

THE STUDY OF MAGDA SZÉCSI'S TALES IN THE MIRROR OF PRIMARY SOCIALISATION

Gizela Tóthová

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Faculty of Central European Studies,
Institute of Hungarian Linguistics and Literary Science, Dražovská cesta 4, Nitra 949 74, Slovakia

Abstract

The present study focuses on Magda Szécsi's tales that were studied using the content analysis method. I applied the research method of qualitative content analysis, and then I illustrated the types of the functions of primary socialisation and the types of interactions inside and outside the family with examples. The tales in Magda Szécsi's two books were included in the text corpus to be studied: Madarak aranyhegedűn (Birds on the Golden Violin [1996]) and Az aranyhalas lószem tükre (Mirror of the Horse Eye with the Gold Fish [1988]). Many references to the Roma people's history (India as their ancient homeland and migration) and culture (such as the Roma language, Romani law, and caravan), intra-family and extra-family relations, crafts, a violin (as an important symbol) and knowledge (as an essential element for subsistence and living a decent life) can be found in these tales.

Keywords: socialisation, Romani, literary tales, identity

1. INTRODUCTION

This study is a part of the documents of a research project that aims at drawing up a methodological proposal aiming to integrate Roma pupils for schools that use Hungarian as language of instruction. The study has two main objectives. The first main objective is to assess how to increase the Roma pupils' motivation through telling or reading Roma tales; i.e. to ensure that the inclusion of the tales in the primary school curriculum confirms to them that the culture they were born into is a valuable culture. It is also important to enable them to present their culture to the majority. All this will enable Roma pupils to be more motivated, to feel like equal citizens and to enhance their inclusive values.

The second main objective is to assess how the Roma culture, especially oral culture, is reflected in the curricula of lower primary and upper primary classes of schools that use Hungarian as language of instruction, and if the Roma culture is not part of the curriculum, how it could be integrated. Several programmes for this have been launched so far, however I am not aware of any programme addressing the same issue at the level of school classes. My aim is to assess whether pedagogues regard Roma children as members of the Roma minority and make them aware of having a different cultural identity or regard them as members of the Hungarian minority. The first objective is therefore to assess the school environment, and the second objective is to include the Roma culture in the primary school curriculum through tales. Its pedagogical aim is to raise the Roma children's consciousness and to boost their motivation.

Practical results are expected in three fields: lessons, leisure activities, and school ceremonies. The groups of subjects which cover minorities in Slovakia and multicultural education and into which Roma tales can be integrated are to be dealt with. Two methods will be applied for stock-taking in the research: the first method is the analysis of available materials in order to determine the Roma pupils' educational situation in the public education system. The second method to be applied in the research is fieldwork. Schools that have Roma pupils and where the proportions of Roma and non-Roma pupils are varied are to be selected. I will conduct interviews with the lower and upper primary pedagogues teaching in these schools. All this will also be assessed using participant observation method. Roma are the second largest ethnic minority in Slovakia; it is difficult to estimate their exact number due to fact that the Roma ethnicity is often not officially declared due to their ingrained inferiority and discrimination against them; the lack of options to self-identify with more than one race and to

indicate residence and cultural climate in census questionnaire also contributes to Roma's refusal to declare themselves as Roma. The Roma issue was treated as a social policy issue until 1989, and the Roma minority has been regarded as a separate ethnic group in censuses carried out after 1989. Before 1989 administrative bodies put an increased focus on efforts for closing the gap for the Roma and their assimilation in the post-war period. It was prohibited to sing Roma folk songs, to establish Roma youth associations or sport clubs, to sing Roma songs in schools, to publish books and journals in Roma and to broadcast television programmes in Roma. The designation of 'Roma' or 'Gypsy' could not be used, instead, the designation 'citizens of Gypsy origin' was used. The most important goal of the State was to find a solution to the problems of housing, high unemployment rate and low educational attainment for the Roma people. These measures were imposed on the Roma people, and the State did not even attempt to better understand this minority group. They believed that the reason for the lack of success of the measures was the Roma; cf. Michal Vašečka: *A roma kisebbség Szlovákiában (The Roma minority in Slovakia)* [1]. Roma nationality was presented among selected nationalities that could be declared again at the census conducted in 3 March 1991, which had an impact on the figures on the Hungarian ethnic minority [2].

