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Literature: A Rich Resource for Teaching Language and Culture in Context

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To want to teach a cultural language as a second language, without teaching its literature, is a form of barbarism. (Weinrich 1983, p. 11)²

Proficiency and Literature

The proficiency emphasis in the teaching of foreign languages has brought with it a realistic and real-world application of language. The goal of a proficiency-oriented classroom is to talk *in* the language and not *about* the language. The curriculum, therefore, is no longer driven solely by grammar, but rather by communicative functions. Students are prepared to communicate on a variety of topics and learn to negotiate meaning in contexts "motivated by real communicative needs" (Littlewood 1985, p. 70). The learner becomes an active participant in the language-learning process and becomes a skill-user, not merely a skill-getter (Rivers 1972). Language teaching theorists and experts (Bireckbichler and Muyskens 1980; Carrell 1984; Kramsch 1983; Swaffar 1984; Swaffar et al. 1991) have underscored classroom interactions based on functional settings. As a result of this focus, the role of reading has been stressed, "particularly the reading of literature in language acquisition" (Rankin 1990, p. 24). In light of these developments, the role of literature in the foreign language classroom has been reevaluated.

Traditional Approaches to Literature

Traditional approaches to the teaching of foreign literatures have historically been characterized by a teacher-centered classroom, consisting largely of biographical and historical lectures or a New Critical approach. Technical discussions of style and literary concepts were stressed and "literature" referred exclusively to the great classics. Such a teacher-dominated classroom focused on the "magical unlocking of the meaning of the text" (Bretz 1990, p. 336). The learner was regarded as the receiver of information, an empty vessel if you will, who would be provided "the true" interpretation by the instructor. The reader/

learner was the passive recipient of knowledge, not an active participant who was required to think, comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate.³ As a result, the learner/reader felt helpless without the aid of an instructor when reading a piece of literature and became "disempowered," often resulting in the cessation of attempts to read on his or her own.

It is perhaps for this reason that Omaggio (1986, p. 163) relegated the role of literature to the advanced level on the proficiency scale. To understand lectures on technical literary style or the New Critical approach, and to express opinions and interpretations would require an advanced proficiency. Content questions might help to make the plot clearer, but at the same time these questions underscore the "one answer only" approach. Such content questions do not provide sufficient interaction to promote any real degree of proficiency.

Literature in the Beginning Language Classroom

As a result of numerous scholarly studies on discourse analysis (Kramsch 1985) and the dynamic processes of reading (Carrell 1984), teaching methods and strategies were explored that promoted a student-centered, interactive approach to the teaching of literature. Bredella (1987), Kast (1984), Krusche and Krechel (1984), and Morewedge (1987) have provided numerous creative and innovative techniques and strategies that allowed the reader to become intimately involved with the literary text. Such pedagogical approaches to the study of literature and literary texts emphasized that "skill development and content-processing should go hand in hand, and the higher-level cognitive operations that are associated with content-processing should be part of each student's earliest language experiences" (Jurasek and Jurasek 1991, p. 93).

Littlewood (1985) has pointed out that foreign language learning does not occur in a "step-by-step progression through the separate parts of the system" (p. 96). He promotes teaching communication strategies that encourage learners to use language as a system "which is elaborated globally and increases gradually in communicative potential" (p. 92). This is in keeping with Krashen's (1982) theory that advocates authentic, natural, comprehensible input that is "roughly tuned" and is pegged slightly above the level of the student. Krashen's "input + 1" supports the incorporation of activities to build communicative competence through well-designed activities that build comprehension and proficiency.

Hans Hunfeld (1990) promotes the use of literature in the very beginning stages of language instruction so that language students learn the connotative use of language from the onset and build from there. He feels that the language textbook should be supplemented with literary texts that are linguistically and culturally rewarding for the language learner. He points out that the inherent danger of a textbook is to underestimate the ability of the learner. Since the cognitive development of learners far exceeds their ability to express themselves in the target language, the result can lead to boredom and disinterest. Hunfeld suggests finding a connection between the textbook and literary texts that would "express the multiplicity of the texts in foreign language teaching"⁴ (p. 33).

Hunfeld recommends the inclusion of lyric poetry into the foreign language classroom. He argues that lyric poetry is designed to initiate a reaction from the

reader. When this reaction moves language learners to speak, the practical language goals of the classroom have been achieved. If language learners are motivated to express their opinions, then poetry takes on the hermeneutic dimension. Hunfeld argues that lyric poetry speaks differently to foreign learners than to native speakers. This provides fertile ground for the classroom teacher to discuss similarities and differences in the language and culture, a task that is difficult to achieve in the textbook (Moeller 1991).

