

Language teaching and fairytales: contextualized teaching, a new approach
Ensino de língua e contos de fada: ensino contextualizado, uma nova abordagem

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Resumo: *Como podemos instigar a imaginação da criança em favor do ensino de língua? Egan (1992) aponta uma abordagem de ensino infantil que difere do comum. Essa abordagem trás para o centro do currículo a imaginação da criança. 'Ensinando com contexto' (usando contos de fadas) pode ser relacionando aos gêneros de Bakhtin. Eles estão presentes no nosso cotidiano e são impossíveis de separar do aprendizado de língua. Duas versões de um mesmo conto-de-fadas foram linguisticamente comparados através de uma análise de corpus com o fim de investigar qual versão seria a ideal para uso em contexto escolar. As histórias analisadas são de Branca de Neve e Cinderela, uma versão traduzida do Alemão e outra recentemente adaptada da mesma.*

Palavras-chave: *Conto-de-fadas; Ensino-Imaginativo; Crianças.*

Abstract: *How can we instigate the child's imagination in favor of language teaching? Egan (1992) appoints an approach to teaching children that differs from the common, barely 'imaginative'. This approach brings the child's imagination to the center of the curriculum. 'Teaching with context' (using fairytales) can be linked to Bakhtin's genres, they are present in our everyday life and are impossible to separate from language learning. Two versions of two fairy tale stories were chosen to be linguistically compared through corpus analysis, for the matter of investigating what versions are considered proper in a classroom context. The stories analyzed are Snow White and Cinderella, one version translated from German and the modern adaptation.*

Key-Words: *Fairytales; Imaginative-teaching; Children*

1 Introduction

In old times, when technology was not more than horses and wagons for transportation and written texts were extremely rare, storytelling was an art. Each tribe, culture and society transmitted their values and their culture through the art of storytelling. Story tellers played an important role in society; the task of correctly transmitting the values of their society to youngsters. Myths, fables and stories speculating about the origin of the world, the origin of a

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tribe and reason for religion were the common way to gather people with common thoughts and culture.

In this day and age the art of storytelling and transmitting values through imagination evolved from merely speech dependant to written texts, films, cartoons, and, therefore considerably lost importance in education, ethical, and moral development of human beings. The Catholic era had a strict sense of catechizing and brought education and teaching away from daily life and daily habits and isolated them into the context known and school, separating life from education (Cubberley, 1920). With the changing of the world and books becoming popular, oral storytellers lost their power and their role was transferred mainly to written texts. What once was an essential part of society became simple folk tales or “Granny bed time stories” and began to be called fairy tales.

Due to the lack of means to keep record, many versions of the same story were created. The Grimm Brothers were two among many that felt the need to write down these common knowledge tales, the brothers considered fairytales a reflection of a culture and a time.

This research aims to analyze and compare the language in fairy tales. The separation of the fairytales as genre occurred before the Grimm brothers decided to write “Stories of Children and House Hold”, the use of fairytales genre was first defined by Madam D’Aulnoy (1697).

There is a study regarding language teaching through genres that has been conducted recently, focusing on language teaching based in context (Honglin 2003). Considering Bakhtin’s (1997) definition of ‘*speech genre*’, a Fairytale is a genre that infers predominantly the ‘*narrative type*’ of discourse.

In this paper it was intended to analyze and compare the language in two Grimm fairytales. Two popular fairy tales containing the same ‘Fabula’ (Mieke Bal, 1997) were chosen, Cinderella and Snow White. Four as total, two closer to the original Grimm translated version and two versions recently adapted for children.

2 Literature review

What could be considered the best or the only approach to teach and impart knowledge, now is taken as a ‘new approach’ in teaching. Schools and education today are derived from a medieval time policy and educational structure (Cubberley, 1920), when teaching had a strict purpose to catechize.

Schooling was at first only open for clerical members then strictly for men with high monetary power. Many changes happened throughout history, the public was broadened (all men, including women) and the subject evolved according to the philosophies, ideologies and religion of each country; but some of the main structures of the medieval schooling still remain, such as the prejudice towards language and a bias against imagination and individual thinking.

