates language acquisition through contextualization, repetition, and scaffolding. Stories expose learners to recurring lexical and grammatical patterns embedded in coherent discourse, enabling implicit learning and deeper processing of language structures.

Moreover, narratives encourage interaction, prediction, and interpretation, fostering learners' active engagement and communicative use of language.

In addition, narrative-based EFL instruction supports the development of pragmatic and sociocultural competence by modeling language use in socially meaningful situations. By engaging with characters and storylines, young learners internalize communicative norms and discourse strategies in a natural and accessible way. Therefore, within the proposed theoretical framework, narrative is viewed not merely as instructional content but as a didactic mechanism that mediates the development of EFL competence in primary school education.

Description of the Instructional Intervention

The instructional intervention was based on the systematic integration of fragments of English children's literary texts into regular EFL lessons in primary school. Literary materials were selected according to learners' age, language proficiency level, thematic relevance, and alignment with the requirements of the State Standard of Primary Education and the New Ukrainian School concept. The intervention aimed to create an authentic communicative environment that supports the development of EFL competence through narrative-based learning.

The intervention employed short narrative fragments rather than full-length texts to ensure accessibility and maintain learners' motivation. The selected materials included well-known and pedagogically appropriate works of English children's literature, such as:

Fairy tales and short stories:

“Goldilocks and the Three Bears”,

“The Gingerbread Man”,

“Little Red Riding Hood” (adapted English versions),

“The Very Hungry Caterpillar” by Eric Carle.

Classic and modern children's literature:

“Winnie-the-Pooh” by A. A. Milne,

“Alice's Adventures in Wonderland” by Lewis Carroll (simplified excerpts),

“Matilda” and “The BFG” by Roald Dahl (adapted fragments).

These texts were chosen for their repetitive structures, rich visual support, clear narrative logic, and potential to stimulate emotional engagement. The literary fragments were integrated into thematic units and complemented with illustrations, audio recordings, and dramatization activities.

Types of Tasks

To ensure structured and scaffolded language learning, each literary fragment was accompanied by a three-stage system of tasks: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities. Pre-reading tasks were designed to activate learners' prior knowledge, introduce key vocabulary, and generate interest in the story. Typical activities included:

- predicting the story based on the title or illustrations;
- introducing key lexical items through visuals and games;

- discussing familiar themes or characters;
- listening to short audio cues related to the story.

These tasks prepared learners for comprehension and reduced linguistic barriers.

While-reading tasks focused on developing comprehension and language awareness during interaction with the text. Activities included: listening to or reading short narrative fragments; matching sentences to pictures; identifying main characters and key events; completing simple comprehension checks (true/false, choosing the correct picture); repeating key phrases and dialogic expressions. This stage emphasized understanding meaning in context rather than detailed textual analysis.

Post-reading tasks aimed to consolidate language skills and encourage communicative use of English. Learners were engaged in: retelling the story using visual prompts; role-playing or dramatizing short scenes; completing creative tasks (drawing an alternative ending, describing a favorite character); expressing personal reactions and opinions in simple English. These activities supported the development of speaking, vocabulary retention, and emotional engagement with the narrative.

Digital elements were integrated to extend literary texts beyond the printed format and to create a multimodal learning environment aligned with the principles of the New Ukrainian School. The following digital tools were integrated into narrative-based EFL lessons:

1) QR codes were embedded in worksheets, textbooks, and classroom posters. Scanning a code enabled learners to listen to story fragments, repeat key phrases, or access short videos. This tool supported autonomous learning and allowed students to revisit materials at their own pace;

2) Interactive posters were used as multimodal learning tools that combine graphic elements, textual information, audio recordings, videos, and interactive tasks, exemplifying effective ways of selecting and presenting literary material and synthesizing diverse media through web-based services such as Glogster, Thinglink, and Genially (Kachak, 2021), which are most effectively demonstrated on interactive whiteboards

3) Audiobooks were used during pre-reading and while-reading stages to develop listening comprehension and pronunciation. Audio input helped learners associate written text with correct pronunciation and intonation, which is particularly important for primary school EFL learners;

4) Interactive platforms such as LearningApps, Wordwall, Kahoot!, and Quizizz were employed to reinforce vocabulary and comprehension through game-based tasks, allowing learners to engage with story content in an interactive and motivating format. Beyond supporting language acquisition, narrative-based instruction also provides structured and emotionally supportive learning environments, fostering resilience and promoting adaptive coping strategies among young learners. Engagement with stories allows children to process experiences, regulate emotions, and participate in meaningful, low-anxiety language activities (see Table 1).