Learning Theory and Learning in Context

Recent research in education has clearly proven that optimum learning is achieved through discovery, rather than information-giving (Hyde and Bizar 1989). Strategies such as cooperative learning, pair work and small-group activities, and hands-on activities accomplish long-term retention and understanding of concepts, rather than mere memorization of facts. Holistic approaches to reading, listening, speaking (whole language), and writing (portfolio assessment) have redefined the curriculum for elementary education. Upon close analysis of these curricular movements in education, it becomes clear that there are numerous parallels in the field of second language learning. The emphasis is on "authentic texts," "learning in context," and functional use of language.

Another matter of concern in the area of education is teaching across the curriculum. Teaching subjects in isolation fails to provide students with the necessary context to fully comprehend the interconnectedness between the disciplines, thus no allowance is made for higher-level skills such as synthesis and analysis. By linking language and subject matter from other areas of the curriculum (e.g., social studies, history, art), the isolation of the language class can be countered. It is the contention of this paper that all of the objectives ranging from oral proficiency to connotative language understanding to cultural literacy can be achieved through the use of literary texts in the foreign language classroom.

Reader Response: A Context-Based Approach

As discussed earlier in this paper, literature has traditionally been viewed exclusively as the "great classics," and has been taught in an objective, formal, text-centered manner (New Criticism). Reader-response theorists have promoted a holistic, reader-centered, context-based approach that views the text as a dynamic, allowing for a variety of interpretations based on the past experiences and knowledge of the reader. According to Stanley Fish (1980), the emphasis should not be placed on the text as the object, but rather on the responses of the reader. "Response," according to Fish, incorporates much more than feelings and the affective domain, but includes "any and all of the activities provoked by a string of words: the projection of syntactical and/or lexical probabilities—their subsequent occurrence or nonoccurrence; attitudes towards persons, or things, or ideas referred to, the reversal or questioning of these attitudes and much more" (p. 2). According to this view of literature, the reader is treated as a coauthor who brings to the text a set of experiences and knowledge that will determine the interpretation of the text. According to Reader Response Criticism, a text "scarcely exists until somebody reads it" (Holeman and Harmon 1986, p. 412).

The reader's experiences and imagination will determine how the *Leerstellen/Umbestimmtheitsstellen* ("holes"; unclear spots) that occur in a text will be filled (Bredella 1984). If reference is made to a dog in a text, each reader envisions a dog unique to his or her knowledge and personal experiences. By allowing the reader the opportunity to articulate, or describe, what he or she is imagining or visualizing, the reader becomes actively involved in the text and classroom. According to Hunfeld (1990), then, literature takes on the hermeneutic dimension, in that the reader is motivated to express an opinion.

Literature: A New Definition

The narrow definition of "literature" as the "great classics" has recently been revised and expanded to include a variety of literary texts that include "popular theater, television dramatizations, cartoons, advertisements, political discourses, and film" (Schofer 1990, p. 327). Schofer contends that the "aim is not to call all written texts 'literature' but rather to show our students how literary devices permeate every part of our lives" (p. 327).

This expanded definition of literary texts allows the classroom teacher to incorporate a wide variety of texts, including the classics.

Criteria for Selection of Literary Texts

The most important considerations in choosing appropriate literary texts for the foreign language classroom include the following criteria:

1. appropriate linguistic level
2. appropriate length of the text
3. age of the student
4. whether the content awakens interest and motivates the reader
5. whether the text expands cognitive, esthetic, and emotional development
6. whether the text promotes cultural understanding (deeper understanding/communication with the culture through common literacy)
7. whether the text expands vocabulary skills and acquisition of vocabulary

In summary, the literary texts should prove culturally and linguistically rewarding to the readers and should be personalized to meet the needs of the individual classrooms and students. Motivational considerations should outweigh "a desire to introduce representative authors and themes" (Wells 1984, p. 197) in the choice of texts. It is generally accepted that a text should be no longer than 400–600 words at the third-year level if it is a nonliterary text. Literary texts can be 800–1000 words in length because the plot provides a context to remember the facts outlined in the text (Wells 1984, p. 199).

Theory in Practice

Keeping in mind all the theoretical considerations discussed at length in this paper, an analysis of these premises from a practice-oriented approach is in order. How do these theoretical studies and insights actually work in the practice of teaching a literary text?

Bremen Town Musicians: A Concrete Example

In order to illustrate how a literary text might be used to incorporate the above-mentioned strategies, it is necessary to select a single text that will serve as a frame of reference for illustrating possible activities and strategies to achieve the goals stated in the first half of this paper. A Grimm's fairy tale entitled *The Bremen Town Musicians* will serve as the literary text in the foreign language classroom. The example presented here is in English in order to cross language lines. The reader can easily transfer these strategies onto any literary text in his or her foreign language.