Language prejudice is an issue we face up until today, it is a trail of thought that believe there is only one right way of speaking (Bagno, 2006). A thought that can be found in every school or every teacher and maybe in every parent. The liberty of knowing a language and being able to 'play' with it is associated to the lack of schooling or knowledge of language. Contextualized teaching brings forth the context considering not that there is only one right way of speaking (grammar), but that there are right ways, a right way in every different context. It is what Bakhtin (1997) defines primary and secondary genre.

Egan (1992) emphasizes the importance of imagination in the formation of the child as well as points to deficit in the educational system once imagination is ignored. "*Most teachers of young children learn in their professional preparation that children's active manipulation of concrete objects should precede abstract or symbolic learning*" (EGAN, 1992). Here, she clarifies the role imagination plays in a child's world enabling the "individual-social" communication, with this we can relate to Bakhtin's language theory that an 'individual' will think (imagination) if it is motivated by a social movement and if the imaginative process does not occur, the 'individual' will not be able to relate in a social realm and will not accomplish communication's main rule.

In order to learn a language, even it being your native language, you need to learn 'proper' grammar? When do you really 'learn' a language? These questions are most likely to be answered in such a way that one would barely be able to know a language unless one would spend years studying norms or grammar. Bagno (2006) names this kind of thought as 'Linguistic Bias'. It is a name for an idea that many have that only "cultured" speakers truly speak and know a language. It is a bias that he considers unreal, since language is a social product that has communication as critical matter. When communication and understanding do not occur, words become useless.

The main question that motivated this research is "how do you teach a child to function and really communicate?" The main challenge is to teach the child language in context, in other words, to teach the child to effectively communicate in each different and specific situation. Following this perspective, Honglin (2003) states that: "Genres tend to be conceived as generic structures that constrain individuals and communicative events."

What does Bakhtin's language theory have to do with Imagination? It was hard, as first, to draw a bridge between two things that appear to be so different, but after reading Egan's paper (1986) on 'the new approach' the bridge was already there. In this perspective, Bakhtin (1997) states that the production of language is always dialogical, multiple voices (polyphony) and multiple meanings (polysemy) are present in the speech of communicative groups and for this matter do not allow a single pure truth in their speech, but various "truths" that are present in every social interactions regarding language (Linguagem). Thus, Bahktin clarifies that the senses are constructed by multiple voices present in verbal interaction which characterizes an

interactionist conception of language. In other words, we see Bakhtin in this relationship of language to the reader.

Egan states that a child can only relate to the material world after this world has been processed through their imagination. In order to realize an object in the material world or an action or a social interaction the child must first imagine it and have a psychological brain process. Therefore, Bakhtin's (1997) point of view would only be confirmed if first the individual would understand the abstract and then realize the concrete.

The language in a fairytale plays a particular role in the child's understanding of the story, the more 'concrete' (related to material objects) the words are the less the young learner will be able to comprehend, as opposed to the more abstract a word is (more related to feelings and imagination) the easier it will be for the child to understand. For instance, if you use metaphors concerning the physical world (mountains, rivers) the child will have a hard time to understand as opposed to describing feelings and 'good versus bad' actions, which the processes in early years:

"If we take a story such as Cinderella (...) it is clear that the story is structured on the relationship of various underlying concepts. (...) we can immediately see conflicts of fear/hope, kindness/cruelty (...) good/bad. These are enormously general, abstract concepts. (...) The abstraction is prior and prerequisite to being able to understand the concrete story.

(...) the parts of a narrative that are most comprehensible and engaging (to a child) are those whose meaning turns on the child's understanding of the abstract concepts like loyalty/betrayal, courage/cowardice. Without such concepts most of the concrete action in the book is meaningless. (EGAN, 1992: Chapter 1)

Fairytales are well known for the great imaginative power, thus, the language used in a fairytale may influence a child's comprehension. It is important to us as teachers to know what type of language can be used with each different situation. By comparing the fairytales we will try to find a concrete difference between them.