There are no reliable data on the number of Roma pupils in Hungarian primary schools. What is certain is that there are schools attended solely by Roma pupils (in the Eastern and Southern regions of Slovakia), I therefore consider it essential to allow Roma pupils to define themselves through their own culture in schools. Since Roma pupils are generally less motivated to learn and study, I feel it is particularly important to use elements (from Roma tales and Roma culture) that are well-known to them in order to motivate them to learn.

The present study covers the first part of the research, namely the content analysis of Magda Szécsi's tales. The research was inspired by the work of Teréz Jenei who has been studying the role of Roma folk tales in social learning.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is based on the analysis of Magda Szécsi's two books of tales, *Madarak aranyhegedűn (Birds on the Golden Violin [1996])* and *Az aranyhalas lószem tükre (Mirror of the Horse Eye with the Gold Fish [1988])*; I studied the tales from the point of view of the functions of primary socialisation and interactions inside and outside the family, using the method of content analysis. According to the traditional definition, content analysis is the study of meanings contained in the messages. The analysis was conducted on the basis of the definition of Klaus Krippendorff; I also attempted to reveal the hidden meanings of the texts in the content analysis. For that reason, I also decoded references to the listed five categories in the tales [3].

Magda Szécsi has a colourful personality and is an outstanding person of art and culture. She is a Hungarian self-taught artist — graphic artist, ceramist, writer, painter, and illustrator — of Roma descent. Her illustrations have been regularly published in Roma papers since the 1990s, she has drawn illustrations for several books and has made her way in the literary world with tales, poems, short stories, novels, and novelettes [4].

3. RESULTS

The functions of primary socialisation are discussed in this section, but first it is necessary to clarify the concept 'primary socialisation', more precisely the concept 'family socialisation'. The concept of primary socialisation is clarified on the basis of the findings of Anthony Giddens and Tamás Kozma. The agent of primary socialisation is the family, as a child learns appropriate attitudes, values, and actions in this micro-environment. Family is considered the most primordial institution and a primary agent of socialisation [5]. According to Giddens, although the main agency of socialisation in modern societies is the nuclear family, the most recent research suggests that the category of nuclear family includes the whole family in a symbolic sense [6]. The role of family socialisation is multi-faceted, as it not only secures biological and personality development, but also serves as an agent for behaviour

and role patterns. According to the traditional concept, family is a dual-parent unit; the roles of the father and the mother are clearly delineated, as fathers have an instrumental role and mothers have an expressive role [7]. This traditional model does not always apply nowadays (e.g. single parents), and the allocation of roles between the parents has improved within the traditional family formation.

The study from Judit Torgyik *Nyelvi szocializáció és oktatás (Language Socialisation and Education)* draws attention to the importance of language socialisation, as it is an essential part of family socialisation that forms a basic part of the socialisation process. Language is the most essential cultural ‘hallmark’, which facilitates social inclusion for a person. The process of language socialisation (like socialisation itself in a broader sense) is not limited to the family, but, after family, educational institutions take over the charge of socialisation [8]. József Choli Daróczi expounded his views on Roma families in his study *Szocializációs sajátosságok és a beilleszkedés nehézségei (The Particularities of Socialisation and Difficulties in Integration)*, namely that the socialisation of a Roma child also takes place in the family, i.e. a Roma child also becomes a segment of the value and symbol system that children acquire over their life course. Stimuli coming from the family are primary solely during early childhood, and later the factors of the majority culture also have a central influence [9].

3.1. Interactions inside the Family

Family is a central element of the tales included in the analysed corpus. In this case, the definition of family covers the whole camp, the definition of the so-called extended family thus comes to the foreground. Roma family model emerging from the tales can be characterised as follows: Many of the actions in the tales take place far away from where the majority society lives, and the members of a Roma camp are the characters in most tales. The characters, weary from hopelessness, are yearning for their homeland, Gypsy Country, which results, inter alia, in eternal quest to find their place in the world. The motifs of wandering and persecution fulfil a double role in the tales: a tale is either set in the time of wandering or the settled Gypsies have to hit the road again due to reasons out of their control. Families live in poor conditions, generally have many children, live in poverty and long for the love of people. The motif of humiliation from most people also emerges in many tales; Roma people are a marginalised group. Humiliation, hopelessness, and social exclusion clearly emerge from the plots of the tales.