Emphasized will be the integration of culture, art, history, literary genres, pair work/small-group activities, reading, writing, speaking and listening activities appropriate for the novice- or intermediate-level foreign language classroom. Cooperative learning and interactive activities that lead to a student-centered, proficiency-centered classroom will be highlighted and concretely illustrated and described.

Prereading Strategies

The teacher places a transparency depicting the four animals from *The Bremen Town Musicians* on the overhead machine (see figure 4-1). Students are asked to identify the four animals they see pictured. The teacher can then quickly introduce the prepositions *under*, *between*, and *on top of* by describing the positions of the animals. Have students walk to the screen and point out the animal the teacher describes in words such as "This animal is located between the cat and the donkey." The animal sounds can be added to the description. A discussion could ensue on the different sounds animals make in different languages. An American rooster says "cock-a-doodle-doo" and a German rooster says "kikeriki." This is an excellent global activity that can lead to insightful discussions and comments. A quick comprehension check of prepositions and animal vocabulary can be carried out by having students raise their left hand for false and right hand for true statements, such as "the donkey is under the dog" or "the rooster is on top of the dog."

Students could be divided into groups of three for a maximum of 5 minutes to create a story about these four animals. This is done in English at the novice level. The purpose of this activity is threefold: (1) it is one way to motivate students to want to read what really happens, (2) the students become personally involved with the text before actually reading it, and (3) it kindles the imagination of students and lowers the affective filter as students become better acquainted with each other and work together to create a story.

Another approach is to begin with an associogram. The teacher writes the words "Grimm Brothers" on a transparency and asks the class to respond with the first thing that comes to their minds (see figure 4-2). As students begin to respond, the teacher records the answers on the transparency. Each answer will trigger responses from other students. These responses can serve as a springboard for a discussion on the Grimm brothers and the fairy tale.

An interactive activity that ensures a combination of reading, listening, and speaking skills is the following pair-work activity. Students are divided into pairs



Figure 4-1. The four animals.

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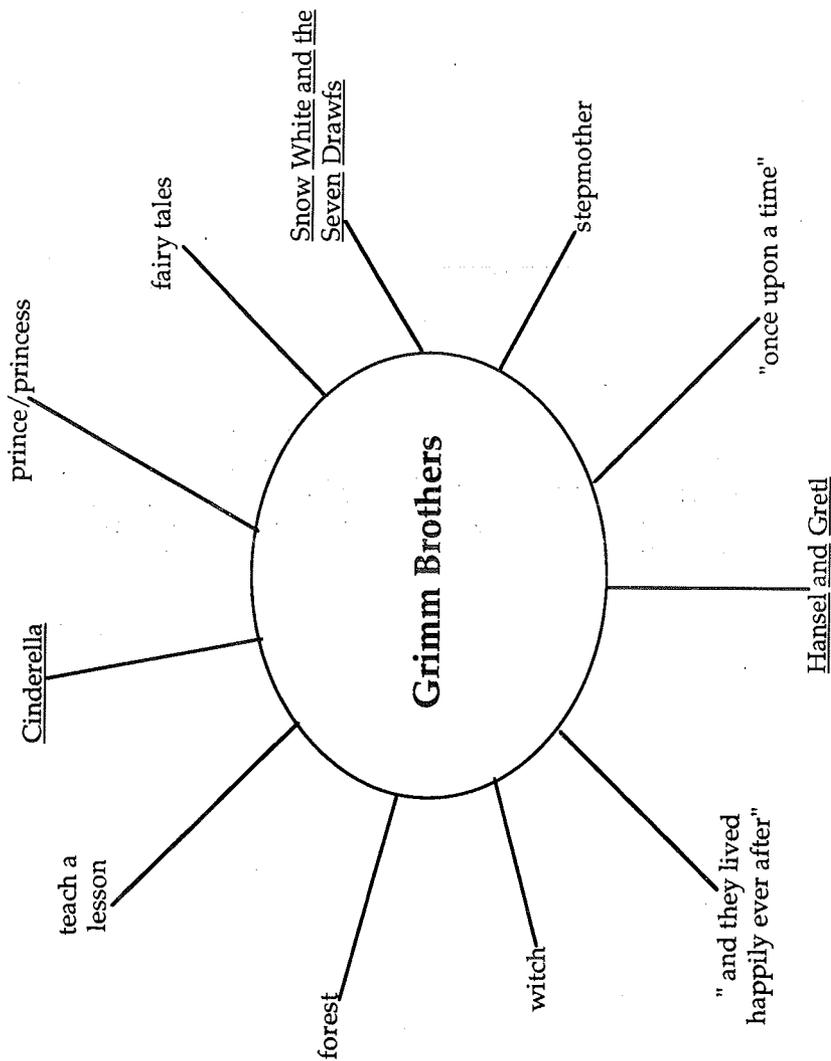


Figure 4-2. An associogram of Grimm brothers for novice-level learners.

