

# **The Uses of Enchantment: Fairy Tales as Instructional Materials to Facilitate Primary English Language Education**

Chinghwa Lee \*

## **ABSTRACT**

Graders 5-6 of the primary schools in Taiwan were offered official English teaching program for the very first time in 2001, thanks to the innovative educational practice called the Nine-Year-Integrative-Curriculum. The researcher strongly advises teachers to adopt fairy tales as instructional materials for primary language education. Psychological, intellectual, and cultural benefits of fairy tales are reviewed to justify the proposal. In addition, to make the best use of fairy tales in the program, related pedagogical elements such as young learners' general characteristics, various teachers' roles and effective teaching activities are examined in an elaborate way. By the fairy-tale based instruction, the researcher intends to motivate the young beginners to get involved in the teaching program and to assist them in sailing through their second language acquisition experiences.

**Key words: Teaching English to Children, Instructional Materials for Children, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the Nine-Year-Integrative-Curriculum, Teaching English As a Foreign Language (EFL)**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Taiwan is undergoing an innovative educational practice called the Nine-Year-Integrative-Curriculum, which mainly aims to integrate knowledge acquired from books and real-life experiences, in the hope of promoting students' creativity as well as problem solving skills, which are reported not fully developed in the days when the traditional curriculum was implemented.

The students who receive the Nine-Year-Integrative-Curriculum consist of two major groups: graders 1-6 and graders 7-9. For the former, one of its most prominent features is EFL education for graders 5-6. According to the traditional curriculum, young learners are not offered EFL program until they go to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade in the junior high school. In other words, EFL teaching is officially implemented in primary schools for the very first time. The revolutionary program, as a natural consequence, catches eyes of people of all ages and walks.

Graders 5-6 belong to a bracket different from grown-ups in many ways: they have short attention span; they have difficulties understanding abstract concepts; they are at the end stage of the critical period for language acquisition, to name just a few.

If we teachers transfer EFL teaching experiences directly from high school or college language education to primary schools without major adaptation, we are very likely to incur frustrations. In other words, to successfully teach English language to the given bracket requires specific skills and intuitions that differ from those appropriate for other learners. Therefore, the researchers and teachers are expected to

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generate more thoughtful and helpful ideas to facilitate English education programs for primary school pupils in Taiwan.

To follow the goal of the Nine-Year-Integrative-Curriculum, the researcher recommends fairy tales as appropriate instructional materials for primary EFL education. The study revolves around the general features of fairy tales, which are justified to be beneficial to young learners' language acquisition. To make the fairy-tale based program feasible, the traits of the learners (graders 5-6), various roles of primary school language teachers, certain pragmatic pedagogical designs and their supporting studies are provided in details to assist the teacher to implement the program.

## **LEARNERS: GRADERS 5-6**

Graders 5-6 in Taiwan are about 11 to 12 years old. They are pre-pubescent children who are different from pre-school children or adults. In the following passages, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders' general characteristics and their roles as EFL learners will be investigated in order to manifest the uniqueness of the population of this bracket.

### **1.General Characteristics**

Features of the young learners may provide us valuable and practical information. Brown (2001) indicates five categories, which may offer helpful insights into children's language education. His categories include intellectual development, attention span, sensory input, affective factors, and authentic & meaningful language. The researcher adds one more aspect "the effect of the Critical Period" to what Brown suggests and therefore makes the categories six.

#### **( 1 ) Intellectual Development**

Children of this bracket are centered on the functional purposes of language. The grammatical term "present progressive" may be too abstract for them to catch although the syntactic structure itself is accessible for them if the educator can call the young learners to pay attention to the *ing* ending of the verbs. As a result, certain complicated concepts or patterns require more repetitions than adults. However, the meaning and

relevance of repetitions should be made clear to help students realize and to accept the practice.

### **( 2 ) Attention Span**

Learners of the given bracket have short attention span when dealing with material that is boring, useless, or too difficult to them. Since language lessons can at times be difficult for children, attempts should be made to make language classes interesting, lively, and fun.