3.1.1. Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Portrayal of Children

Magda Szécsi's tales are analysed in this sub-section; two important elements in these tales are childbirth and the relationship between spouses. The protagonist in the tale *Birds on the Golden Violin* was not conceived naturally. The mother could not get pregnant, she therefore sipped the sweet ‘sweat’ of mountain trees, and consequently, nine months later, Hanidzsa, a girl endowed with miraculous powers, was born. Children miraculously conceived range in the tales from destroying children who are born with miraculous powers, diamond hooves and pestilential breath and later almost wipe out the whole camp to characters like Hanidzsa whose birth was followed by miraculous events and whose powers enable her to bring healing to sick Gypsies [10]. Children are born from marriage in the majority of the tales. Having children gives parents great pleasure, and the birth of a baby girl also brings the father deep happiness. New-borns are generally born with miraculous powers. The outcropping of these powers varies in the tales, e.g. some children can speak at the very moment of their birth or are born with their eyes open, a laugh, or an ardent glance. There is no mention of the magical role of breastfeeding, early childhood nutrition or breast milk in the analysed corpus, unlike in folk tales.

The motif of the cruel child also features in the tales. In the tale *The Mysterious Szalizáti*, Szalizáti has magical powers; he can speak at the very moment of his birth, and his mother is so surprised that she dies instantly. His father attempts to run his son out of the tent, “but as soon as he touched him, he burnt into ashes in an instant. The little boy cast the white dust remained of his father into his palm, blew the ashes and watched, laughing, what had once been hands, feet and eyes that had moved, sensed and been alive in the sweet-scented tent a second ago fill the air. “I guess I’m an orphan now,” the little boy announced and began to wander around the world to know people” [11].

The motif of incest shows up in the tale *The King of the Gypsies*. The father, unbeknownst to him, marries his own daughter, and, later, he learns the truth from an elderly, dying woman: “*Forgive me, King of the Gypsies, the most wretched of human beings! Know you that the girl you married was your own daughter. That is why spirits did not allow you to have children born alive. I was the only one that knew about it... but I couldn’t tell anyone... I was obliged by my oath... to the voivode*” [11].

3.1.2. Father Figures

There are two types of fathers in the analysed tales: the portrayal of fathers can be positive or negative. The fathers’ behaviour is not pointless even in the latter case, rather they want to meet the expectations and follow the customs of their tribe. In the tale *Trebla and Rebeka*, the father buys and gives his daughter everything she wants. One time, Rebeka orders her father to rip off the wings of Trebla, the son of the king of the wind. The trader grants her request immediately. The demand for justice of tales is fulfilled in this tale as well; the trader and his daughter receive their appropriate punishment [11]. The readers of the tales will become familiar with the customs of Roma people. Fathers choose husbands for their daughters, and daughters do not have a say in this. For instance, in the tale *Birds on the Golden Violin*, the voivode tells his daughter:

“*You’re getting married. This is my wish,*” the father announced. [...]

“*I’m going to marry the prince of hell? But five hundred women are awaiting his orders every moment of every day! Being a servant of the prince of hell is the fate you bestow upon me?*” the girl sobbed, full of horror.

“*I want you to be as obedient to him as your mother was to me.*”

“*And she died of obedience,*” the girl thought, and she said aloud:

“*I love Ródoyk!*”

“*Put him out of your mind. His tribe and our tribe are enemies since time began. You can never be his wife! Anyway, you betrayed us by allowing that ground-squirrel eating boy into your tent. Accepting the prince’s offer is the only thing that can save you from death. Our tribe will get eternal life and eternal wealth in return*” [1].

The nurse who does not believe Hanidzsa’s dream will come true informs the reader of the roles of men within a tribe: “*Plus, that book! It will be some kind of spell book, if it comes to something, but it is most certainly not a man who is writing the book. Have you ever seen a Gypsy man writing? Men only care about horses, red skirts, and having fun. We women are working our fingers to the bone for them, but... but it’s alright though... Szomrátánidzsasán can’t see so far that he could read the title of the book. The title of a book that is not written yet*” [10]. The father-daughter relationship is characterised by the aspect that although a daughter disagrees with her father, she does not resist him and respects his wishes. The father’s word is final and absolute in the tale *Birds on the Golden Violin* as well: the voivode and his two sons hit the road to find the prince of hell, the fiancé of their sister. “*No-one is more powerful below the sun. Their father’s words sent a shiver through the two sons, but what could they do, he was the head of the family, there was no question of being disobedient or contumacious.*” The daughter does not want to marry the prince, but she knows that she has no choice. She calls his father a traitor, then says: “*He is always talking about his people, but he always put himself first. I know that the older he gets, the more he fears death. That is why he’s willing to sacrifice me. How could a man like him possibly love his people, a man who doesn’t love his own child, who sells his daughter, who doesn’t value the happiness of his own flesh and blood? He would also be a traitor to his people*” [10].