(A and B). A is given a reading text containing a picture of the Grimm brothers and a text containing biographical and historical information about the two brothers (in the target language). B is given a text containing information about Grimms' fairy tales and the elements that make up a fairy tale. On the bottoms of both A and B's papers is a series of questions (true/false; fill in dates; sentence completions) that must be answered by the student (see figure 4-3). The students

are required to elicit information from one another in order to answer these questions. This activity involves active reading, posing questions, listening for responses, and recording the required information. In addition to all this, the students are learning about two important German figures, a literary genre, and a historical period and are provided with what is a part of every German's cultural literacy—Grimms' fairy tales. This provides the vital link of a "shared frame of reference" to the target culture that is not readily achieved through a textbook.

First Reading Activities

The students are handed a one-page text without a title (see figure 4-4). They are asked to keep it turned over until told to do otherwise. The teacher instructs the students to read the first paragraph only and, once finished with the paragraph, to turn the page over again. The teacher then gathers the answers to the following questions on an overhead transparency: who, what, when, where why. This is all conducted in the target language. Students are able to respond in single words and short phrases to answer these questions. The resulting answers provide the student with a framework for the story (who: donkey; what: master who wants to get rid of him; when: don't know; where: Bremen; why: he's old and can't carry the sacks). It is a good idea always to number the lines of all the lines of all texts so in case of dispute, the students can easily identify the line of text upon which they are basing their answer. This allows for a variety of legitimate answers, as long as they can be validated in the text itself. This is an excellent strategy for getting the students to do a more detailed reading of the text a second and third time to find confirmation for an answer.

An excellent listening activity aimed at increasing vocabulary is possible by providing the students with a cloze text of the fairy tale. A recording of the fairy tale (either commercial or self-produced) is played and students fill in the blanks as they listen to it. It is a good idea to do such an activity in short segments of text and to allow the students to work in pairs. This lowers the anxiety and encourages a cooperative atmosphere. The teacher follows up this activity by placing an overhead transparency containing the cloze text and calls upon the students to read the sentences with the correctly filled-in blank. The students can walk up to the transparency projector and fill in the blanks as the teacher circulates to assist those with questions. As a homework assignment, students are given ten true-false statements they must either correct to make true, or designate as already being true. In doing so they must record the line of the text that confirms their answer.

Small-Group Activities

Another effective approach is to divide the text into six or seven segments. In teams of three, each team must underline unfamiliar words and attempt to guess at the meaning of these words from the context. This promotes contextual guessing skills, an important skill for problem solving. It is recommended that at least two teams have the same segments so that they can then join the team with the same paragraph and compare answers and revise according to the consensus of the larger group. Dictionaries are not allowed in this exercise. The idea behind the activity is to train students to read larger segments of text without looking up

Partner A: Grimms' Fairy Tales

Fairy tales were stories people told to each other by word of mouth for many centuries. In the 19th century two brothers in Germany, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, became interested in these stories. They wrote these oral tales down and published them. Some of the most well known fairy tales are *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretl*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Fairy tales often begin with the phrase "Once upon a time" and end with "and then they lived happily ever after." The place a fairy tale happens is never really made clear in the tale. The people in the story don't always have names, or they have simple names like Jack or Tim. They never have a last name. The fairy tales usually describe how a human being meets a fairy—as in *Cinderella*, when she meets her fairy godmother. The plot usually consists of three parts: (1) the hero/heroine is being treated badly at the beginning of the story, (2) the hero/heroine must survive danger, (3) the solution to the problem in which the hero/heroine uses a magical means, fights, and conquers. The bad person is punished.



The characters in a fairy tale do not possess the characteristics of a real human being. They are bad or good and remain superficial, one-dimensional figures. Animals have the ability to speak in fairy tales. Numbers play a significant role in fairy tales. The numbers 3, 7, and 12 are the most common. A hero must accomplish three deeds, or has three wishes. There are seven dwarfs and seven years in most tales. The numbers 7 and 12 are sacred numbers: the Catholic Church has seven sacraments; there are seven days of the week; there are seven colors; the Old Testament speaks of twelve tribes of Israel and there are twelve apostles. Fairy tales serve to entertain and take the reader into a world of make-believe, away from the real world. Many of the fairy tales teach a moral lesson, making them especially popular with children.

Pose the following questions to your partner (B) and record your answers.

1. In what years were Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm born?
2. Which countries were in power during their lifetimes?
3. From whom did they hear many of the tales included in their collection of fairy tales?

True or false? If false, make the statement correct.

- _____ Wilhelm Grimm is famous for his book on German grammar.
 _____ Wilhelm and Jakob Grimm collected books on fairy tales.