### **( 3 ) Sensory Input**

Pupils at 5th and 6th grades need to have all five senses stimulated. Role-plays, games, Total Physical Response Activities and other hands-on activities help children to internalize language by sensory aids.

### **( 4 ) Affective Factors**

The pre-pubescent are often innovative in language forms but still have a great many inhibitions. They are extremely sensitive, especially to peers. They are much more vulnerable than adults since their egos are still being shaped. The slightest nuances of communication can be negatively interpreted. Therefore, efforts should be made to help them overcome potential learning barriers. Patience and support from teachers are also necessary when we try to build their esteem to make error-and-trial experiments.

### **( 5 ) Authentic & Meaningful Language**

Children of this bracket are less willing to put up with language that does not hold immediate rewards for them. "Canned" or stilted language is likely to be rejected. Language needs to be firmly context embedded. They are much less ready to tolerate context-reduced language in abstract, isolated, unconnected sentences.

### **( 6 ) The Effect of the Critical Period**

In most behavioral domains, competence is expected to increase over development. But it has been suggested that there is a critical age for language acquisition (Fromkin, 1998; Cipollone, 1998; Brown, 2000; Brown, 1995). During this period, language learning proceeds more easily and swiftly. The ability to learn a native language develops within this specific period, that is, from birth to puberty. As far as second language acquisition issue is concerned, Scovel left powerful evidence of a critical period for accent (Fromkin, 1998; Cipollone, 1998; Brown, 2000; Brown,

1995). According to the Critical Period Hypothesis mentioned above, graders 5-6 are still in the golden prime time of language learning in terms of the phonological manifestation. Teachers should take advantage of learners' Critical Period and make the most use of the age effect lest interference from one's native phonology should create difficulties that persist as a foreign accent in phonology, as noted by Fromkin (1998). Although the results of research on the Critical Period effect in second language acquisition are mixed, the revelation that phonological learning is a the-sooner-the-better matter plays a significant role in EFL education aiming at the given bracket.

## **2.Learners' Roles**

The emphasis of the Nine-Year-Integrative-Curriculum on functional use of language for meaningful purposes results in different learners' roles from their counterparts who receive traditional language education. Breen and Candlin's (1980) description of the Communicative Language Approach of the learner's roles may serve as the guideline of the fairy-tale based instruction program:

The role of learner as negotiator—between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning—emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities, which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way.(p.110)

In other words, by interacting with group members, every individual should make contribution to their own learning. On the other hand, students also gain control of language education by taking responsibility of learning.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: FAIRY TALES**

In September 2001, EFL education of primary school was launched. What caught people's attention was a plethora of textbooks, full of tasks and goals, imported or

home made, with a lot of well printed characters under different names: Yoyo or Cody or whatever. These printed characters are all very new but are distant and foreign to children in Taiwan. To make things worse, they are “hollow” characters—no personal traits of them can be traced. Most children would have trouble “interacting” with these strange figures in the language classes.

To ease students’ learning anxiety and to motivate children’s language acquisition, teachers are strongly advised to make use of fairy tales as instructional materials, which may serve as familiar and convenient links to connect school kids’ old academic territory and new language learning field.

In the following passages, the researcher would first present the features of fairy tales, next their merits as instructional materials and finally their drawbacks when applied to the primary English education program.

### **1.Description of Fairy Tales**

The term “ fairy tales “ was first used by Madame d’Aulnoy to name her book *Conte de Fees* (Tales of the Fairies). “Fairy” comes from “fay” or “fata,” which is the Latin for the fates, who were goddesses possessing power over the future and man’s destiny. Today the word is used to describe any small supernatural being with magical powers (Brown, 1996). Contrary to the common belief, fairies rarely become involved with these stories. But the supernatural powers that fairies are endowed with turn out to be an essential component of fairy tales. It is the magic that changes a beast into a prince and a pumpkin into a carriage.

According to Tomlinson (1986), traditional fairy tales are characterized by the following traits, which apparently are favorable to language education aiming at graders 5-6.

