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## JEDINSTVENI DIPLOMSKI RAD

Didactic Application of Selected English and Czech Fairy Tales

Didaktické využití vybraných anglických a českých pohádek

(Smjer: Anglistika; nastavnički, Češki jezik i književnost; nastavnički)

Kandidat: Vlatka Šnobl

Mentori: dr. sc. Iva Polak, doc., Marina Jajić Novogradec, prof.

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## Introduction

Fairy tales play an essential role in a child's life. They are not just fantastic stories intended to entertain, but also a means of learning moral values for children. Through a fairy tale, children develop their imagination and more importantly, their understanding of the world. Apart from that, fairy tales can also enrich their vocabulary and facilitate language acquisition when reading the tales in a foreign language.

The aim of the thesis is to show how the selected fairy tales by George MacDonald can be used in a classroom as a means of teaching English as a foreign language and how the selected fairy tales by Karel Jaromír Erben can find their place in teaching Czech as a second language. Both authors take a prominent position in their respective literatures. The analysis of English and Czech fairy tales will also reveal some similarities and differences between the two cultures and it will provide ways in which fairy tales can be used not just for teaching vocabulary and practising reading but for questioning the world around us as well as developing critical thinking. It is not enough just to read a text and use it for linguistic purposes, a critical interpretation has to be offered and some main issues need to be discussed, which can serve as the basis for a speaking activity.

After defining the genre of the fairy tale and providing information about the authors, the thesis describes possible ways of dealing with the selected fairy tales in the classroom. The activities suggested are based on language teaching methodology and Gillian Lazar's *Literature and Language Teaching*. The thesis also mentions the benefits of using fairy tales in the classroom and difficulties that might appear when incorporating the tales in language teaching.

## 1. Defining Fairy Tale

*Fairy tales, then, are not responsible for producing in children fear, or any of the shapes of fear; fairy tales do not give the child the idea of the evil or the ugly; that is in the child already, because it is in the world already. Fairy tales do not give the child his first idea of bogey. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of bogey.*

G. K. Chesterton in *Tremendous Trifles*

The name – *fairy tale* – might indicate that it is a story about fairies. However, as J. R. R. Tolkien puts it: “[t]he realm of fairy-story is wide and deep and high and filled with many things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there” (Tolkien 109). Therefore, according to Tolkien, saying that it is a story about fairies is a too narrow definition (110), since fairies are not the only magical or extraordinary creatures or objects that one can encounter in a fairy tale. Quite the opposite, “[i]f the world of fairy-tales is mentioned you at once think of the water and forest sprites, of giants, dragons and magicians, of glass mountains and living water, of animals speaking, or of seven-league boots” (Čapek 58). Anything can be found in a fairy tale, a flying carpet in *Aladdin*, magical beans in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, or three hazelnuts which contain dresses for various occasions in *Tři oříšky pro Popelku* (Three Wishes for Cinderella).

The extraordinary creatures and events are presented as something completely normal, that is, in the world of fairy tales the magical is not considered as something strange but rather it is taken at face value. Tzvetan Todorov places fairy tales into the genre of the marvelous, meaning that “supernatural elements provoke no particular reaction either in the characters or in the implicit reader” (54). In Božena Němcová’s *Čertův švagr* (The Devil's Brother-in-Law), the main protagonist Petr finds himself face to face with the Devil who offers him a job, and Petr calmly accepts it and goes with him to hell.

Hence, according to Todorov, “[w]hat distinguishes the fairy tale is a certain kind of writing, not the status of the supernatural” (54). Since children are not yet cognitively developed as adults, reading fairy tales might impose some difficulties to understanding the story if the story is not clear. Christine Brooke-Rose names this clarity of the story where all the information is given and everything is explained *over-determination*. By this she means that the “information (narrative, ironic, hermeneutic, symbolic, etc.) is too clear, over-encoded, recurring beyond purely informational need” (106), which “is of course specific to the fairy-tale” (109). With an

over-determined text, there is an over-encoded reader who “does in fact sometimes appear in the text, dramatized, like an extra character: the ‘Dear Reader’ (Brooke-Rose 106). The reader is then treated as someone who has to be told everything, which makes children the intended audience of fairy tales. For example, the narrator in C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* repeatedly addresses the reader as he narrates the story.