3.1.3. Mother Figures

Anyone who is a member of a Gypsy tribe should respect the law of the Gypsies. Principally women offend something against the Gypsy law in the tales. Mothers are pictured positively in the majority of the tales. A mother’s job is to take care of her family. After the mother’s death, the widowed husband never marries again, and the nurse will fill the mother’s role in the tales. The motif of the wicked stepmother does not show up in the tales; a nurse takes care for children as if they were her own, and

she is even willing to do role reversal for the girl. Worry about their children often makes mothers sick. In the tale *Trebla and Rebeka*, Queen Dawn's son, the pride of her heart, disappears. "*She could tell there was something wrong, just as birds can sense a coming storm. Queen Dawn cried day and night and was surfeited with grief. She was so weakened that she became eventually bedridden. That's why dawn never broke again*" [11]. An example of maternal love can be found in the tale *The Gypsy Woman and the Devil*; the mother takes the road to bring provisions for her thirteen sons. After encountering the devil, he turns her into a cherry tree. Her sons go off in search of their mother. "*They have been wandering the word ever since — alleviating their hunger and quenching their thirst with their mother's flesh and blood, "gypsy" sour cherry*" [11]. The unfaithful mother figure repeatedly shows up in the tale *Birds on the Golden Violin*. Zsijegeskán, a Gypsy boy transformed into a willow, tells one of these stories: "*The cursed woman didn't want to return to her people, but one day she had to struggle ashore. She went into labour. I was that child. My mother left me on the bank, and people didn't find me until the next day. There were purple skin membranes trembling between my fingers, so they figured out at once what had happened. My grandmother took me in*" [10]. Many mentions of the role of Gypsy women within their tribe can also be found in the tales analysed. In the tale *Karadana's Curse*, the mother asks her daughter to go back to her people: "*Though I was forced to leave the tribe, you do belong to your people. You got engaged to the Gypsy voivode's only son, Dot, before you were born. You're to be his wife. You owe obedience to your husband. All you've got to do is to bear many children to enlarge the tribe*" [11]. In the tale *Birds on the Golden Violin*, the nurse warns Hanidzsa: "*I understand that you hope for more than being the wife of the voivode's son, but you stabbed me with your words. Thinking about the world is what men do, and we women should accept our fate with humility. We ought to renounce our desires when losing our milk teeth to avoid trouble. Bear several children with night-black eyes, and you'll see your husband will respect you, you'll see you will be happy and your dreams will remain lucid*" [10].

3.1.4. Interactions inside the Family and within the Tribe

Various forms of interactions inside the family can be found in the tales. In the tale *The King of the Gypsies*, when it turns out that Kartu, unknown to him, has fallen in love with his own daughter, he vows terrible vengeance against his people. "*People prostrated themselves at his feet, and he walked about with laughter. Other times, he fed famished men to death, who became so weak that they choked to death on their own vomit. People hated Kartu and were imprecating million curses on his head day by day*" [11].

Anyone who is a member of a Gypsy tribe should respect the Gypsy law. Radazána has to die because she violated the law by allowing her brother-in-law into her tent. "*Flailing people stood around a pretty-haired and weeping woman; while the wizard was cutting her hair, other women threw rocks at her, struck at her face with their nails and tore off her clothes in the face of all men. Her name was Radazána, and she had to die because she allowed Huklodoktán, her brother-in-law, into her tent. Ohh, I can still hear her scream when her husband, tired of her agonies, stabbed her with his serrated dagger that he used in hunts*" [10].

A positive example of extra-tribal marriage is an element of the tale *Birds on the Golden Violin*; the father chooses a husband from a different tribe for his daughter to unite the two tribes. "*Men came on horseback beside the long line of wagons, protecting what belonged to them. They were all riding proudly. Their women's sparkling eyes followed their every move. The women blithely sprang out of the wagons to start cooking, and then set up their couches for the night and built the inevitable campfire. The men didn't do anything and let the women do their job. The men were talking and, as usual, praising their horses, but kept one eye on the edge of the forest, fearing of the appearance of strangers.*"

"*Rubekka, why didn't you select a husband from among the men of your tribe?*" asked Razsinnáta.

"*It was not I who picked him. My father has chosen him for me to ensure that the two tribes continue to help each other*" [10].