**( 1 ) Shorter plots than in other genres of literature.** Some of them are as short as one-third of a page. Stories longer than 5 pages like “The Magic Table, the Golden Donkey, and the Club in the Sack” (Zipes, 1988) are rare and exceptional in Brother’s Grimm’s collection. Since young learners’ attention is short, these simple and succinct stories are appropriate for them.

**( 2 ) Concentrated action.** To keep audience alert and interested, the development pace of fairy tale events such as wedding, murdering, accident and death move rapidly. The fast tempo makes the language classes entertaining and enjoyable. As a result, students' attention would keep focusing on learning.

**( 3 ) Characters with only one outstanding quality,** which made them easy to identify. Traditional fairy tale characters include king, with or without his queen; a prince and princess, who usually fall in love and marry; a wicked stepmother, who is almost always cruel and evil in contrast to the natural mother. Others include country people, such as woodcutters, millers, hunters; animals, most of whom can talk; witches, ogres and other beings with supernatural powers. Characters with only one distinguished quality are likely to appeal to school kids since their minds are simple and straightforward.

**( 4 ) Language full of rhythm and melody.** As in "Cinderella" translated by Jack Zipes (1988), the pigeons cried out twice to the prince: "Looky, look, look/ at the shoe that she took. There's blood all over, and her foot's too small./ She's not the bride you met at the ball." For the third time, when the prince was accompanied by Cinderella, they sang out: "Looky, look, look/ at the shoe that she took./ Her foot's just right, and there's no blood at all. She's truly the bride you met at the ball." The special linguistic style device provides young learners a meaningful context to repeat certain words or phrases in rhyme. Through the process, the students are likely to acquire the vocabulary and sentences exposed to them, without making much conscious efforts .

**( 5 ) Stock beginnings and endings** such as "Once upon a time" and "They lived happily ever after." The ritual-like opening may easily lead learners to the language education context. The ending, on the other hand, cues them to go back to the reality.

**( 6 ) Recurring features** such as use of the number three, as in three sisters, three wishes. This fixed pattern lowers students' learning anxiety since the plots are somewhat predictable.

**( 7 ) Repetition of refrains or chants**, such as “Mirror, mirror, on the wall,/ who in this realm is the fairest of all?” in “Snow White” (Zipes, 1988). The oral traits of these stories are favorable to language education since repetitions may foster primary school pupils’ learning.

**( 8 ) A happy ending.** Most fairy tales end with “They lived happily ever after.” The promising ending may reassure children that there is a happy solution to their problems either in growing or in learning.

## **2.Merits**

Fairy tales would benefit primary language education in many different ways. The psychological, intellectual and cultural advantages of fairy tales would be investigated to manifest their favorable effects.

### **( 1 ) Psychological Level**

First and foremost, fairy tales as instructional materials for primary EFL education can lower learners’ anxiety. According to Krashen, (Richards, 1999; Brown, 2000) the best acquisition will occur in environments where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent. For instance, Snow White, Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood is a figure that most children have been acquainted with for years. Their personalities, character development and final outcome would not deviate from children’s expectation. Familiarity and predictability thus provide children sufficient psychological comfort and encourage them to confront the new learning field.

In addition, in the last few decades, many famous contemporary psychologists proposed that fairy tale plots basically parallel children’s psychological development. For example, Bruno Bettelheim (1989), a well-known child psychologist, interprets “Hansel and Gretel” as a symbolic process of children’s struggling to survive the oral fixation stage.

The parents’ desertion of Hansel and Gretel basically indicates fathers’ and mothers’ intention to force their growing children to transcend from their oral stage and to be independent from the supporting family. The way that Hansel and Gretel kill

the cannibal witch (burning her in a cooking stove) reveals the fact that they ultimately learn to face their developing crisis and also overcome it. Thus they gain growth and autonomy. In a similar way, “Cinderella” focuses on sibling rivalry problem; “Snow White” and “Jack and the Beanstalk” mainly deal with the conflicts between generations (Bettelheim, 1989).

Since fairy tales not only address children’s present difficulties and challenges but also provide potential solutions, the magnetism of these stories is unequalled, compared with other teaching materials. By exerting the enchantment of the stories, teachers could draw out pupils’ learning potentials from their unconscious domains.