Figure 4-3a. Pair-work activity: Partner A's sheet.

Partner B: The Grimm Brothers

Jakob Grimm was born January 4, 1785, at Hanau in Hesse-Kassel. Wilhelm was born on February 24, 1786. They grew up when Germany was a loosely organized federation of states. Prussia and Austria were the leading kingdoms. They studied law at the University of Marburg. Jakob came into contact with a famous law professor and scholar named Savigny, who interested him in the legends of the Middle Ages and in the songs of the minnesingers, the German poet-singers of the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries. Jakob and Wilhelm became librarians at the University of Göttingen. Both brothers were given professorships at the University of Berlin and were elected to the Academy of Science. Jakob wrote a book on German grammar that is still considered a great work in language study. Both worked on a dictionary of the German language and on the collection of folktales. They spent fourteen years collecting stories that were included in their three volumes of fairy tales. The first volume, *Kinder und Hausmärchen*, was published in 1812. Among those they interviewed regarding these folktales was a Margarethe Viehmännin, a peasant woman who lived near Kassel. She had an amazing memory and served as a rich source of tales for the Grimm brothers. A second volume was published in 1815, and a third in 1822.



Pose the following questions to your partner (A) and record the answers.

1. What are the three common elements of a plot in a fairy tale?
2. Describe a typical fairy-tale character. Give a minimum of three traits.
3. Why are fairy tales still popular?

True or false? If false, make the statement correct.

- _____ Fairy tales were collected and recorded for the first time in the 12th century.
- _____ The numbers 3, 7, and 12 were used in fairy tales because they are magical and sacred.
- _____ *Hansel and Gretl* is a fairy tale collected and recorded by Hans Christian Andersen.

Figure 4-3b. Pair-work activity: Partner B's sheet.

The Bremen Town Musicians

1 Once there was a donkey who had carried his master's sacks to the mill for years. Now that the donkey was old, his master wanted to get rid of him. The donkey sensed that something bad was in the wind and set out for Bremen, where he thought he might become town musician.

Walking a short way, he came upon a hound panting by the side of the road. The donkey asked, "Hound, why are you out of breath?"

The hound answered, "I am old. I can no longer keep up with the hunt. My master wants to kill me. I ran away. What can I do?"

"I am off the Bremen to become town musician. Why not join me?"

The hound agreed and they walked together. Shortly, they came to a cat with a face like three rainy days. "What's wrong?" they asked.

"I am old and would rather sit by the oven than hunt mice. My mistress wants to drown me. Where can I go?" asked the cat.

"Cats are full of night music. Come and be a musician in Bremen."

The cat joined them. Walking on, they came to a cock crowing wildly.

"You cries shiver my spine," said the donkey. "What's wrong?"

"My mistress wants to cook me when company comes for Sunday dinner. So I am crowing with all my might while I still can."

"Come with us and call out your morning music in Bremen." The cock agreed and the four walked on together.

40 But Bremen was too far off to be reached in a day. At dusk they came upon a wood where they decided to spend the night. Seeing a light in the distance, they headed for it. The light came from a house. The donkey, being the biggest, went and looked in the window. "What do you see?" asked the hound.

49 "I see good things to eat and drink all laid upon a table," responded the donkey. "And I see robbers making themselves very comfortable."

"I wish we could trade places with them," said the cock.

55 The others agreed. So they huddled together, and at last they hit upon a plan to drive the robbers from the house.

Hound upon donkey, cat upon hound, and cock atop, they perched by the window. Then came music—the donkey brayed, the hound barked, the cat yowled, and the cock crowed. The frightened robbers ran for the forest.

65 The four companions made free with the food on the table, eating it all. Afterwards each sought a sleeping place befitting his nature. The donkey lay upon the dunghill in the yard, the hound behind the door, the cat on the hearth, and the cock on a roof beam.

At midnight, when the house had been quiet for some time, the robber captain ordered one of the robbers to scout the house.

75 Finding everything still, the robber went in. Thinking the cat's glowing eyes were glowing embers, he held a match to them to get light. The cat flew at him, spitting and scratching. Terrified, the robber ran out the door, and the hound bit his leg. In the yard the donkey kicked him sharply. The hubbub woke the cock, who cried "Cock-a-doodle-do!"

85 Returning to the captain, the robber gasped, "A horrible witch came at me and scratched my face. By the door a guard stabbed me in the leg. In the yard a monster beat me with a club. From above, a judge called, 'Cook him in the stew!' So I got away as fast as I could."

95 Well, the robbers would have nothing to do with the house. But it suited the four musicians just fine, and there they stayed.

