Grimm's fairy tales as an interface between literature, language and culture: a literary enrichment for holistic (German) language learning at university level

Sabrina Link (University of Urbino "Carlo Bo")
sabrina.link@uniurb.it

ABSTRACT

The educational value of fairy tales has already been recognised by the Brothers Grimm themselves, and by the end of the 19th century, their fairy tales had been introduced into school lessons in Germany, where they have remained ever since. In the 1980s, they became even more popular in education and were soon also found to be useful for teaching German as a foreign language (GFL). Fairy tales serve as an interface between literature, language, and culture, and their integration into language teaching significantly expands the didactic repertoire. This paper will explore the potential of fairy tales for teaching university students of German and, by providing concrete examples from practice, will demonstrate how even small fairy tale tasks can facilitate holistic learning, owing to the wide range of applications in the language classroom, from creative writing to grammar revision.

Sabrina Link

University of Urbino "Carlo Bo"
sabrina.link@uniurb.it

Grimm's fairy tales as an interface between literature, language and culture: a literary enrichment for holistic (German) language learning at university level

ABSTRACT

The educational value of fairy tales has already been recognised by the Brothers Grimm themselves, and by the end of the 19th century, their fairy tales had been introduced into school lessons in Germany, where they have remained ever since. In the 1980s, they became even more popular in education and were soon also found to be useful for teaching German as a foreign language (GFL). Fairy tales serve as an interface between literature, language, and culture, and their integration into language teaching significantly expands the didactic repertoire. This paper will explore the potential of fairy tales for teaching university students of German and, by providing concrete examples from practice, will demonstrate how even small fairy tale tasks can facilitate holistic learning, owing to the wide range of applications in the language classroom, from creative writing to grammar revision.

KEYWORDS: Brother Grimm's fairy tales in GFL; creative writing and language learning; grammar revision through fairy tales; GFL on university level; holistic language learning

1. Introduction: fairy tale features and their educational value

The fairy tale collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* by the Brothers Grimm enjoys widespread popularity and, after Luther's Bible, is one of the most printed books in the German language (cf. Villiger 1973, 174), having been reissued time and again (Riegler 2022, 21). Moreover, as the most translated book in the German language (Weber 2000, 26), Grimm's fairy tales are well-known not only in German-speaking countries but also across the world, a reach further amplified by Disney's film adaptations. Thus, Grimm's fairy tales constitute a shared cultural knowledge in some parts of the world that transcends language and national boundaries.

The German term *Märchen*, a diminutive derived from Old High German *māri* ('news, report, tale') and Middle High German *mære* ('tidings, news, report, poetic narrative, rumour'; cf. Märchen in DWDS), originally referred to short stories. Over time, the term underwent a semantic shift, becoming associated with 'invented stories' (Lüthi 2004, 1). This connotation persists in the German expression *erzähl mir keine Märchen*, meaning 'don't tell me lies' (Glaboniat et al. 2005).

Consequently, fairy tales are stories created with poetic imagination. They typically include supernatural elements from the realm of magic, such as giants, dwarves, or talking animals, alongside miraculous events, magical powers, and symbolic numbers (Huupponen 2018, 6). These magical components are central to fairy tales, forming part of the classic motifs of the genre (cf. Besedová 2014, 46). Hence, they are wondrous narratives that are neither bound by the conditions of real life nor directly connected to historical events or figures (Esselborn 1991, 244; Lüthi 2004, 3). This distinguishes them from sagas, which are more historical, incorporating real places and historical figures, thereby exhibiting a closer connection to reality (Lüthi 1998, 32, 34; Ranke et al. 1999, 252). While fairy tales share the classification of 'folk' genre (Neuhaus 2017, 27) and some features, such as the supernatural and fantastic, with neighbouring genres like sagas, legends, myths, and fables, they must be differentiated from them (Neuhaus 2020, 9).

Certain features of fairy tales, such as their simple language and repetitive structure, can be traced back to their oral tradition. Repetition, key words, formulaic phrases, proverbs, metaphors, and opposites were employed as mnemonic aids (Esselborn 1991, 257–258). While storytelling was the dominant tradition in the Middle Ages due to widespread illiteracy (Neuhaus 2017, 27; Huupponen 2018, 5), as literacy rates increased, various authors, including the

Brothers Grimm, began collecting these gradually disappearing stories (Woeller and Woeller 1990, 184–185) with the aim of preserving them, entertaining readers, and fostering a love for fairy tales (Werner 1965, 104).

In addition to their supernatural elements and simple, repetitive linguistic structure, fairy tales are characterised by the absence of specific settings in terms of place (Weiss 1946, 287) or time (Esselborn 1991, 244–245). They usually have fixed beginnings and endings (Once upon a time…, And if they have not died, then they are still alive today) and clearly distinguish between good and evil, with good invariably triumphing over evil in the end. This moral dichotomy forms the basis of their educational value.