Moreover, every fairy tale guarantees a happy ending, which may help culture children’s optimism and perseverance. When dealing with the difference between fairy tales and myth, Bettelheim (1989) noted,

“At this age, from four until puberty, what the child needs most is to be presented with symbolic images which reassure him that there is a happy solution to his oedipal problems—though he may find this difficult to believe—provided that he slowly works himself out of them. But reassurance about a happy outcome has to come first, because only then the child have the courage to labor confidently to extricate himself from his oedipal predicament.”(p.39)

Although Bettelheim addressed himself to children’s growing problem instead of language learning issue, we are justified to infer that young learners may benefit from the bright side of fairy tales, which may facilitate the process of language acquisition. When experiencing frustrations in EFL education, students are likely to identify themselves with the characters in the tales who confront various tests or seemingly irreversible failures only to gain the final victories. Unconsciously, young learners may secretly hope that they would ultimately overcome language learning barriers. In this case, they are more willing to take risks in the language class. As Brown (2001) noted, “If learners recognize their own ego fragility and develop the firm belief that, yes, they can indeed do it, then they are ready to take those necessary risks. They are ready to try out their newly acquired language, to use it for meaningful purposes, to ask questions, and to assert themselves.”(p.63) As students’ confidence and esteem are heightened,

the intimidation of the EFL education may dwindle; therefore, students are willing to attempt to produce and to interpret language that is a bit beyond their absolute certainty.

## ( 2 ) Intellectual Level

Pupils of graders 5-6 are interested in language that holds immediate rewards for them. Therefore, linguistic labels of learner's world components that they can see or touch should be of the first priority when primary language educators weigh one teaching material over another. Fairy tales are full of names of tangible objects such as *mirror, wall, frog, apple*, to name just a few. The textbooks in trade markets do include words like these but they are not taught in a meaningful context, as fairy tale story lines would offer us.

There has been a great deal of research by psycholinguists on lexical access, which helps learners gain related information of the meaning of a given word from their mental lexicon. It has been proposed that semantically related words such as "doctor" and "nurse" are located in the same part of the lexicon and once the "path" to that section has been taken, it is easier to trace that way a second time (Fromkin, 1998).

According to this assumption, fairy tales are more efficient in vocabulary building than other trade textbooks in primary EFL education. The fairy tale provides a story line as a context to store the related words together in the same area of lexicon. Take "Snow White" as an example, its plot development helps learner to connect the relationship among the season word (*winter*), the color words (*white, red, black, yellow, green*), names of daily articles (*mirror, bed, chair, knife, fork*), the cardinal number word (*three, seven*), other miscellaneous words commonly used in daily lives (*heart, wedding, die*) and so on and so forth. Instead of being separated and stored in isolation, these words may become semantically related by means of the fairy-tale based instruction program. As a consequence, the vocabulary would be easy to retain, access and retrieve.

Besides, dialogues such as greetings, requests, or information exchanges between fairy tale characters are also ready to be transferred to primary EFL teaching program. These context embedded conversations are compatible to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders' intellectual development and therefore may help them learn English meaningfully and easily.

Concentrated plot development, rhythmic and melodic language, repeated refrains and chants make fairy tales extremely appropriate for drama activities. A stage play

activity, for instance, may stimulate school kids' five senses and open their minds to language acquisition.

### ( 3 ) Cultural Level

According to Schumann, (Richard-Amato, 1988), L2 acquisition is dependent upon the amount of social and psychological distance that exists between the learner and the L2 culture. When the distances are great, the learner tends to fossilize<sup>1</sup> during early stages of interlanguage development. The learner may not have received the necessary input because of social isolation or may not have given the target language the attention necessary for acquisition because of psychological distance (Richard-Amato, 1988; Brown, 2001). Fairy tales, as one genre of children's literature, may increase students' cultural awareness of western societies. Acculturation in turn may motivate students to acquire English as a foreign language, which is prevalent all over the world.

### 3.Drawbacks

As instructional material for primary EFL education, fairy tales have three major inherent limitations. First of all, children do not have the chance to gain exposure to current words, such as *computer*, *air plane*, *video game*, *internet*, or other terms that entered Modern English after fairy tales had been fixed in their written forms.