Figure 4-4. *The Bremen Town Musicians (Highlights)*

Used by permission of *Highlights for Children, Inc.*, Columbus, OH, Copyright © 1980.

every word. This encourages skimming and scanning for meaning in preference to a word-for-word translation. This builds the students' self-esteem and confidence in their ability to comprehend the gist of a lengthier text and motivates them to continue reading.

In groups of three students, reread the text and pick out the fifteen key words in the story. Again, this can be performed with shorter text segments, in which case each team is limited to three key words. A variation of this activity is to have students pick out word pairs such as donkey-miller; Bremen-town musicians; hound-hunt; cat-mice; cock-crowing; robbers-house. This forces the student to read the text very closely to determine logical pair matches. The next day the teacher hands each student a sheet of paper with one word in large letters written on it. When the bell rings, the teacher asks the students to find their partners and line up in front of the classroom. After the students have had time to consult, the students are asked to explain the context of the word pair from the story. Once this is completed, the teacher asks the students to line up chronologically according to the order of the story line. They may get help from their peers and teacher if they ask in the target language. Once lined up chronologically, each student makes up a sentence with the word he or she is holding and the next student builds upon that sentence to eventually retell the story in its entirety. The students have now worked with the text using a variety of skills: they have read the text numerous times, picked out the key words, retold the story, and listened to the text in a variety of settings.

As a homework assignment, students are asked to paraphrase the story in ten short sentences. The next day, the teacher collects these sentences and places them in random order on a sheet of paper, and students must put them in the correct chronological order (this can serve as a comprehension check or a quiz). The activity can be simplified by assigning a letter to each of the ten sentences. In a box numbered one through ten, the students are asked to place the correct letter in chronological order. For example: (a) The robber captain orders one of the robbers to scout the house. (b) The donkey decides to go to Bremen. (c) The donkey meets a hound on the road. (d) The animals rest in the forest. The properly filled in box would look like this: 1. b, 2. c, 3. d, 4. a. This is easy to grade and tests the way the text was taught.

A variation of the comprehension check is to cut up the story into several logical parts and place them in an envelope. Each team, consisting of three members, must place the text segments into the correct order. The first team to finish can be rewarded with extra-credit points for all the team members. This can be done by matching pictures or scenes from the story with the text as well. The Goethe Institute has produced a cartoon version of *The Bremen Town Musicians* with the text that can easily be used for such an activity (Schweckendiek 1987). Beautifully illustrated Grimms' fairy tales are readily available in children's bookstores. Copies can be made of the illustrations and used for retelling and text-matching activities.

Strategies for Building Vocabulary

One of the major advantages of using literature in the classroom is that vocabulary is learned in the context of a plot or story. Research has revealed that learning is facilitated and vocabulary comprehension and acquisition is enhanced

when presented in context (Omaggio 1986). An effective way to expand vocabulary skills is through contextual clusters, in which students are required to list all associations that have to do with one concept or character. In *The Bremen Town Musicians*, for example, the students might be asked to find and list all associations with the donkey. The result might look like this: donkey: miller, town musician, old, carried sacks, Bremen, master, makes friends, brayed, robbers, forest. Such contextual clusters could be limited to verbs or adjectives describing each animal.

An alternative way of building vocabulary skills is to pin up the names of the main characters from the text on the bulletin board. The teacher passes out a series of facts recorded on index cards to the students. The students must place the fact under the appropriate character. Examples of such facts from *The Bremen Town Musicians* might be: (1) he could no longer carry sacks, (2) they are the bad guys, (3) she can no longer catch mice, (4) he's afraid of becoming Sunday's supper. The teacher reads them aloud to determine if they have been placed under the appropriate character. The entire story is thereby reviewed and discussed in detail.

An outstanding interactive oral activity for the classroom is a game that is a version of the television show "\$20,000 Pyramid." The teacher prepares an overhead transparency that contains numerous lists consisting of six words that were taken from the text of *The Bremen Town Musicians*. The transparency might look like this:

I	II	III	IV
donkey	hound	cat	midnight
window	light	drown	cock-a-doodle-doo
forest	captain	bark	crowd
robbers	house	sacks	Sunday
miller	table	old	light
musician	Bremen	roof	mice