Table 1
Narrative-Based EFL Competence Development in Primary School

Narrative Element / Task	Targeted Language Skills	EFL Competence Component	Notes / Examples
Story listening / audiobook	Listening comprehension	Lexical & grammatical competence	Exposure to repeated vocabulary and structures; e.g., “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” audio fragment
Picture-supported storytelling	Speaking & listening	Communicative competence	Retelling story using visual prompts; encourages oral interaction
Pre-reading prediction	Speaking & reading	Lexical & communicative competence	Predicting events using illustrations; activates prior knowledge
Story dramatization / role-play	Speaking & interaction	Communicative & sociocultural competence	Acting out dialogues; models social norms and pragmatics
Retelling & summarizing	Speaking & writing	Communicative & lexical competence	Retell plot orally or in writing; reinforces vocabulary and sentence structures
Post-reading creative tasks	Writing & speaking	Communicative & sociocultural competence	Drawing alternative endings, describing characters; develops expression in context
Interactive games / quizzes (Kahoot!, Wordwall)	Listening, reading, vocabulary	Lexical & grammatical competence	Reinforces comprehension, recognition of key words/phrases
Digital multimodal input (QR codes, animations)	Listening, reading, speaking	Lexical, grammatical & communicative competence	Supports multimodal comprehension, pronunciation practice, autonomous learning

Table 1 illustrates how carefully selected English children’s literature is transformed into structured tasks that develop primary learners’ EFL competence. Multimodal and digital tools (audiobooks, QR codes, interactive platforms) enhance

comprehension, engagement, and autonomous learning while supporting holistic language development in alignment with CEFR A1–A2 descriptors and the New Ukrainian School competence-oriented principles (see Fig.3).



Figure 3. Interactive tasks developed for primary school learners
Source: created by authors together with students in the courses of Methods of Teaching English in Primary School and English Literature for Children

An important practical component of the study was the analysis of narrative-based instructional materials developed by Pedagogy Faculty students and implemented during their teaching practice in primary school (represented in Figure 3). These student-designed lesson tasks, and digital activities demonstrated the feasibility of systematically integrating English children's literature into real classroom environments. The materials combined carefully selected literary fragments with structured pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading tasks, as well as digital tools. Classroom observations indicate that these practices facilitated active learner participation, supported comprehension, and created emotionally engaging learning space. The use of narratives enabled young students to interact with language meaningfully rather than mechanically, while digital mediation enhanced motivation, autonomy, and multimodal perception. Overall, the students' (pre-service teachers') educational developments confirmed that narrative-based instruction is not only

theoretically justified but also practically effective in fostering integrated EFL competence in primary school learners, which provides a solid foundation for the general conclusions of the study.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study highlight the pedagogical effectiveness of English children's literature in fostering EFL competence in primary school learners. Systematic integration of narratives into English lessons provides repeated exposure to meaningful lexical and grammatical patterns, facilitating the development of lexical and grammatical competence. At the same time, tasks such as retelling, dramatization, and role-play create authentic opportunities for learners to use language communicatively, thereby strengthening communicative and sociocultural competence. The holistic design of narrative-based instruction ensures that EFL competence is developed in an integrated and contextually meaningful manner, aligning with both CEFR A1–A2 descriptors and the competence-oriented principles of the New Ukrainian School (NUS).

Narratives were found to have a significant positive effect on learners' motivation and emotional engagement. By presenting language in a meaningful, story-driven context, children were more willing to participate in communicative activities, engage with peers, and explore new vocabulary and structures with curiosity. This engagement supports Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, as emotionally supportive and low-anxiety learning contexts facilitate more effective language acquisition. Moreover, the cognitive and imaginative aspects of storytelling – such as prediction, interpretation, and empathy - contribute to deeper processing of language and promote sustained attention and active participation in classroom activities.