Secondly, fairy tales are mostly narrated in past tense. Comparatively speaking, past tense is an abstract and thorny concept to most graders 5-6 in Taiwan. One of the possible reasons is that Chinese language users do not indicate time changes by inflection. For another, past tense consists of regular forms and irregular forms. The complicated composition makes tremendous demands on language learners. Even young native speakers, who are exposed to intensive English language, have to

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<sup>1</sup> Fossilization refers to erroneous features that persist despite what is otherwise a reasonably fluent command of the language. This phenomenon is most saliently manifested phonologically in "foreign accents" in the speech of many individuals who have learned a second language after puberty, or the Critical Period we mentioned in the text (Brown, 2000). There is an interesting parallel metaphor in fairy tale interpretation. The contemporary psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim (1989) in his popular book *The Uses of Enchantment* repeatedly interprets "turning into a stone statue," a commonly occurred event in world fairy tales, as a phenomenon that symbolizes the story character's failure to transcend to a higher plane of growing hierarchy.

experience an intricate process to figure out past-tense forms. For instance, Fromkin (1998) noted,

“In fact, children may say *brought* or *broke* before they begin to use the incorrect forms. At the earlier stage they never use any regular past-tense forms like *kissed*, *walked*, or *helped*. They probably do not know that *brought* is a ‘past’ at all. When they begin to say *played* and *hugged* and *helped* as well as *play*, *hug*, and *help*, they have ‘figured out’ how to form a past tense—they have constructed the rule. At that point they form all past tense by this rule—they overgeneralize—and they no longer say *brought* but *bring* and *bringed*. The acquisition of the rule overrides previously learned words and is unaffected by ‘practice’ reinforcement. At the later time, children will learn that there are ‘exceptions’ to the rule, and only then will they once more say *brought*.”(p.335)

As most young pupils in Taiwan suffer from insufficient English language exposure in their living communities, it is not an easy task for them to tackle with the past-tense forms, especially at the initial stage of the language acquisition process.

Moreover, most of the fairy tales that we can apply to the instruction program are from western societies. Although European traditional stories provide more than enough teaching resources, it is a pity that our teaching repertoires are lack of familiar Chinese and Taiwanese ancient stories. Local tales are either short of English translation or have not been assembled in collections yet. Given that there is no easy and convenient access, we assume that most EFL educators may prefer foreign stories to native ones.

Because of the drawbacks, teachers are cautioned against presenting fairy tales line by line according to English versions available in the book markets. To remedy the situation, adaptation and simplification are necessary steps for EFL primary education if teachers decide to implement fairy-tale based instruction program. In the case that Chinese stories are integrated into the program, educators should also involve in the task of translation.

## **TEACHERS' ROLES IN THE PROGRAM**

In terms of teachers' roles, educators have to analyze learners' needs first. Aiming at the needs, teachers then adapt and simplify fairy tales chosen by students. In this way, teachers can get rid of inappropriate grammatical structures and complex sentence patterns. Take "Little Red Riding Hood" as an example, instead of "Once upon a time, there was a sweet little maiden (Zipes, 1988)", teachers may ask the student who plays the role of Little Red Riding Hood to greet and say, "Hi, I am Little Red Riding Hood." In this way, sentences of complicated syntactic structures could be avoided.

Teachers are also encouraged to add current vocabulary to the instruction content. For example, when Little Red Riding Hood gives the wolf directions to her grandmother's house, a modern map can be designed to include locations such as post offices, libraries, coffee shops or fast food restaurants.

In addition to the roles of need analyst and resource organizer, primary EFL teachers are also facilitators in communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts (Richards & Rodgers, 1999).

Depending on the needs of class, teachers may assume different roles such as counselor, group process manager, or guide within the classroom procedures and activities. However, language educators are cautioned against controlling all the details of the class process. Or learners might be deprived of the opportunities to grow to be autonomous.