The Brothers Grimm recognised the educational potential of fairy tales, focusing on their subtle role-modelling effect and their capacity to develop the powers of consciousness (Esselborn 2010, 211). Fairy tales act as moral guides, imparting values and providing orientation to help readers align their behaviour and lives with ethical principles (Riegler 2022, 23). Their educational value was also recognised by schools, leading to their introduction as school reading material in Germany at the end of the 19th century for ethical education purposes (ibid.). In the 1970s, their potential to encourage creativity was discovered (Esselborn 2010, 212), and from the 1980s onwards, fairy tales gained further popularity, with numerous journals publishing articles on how to incorporate them into classroom teaching (cf. Haas 1997, 56), including their use in teaching German as a foreign language (GFL).

While many didactic approaches and publications focus on teaching fairy tales to children, this paper will explore their use for adults, specifically university students of German. The aim of this article is to expand existing research (e.g., Weber 2000; Davidheiser 2007; Soltau 2021; Kuzmanovska et al. 2022) by demonstrating the versatility and holistic learning potential of fairy tales. Using *Rotkäppchen* [Little Red Riding Hood] as an example, this paper will show how fairy tales can be integrated into language teaching and how their potential can be fully utilised through small, relatively time-efficient tasks in the university GFL classroom.

2. Fairy tales and their application and benefits in German as a foreign language (GFL) teaching

Fairy tales became increasingly popular in GFL teaching from the 1980s onwards

(Riegler 2022, 23), and in 1985, the Goethe-Institut, for instance, published a workbook titled *Märchen*, accompanied by a supplementary didactic booklet, *Märchen, Aufgaben und Übungen* [Fairy Tales, Tasks and Exercises] (Esselborn 2010, 188). Today, fairy tales remain popular in GFL. Numerous recent bachelor's, master's, and doctoral theses have explored their use in GFL teaching in recent years (e.g. Rosenfelder Johansson 2015a, 2015b; Kostková 2017; Niskanen 2021; Riegler 2022). In 2017, Klett Verlag, one of the largest publishing houses for GFL materials, launched its own series on the topic (Riegler 2022, 23), and the journal *Praxis Deutsch* released an issue titled *Märchen in Geschichte und Gegenwart* [Fairy Tales in the Past and Present] in 2020 (Kammler 2020). The ISU Kassel is set to offer a summer course for German learners on the Brothers Grimm in 2025.[1] Moreover, the internet hosts a wealth of ready-made didactic resources for GFL, such as the *Märchenkalender*[2] [Fairy Tale Calendar], published by the Goethe-Institut to mark the 200th anniversary of the first edition of the Brothers Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Goethe-Institut 2020). This calendar includes 12 didactic suggestions covering a range of fairy tales and catering to diverse learning levels, from primary school to adulthood (Goethe-Institut 2020).

Despite this increased popularity, in the early 1990s, many textbooks excluded fairy tales as a teaching topic (Maier 1990: 1). Possible reasons for this limited application were thought to be the old-fashioned language, which can pose comprehension challenges, the limited opportunities for linguistic exercises, demotivation due to the familiarity of the content, and the questionable motivational power of the narratives for older learners (ibid., 9). Additionally, it has been argued that fairy tales are particularly problematic for beginners, as most are written in the preterit tense, which beginners of German might not yet be familiar with, since it is usually introduced at the A2/B1 level.

Although fairy tales have undergone a significant renaissance (Röhrich 2003, 5), a study conducted in Sweden a decade ago found that, despite their value as an enriching resource for foreign language teaching, fairy tales are not part of most teachers' standard repertoire (Rosenfelder Johansson 2015b, 17) and are often overlooked in textbooks (ibid., 15). In fact, fairy tales often occupy only a superficial role in German language classrooms, being used exclusively, for instance, to teach the preterit tense (Soltau 2021, 38; Riegler 2022, 56).

These doubts and omissions are contrasted by the claim that fairy tales, especially those from the Brothers Grimm, should be regarded as 'a stroke of

---

[1] https://www2.daad.de/deutschland/studienangebote/international-programmes/en/detail/7620/
[2] https://www.goethe.de/lrn/prj/mlg/miu/deindex.htm

luck' for GFL teaching (Weber 2000, 26). They are "one of the most common cultural icons of Europe and make excellent teaching devices in foreign language classrooms" (Davidheiser 2007, 224). As a cultural asset, they provide a variety of approaches for teaching German as a foreign language (Ehlers 2004, 64). While these tales are complex and present certain linguistic challenges, such as archaic grammar and vocabulary (Weber 2000, 26; Riegler 2022, 30), their repetitive nature and predictable features make them accessible. Recurrent structures and repeated sentences (Petzoldt 2005, 250), along with formulaic openings and closings, help familiarise learners with the text's structure and consolidate new learning content (Bach 2008, 13).