3.1.5. Relationship between Husband and Wife

Marital fidelity is of utmost importance in Magda Szécsi's tales. Although spouses are very bonded and devoted to each other, only women are required to be faithful to their husband, men can sleep with other women. If a woman turns unfaithful, she must atone. One great example of conjugal love can be found in the tale *The King of the Gypsies*. The husband is so broken up about his wife's death that "*Kartu's hair became entirely white the moment he was informed in his wife's tent. He buried her and then lived inside his tent for a year. The camp was also wrapped in silence, as if the people foresaw the desperate times they would face*" [11]. In the story *Birds on the Golden Violin*, the nurse tells Hanidzsa that how unhappy she was in her marriage: "*I stayed because I was scared. Sukusáni bought my desires. He paid plenty for them. [...] What is happiness, my child? I remember tears turning dark from the fear on my face and the shivering nights of barren women as our red eiderdowns were fading like the love I never had. I was always alone! Grass lily, the flower of hate, blew in our quiet tent. [...] Yes, perhaps I should have fled. I've lived a full 77 years, my child, but I never encountered with happiness. I've stolen small pieces of happiness of others and gloated over them in privacy just as a dog in the manger hides, growling. Your laugh has warmed my old bones, scaring death away. Believe that!*" [10].

3.1.6. The Parent-Child Relationship

The most characteristic feature of the parent-child relationship is that although children disagree with their father, they do not resist him but respect his wishes. Showing respect and love to parents is a convention employed in the tales. The father's word is final and absolute in the tale *Birds on the Golden Violin* as well: The voivode and his two sons hit the road to find the prince of hell who is the fiancé of his daughter. "*No-one is more powerful below the sun. Their father's words sent a shiver through the two sons, but what could they do, he was the head of the family, there was no question of being disobedient or contumacious*" [10]. The daughter does not want to marry the prince, but she knows that she has no choice. She calls his father a traitor, then says: "*He is always talking about his people, but he always put himself first. I know that the older he gets, the more he fears death. That is why he's willing to sacrifice me. How could a man like him possibly love his people, a man who doesn't love his own child, who sells his daughter, who doesn't value the happiness of his own flesh and blood? He would also be a traitor to his people*" [10].

We can find an example of the manifestation of maternal love in the tale *The Gypsy Woman and the Devil*. The mother takes the road to bring provisions for her thirteen sons. After encountering the devil, he turns her into a cherry tree, and, shortly afterwards, her sons go off in search of their mother. "*They have been wandering the word ever since — alleviating their hunger and quenching their thirst with their mother's flesh and blood, "gypsy" sour cherry*" [11].

3.2. Ties outside the Family

Interactions outside the family are of a complex nature in the tales. The characters of the tales generally beware of strangers and warn the other members of the tribe against them. When the nurse begs Rázsinnáta not to leave her tribe, she says: "*I fear for you, daughter. None of us have ever gone over the mountains where strangers live. They might even destroy you because you don't know their customs and don't speak their language. They might have three eyes and four arms. Who knows?*" An example of enmity between tribes can also be found in this tale: "*A fine Gypsy man, the young voivode of the loathsome tribe Mohála, was lying in Rázsinnáta's lap. He asked her a million times to marry him, but his offer could never be accepted. Even so, he always came back and was claiming the beautiful Rázsinnáta who loved him back. Long had war raged between the two Gypsy tribes, but even the very oldest couldn't recall the cause of hatred*" [10].

What the king does in the tale *The Orphaned Radazána* is a prime example of helping others; namely that the king helps weary strangers wearing tattered clothes. "*Succor my people because we've been driven from our homes, from along the great river, where we were living peacefully. Our tents were robbed, and we've been driven into exile. [...] We're Gypsies, my good sir. We're peaceful, well-intentioned people who are looking for happiness.*" The king allows them into his oak-forest where the expelled people can live in peace [11].

Mistrust towards the Gypsies is reflected in a question asked by a soldier in the tale *The Orphaned Radazána*: “My King, you can’t let these people settle down here, in our country. [...] Zófun, the fortune-teller dreamed these Gypsies will bring misfortune upon you. Send them far away,” answered the soldier. Nonsense. Superstition, the king snapped” [11].