Besides providing clear information about the plot, a child’s understanding of a tale is further aided by the structural stability of the fairy tale. In his *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp deals with the structural analysis of fairy tales. He describes the sequence of events and roles of the characters (or rather the functions of *dramatis personae*), which are more or less universal to the genre of the fairy tale and follow a specific order. According to him, “[a] tale usually begins with some sort of initial situation. The members of a family are enumerated, or the future hero (e.g., a soldier) is simply introduced by mention of his name or indication of his status” (25). After the initial situation, the plot follows the functions which designate the hero’s adventure and it all finishes with a happy ending when the villain is punished and the hero is married and ascends the throne (Propp 63). No matter the name or the attributes of a character, their actions and functions always remain the same (Propp 20). And since the number of the functions is limited – there are 31 functions in total - this causes repetition (Propp 21). Children can rely on the functions being repeated and on the spheres of actions of certain characters such as the villain, the princess and the hero (Propp 79). For example, the sphere of action of a princess is always in connection with her father who assigns difficult tasks to her suitors and punishes the false hero (Propp 79). Hence, functions and spheres of actions also contribute to the over-determination of the fairy tale.

Another characteristic that can be found in most fairy tales is *strange remoteness*, according to Karel Čapek (56). The term refers to a vaguely determined place and time where a fairy tale takes place: “[o]nce upon a time, beyond nine mountains and rivers; once upon a time there was a country where it happened ...” (Čapek 56). In addition to remoteness in time and space, a social remoteness is also typical for the fairy tale since “the people who appear in fairy-tales are usually kings and princesses, or again, persons living more or less outside the social bond: a hermit, a magician, a wanderer, and such-like” (Čapek 57). Children with their unspoiled imagination tend to identify themselves with the main protagonist who is usually a prince or a princess, someone of noble origin. However, it is not always the case. The main protagonist can

also be a simple man or woman who triumphs over evil with their wits. The Czech Honza is such a character. In the folk tale tradition, Honza is a poor boy who finds happiness with his cleverness despite being considered stupid by everyone else. That is the fate of Honza in Němcová's tale *O hloupém Honzovi* (About Dull Honza), where he successfully tricks the king and wins a fortune.

When it comes to the content of fairy tales, the underlying plot seems to be the fight between good and evil with the good prevailing in the end. This happy ending, when the evil is defeated, when the prince gets the princess and half of her kingdom, when heroes find their way back home, is also one of the fundamental parts of a fairy tale. The evil manifests itself in various forms, be it a dragon, a stepmother or a magician who traps a princess, but they all end up being defeated and/or punished in the end. Tolkien claims that the happy ending, or as he calls this sudden turn of events – *Eucatastrophe*, is the consolation of fairy tales and “all complete fairy-stories must have it” (Tolkien 153). *Eucatastrophe* brings joy and more importantly, it does not negate the existence of sadness and failure, “it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat” (Tolkien 153). The happy ending gives hope and joy that after all the misfortune, one can still lead a peaceful and happy life.

Despite describing some aspects of fairy tales, a definition as such is not provided, which is in accordance with Čapek's claim that “[t]here is no theory which would explain the fairy-tale entirely as a literary species *sui generis*: even to outline its boundaries is becoming more and more difficult” (54). Instead of putting fairy tale into some strictly defined framework, the theoreticians settle down

with the description of its very varied characteristics, such as its complicated sequence and merging of motifs, its mixture of play and seriousness, of dream and reality, of horror and humour, the comfortable breath of its story, its epic laws of gradation and repetition, its pleasure in digressions, and its tendency to strangeness and paradox, frequent partiality for moralizing, and so on. After all, a fairy-tale has no exact frontier: it merges into legend, myth, fable, short story, and anecdote. (Čapek 55)

Fairy tales might merge into all of the above, but it is important to notice that despite similarities, fairy tale is neither a myth, a legend nor a fable. Each has their own laws and rules that separate them from one another. Myths were often used to explain strange phenomena. According to Claude Levi-Strauss, “a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place in

time: before the world was created, or during its first stages-anyway, long ago. But what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future” (430). While fairy tale has a world of its own, “a legend is always specified by history or locality, it has its relation to a definite castle, river, rock, or person. Every legend has its relation to reality” (Čapek 58). And last, although talking animals can appear in both a fairy tale and a fable, in fairy tales, men understand animals through some sort of magic and their understanding is the result of the desire to communicate with other creatures. On the other hand, in a fable there are no humans or they are merely adjuncts to the animals who serve as heroes and heroines (Tolkien 117).