Additionally, the portrayal of heroes and heroines in a glorified manner, contrasted with the negative depiction of antagonists, aligns with learners' expectations. This focus on contrasts helps learners comprehend the straightforward depiction of social, familial, and moral relationships (Riegler 2022, 26). Moreover, many fairy tales share similar content (ibid., 25). Characters, settings, and plots, along with genre-specific features, are often familiar to GFL students (Weber 2000, 26), and thus the students can access them through their own experiences (Esselborn 2010, 197). These experiences may stem from native-language readings, cinema and television adaptations, theatre performances, or visits to theme parks (Weber 2000, 26). This assimilation into existing knowledge in a positive emotional context can render learning more effective (Umbreit 1994, 55). The familiarity of fairy tales further enhances motivation (Bach 2008, 13) and can lower the students' potential level of fear in approaching foreign languages (Davidheiser 2007, 215).

Beyond their familiarity, fairy tales support language learning by addressing all four skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Their roots in oral storytelling, later supplemented by written forms, make them versatile for language learning (Esselborn 2010, 218). This intersection of oral and written language, as well as reception and production, is a compelling argument in favour of their use in GFL lessons, as it allows for the accommodation of different types of learners (Bach 2008, 13). Thus, while doubts about integrating fairy tales into GFL were prevalent in the past, a consensus has emerged over the last few decades, indicating that the use of fairy tales in German foreign language classrooms is of great benefit to learners.

3. Fairy tales in adult university language learning

Section 2 demonstrated how the structure and content of fairy tales make them a genre worth exploring with GFL learners. However, it also became apparent that, in the past, various arguments have been raised against using fairy tales in adult education, with doubts expressed, for instance, about their motivational power for older learners (Maier 1990, 9). Despite this, and the title *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the Brothers Grimm never intended their collection to be solely a children's book but also aimed to engage adults (Huupponen 2015, 9).

While it is important to consider how students, having outgrown childhood, might respond to early 19th-century depictions of fantastical and marvellous events (Weber 2000, 26), the fantastical dimension of fairy tales can serve as a counterbalance to the everyday reality of more conventional texts and realistic narratives (Bach 2008, 13). Moreover, fairy tales, as an intersection of literature, language, and culture, offer holistic learning opportunities. Their application in adult language learning can stimulate learners' creativity while simultaneously enabling them to improve their language skills, enhance their literacy competencies, and increase their cultural awareness (cf. Section 3.1). In addition, fairy tales can be utilised for language revision, as their linguistic structure provides a basis for practising or revising various grammatical features (cf. Section 3.2).

3.1. *Grimm's* Rotkäppchen*: creative writing and literacy competences*

Fairy tales offer many opportunities to promote students' creativity and stand in stark contrast to their everyday lives in the university context, which are often dominated by factual content, leaving little room for imagination. Therefore, in such an environment, it is paramount to provide students with space for creative learning. While activity-based, communicative teaching is currently the accepted norm in foreign language education, institutional requirements sometimes make it difficult to fully implement this approach at the university level. Integrating fairy tales is an effective way to promote activity-based teaching and foster learner-, process-, and product-oriented learning (Jank and Meyer 1994). Although university students are usually familiar with various fairy tales, in my experience, they have rarely encountered them in an educational language

classroom setting.

This section demonstrates how the Grimm brothers' fairy tale *Rotkäppchen* [Little Red Riding Hood] can be used to stimulate students' creativity and develop their literacy skills. This fairy tale was used in GFL lessons with students at three different European universities: the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, and the Università degli Studi di Carlo Bo Urbino in Italy. In all three countries, the students were familiar with the plot of the fairy tale. It is worth noting that the student groups in Aberdeen were highly heterogeneous, as a great percentage of the students came from different European countries. However, even in this diverse group, everyone was familiar with the story. The students' language proficiency ranged from B2 to C1 according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (Council of Europe 2020).

Before working with the fairy tale itself, students were asked to discuss their prior knowledge and experience with fairy tales in small groups, brainstorm typical fairy tale features, and take notes. This collaborative activity aimed to help students practice their speaking and listening skills. Although students were familiar with fairy tales, revising the essential elements of the genre was crucial for enabling them to consequently work creatively with the story. Next, students were shown a picture of *Little Red Riding Hood* and asked, once again in small groups, to outline the main narrative steps of the fairy tale in brief notes. This task further trained their productive and receptive skills. The content of the fairy tale was then reconstructed in a plenary session. In a final step, an audio recording of the story was played[3], and students compared it with their reconstructed version. For less advanced learners, listening comprehension could be supported by reading along with the text.