## **TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

Listening activities and speaking activities are supposed to intervene in the fairy-tale based program to prevent the learners from getting bored in the language classes. By the following examples, the researcher intends to illustrate how primary language educators may design their own teaching activities for the fairy-tale based instruction program.

## 1. Identifying Exercises

The primary EFL teachers may make use of fairy tale characters' names to design *identifying exercises*. (Scott & Ytreberg, 1997) Learners are asked to distinguish Snow White, the Hunter, the Prince and the Witch from each other, for instance. Thanks to the special characterization device of fairy tales mentioned earlier, students have no difficulty telling one character from another. As a consequence, young learners' attention is likely to be focused on phonological distinction.

## 2. Card Playing Games

Fairy tales are full of articles that exist in our daily lives. Language educators should first choose the words that we would like the students to internalize. Pick up words such as *glass, bed, knife, heart, apple* from the story "Snow White," for example. Then give every small group a pack of cards and each member of the team is told to name himself/herself after one of the given words. Then the cards are attributed to them one by one. If any two members of the team get the cards with the same number, say seven, they have to call out each other's name. The one who succeeds in addressing the other's name is the winner.

The point of the activity is that everyone would like to choose a difficult term lest his/her opponents should pronounce the word easily and quickly. Meanwhile, to keep himself/herself from turning into a loser, every group member makes great efforts to utter these terms. In the process, the learners will eventually internalize the given words assigned for the activity. In spite of the tension resulting from the competitive atmosphere, the class will be filled with laughter, screaming and, most important of all, joyfulness.

The card playing game echoes to what Byrne (1994) describes in the following quotation:

"...They (games) have been contrived or adapted to provide repetition (often frequent and rapid) of a particular item or items in an enjoyable context. They are effective because the learners are so involved in playing the game that they do not realise that they are practising language items.

...(They) are also *competitive*: one of the players is trying to win either for himself or on behalf of his team. ... it has to be accepted that this can provide an impetus for using language with a purpose: the players in the game *want* to have a turn; they *want* to stay in the game (if this is one that involves elimination); they *want* to be the first to guess correctly or they *want* to gain points (and so on).”(p.100)

The card playing game can be used to improve learners' command of different items of language: sound, vocabulary, spelling, grammatical items or functions.

### 3.Short Stage Plays

Stage plays, as most teachers believe, takes a lot of time and devotion. Primary EFL teachers might wonder if their students are capable enough to stage a play. In fact, by simplification and adaptation, the language teacher could manage to assist young learners to perform this popular and interesting activity.

First of all, educators should extract the most exciting part of the story instead of clinging to the ambition of staging the whole story, For example, the most dramatic plot in “Little Red Riding Hood” happens when the wild wolf is devouring the innocent little girl. As teachers who use the Community Language Learning would do (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Brown, 2000), educators may help students to write down some simple lines to present the context. The following is one of the possible versions.

Red: (Knocking) Grandma, are you home? I am Little Red Riding Hood.

Wolf: Come in, my dear darling. Open the door.

Red: (Go to grandma) Grandma, your ears are so big! (Surprised)

Wolf: So I can hear you well.

Red: Your hands are so big!

Wolf: So I can hold you tight. (Hold her in arms)

Red: Your mouth is so big!

Wolf: So I can eat you up.

If young learners are provided with sufficient rehearsal and adequate assistance, the likelihood to stage the play successfully is maximal.

The short stage play activity, like readers' theater<sup>2</sup>, "involves a great deal of repetition as students are rehearsing a presentation; the words become part of the students' repertoires without conscious memorization. The whole class, even the audience, begins to internalize the lines (Richard-Amato, 1988)."