The class is divided into teams consisting of four to six players. Team A comes to the front of the class and they are seated as follows: the captain of the team sits facing the overhead screen and the remaining team members have their backs to the screen and cannot see the words on the transparency. The entire class and the captain of Team A can see the words on the transparency. It is the task of the captain to get his or her teammates to say the six words under rubric one within sixty seconds. The captain is required to keep his or her hands behind his or her back while giving the clues. The clues cannot make use of any part of the word (e.g., classroom—it's a room), and only the target language must be spoken. The captain may pass a word, proceed to the next word, and return to the skipped word if there is time remaining. The teacher reveals one word at a time and will say "correct" if the team provides the correct answer. The total number of correct responses is the number of points earned. The members of each team sit in separate rows. After sixty seconds Team B is up and they follow the same procedures with List II. Usually in one class period one can get through two preliminary rounds and one final bonus round. The bonus round is worth 2 points per correct answer. This is an excellent review activity the day before a unit

test. The team members on the winning team are entitled to 10 bonus points each on the unit test. This activity is ideal for building proficiency skills. The first few times this game is played it is slow, but the students very quickly learn tricks to elicit responses from their teammates by using expressions like "plural form," opposites, and the like. The students often resort to the context of the story to describe the word they want to elicit from their teammates. This is a truly interactive oral strategy and provides a lot of learning in a fun atmosphere.

The list of words for the pyramid game can also be restricted to specific subtopics such as (using *The Bremen Town Musicians* as an example): donkey: miller/sacks/Bremen/musician/old/mill. This provides the student with a specific context and narrows the number of options.

Simulations

The Bremen Town Musicians lends itself easily to a stage production or dramatization. The simple plot, the animal sounds, and the dialogs between the characters provide a rich basis for a story simulation. This should be videotaped and shown to the classes next year to illustrate to students (at the beginning of the academic year) how much they will learn and what they will be able to do before the year is over. Playing the videotape the following year to the same students who performed the play also provides a very humanizing and personalizing activity that tends to unify the class members and solidify them as a group.

In order to ensure that the students have an opportunity to create in the language, conversation cards can be created on index cards. An example from *The Bremen Town Musicians* might be as follow: Student A: You are the miller and are trying to convince the donkey to leave. You tell him he is useless and too old to work. He must leave or you will kill him, because you have no money to feed him. Student B: You are the donkey and try to convince the miller that you have been a faithful and loyal worker for twenty years. You can still carry the sacks to the mill, but it simply takes a little longer. Try to convince him that you should stay. The conversation cards must be adjusted to the linguistic competence of your students. Trying to convince someone is a higher-level skill on the proficiency scale, so you will need to adjust the function to the level desired (novice to advanced).

An advanced oral proficiency activity that works well with literature, and particularly with characters in a literary text, is the alter-ego activity. One student stands behind another student. The student in front represents the good side of the donkey, the student behind represents the bad side of the donkey. The good donkey makes a statement such as "I know I'm not as fast as I once was." The alter ego replies, "Well, neither is the miller, but no one is threatening to kill him." Donkey: "The miller is a good man, we have been friends for twenty years." Alter ego: "Friends, you say!! Would a friend kill you because you're old?"

Writing Strategies

Students are divided into groups of three and are asked to come up with an appropriate title for the literary text. This activity requires a thorough understanding of the text, since the title summarizes the main content of the story. This activity can be extended to having the students divide the text into logical segments and provide a title for each segment. Another departure from this type

of activity is to omit the last paragraph of the reading text and have the students write the ending of the story. The titles provided by students are often better than the original titles themselves.

One of the most common writing assignments is to rewrite a paragraph in the present, past, or future tense. This is an effective homework assignment that provides the student with a guided practice opportunity in the area of grammar. Students are well acquainted with the text at this point and can concentrate on grammar specifically. Another grammar strategy is to have students paraphrase a particularly difficult sentence into simple language.

Creative writing activities in the classroom allow students who may not succeed in other aspects of the class to shine. The students are asked to write a poem in the shape of a diamond that consists of the following elements: the first line consists of one word that identifies the subject; the second line consists of two verbs that describe the subject; the third line consists of three adjectives that elaborate the subject further; the fourth line consists of a sentence made up of four words describing the subject; the fifth line is either a synonym for the subject or the same word. An example of this type of poem from *The Bremen Town Musicians* would look like this:

Donkey
carry, escape
musical, old, useless
seeking a new life
burro

Creating such poems requires a thorough understanding of the character and allows for individualization. The teacher may want to type poems on a ditto and distribute them to the class so that the poems can be analyzed and read by all members of the class. Such a poetry activity is especially effective with lengthier literary works in which the characters of a novel or short story are depicted in poem form. The cinquain, a five-line stanza, and haiku, an unrhymed verse form of three lines, offer other variations of such a poetry activity.

Concrete poems that illustrate the content of a story, or depict one of the scenes or characters in the text, also allow for individual creativity. The teacher can give a few examples of classic concrete poems and let students create their own concrete poems.

Rewriting *The Bremen Town Musicians* using four other animals is a challenging and creative writing assignment. Another variation might be to do a modern version of the fairy tale.