Following this, students were divided into pairs or groups of three and assigned a creative writing task. Creative writing exercises can include short poems, stories, cartoons, plays, or songs (cf. Kast 1999). This type of writing encourages learners to move beyond pure reproduction of language and dare to create something new, fostering self-expression and problem-solving skills (Mahmoud 2020, 352). Böttcher (1999, 24 ff.) distinguishes six groups of creative writing methods: a) *the*

---

[3] For example, this audio version available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLpAMbZuEk0, however, the end of the audio file is rather heavily embellished with details.

associative writing method, b) writing games, c) writing according to patterns, rules and guidelines, d) writing literary texts, e) writing to stimuli and *f) further writing on creative texts.* Although these methods are distinct, they often overlap and can be combined in various ways (Mahmoud 2020, 355). Each student group, now familiar with the content of the fairy tale, was given a different perspective from which to rewrite the fairy tale. For example, students were asked to retell the tale from the viewpoint of the grandmother, the hunter, the wolf, or even a bystander having a picnic in the forest. The other students then had to guess the perspective from which each version was written. Therefore, the fairy tale writing task given to the students integrated elements of *writing according to patterns, rules and guidelines*, *writing literary texts* and *further writing on creative texts.*

Fairy tales are particularly suitable for such tasks due to their predictable structure and exemplary nature, which significantly ease the narrative and writing process (Schilcher and Knott 2020, 96–97). At university level, where students often focus on academic writing and may feel disconnected from creative expression, fairy tales offer a helpful scaffolding that encourages imaginative writing. Creative writing in foreign language education can boost learners' motivation (Riemer 2010, 1152; Bernstein 2020, 12) and improve their academic language skills (Bernstein 2020, 12). While the importance of developing writing skills for students has been acknowledged in GFL (Ruf 2016, 12), the research on the positive effects of creative writing mainly focuses on the expansion of grammatical and lexical knowledge (Bernstein 2020, 17). Consequently, also textbooks predominantly work with literary texts receptively, rather than productively (ibid.), using these reproductive exercises often to practise and deepen grammatical phenomena or vocabulary work (cf. Miletić 2019, 348).

While students, working with *Little Red Riding Hood* are improving their lexical knowledge, as some fairy tale terminology is probably unknown to them, rewriting the text offers them the possibility to actively apply the new vocabulary encountered as well as to improve their writing skills. Once the students had written their texts, they had to read out loud their fairy tale and the others consequently had to guess from which perspective the fairy tale has been written. Alternatively, the fairy tales can also be attached to the classroom walls, like in an exhibition, and all students walk around reading the various fairy tales and subsequently guessing the points of view.

This creative writing task not only improves all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—but also fosters social learning. Collaborative group work in both the brainstorming and writing phases enhances

students' communicative abilities. Listening to an audio version of the fairy tale, as well as reading or listening to their peers' texts, strengthens their listening comprehension. Beyond language skills, integrating literary texts like fairy tales into university language courses creates curiosity, excitement, and variety, leading to more active learning (Ehlers 2004; Burwitz-Melzer 2006). Literature can elicit strong emotional responses and engage students as whole individuals (Lazar 1993). Working with a well-known fairy tale like *Little Red Riding Hood* ensures that students are not overwhelmed, as the familiar structure and content provide a sense of security. Additionally, using a familiar story in the foreign language (German) offers a playful approach to literature (Mühlbauer 2014, 3).

Fairy tales, as part of cultural heritage, provide insights into another culture, including the use of archaic language (Hermes 1999, 439f.). As authentic texts (Weber 2000, 28), they offer a "cultural experience" from the perspective of a native speaker (Byram 1991, 19 ff.). Linguistically, the cultural heritage of fairy tales can still be seen in some everyday life relicts, such as in idioms (Deutsche Welle 2023). When it comes to literature, fairy tale motifs and themes frequently appear in (German) literature and across the canon readers can find more or less implicit fairy tale allusions (Bach 2008, 7). Understanding them requires background knowledge. Examples reach from Tieck's play titled *Leben und Tod des kleinen Rotkäppchen - eine Tragödie* [The Life and Death of Little Red Riding Hood – a tragedy] to film adaptations. After the Second World War *Little Red Riding Hood* alone was adapted four times in the still young Federal Republic of Germany (Heidtmann 2000, 84). Further, the Little Red Riding Hoods dress motif can be found in many popular literary adaptations (Wray 2021). Since university students of German often study German literature alongside language, working with fairy tales in language classes can enhance their understanding of both language and literature.

In summary, while the benefits of using fairy tales to improve students' receptive and productive language skills are clear, university language students can also gain broader educational benefits. These include improved academic writing skills as a result of creative writing tasks, as well as a deeper understanding of German culture and literature.

3.2. *Rotkäppchen and Konjunktiv I*

Common arguments against integrating creative exercises and literature into

university language teaching are the institutional framework, which still often favours explicit grammar teaching, and time restrictions. However, the structure of fairy tales is highly suitable for developing or consolidating grammatical concepts rather time-efficiently (Riegler 2022, 28). This is exemplified by Zinggeler's *Grimmatik*, which links and compares Grimm's fairy tales to German grammar (Zinggeler 2007). When it comes to German grammar, fairy tales are often used to teach and revise the preterit tense (cf. Section 2). However, they also offer potential for revising other features, such as sentence structure, adjectives, pronouns, the subjunctive (*Konjunktiv*), and plural forms (Bach 2008, 27).