When the fairy tales are analyzed it is possible to notice that there are differences between the original and adapted versions. This occurs mainly in the way in which stories are told. In addition, we note a significant change in the language used which corresponds to those versions. The brothers Grimm did not write their stories for children but they are used today for adults as well as children to read. However their stories have been adapted in to a more adequate form for children. While maintaining the same 'fabula' (Bal, 1997) it is clear that the story and language differ.

One of the most interesting characteristics of this analysis is to observe how the same person or situation can be described in different ways, viewing the same perspective but not the same ‘road’ to reach it. A good example is in the stories that were chosen, the father of Cinderella is mentioned as “a rich man” in the adult version and as “a gentle man\” in the adapted version.

3 Methodology

We chose two fairy tales to work with: Snow White and Cinderella. For this research, two versions of those tales were chosen, the original and the one adapted for children. Using ‘AntConc’, we ran the frequency list and analyzed possible differences between the fairytales, by directly comparing the beginning and the end of the versions.

For the analysis, this research will use the program “Antconc” in order to build a frequency list of words to see which ones are used in both versions and how the fairytales versions differ. In addition, we will use this program to assess whether it is possible to differentiate both versions of fairy tales through a corpus analysis.

4 Results

4.1 Word Frequency

Using the ‘AntConc’ program we found the following results comparing the versions of the stories:

Snow-White:

Version	Word types	Word tokens
Adult	605	2632
Adapted	543	1920

Table 1

First, looking at this comparison we can see that the size for these stories matters and the amount of word tokens used in it is directly proportional to the version (highest for adult version and lower for adapted version).

Cinderella:

Version	Total word types	Total word tokens
Adult	571	2700
Adapted	783	2349

Table 2

However, when we see the Cinderella comparison it is possible to notice that the total number of types are higher in the adapted version than in the adult one, which was unexpected. On the other hand, we see a contrast regarding the total number of tokens used in the adult version and the total number of types, which are similar to the results found in the Snow-White version. What was expected were the same results found in Snow-White.

When looking for an answer to this problem we could see that the difference between the versions was simply a matter of text organization, for in the adapted version there are more dialogues that allow a possible oral reader of the story to interact with the public and in the adult version the speech of the characters are simply stated. This happens predominantly only in the Cinderella because the difference is considerably noticeable. When concerning the Snow-White story we see the Adult version has more of a descriptive aspect than the adapted version but the difference is not as considerable.

With this analysis we conjectured that what may influence the difference between the versions may be the total number of words, and not the number of word types (different words) used throughout the text. However we could not reach a full conclusion. For this matter, we made a direct comparison of the beginning and the end of the versions to be able to view differences in details.

4.2 Cinderella, direct comparison

4.2.1 Beginning of the story:

Adult: *“The wife of a rich man fell sick, and as she felt that her end was drawing near, she called her only daughter to her bedside and said, dear child, be good and pious, and then the good God will always protect you, and I will look down on you from heaven and be near you. Thereupon she closed her eyes and departed. Every day the maiden went out to her mother's grave, and wept, and she remained pious and good. When winter came the snow*

spread a white sheet over the grave, and by the time the spring sun had drawn it off again, the man had taken another wife.

The woman had brought with her into the house two daughters, who were beautiful and fair of face, but vile and black of heart. Now began a bad time for the poor step-child. Is the stupid goose to sit in the parlor with us, they said. He who wants to eat bread must earn it. Out with the kitchen-wench. They took her pretty clothes away from her, put an old grey bedgown on her, and gave her wooden shoes. Just look at the proud princess, how decked out she is, they cried, and laughed, and led her into the kitchen. There she had to do hard work from morning till night, get up before daybreak, carry water, light fires, cook and wash.”

