

4. Multilingual Narration

1. The educational value of children's literature

“For the child, children's literature is not presented as a set of contents to learn, but as a series of experiences with which to contact. Thus children's literature, thanks to its intrinsic value will contribute to the integral formation of the child far beyond mere rote, intellectual or purely rational and systematic approach” (Cervera Borrás, 2006).

The educational value of using stories at school and in informal contexts has always been undisputed throughout the world for different reasons: the use of children's literature approaches culture and real life, integrates folk topics, involves ludic elements and generate motivation for the development of both language and other educational aspects (psychological, cognitive, social and cultural).

In multicultural and multilingual classrooms where the acquisition of both linguistic and cultural skills is a main objective, teachers can use stories for supplementing their core materials so to involve personally, actively and creatively pupils in learning activities. Considering that there is not only a literature to be read through words, but also to be narrated and interpreted through the use of illustrations or drama, the approach to stories in foreign languages could be made easier.

The collection of Brothers Grimm's folk tales, due to their popularity, their availability in more than 100 languages and the several versions adapted by filmmakers constitutes a good resource.

Poco tempo dopo, la regina diede alla luce una bimba bianca come la neve, rossa come il sangue e con i capelli neri come l'ebano; e, per questo, la chiamarono Biancaneve.

Poco después la reina tuvo una niña que era tan blanca como la nieve, tan encarnada como la sangre y cuyos cabellos eran tan negros como el ébano. Por todo eso fue llamada Blancanieves.

Not very long after the queen had a daughter, with a skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony, and she was named Snow-white.

(<http://www.grimmstories.com/>)

At <http://www.grimmstories.com>, for instance, a complete collection of the Grimm's stories is available in 19 languages.

2. Songs and Rhymes

Multicultural songs do so much more than simply providing a source of amusement. Whether or not you are proficient in other languages, these songs can provide children with something to learn together.

"Frere Jacques", for instance, is a famous French nursery melody and one of the most widely known songs in the world. As with most traditional songs, its origin is uncertain. The earliest printed version dates from around 1780 (manuscript 300 in the manuscript collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris), as "Frère Blaise" and the French musicologist Sylvie Bouissou has found some evidence that composer Jean-Philippe Rameau, one of the most important French composers of the Baroque era, had written the music.

During its long journey to this day, "Frere Jacques" has experienced numerous variations and countless translations, from Afrikaans to Xhosa through Japanese. Did you know that the name of the friar is not the same in the different translations? He is known as "Brother John" in English, as Fra' Martino in Italian, as Fray Santiago in Spanish... [Click here](#) to have a look at the different names he has around the world.

Gustav Mahler reworked the song in the form of a funeral march in the third movement of his Symphony n.1 (Titan). Mahler uses the song, which he cites as "Bruder Martin", changed from major to minor, thus giving the piece the character of a funeral march.

For his march, Mahler used as iconographic reference an old print caricature for children: The Hunter's Funeral Procession by Moritz von Schwind 1850, inspired from a well known fairy tale among the Austro-Hungarian Empire children of the late nineteenth century which tells of the funeral procession of a hunter with the participation of forest animals.



Moritz von Schwind (1850) *The Hunter's Funeral Procession*

Mahler symphony No.1-3M G.Dudamel Los Angeles Philharmonic:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQCHgnpCGf4>

3. Collection of proverbs

Proverbs are the element of language that best represents a society's values and beliefs. In short and pithy sayings they express some traditionally held truth. They are often metaphorical, at time rhythmic and easy to memorize.

Proverbs are used in conversation. Usually, adults use proverbs more than children, because the skill of learning and using them is developed over years and because the patterns of metaphorical expression are not so easy to manage. Nevertheless proverbs become part of our cultural baggage from childhood. We can find them as part of a conversation (have you ever used or heard these sayings? *Well begun is half done* or *Mustn't cry over spilled milk?*), but also in popular stories like in Aesop's Fables, such as *Heaven helps those who help themselves* from *Hercules and the Wagoner* or more recently in the twisted versions of the Harry Potter novels *It's no good crying over spilt potion* or *Don't count your owls before they are delivered*.

Proverbs are often and easily translated and transferred from one language into another. Sometimes the uncertain derivation of proverbs makes the same proverb being often found in many different countries and languages, and it is difficult or impossible to assign its paternity clearly.

In this regard, the *Instituto Cervantes* collected a very interesting selection of popular Spanish proverbs with its correspondence in several languages (German, Catalan, French, Galician, Ancient Greek, Modern Greek, English, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian and Basque). It is a multilingual collection unique in the world not only for this linguistic combination but also for the information provided: they include the meaning and observations that are both lexical (formal clarifications or about the content of some word, being in disuse or being an archaism) as well as cultural. The versions in other languages are

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Project Number: 2015-1-IT02-KA201015407

accompanied by the literal translation, the possible variants, as well as synonyms and antonyms, sources and contexts.

Avec du temps et de la patience, on vient à bout de tout
Patience, money and time bring all things to pass
Con paciencia todo se logra
Mit Geduld und Fleiß kommt man weit

The complete collection is available at this website: *Centro Virtual Cervantes. Refranero Multilingüe* (<http://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/refranero/Default.aspx>)

Bibliography

Carroli, P. (2008) *Literature in Second Language Education, Enhancing the Role of Texts in Learning*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London & New York.

Cervera Borrás, J. (2006). *La literatura infantil: los límites de la didáctica*. Retrieved from http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-literatura-infantil-los-limites-de-la-didactica--0/html/ffbcc644-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_1.html

Learning English through children' literature. Retrieved from <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/learning-english-through-childrens-literature>

Krsteva, M. & Kukubajiska, M.E. (2014) *The Role of Literature in Foreign Language Acquisition*. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814008271>

Web

<http://www.sedll.org/es>

<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/>

<http://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/refranero/Default.aspx>

<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/proverbs.html>

<http://www.mamalisa.com/blog/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fr%C3%A8re_Jacques#In_popular_culture