In the following, it will be shown how *Little Red Riding Hood* can be used to revise German *Konjunktiv I*. This can be done as a follow-up to the creative writing exercise—bearing the advantage that students are already familiar with the text and vocabulary and that the students' creative texts can be used as a basis for further grammar exercises. Alternatively, the fairy tale can be used independently of the creative writing task to revise *Konjunktiv I*.

In German, there are two types of subjunctives: *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II*. The former is used to mark reported speech and is usually introduced in textbooks at B2 level. *Konjunktiv II* is used in conditional phrases, for polite questions and requests, to express wishes, or to give advice. The various applications of *Konjunktiv II* are generally taught from A2 level onwards.

The subjunctive forms in German can create difficulties for learners, as these forms may not exist in their native language or have a different function. For instance, while the subjunctive exists in English, it is relatively rare, and its usage differs significantly from that of the German subjunctive. Similarly, also for Italian speaking students the German subjunctive can present challenges. While Italian has a frequently used subjunctive mood, it is mainly used in subordinate clauses of conditional phrases or following certain expressions. In many instances where German requires *Konjunktiv II*, Italian uses the conditional mood, which does not exist in German. Additionally, Italian subjunctive forms exist across all tenses, whereas German subjunctive only has one form each for present, past, and future.

While *Konjunktiv II* generally creates fewer problems for learners—since most verbs (apart from auxiliaries, modal verbs, and some frequent irregular verbs) form *Konjunktiv II* using the subjunctive form of *werden* and the infinitive—*Konjunktiv I* is often perceived as more challenging. There are two reasons for that: Some forms of *Konjunktiv I* correspond to the indicative forms. In these cases, *Konjunktiv II* must be used to mark reported speech. Thus, a good command of both the indicative and *Konjunktiv II* is necessary to apply *Konjunktiv I* correctly.

Secondly, *Konjunktiv I* is predominantly used in written communication. In spoken language, speakers often use the indicative for reported speech. As a result, even students who spend time in Germany may rarely encounter *Konjunktiv I* unless they regularly read the news.

Fairy tales are well-suited for practicing both subjunctive forms. *Little Red Riding Hood* is especially useful for practicing *Konjunktiv I* due to its extensive use of direct speech, which students can then transform into reported speech. The story begins with a dialogue between the mother and Little Red Riding Hood, followed by the first encounter between Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf, a brief conversation between the grandmother and the wolf, the famous second encounter between Little Red Riding Hood and the disguised wolf, and finally an exchange between the hunter and the wolf, as well as between Little Red Riding Hood and the hunter.

In addition to the frequency of direct speech, the variety of sentence structures in the dialogues makes the fairy tale ideal for revising and consolidating *Konjunktiv I*. For instance, the mother says: "Komm, Rotkäppchen, da hast du ein Stück Kuchen und eine Flasche Wein, bring das der Großmutter hinaus"[4] [Come Little Red Riding Hood. Here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to your grandmother][5]. This sentence contains imperatives that cannot be directly transformed into *Konjunktiv I* by simply conjugating *kommen* and *bringen*. Instead, they must be rephrased using the modal verb *sollen* [should]. Both dialogues between the wolf and Little Red Riding Hood are filled with questions, such as: "Wo hinaus so früh, Rotkäppchen?" [Where are you going so early, Little Red Riding Hood], "Was trägst du unter der Schürze?" [And what are you carrying under your apron] or the famous questions in the German original, regarding the grandmother's appearance "Ei, Großmutter, was hast du für große Ohren? [Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!]. Additionally, the story offers opportunities to practice statements in reported speech, such as: "Ich glaube, du hörst gar nicht, wie die Vöglein so lieblich singen! Du gehst ja für dich hin, als wenn du zur Schule gingst, und es ist so lustig draußen im Wald" [And I don't believe you can hear how beautifully the birds are singing. You are walking along as though you were on your way to school in the village. It is very beautiful in the

---

[4] As a basis for the quotes the version of Little Red Riding Hood published by the *Goethe Institut* was used: https://www.goethe.de/lrn/prj/mlg/mad/gri/de9114344.htm [last accessed 27.11.2024]
[5] Translations taken from the English adaption of Grimm's Little Red Riding Hood at Projekt Gutenberg https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2591/2591-h/2591-h.htm#link2H_4_0023 [last accessed 27.11.2024]

woods]. In such cases, learners must transform verbs into the correct subjunctive form and adjust pronouns for the change in perspective.

Hence, when students transfer *Little Red Riding Hood* in reported speech, they must navigate a range of grammatical constructions. This task is demanding but offers a comprehensive review of reported speech. Familiarity with the fairy tale—especially if the grammar task follows the creative writing task from Section 3.1—can facilitate the process, allowing students to focus on grammar rather than unfamiliar content.