We also find that with psychological masks of the drama roles' pseudo-identities, students are more willing to make attempts at language learning. Richard-Amato (1988) confirms the restraint-removing effect of the English play, too. He concludes, "Because students can lose themselves in the characters, plots, and situations, they are more apt to receive the benefits of reduced anxiety levels, increase self-confidence and esteem, and heightened awareness."(p.145)

The primary language teachers who aspire to teach students successfully therefore should never underestimate the appeal of fairy tale plays. We should keep in mind that one of the major features of the young learners is their special sensory input. The play is an ideal teaching activity in that the pedagogical practice involves sensory aids and therefore may maximize the learning results. Available reference books such as *Teaching English to Children* and *Making It Happen* offer many feasible activities for EFL education. What teachers have to do is to transfer fairy contents to those well-contrived activities. Activities such as role-play, story telling, drama and other available games can be applied to primary EFL education in a similar way. For example, Scott & Ytreberg (1990) suggest that fairy tales are appropriate for story telling. They noted, "Traditional fairy tales, like *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Goldilocks* make wonderful stories for telling. They have a clear structure, with a special type of beginning, middle and end."<sup>3</sup>(p.29)

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<sup>2</sup> According to Richard-Amato (1988) "readers' theater" is recommended by Goodman and Tenney. The activity is named "readers' theater" because that the actors hold their scripts and read from them with expression and feeling, as they were acting on the stage. In fact, the actors and the narrator generally sit on tall stools arranged in a semicircle in front of the audience. The narrator plays a key role; he/she sets the scene, introduces the characters, and gives comments. In short, he/she provides the glue that holds the dialogue together and makes it understandable. "Reader's theater" is an alternative of a stage play, if the language teachers repel the latter because of time limits or other factors (黃裕惠, 民 83). Primary EFL teachers may play the role of the narrator to lessen students' burden.

<sup>3</sup> Scott & Ytreberg (1990) also advise teachers to look at *Favourite Fairy Tales*—a Longman series for young readers, if the educators are interested in learning how fairy tales can be simplified.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher intends to recommend fairy tales as adequate instructional materials for primary EFL education, which was first implemented in 2001 in Taiwan.

First of all, the study provides details to manifest how graders 5-6 are different from other learners. The distinctions are discussed from six perspectives, including intellectual development, attention span, sensory input, affective factors, authentic & meaningful language, and the age effect.

The study also presents the features of fairy tales. In an elaborate way, the researcher justifies that fairy tales are psychologically, intellectually and culturally beneficial to primary language education. Apart from the merits of fairy-tale based program, its limitations are also discussed.

Furthermore, identifying exercises, card playing games and short stage plays serve as examples to illustrate how language educators may contrive their own teaching activities and increase their education repertoires.

By means of the fairy-tale based instruction program, the researcher encourages satisfactory interaction and involvement among teachers, learners and texts and thus achieves the underlying goal of primary language education of the Nine-Year-Integrative-Curriculum. The program also brings great promise for students to learn English language happily and productively ever after, as the fairy tales always foreshadow.

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# 魔力的功用： 利用童話素材建構國小英語課程

李菁華\*

## 摘 要

台灣的九年一貫教育革新肇始於民國九十年，國小五、六年級學童因之首度接受正規外語課程。本研究旨在探討童話素材作為英語教學教材的適切性與正當性。作者詳細檢視兒童學習者的特色、教師角色的變換以及教學活動的開發與設計，以作為課程推展之配套措施。童話因特殊地理、歷史、文化所衍生的特質，與市售兒童英語教材大異其趣，無論由心理層次、文化學習、智力發展的角度考量，童話在語言教育上均具有潛在的優勢；憑藉童話故事為主軸，本研究希冀架構課程教學脈絡，誘發學子內在動機、提升學習成果，並在啟蒙歷程中，為孩子營造幸福快樂的語言學習環境。

關鍵詞：兒童英語教學、兒童英語教材、第二語言習得、九年一貫教育、  
外語教學、教材教學法

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Examples Teaching materials can refer to a number of teacher resources; however, the term usually refers to concrete examples, such as worksheets or manipulatives (learning tools or games that students can handle to help them gain and practice facility with new knowledge -- e.g. counting blocks). Teaching materials are different from teaching "resources," the latter including more theoretical and intangible elements, such as essays or support from other educators, or places to find teaching materials. Student Learning Support Learning materials are important because they can signific Find helpful customer reviews and review ratings for The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales at Amazon.com. Read honest and unbiased product reviews from our users.Â The language is clear and unpretentious and Bettelheim does a thorough job explaining fascinating and historic details of these Fairy Tales! Read more. 5 people found this helpful.