The motif of unjustified cruelty shows up in the tale *The Orphaned Radazána*: “The king stood in the centre of the Gypsy camp with a cold glare and was issuing orders. He ordered to make a great pyre and to tear the black tents to shreds. The women and children clustered together were screaming with fear, and the men knelt in humility before the king; Only Szóberjáni stood, straight and proud. Radazána was hiding behind a tree and waited what would happen. [...] Lay hands on him and throw him in the fire! I’ll give you loving a queen! cried the king, reddening. The servants hurled themselves on Szóberjáni and threw him in the fire” [11]. The protagonist of the tale *The King of the Gypsies* acts with reason. When the old woman tells him that he married his own daughter, first he curses the woman and then opens her skull with his knife [11]. Cruel acts in the tales of the analysed corpus are always a consequence. Cruel acts are not always a series of acts performed in a consistent manner; regardless of whether only a part or all of these acts are carried out, sinners will always be punished. Cruel acts are carried out by the wicked, for which (s)he will be punished later, or by the hero to exterminate the wicked. There are situations in the plot in which a character states the causes for his/her acts.

4. DISCUSSION

As the above examples show, we can conclude with regard to Roma families that the traditional family model has been passed down from generation to generation. Boys and girls are raised differently in Roma families, members of the two sexes are thus not treated on an equal footing. Ample examples of this phenomenon can be found in the tales analysed. Father and mother figures can be positive or negative in the tales; the instrumental role of the father and the expressive role of the mother are highlighted. Negative parental figures and examples of marital infidelity can also be found in the tales; thus, these tales also provide negative examples, i.e. mirror a complex world view. The following sub-sector presents interactions outside the family. Roma reach out to the poor, people in need of assistance and the socially excluded with compassion and respect ‘outliers’ in spite of their mistrust towards and fear of strangers. Relationships outside the family are more differentiated in Magda Szécsi’s tales. Cruelty both in intra-family and extra-family relationships is a very dominant motif in the tales. Cruel acts are the fabled stages of the Roma people’s self-rediscovery. Magda Szécsi’s tales are great feats; her myth-making endeavours have resulted in certain elements of the tales that require further analysis. For instance, the tale *Doja, the Gypsy Fairy* [11] is similar to an origin legend. Although the writer’s tales are intended for adults, they could be integrated into the upper primary curriculum.

5. CONCLUSION

The in-depth analysis of the tales aims at outlining a methodology for Slovakian Hungarian primary schools to integrate Roma tales in the school curriculum. Double minority status is the main barrier to the integration of Hungarian Roma living in Slovakia, as, besides being members of the Roma minority, they belong to the Hungarian minority. It is noteworthy that while 105,738 people declared themselves as Roma on the basis of the data of the population census 2011, this number increased four-fold on the basis of the surveys ‘The Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia’ conducted in 2013; the number of Roma was estimated at 402,840 people in that year [12]. 406,790 pupils, of whom 971 pupils are Roma, are attending public schools, 25,272 children, of whom 172 children are Roma, are pupils of church schools, and 8520 pupils, of whom 6 pupils are Roma, are attending private schools in Slovakia in the school year 2017-2018. A total of 1149 ethnic Roma pupils are attending Slovakian primary schools (including public, church and private schools). This participation rate of Roma children is very low, compared to the number of Roma population in Slovakia. Political and historical changes, fierce assimilationist efforts, resettlement efforts, and the acculturation process

impact greatly on the phenomenon of Roma declaring another identity rather than Roma. As regards Roma pupils attending minority schools that use Hungarian as language of instruction, the fostering of language culture is of dual nature: the domain of language use for those who speak Roma is limited to small-scale family environment, and many Roma no longer speak the Roma language (due to language loss or language shift) and use the Hungarian language as their mother tongue. Language loss or language shift causes a certain degree of identity loss or identity crisis. In addition to all this, different forms of the social exclusion of the Roma, negative stereotypes of and discrimination against them, as well as xenophobia, create an even bigger gap between Roma and non-Roma people. I therefore consider the inclusion of Roma culture in the primary school curriculum through Roma folk tales and Roma literary tales as extremely important. Tales can draw attention to the differences and similarities between different cultures, as well as to diversity, even in early childhood education. It is important for pupils to acquire competencies that enable them to better understand the differences between the majority society and minority groups, to build tolerance in their lives, and to learn to have respect for the traditions of other groups. School education provides the best framework for pupils to acquire these competencies. Roma tales give insight in Roma culture; the inclusion of these tales in the primary school curriculum would help Roma pupils better understand their own culture, would contribute to the cultural enrichment of non-Roma pupils, would be an intercultural bridge between them and would bring us closer to a more fruitful dialogue between people and cultures.

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