As for the origin of fairy tales, Čapek claims that “[f]airy-tales are, no doubt, folk superstition and foolishness, but you can toy with them gracefully and mask them with sensible moralizing and gentle didactics” (49). This didacticism in fairy tales has been used to promote them as a literature that is especially intended for children.

Considering all the fantastic motifs in fairy tales, it is not surprising that children are thought to be the targeted audience of fairy tales. However, fairy tales are not just leisure reading, they can be used to teach children some basic values and lessons of life. In his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, a developmental psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, deals precisely with this use of fairy tales arguing that a child needs “a moral education which subtly, and by implication only, conveys to him the advantages of moral behavior, not through abstract ethical concepts but through that which seems tangibly right and therefore meaningful to him. The child finds this kind of meaning through fairy tale” (13). No doubt that children can be taught these values explicitly, but within the story, the child can identify itself with the characters, which makes the lesson far more valuable and memorable.

## 2. Victorian Literature

According to Lewis C. Roberts, “Victorian narratives were obsessed with images of children and childhood” (354) and “childhood came to be seen as the most significant phase of life” (354). The main debate was whether a child is born into this world innocent or flawed by “the original sin”. Accordingly, it was believed that the child is in fact born innocent and virtuous, bearing all characteristics that adults have lost (Roberts 355). In order to preserve this innocence, children had to be protected from potentially corrupting books (Roberts 356). The



way to achieve this was by writing only “good” books for children. This is why the Victorian period focused on fairy tales.

Roberts claims that “[t]he Victorians inherited a long tradition of the fairytale, dating at least from the middle ages. However, as Eric C. Brown warns, the fairy tales written in this period “fall under the rubric of literary fairy tales – not directly deriving from the mostly oral, folk tradition” (33). Zipes makes a distinction between what he calls a folk tale and a fairy tale. He says that “the common term *Volksmärchen* or folk tale (of medieval origins) clearly signifies that the people were the *carriers* of the tales”. On the other hand, “fairy tale refers to the *literary* production of tales *adapted* by bourgeois or aristocratic writers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries” (Zipes, “Breaking the Magic Spell” 119). Thus, the function of such fairy tales is to preach “how one was to conduct oneself in conformity with the laws of one’s social class and state” (Zipes, “Breaking the Magic Spell” 121). So fairy tales become appropriate for children because they have the didactic impulse that is teaching them how to behave according to their social class and also how to stay innocent. While Zipes’ distinction might work in theory, the reality is not that simple. Folk tale is already a modified version of the oral narrative and fairy tale is just one step further from it.

The desire for children to stay innocent and uncorrupted, that aspiration to separate childhood and adulthood, can be found in many Victorian fairy tales according to Roberts (359). As already mentioned, this is connected to the Victorian view of the childhood as the most significant phase in one’s life. However, as every trend has its counterpart, so does the view that fairy tales are only for children and that they need to teach them how to behave properly. According to James Eli Adams, in the 1830s there emerged “a broad resistance to prescriptive moralism, and with it a body of literature blurring the boundaries of child and adult readership” (229). Among the writers who condemned the strict moralising in literature for children was George MacDonald who wrote fantasies for both children and adults (Adams 229).