The study also demonstrates the crucial role of digital mediation in enhancing literature-based EFL instruction. Tools such as QR codes, audiobooks, and interactive platforms and tools not only provide multimodal access to narrative content but also allow learners to revisit and practice language autonomously. Digital tools complement traditional storytelling by supporting listening comprehension, pronunciation, and interactive engagement, thereby reinforcing both linguistic and communicative outcomes. The integration of digital resources makes narrative-based instruction more flexible, inclusive, and engaging, particularly in contexts where learners benefit from repeated exposure and differentiated support.

Thus, the research confirms that English children's literature, when systematically embedded in primary school EFL instruction and supported by structured tasks and digital mediation, is a highly effective pedagogical tool. It promotes the integrated development of EFL competence, supports learner motivation and engagement, and provides a scaffolded, emotionally supportive environment conducive to both linguistic and socio-emotional growth. These findings

underscore the value of narrative-based approaches as a theoretically grounded and practically viable strategy for early foreign language education.

Further research will be aimed at studying the long-term effects of systematic use of English children's literature on the development of communicative and sociocultural competence in primary school learners. Particular attention should be paid to age- and proficiency-related differences in learners' perception of narrative texts, as well as to the pedagogical potential of various forms of digital mediation in literature-based EFL instruction. These directions will contribute to a deeper understanding of the scalability and sustainability of narrative-based approaches in primary foreign language education.

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Tetyana Blyznyiuk, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences (Ph. D.), Associate professor of Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University, Ukraine
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0558-2201>
tetiana.blyzniuk@cnu.edu.ua

Larysa Krul, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences (Ph.D.), Associate professor of Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University, Ukraine
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1437-7469>
larysa.krul@cnu.edu.ua

Близнюк, Т., & Круль, Л. (2025). Наративи в дії: використання англійської дитячої літератури для розвитку англomовної компетентності в учнів початкової школи. *Дитяча література: інтердисциплінарний дискурс*, 2 (2), 72 – 88.

У статті досліджено використання англomовної дитячої літератури як педагогічного інструменту розвитку іншомовної комунікативної компетентності з англійської мови (EFL) у здобувачів початкової освіти. На основі аналізу педагогічної практики студентів і навчально-методичного змісту дисциплін “Методика навчання англійської мови в початковій школі”, “Англійська література для дітей”, “Дитяча література” та “Зарубіжна дитяча література”, що викладаються студентам педагогічного факультету Карпатського національного університету імені Василя Стефаника, розкрито потенціал нарративно орієнтованого навчання для розвитку лексичної, граматичної, комунікативної та соціокультурної складових іншомовної компетентності молодших школярів. Дослідження здійснено в межах компетентісно орієнтованих засад Нової української школи та з урахуванням дескрипторів CEFR рівнів A1–A2, з акцентом на інтегрований розвиток мовленнєвих умінь, емоційне залучення та особистісно орієнтоване навчання.

Навчальне втручання передбачало систематичну інтеграцію коротких, відповідних віку учнів фрагментів художніх текстів (казок, оповідань, адаптованих творів класичної дитячої літератури) у структуру регулярних уроків англійської мови. Застосування структурованих завдань до, під час та після читання у поєднанні з цифровими засобами, аудіокнигами та інтерактивними платформами забезпечувало мультимодальну підтримку розуміння, засвоєння лексики та формування комунікативних умінь. Наративно зорієнтовані види діяльності стимулювали застосування автентичних матеріалів, забезпечували емоційне залучення та активну участь учнів у змістовній взаємодії.

Отримані результати засвідчують, що нарративно орієнтоване навчання ефективно сприяє цілісному розвитку іншомовної компетентності учнів початкової школи, забезпечуючи постійний і доступний мовний досвід та формуючи комунікативні й соціокультурні вміння. Англomовна дитяча література підвищує мотивацію, увагу й емоційну залученість здобувачів освіти, а використання цифрових інструментів і платформ посилює автономність навчання та мультимодальне сприймання мовного матеріалу. Загалом дослідження підтверджує, що використання дитячої літератури та нарративно орієнтованого підходу є теоретично обґрунтованою та практично ефективною стратегією навчання англійської мови в початковій школі, особливо за умов підвищених освітніх і емоційних викликів.

Ключові слова: дитяча література, англійська мова як іноземна (EFL), учні початкової школи, нарративно орієнтоване навчання, іншомовна компетентність.

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