Adapted: *“There was once an honest gentle man who took for his second wife a lady, the proudest and most disagreeable in the whole country. She had two daughters exactly like herself in all things. He also had one little girl, who resembled her dead mother, the best woman in all the world. Scarcely had the second marriage taken place, than the stepmother became jealous of the good qualities of the little girl, who was so great a contrast to her own two daughters. She gave her all the menial occupations of the house; compelled her to wash the floors and staircases, to dust the bed-rooms, and clean the grates; and while her sisters occupied carpeted chambers hung with mirrors, where they could see themselves from head to foot, this poor little damsel was sent to sleep in an attic, on an old straw mattress, with only one chair and not a looking-glass in the room.”*

When reading the beginning of the versions it is possible to see that an interesting fact is omitted from the Adapted version and is subjectively put out to the reader, the death of the mother is an important fact in the story and it is the main reason for the facts that follow and for the unfolding of the fairytale. Therefore it is not explicitly mentioned in the adapted version except for the comparison of Cinderella with goodness of her dead mother. This goodness is reinforced in both versions, it is considered something important for the final enclosing of the tale in which goodness is rewarded and evil is punished. Another interesting difference we can see is regarding Cinderella’s father, he is seen as a plain rich man that took another wife for himself in the Adult version as opposed to the Adapted version where he is mentioned as a gentleman.

Some other main differences that can be observed in the table as to the references used for the same characters and the mentioning of certain events occurring at the beginning of the story. They are compared directly if a correspondent is found both in the Adult and Adapted version.

Table of comparison

Adult	Adapted
Rich man	Honest gentle man
only daughter	little girl
First wife	–
–	Sisters
–	Mother – Best woman
Her end was drawing near	Dead mother
Another Wife	Second Wife
The woman	She
Vile and black of heart	Proudest and most disagreeable

Table 3**4.2.2 End of the story:**

Adult: *“As they passed by the hazel-tree, the two white doves cried - turn and peep, turn and peep, no blood is in the shoe, the shoe is not too small for her, the true bride rides with you, and when they had cried that, the two came flying down and placed themselves on cinderella's shoulders, one on the right, the other on the left, and remained sitting there. When the wedding with the king's son was to be celebrated, the two false sisters came and wanted to get into favor with cinderella and share her good fortune.*

When the betrothed couple went to church, the elder was at the right side and the younger at the left, and the pigeons pecked out one eye from each of them. Afterwards as they came back the elder was at the left, and the younger at the right, and then the pigeons pecked out the other eye from each. And thus, for their wickedness and falsehood, they were punished with blindness all their days.”

Adapted: *“Filled with astonishment, mingled with no little alarm, they threw themselves at her feet, begging her pardon for all their former unkindness. She raised and embraced them: told them she forgave them with all her heart, and only hoped they would love her always. Then she departed with the herald to the king's palace, and told her whole story to his majesty and the royal family, who were not in the least surprised, for everybody believed in fairies, and everybody longed to have a fairy godmother.*

For the young prince, he found her more lovely and loveable than ever, and insisted upon marrying her immediately. Cinderella never went home again, but she sent for her two sisters to the palace, and with the consent of all parties married them shortly after to two rich gentlemen of the court.”

When comparing the surreal manifestations in the story that unfolds and produces a change in the plot we see a mainly religious difference between the stories. In the Adult version, Cinderella is left compelled to be good by her dead mother, following the will of God and thus will be protected by Him. Therefore, in the adapted version the humility of Cinderella and her goodness are shown as an act of kindness and forgiveness towards her step-sisters, what is reinforced is benevolence with nothing in exchange. The surreal manifestation in the Adapted version, the fairy-Godmother, comes to aid her in a moment of sadness and plays no other part in the story as opposed to the pigeons in the Adult version that punish the evil step-sisters.

Table of comparison

Adult	Adapted
two white doves	They
As they passed by the hazel-tree	Filled with astonishment, mingled with no little alarm
the two came flying down	threw themselves
king's son	young prince

Table 4

4.3 Snow-White, direct comparison

4.3.1 Beginning of the story:

Adult: *“Once upon a time in the middle of winter, when the flakes of snow were falling like feathers from the sky, a Queen sat at a window sewing, and the frame of the window was made of black ebony. And whilst she was sewing and looking out of the window at the snow, she pricked her finger with the needle, and three drops of blood fell upon the snow. And the red looked pretty upon the white snow, and she thought to herself, "Would that I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window-frame.”*

Soon after that she had a little daughter, who was as white as snow, and as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony; and she was therefore called Little Snow-white. And when the child was born, the Queen died.