### 2.1. George MacDonald (1824 – 1905)

In his essay “The Fantastic Imagination”, MacDonald claims that he does not write for children but for the childlike, whatever their age may be (MacDonald 7). He was and still is considered revolutionary when it comes to fairy tales. Together with Oscar Wilde and Frank L. Baum. MacDonald “refused to comply with the standard notions of sexuality and sex roles and

questioned the restrictions placed on the imagination of children” (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 109). According to Zipes, “the patterns and configurations of his tales clearly display a tendency to negate the institutionalized and established forms of raising children” (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 111). MacDonald was not afraid to challenge the notion of innocence in children and as Zipes claims, “he was arguing against the conventional rules of pedagogy and strict Christian upbringing” (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 112). Discussions about the issues in his tales later in the thesis will provide a better understanding of his writing.

Despite writing poetry, novels, essays and sermons, MacDonald’s best known works are his fantasies such as *At the Back of the North Wind* and *The Princess and the Goblin*. As already mentioned above, he wrote for both children and adults, aiming with his stories for them to question and rethink the strict social upbringing (Knoepflmacher vii). It is stated in the previous paragraph that MacDonald was arguing against strict Christian upbringing, however, that does not mean that he was against Christianity. Quite the opposite, actually. His works are imbued with Christian undertones, which does not surprise since he served as a Congregationalist minister and was a pastor at one point in his life. After his resignation due to his controversial views, he converted to the Church of England and occasionally preached independently as a lay man (“George MacDonald: Biography”). Imagination and theology were very important for him. According to Kerry Dearborn, “MacDonald’s marriage of imagination and theology emerged from his belief in God as loving creator and redeemer and his desire to follow Jesus Christ in all things. He was convinced that a fruitful imagination finds its inspiration drinking from the wellsprings of God’s infinite creativity” (1). Hence, in his writing, MacDonald tried to get people to return to God (Dearborn 1). He used literature to preach and teach because he “saw the arts as being gifts from God which could be used graciously to penetrate through the thick spectacles of certain rigid forms of theology to present an alternate and more truly theological perspective” (Dearborn 2). With his innovativeness and refreshing way of preaching, MacDonald left his mark in the literary world and inspired many authors that came after him, including C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien (Landow).

### 3. Czech National Revival

The National Revival started at the end of the 18th century, and although it was not completed until the formation of Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, officially the term designates the period's first phase that ended in 1848 (Novák 118). In order to fully grasp the period of the National Revival, one must go back further in the past. A turning event in Czech history was the Battle of White Mountain, when Czech Protestant estates lost against the Habsburg and Catholic side (Rossos 253). The result of the defeat was that “[t]he nation lost its independence and the conquerors, Vienna and the Catholic Church, set about obliterating the memory of its past, especially of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, by destroying its political and cultural traditions and creating new ones in the spirit of absolutism and the Counter-Reformation” (Rossos 253). Continuing into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic books in Latin and German suppressed the Czech language and tradition (Novák 85). It seemed that the Czech nation had lost everything it had achieved up to that Battle. According to Arne Novák “[t]owards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was little hope anywhere that a nation so totally crushed could ever recover. Only among the rural populace did a tiny flame of healthy national life continue to flicker” (85). Hence, based on the socio-historical conditions, it was not surprising that the old stories and tales became the source and reflection of the very heart of the nation.

In his preface to Erben's *České prostonárodní pohádky a pověsti* published in 1955 (*Traditional Czech Fairy Tales and Stories*), Jan Petrmichl points to the importance of fairy tales in the period of the National Revival. He claims that together with poems, fairy tales were the most significant manifestation of Czech poetics proving that the Czech nation lives, fights and creates despite the difficult sociopolitical situation. Furthermore, he says that fairy tales served as a foundation stone based on which the people saved their language from the foreign one (Petrmichl 7). As Čapek says for fairy tales in general, but what can be applied to them especially in this situation, “[t]he very soul of a nation is expressed in them, with its wisdom, phantasy and simplicity, with its faith in supernatural forces and its ancient national deities” (49). This gives fairy tales a certain depth and significance which again proves that fairy tales are not to be taken lightly.

The goal of the National Revival was to encourage the development of national consciousness and struggle against Vienna's absolutism and centralization, as well as to promote

interest in Czech historiography (Rossos 256-257). And the goal was achieved. After being crushed and subdued, the Czech nation has risen from its ashes, successfully re-creating its language, literature and identity.