If students have previously worked on the fairy tale creatively, their own texts can also be used to practice *Konjunktiv I*. However, this requires the inclusion of direct speech in their texts. And while direct speech is a common fairy tale feature, teachers should explicitly specify the need for direct speech in the students' texts if the texts are intended for grammar exercises. Further, it needs to be ensured that the texts are grammatically accurate. After presenting their creatively rewritten texts as indicated in Section 3.1, the student groups can exchange their texts and provide each other with peer feedback. This fosters collaborative and autonomous learning and sharpens their critical reading skills. The teacher can then proofread the texts, and once corrected, the students' creative texts can serve as the basis for transforming direct speech into reported speech. Ideally, students should rewrite texts from a group that they have not yet worked on during the peer-feedback session, in order to encounter new material. Using students' work for grammar revision adds value to their text production, as the texts are reused, promoting product-based learning. This approach can enhance motivation, foster responsibility for their learning, and encourage greater linguistic and content accuracy (Schulz-Zander and Tulodziecki 2009, 43; Roche *et al.* 2012, 31).

In conclusion, fairy tales offer an excellent means of revising grammar. Their familiarity reduces the time required for introduction and allows students to focus on the grammatical topic at hand. As demonstrated, *Little Red Riding Hood* is particularly suitable for revising *Konjunktiv I* in German. Incorporating the creative texts written by the student as basis for the grammar exercises holistically integrates the fairy tale into the class, enhancing creativity, language skills, grammar, and cultural knowledge.

4. Conclusion

This paper aimed to demonstrate that fairy tales, as a literary genre, are not only

highly educational for children but also for adults and can be used in various ways in foreign language lessons. In the context of university language teaching, they help to break up the often still rigid structures prevalent in university language learning. Fairy tales allow students to improve their productive, receptive, and grammatical skills, expand their vocabulary, and gain insights into German culture and literature—an essential aspect for university-level German students.

Furthermore, they enable students to create meaningful texts by working collaboratively, thereby fostering social learning. Every aspect of language acquisition can benefit from the use of fairy tales in the classroom. Their diverse applications—from creative writing to grammar revision—make them suitable for a wide range of curricula. They are part of a cultural heritage, and various aspects and motifs can be found in literature and film, both past and present. Hence, beyond purely linguistic aspects, they allow for holistic learning at the university level, integrating literacy and cultural components.

The example introduced showed that fairy tales, since most students are already familiar with their content, can be integrated efficiently into lessons. This familiarity helps motivate students, provides them with a scaffold, allows them to focus on grammar, and lowers their affective filter. Given the significant benefits the genre offers for the university GFL classroom, it should be included more frequently. Moreover, it would be desirable to see more fairy tale elements incorporated into language-learning textbooks for adults.

References

Bach, Elisabeth. 2008. *Märchen im DaF-Unterricht.* Diplomarbeit. Universität Wien. 10.25365/thesis.2263. Accessible via https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/detail/o:1252243 [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Bernstein, Nils. 2020. "In fremden Sprachen kreativ Schreiben. Zur Korrelation von kreativem Schreiben und bildungssprachlichem Schreiben im Literatur- und Fremdsprachenunterricht". *Zeitschrift für interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht* 25 (2): 11-27.

Besedová, Petra. 2014. *Literatura pro děti a mládež ve výuce cizích jazyků*. Hradec Králové: Gaudeamus.

Böttcher, Ingrid. 1999. *Kreatives Schreiben. Grundlagen und Methoden. Beispiele für Fächer und Projekte*. Frankfurt am Main: Cornelsen Scriptor.

Burwitz-Melzer, Eva. 2006. "Lesen und Schreiben im Englischunterricht in der Grundschule: immer noch ein Tabu?" In *Schriftlichkeit - Interdisziplinär: Voraussetzungen, Hindernisse und Fördermöglichkeiten.* Ed. by Agyro Panagiotopoulou and Monika Wintermeyer, 101-23. Frankfurt am Main: Books on Demand, Frankfurter Schriften zur Erziehungswissenschaft.

Byram, Michael. 1991. "Teaching Culture and Language: Towards an Integrated Model" In *Mediating Languages and Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Theory of Foreign Language Education.* Ed. By Dieter Buttjes and Michael Byram, 17-30. Clevedo: Multilingual Matters.

Council of Europe. 2020. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*: Learning, teaching, assessment- Companion volume. Council of Europe Publishing. http://www.coe.int/lang-cefr

Davidheiser, James C. 2007. Fairy Tales and Foreign Languages: Ever the Twain Shall Meet. *Foreign Language Annals*, 40: 215-225. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2007.tb03198.x

Deutsche Welle. 2023. *Wie Märchen die deutsche Sprache prägen*. https://learngerman.dw.com/de/wie-m%C3%A4rchen-die-deutsche-sprache-pr%C3%A4gen/a-67079574 [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Ehlers, Swantje. 2004. *Literarische Texte lesen lernen*. München: Ernst Klett Verlag.

Esselborn, Karl. 1991. "Märchen – Zugang zum kollektiven Gedächtnis einer fremden Kultur?" *Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* 17: 244-274.

Esselborn, Karl. 2010. *Interkulturelle Literaturvermittlung zwischen didaktischer Theorie und Praxis.* München: Iudicium-Verlag.