It is important to recycle aspects of the fairy-tale activity in the subsequent language levels. In the first year of language study, the illustration of *The Bremen Town Musicians* should be introduced as discussed above. In the second year the fairy tale should be introduced and taught while incorporating some of the strategies outlined in this paper. In the third year a more linguistically challenging fairy tale should be introduced. In the fourth year a good followup on the problem of aging depicted in *The Bremen Town Musicians* would, for German classes, be the short story by Bertolt Brecht entitled *An Unworthy Old Lady (Die unwürdige Greisin)*. This recycles vocabulary and themes and assures a gradual progression up the proficiency ladder.

The Cultural Link

The Bremen Town Musicians provides a wealth of opportunities to tap into aspects of German culture. The town of Bremen itself allows for a geography and history lesson. Located on the Weser River, it is the second-largest harbor in Germany. It was a prestigious member of the powerful Hanseatic League and still bears the honor of being the "Hansestadt Bremen." An innovative way to learn more about Bremen might be to distribute a variety of materials (authentic texts) about Bremen to the students, divided into teams of three. Two or three groups receive a brochure about Bremen and extract certain information from that brochure and report it to the class. Each team would be assigned to glean different information. A fourth team receives a novice-level reading text describing the history of Bremen, a fifth team receives several postcards and must list the most popular attractions in Bremen. The students become the experts on Bremen and report the information to the class, as the teacher records the information on an overhead transparency. This provides an ownership in the gathering of facts—learning through discovery, not mere fact-receiving from the teacher. The symbol of the city of Bremen is the statue of the four animals, which is located next to the city hall. After having read the Grimms' fairy tale, they are aware of the significance and meaning. This provides a "shared frame of reference" with the target culture.

The elements of a fairy tale might be discussed in the context of *The Bremen Town Musicians*. What is unique about a fairy tale, what is its purpose, and who collected them? Teaching across the curriculum can reinforce literary analysis and genre study (English). The historical times in which the fairy tales were popular and the historical context in which they were passed on by word of mouth and eventually collected and recorded provide a link to history. The Grimm brothers and their importance in literature, as well as in the history of the German language, can be highlighted in a variety of creative ways.

Testing

It is important to remember to test the way the text was taught. Providing key words/phrases and placing them in the correct chronological order; true-false statements in which the false statements must be made true; rewriting the paragraph in the past tense; creating a diamond poem about the robbers; finishing the retelling of the story; crossing out a phrase that does not fit with four other statements. Such test items will be an indication of what the students have learned by doing and results are bound to be positive.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made to provide theoretical and practical arguments for the inclusion of literary texts at all levels in the foreign language curriculum. Literary texts offer the opportunity to combine proficiency and literacy, denotative and connotative language learning, and learning in context. The reader/student takes center stage in that they become thinkers, position takers, and active learners. They are negotiators of meaning who have something to say and meanings to express. Interactive teaching strategies, such as those suggested here, allow the reader not "merely [to] decode fixed textual meanings, but also [to] encode meanings of their own" (Jurasek and Jurasek 1991, p. 91).

Literacy in its broadest meaning includes the process by which we make sense of the human experience and define ourselves. As knowledge is accumulated and literacy is expanded, the emphasis is increasingly shifted to the higher-level skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom et al. 1956) in that connections must be made in terms of how the newly acquired knowledge connects, or fits in, with what is already known. E. D. Hirsch (1987) described his theory of education as "based on the anthropological observation that all human communities are founded upon specific shared information" (p. xv). He points out that each group (Japanese, Germans, Americans) has a specific different body of cultural knowledge. In the anthropological perspective, then, "the basic goal of education in a human community is acculturation, the transmission to children of the specific information shared by the adults of the group or polis" (p. xvi). Hirsch provides a list of "shared information" needed for Americans to communicate effectively with one another in their national community. According to Hirsch, "successful communication depends upon shared associations" (p. 59). When those shared associations are lacking, full participation in the literate national culture is not possible.

The foreign language classroom can and must provide a forum for exposing students to these "shared associations" of a specific culture within the context of the curriculum. Literature provides such an opportunity and forum. By utilizing and putting into practice activities such as those suggested in this paper, the goals of proficiency and literacy can be addressed and achieved.

Notes

1. For further information, contact Ali Moeller, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 115 Henzlik Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0355, (402) 472-2024.
2. The original quote is as follows: "Eine Kultursprache als Fremdsprache lehren wollen, ohne gleichzeitig ihre Literatur mitzulehren, ist eine Form der Barberei."
3. Bloom's Taxonomy classifies six major levels into which cognitive objectives may be classified: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
4. Hunfeld states: "Das Beispiel fordert dazu auf, zwischen gängigen Lehrbuchtexten und literarischen Texten von Anfang an eine Verbindung zu suchen. Diese Verbindung muß die Verfügtigkeit von Texten in der fremdsprachlichen Lehre zum Ausdruck bringen."

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