After a year had passed the King took to himself another wife. She was a beautiful woman, but proud and haughty, and she could not bear that anyone else should surpass her in beauty. She had a wonderful looking-glass, and when she stood in front of it and looked at herself in it, and said—

*"Looking-glass, Looking-glass, on the wall,
Who in this land is the fairest of all?"*

The looking-glass answered—

"Thou, O Queen, art the fairest of all!"

Then she was satisfied, for she knew that the looking-glass spoke the truth."

Adapted: *"One winter's day, when the snow was falling, a beautiful queen sat sewing by a window. As she looked out on to the white garden she saw a black raven, and while she looked at it she accidentally pricked her finger with the needle. When she saw the drop of blood she thought to herself, "How wonderful it would be if I could have a little girl whose skin was as white as the snow out there, her hair as black as the raven and her lips as red as this drop of blood."*

Not long afterwards the queen had a baby daughter, and when she saw her jet black hair, snowy white skin and red red lips she remembered her wish and called her Snow White. Snow White grew up to be a pretty child, but sadly, after a few years, her mother died and her father married again.

The new queen, Snow White's stepmother, was a beautiful woman too, but she was very vain. More than anything else she wanted to be certain that she was the most beautiful woman in the world. She had a magic mirror, and she used to look at herself in it each clay and say:

*"Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Who is the fairest one of all?"*

And the mirror would always reply,

"You, oh Queen, are the fairest one of all."

The queen would smile when she heard this for she knew the mirror never failed to speak the truth. "

Looking directly at the version we can see several differences that stand out when analyzing the story. There is a curious chronological delay of events, in the adult version the mother dies right at the birth of Snow-White and in the adapted version the mother dies only a few years after. This has probably happened to diminish the feeling of the absence of a mother in a child/reader. In the adapted version, Snow-White's step-mother is not painted as having a completely evil character, but simply as being very vain (as can be observed in the table). On the other hand, in the adult version the queen is characterized as essentially evil in the beginning and this reflects on her behavior in the end. A curious language difference is the fact that blood

is not mentioned more than once in the adapted version but mentioned twice or more in the adult version.

Table of comparison

Adult	Adapted
in the middle of winter	winter's day
the flakes of snow were falling like feathers from the sky	the snow was falling
a Queen	a beautiful queen
a child	a little girl
black as the wood	black as the raven
a little daughter	a baby daughter
Little Snow-white	Snow White
Queen died	her mother died
a beautiful woman	a beautiful woman
proud and haughty	very vain
wonderful looking-glass	magic mirror

Table 5

4.3.2 End of the story:

Adult: *"It happened, however, that a king's son came into the forest, and went to the dwarfs' house to spend the night. He saw the coffin on the mountain, and the beautiful Snow-white within it, and read what was written upon it in golden letters. Then he said to the dwarfs, "Let me have the coffin, I will give you whatever you want for it." But the dwarfs answered, "We will not part with it for all the gold in the world." Then he said, "Let me have it as a gift, for I cannot live without seeing Snow-white. I will honor and prize her as my dearest possession." As he spoke in this way the good dwarfs took pity upon him, and gave him the coffin.*

And now the King's son had it carried away by his servants on their shoulders. And it happened that they stumbled over a tree-stump, and with the shock the poisonous piece of apple which Snow-white had bitten off came out of her throat. And before long she opened her eyes, lifted up the lid of the coffin, sat up, and was once more alive. "Oh, heavens, where am I?" she

cried. The King's son, full of joy, said, "You are with me," and told her what had happened, and said, "I love you more than everything in the world; come with me to my father's palace, you shall be my wife."

And Snow-white was willing, and went with him, and their wedding was held with great show and splendor. But Snow-white's wicked step-mother was also bidden to the feast. When she had arrayed herself in beautiful clothes she went before the looking-glass, and said: "Looking-glass, Looking-glass, on the wall, Who in this land is the fairest of all?" The glass answered "Oh, Queen, of all here the fairest art thou, But the young Queen is fairer by far as I trow."