Glaboniat, Manuela; Martin Müller; Paul Rusch; Helen Schmitz; Lukas Wertenschlag. 2005. *Profile deutsch. Gemeinsamer europäischer Referenzrahmen*. Stutgart: Ernst Klett Sprachen.

Goethe-Institut. 2020. *Märchen*. Available via https://www.goethe.de/lrn/prj/mlg/miu/deindex.htm [last accessed 21.11.2024]

Haas, . 1997. "Märchen: Wege in die Welt - Wege in die Welt der Literatur". In *Märchen in Erziehung und Unterricht heute.* Ed by Kristin Wardetzky and Helga

Zitzlsperger, 44-58. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider-Verlag.

Heidtmann, Horst. 2000. "Medienadaptionen von Volksmärchen". In *Märchen - Kinder - Medien : Beiträge zur medialen Adaption von Märchen und zum didaktischen Umgang.* Ed. by Kurt Franz and Walter Kahn, 82-98. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider-Verlag.

Hermes, Liesel. 1999. "Das Fremde und das Eigene. Leserperspektive und Erzählperspektive in Short Stories" In *Interkultureller Fremdsprachenunterricht.* Ed. by Lothar Bredella and Werner Delanoy, 439-45. Tübingen: Narr Verlag.

Huupponen, Eeva. 2018. *Märchen in DaF-Unterricht: Ein Unterrichtspaket.* Bachelorarbeit. Universität Jyväskylä. Institut für Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaften Deutsche Sprache und Kultur. Accessible via https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/57949. [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Jank, Werner; Hilbert Meyer .1994. *Didaktische Modelle*. Berlin: Cornelsen.

Kammler, Clemens. 2020. *Praxis Deutsch. Märchen in Geschichte und Gegenwart.* Hannover: Friedrich Verlag.

Kast, Bernd. 1999. *Fertigkeit Schreiben. Fernstudieneinheit*. Berlin: Langenscheidt

Kostková, Petra. 2017. *Märchen der Brüder Grimm im DaF Unterricht.* Bachelorarbeit. Masaryk University. Faculty of Education. Accessible via https://is.muni.cz/th/g9jqv/. [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Kurwinkel, Tobias. 2017. "Von 7 Zwergen, grünen Ogern und einer Prinzessin auf dem Times Square: Der komische Märchenfilm". In *Märchen im Medienwechsel.* Ed. by Ute Dettmar; Claudia Maria Pecher and Ron Schlesinger, 359-71. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-04593-5_17

Kuzmanovska, Dragana; Vesna Koceva, Snezana Kirova, Ana Vitanova-Ringaceva, Biljana Ivanova. 2022. "Using Fairy tales for enriching vocabulary of foreign languages". *Proceedings of INTED2022 Conference 7th-8th March 2022.*

Lazar, Gillian. 1993. *Literature and Language Teaching, a Guide for Language Teaches and Trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lüthi, Max. 1998. *Es war einmal. Vom Wesen des Volksmärchens*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Lüthi, Max. 2004. *Märchen* (10th edition). Berlin: Springer.

"Märchen", provided by the Digitale Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, https://www.dwds.de/wb/M%C3%A4rchen [last accessed 21.11.2024].

Mahmoud, Sakina Saleh. 2020. "Bleibt kreatives Schreiben ein Traum? Kreatives Schreiben als eine geistige und sprachliche Fähigkeit beim Erlernen des Deutschen als Fremdsprache in Ägypten". *Germanistische Beiträge* 46 (1): 347-362. https://doi.org/10.2478/gb-2020-0018

Maier, Irmgard. 1990. "Es war einmal... Märchen als Gestaltungsaufgabe". *Fremdsprache Deutsch: Deutsch in der Primarstufe* Special edition: 4-9.

Miletić, Nikolina. 2019. "Literaturbezogene Übungstypen in DaF-Lehrwerken". In *Tendenzen der Gegenwartsliteratur. Literaturwissenschaftliche und literaturdidaktische Perspektiven*. Ed. by Marijana Jeleč, 331-50. Berlin: Peter Lang.

Mühlbauer, Eva Maria. 2014. *Interkulturelles Lernen anhand von Märchen im Spanischunterricht.* Diplomarbeit. Universität Wien. Accessible via https://utheses.univie.ac.at/detail/28894 [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Neuhaus, Stefan. 2017. *Märchen* (2. edition). Bern: Francke.

Neuhaus, Stefan. 2020. "Über die allmähliche Verertigung der Märchen beim Erzählen. Zur Entstehung der Gattung bei den Brüdern Grimm und E.T.A. Hoffmann". *Ide, Märchen* 44 (3): 9–19.

Niskanen, Meri. 2021. *Die Brürder Grimm und ihre Märchen. Ein handlungsorientiertes Materialpaket für den finnischen DaF-Unterricht auf B2-Niveau*. Bachelorarbeit. Universität Jyväskylä. Institut für Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaften Deutsche Sprache und Kultur. Accessible via https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/78732?locale-attribute=en [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Petzoldt, Leander. 2005. Märchen, Mythen und Sagen. In *Taschenbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: 1: Grundlagen - Gattungen* (4. ed.). Ed. by Günther Lange, 246-66. Blatmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag.