Then the wicked woman uttered a curse, and was so wretched, so utterly wretched, that she knew not what to do. At first she would not go to the wedding at all, but she had no peace, and must go to see the young Queen. And when she went in she knew Snow-white; and she stood still with rage and fear, and could not stir. But iron slippers had already been put upon the fire, and they were brought in with tongs, and set before her. Then she was forced to put on the red-hot shoes, and dance until she dropped down dead."

Adapted: "Not long after this a prince came riding through the forest and came to the hill where Snow White lay in her glass-topped coffin. She looked so beautiful that he loved her at once and he asked the dwarfs if he might have the coffin and take it to his castle. The dwarfs would not allow him to do this, but they did let the prince kiss her.

As the prince kissed Snow White gently, he moved her head. The piece of poisoned apple fell from her lips. She stirred and then she stretched a little. Slowly she came back to life. Snow White saw the handsome prince kneeling on the ground beside her, and fell in love with him straight away.

Then the queen far away in the palace heard from the mirror, "You, oh Queen, are fair, tis true, But Snow White is fairer still than you." She was furious that Snow White had escaped death once more. And now the king discovered what mischief she had been up to, and banished her from his land. No one ever saw her or her mirror again.

As for Snow White, she said farewell to her kind friends the dwarfs, and rode away on the back of the prince's horse. At his castle they were married and they both lived happily forever afterwards."

In the end of the Snow-White version we can notice that the adapted version is a little censored. The punishment of evil is evident in both versions, in the adult version the characters themselves punish the step-mother but in the adapted version the consciousness of the evil step-mother accuses her and make it unbearable to live with herself for all she has done; with this, in the adapted version the way she dies is left out, bringing forth the idea of censorship given that in the adult version the means of her death is very cruel and can be linked to the cruelty of even the "good" characters.

Pointing out what was said in the analysis of the beginning of the story, that the evil is not so evil in the adapted version, we can observe that negative feelings are expressed in the adult story, but few mentions are made in the adapted one. In this way smoothing the events in the story and producing less negative effect on the readers.

Table of comparison

Adult	Adapted
King's son	a prince
wicked woman	the queen
she opened her eyes	. She looked so beautiful
the young Queen	Snow White
was so wretched	was furious
she was forced to put on the red-hot shoes	banished her from his land

Table 6

5 Final conclusions

When analyzing which version would be best for the child learner and which can be considered improper a conclusion was only possible after directly comparing the version, for size was pointed irrelevant. Evil is a concept that was not explicitly put in both adapted versions of the tales, therefore we can see a certain care regarding the child's imagination towards negative concepts.

The theoretical information points that narratives (fairytales) influence a child's learning through imagination. Thus children and possibly everyone absorbs abstract concepts easier; by contextualizing studies of language, the teacher allows the student to be in contact with real situations, therefore, becoming more proficient in the language.

When talking about proficiency in a language, what is usually brought into consideration is the grammatical proficiency. Therefore, in order to practically and properly function in a language you will not be successful if you do not master the main genres in that language, for example, when writing a letter and an e-mail in Portuguese or English some slight differences can be noticed (the punctuation, the format of a letter, etc.) and when one only masters the grammatical aspect of the language he/she will be unsuccessful in the prior engagement of a language, that is, communicate.

In order to propose and introduce to a new language and help children and students to master different aspects of the language, narratives in classroom can be of great help. Narratives are a common genre in most cultures and languages and can be used to produce a link between the native language and the new language, if the case is foreign language teaching. If the case is introducing language as a whole to the child learner, narratives complete the piece Egan (1992) evidences in her paper: imagination helps the child to relate to the material world.

Fairytales are predominantly narratives and the plot is based essentially in abstract concepts and are driven in to a faraway land and time that stimulates the reader's imagination. Imagination, to a child, is an open door for knowledge; it is essentially in the realm of the imagination that language lives.

Communication is an imaginative process, to teach a language is to teach how to imagine in different circumstances and materialize the imagination into the form of sounds or written texts. To try and teach writing, speaking or thinking without imagination is to speak of the sea and point at a puddle, where language is like the sea in its immensity that fits in our imagination and a puddle is just a small example of the many facets and contexts language can be found and used for.

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