Ranke, Kurt; Rolf Wilhelm Brednich; Hermann Bausinger; Ines Köhler. 1999. *Enzyklopädie des Märchens: Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Riegler, Marietta Sofia. 2022. *Die Vermittlung von Märchen im DaF/DaZ-Unterricht als Mittel zur Sprachförderung. Am Beispiel ausgewählter Märchen der*

Gebrüder Grimm. Masterarbeit. Universität Graz. Accessible via https://unipub. uni-graz.at/obvugrhs/content/titleinfo/7801240 [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Riemer, Claudia. 2010. "Motivierung". In *Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Ein internationales Handbuch*. Ed. by Hans-Jürgen Krumm; Christian Fandrych; Britta Hufeisen and Claudia Riemer, 1152-57. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Roche, Jörg; Janina Reher; Marjana Simic. 2012. *Focus on Handlung. – Zum Konzept des handlungsorientierten Erwerbs sprachlicher, sozialer und demokratischer Kompetenzen im Rahmen einer Kinder-Akademie. Bericht eines Pilotprojektes*. Münster: LIT Verlag

Röhrich, Lutz. 2003. "Schneewittchen. Ein Beitrag zur volkskundlichen und literaturwissenschaftlichen Erzählforschung". In *Märchenwelten. Das Volksärchen aus der Sicht verschiedener Fachdisziplinen*. Ed. by Kurt Franz, 5-32. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag.

Rosenfelder Johansson, Nicole. 2015a. *Märchen im DaF-Unterricht. Die didaktische Umsetzung von Märchen in der Praxis*. Magisterarbeit. Dalarna University, School of Humanities and Media Studies. Accessible at http://du.diva-portal.org/smash/ record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A906205&dswid=7819 [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Rosenfelder Johansson, Nicole. 2015b. *Die didaktische Umsetzung von Märchen. Eine Literaturstudie*. Bachelorarbeit. Dalarna University, School of Humanities and Media Studies. Accessible at http://du.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid= diva2%3A827673&dswid=9516 [last accessed 28.03.2025]

Ruf, Oliver. 2016. *Kreatives Schreiben. Eine Einführung*. Tübingen: Francke Narr.

Schilcher, Anita; Christina Knott. 2020. "Propps Märchentheorie als Ausgangspunkt für eine kompetenzorientierte Märchendidaktik". *ide: informationen zur deutschdidaktik. Zeitschrift für den Deutschunterricht in Wissenschaft und Schule* 44 (3): 95–106.

Schulz-Zander, Renate; Gerhard Tulodziecki. 2009. "Pädagogische Grundlagen für das Online-Lernen". In *Online-Lernen. Handbuch für Wissenschaft und Praxis*. Ed. by Ludwig J. Issing; Paul Klimsa, 35-45. München: Oldenbourg.

Sholichah, Iva Riyadhus; Purbani Widyastuti. 2018. "Fostering Language Skills Development through Fairy Tales: A Literature Study." *Conference: International Conference of Communication Science Research (ICCSR 2018)*

Soltau, Noah. 2021. "Teaching Fairy Tales: Constructing Culture and Learning

Language". *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German,* 54: 38-52. https://doi.org/10.1111/tger.12153

Thiele, Jens; Jörg Steitz-Kallenbach. 2003. *Handbuch Kinderliteratur: Grundwissen für Ausbildung und Praxis.* Freiburg: Herder.

Umbreit, Marion. 1994. "Die Sterntaler. Vom Hören zum Lesen zum Schreiben zum Sprechen". *Fremdsprache Deutsch.* 11. Literatur im Anfängerunterricht: 52 – 56.

Villiger, Hermann. 1973. *Deutsche Literatur: von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart: für Gymnasien und den Selbstunterricht mit 64 Abbildungen.* Frauenfeld: Huber.

Weber, Hans. 2000. " 'Ausgerechnet Rumpelstilzchen'? Grimms Märchen im DaF-Unterricht". *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German* 33 (1): 24–35. https://doi.org/10.2307/3531061

Weiss, Richard. 1946. *Volkskunde der Schweiz : Grundriss.* Zürich: Rentsch

Werner, Hans-Georg. 1965. *Deutsche Literatur im Überblick.* Leipzig: Reclam.

Woeller, Waltraud; Matthias Woeller. 1990. *Es war einmal… Illustrierte Geschichte des Märchens.* Leipzig: Edition Leipzig.

Wray, Miriam. 2021. "Kleidung und Altersthematik in „Rotkäppchen", „Aschenputtel" und ihren literarischen Adaptionen". *The German Quarterly*, 94 (2), 197-207. https://doi.org/10.1111/gequ.12176

Zinggeler, Margrit. 2007. *Grimmatik: German Grammar through the Magic of the Brothers` Grimm Fairy Tale*s. München: Lincom.