### 3.1. Karel Jaromír Erben (1811 – 1870)

Karel Jaromír Erben is one of the reasons why the Czech nation was able to preserve its literature. Jaromír Jech states that Erben, next to his contemporary Božena Němcová, is a classic of Czech fairy tales (65). In Czech history (together with Němcová) he is the equivalent of the Brothers Grimm (Jech 65) since he “spent his time as a tireless collector and researcher of folk material, especially fairy tales, songs and customs” (Novák 151). The thesis will deal with his fairy tales, but Erben’s most famous and appreciated work is the collection of ballads *Kytice z pověstí národních* (A Bouquet of National Tales) (Novák 151). One collection of poems was enough to launch him to the stardom of Czech poets. Jan Neruda says that Erben listened to the people’s stories and turned those stories into art. He refers to Erben's verse as pure gold and claims he is the *Czechiest* poet of them all (Neruda 408). Right after the publication of his ballads, Erben set his mind on publishing a book of fairy tales (Dolanský 329). According to Julius Dolanský, being a father of three daughters is, together with his professional interest, the reason of his venture into writing fairy tales (329). What Erben tried to do was transcend the period of darkness after the defeat at the White Mountain and strengthen the people by establishing continuity with its glorious past (Dolanský 400). Inspired with Romanticism, according to which the spirit of the nation is best preserved in people, in their customs, poems, fairy tales and legends, he saved priceless national imagination and art. Today, Erben's collections are a reliable source for everyone interested in Czech folklore (Dolanský 401).

He was among the first who realized the importance of fairy tales. In the tales, he tried to find the remains of myths, people's beliefs in fate and their views of the good and evil, which led him to realize they are similar to the tales of other European nations. In light of that, Erben was the first who published an extensive collection *Vybrané báje a pověstí národních jiných větví slovanských* (Selection of Folk Tales and Legends from Other Slavic Branches). After that he wrote his own fairy tales based on folk motifs (Dolanský 401-402). The plot in his tales is built on the encounter of good and evil. The fairy world is on the side of the brave good-hearted hero who helps others, loves nature and animals, and respects human feelings (Petrnichl 9-10).

His skilfulness as a poet has enabled him to write beautiful tales that still remain popular and widely read even today. This being the case, the analysis of his tales will show that fairy tales are timeless and that there are values there worth to be taught even two centuries later.

#### 4. Didactics and Methodology

*“The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts.”*

C. S. Lewis in *The Abolition of Man*

Before venturing into the didactic analysis, didactics and methodology of teaching need to be defined. According to J. G. Garbers, “[i]t is the task of didactics, as a branch of the science of pedagogics, to outline certain suggestions that will secure successful teaching and consequently the successful cultural maturation of the student” (183). As stated in the introduction, the thesis will provide ways of using fairy tales in teaching English and Czech language. Accordingly, the thesis discusses methodology of teaching that can be used while working with fairy tales and the objectives that might be reached if the tales are incorporated in the classroom as well as some of the possible difficulties that might appear when doing so.

Methodology concerns itself “with the selection and sequencing of learning tasks and activities” (Nunan, *Language Teaching Methodology* 2). According to Nunan, “[a]n important aspect of methodology is the development of teaching routines, materials and tasks for use in the classroom” (*Language Teaching Methodology* 3). The selection and sequence of tasks is important because it aims to motivate learners and make them interested in the topic, ensuring successful learning in the end. The primary goal of teaching a language is of course language acquisition, but language can hardly be separated from its literature, culture and history. There are four skills that learners need in order to become successful users of a language – listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nunan, *Language Teaching Methodology* 6-7). Reading is one of the ways which facilitate learning. According to Porter Lander McClintock, “the nursery tale, whether told at home or transplanted to the school, constitutes the child's introduction to imaginative art, and as such takes on considerable educational importance” (609). Children (but older learners as well) usually like reading fairy tales, they identify themselves with the main characters and all the characteristics like over-determination and structural stability make fairy tales understandable and enjoyable for them. Thus, fairy tales in the classroom, regardless of the

learners' age, can be used to promote reading and contribute to overall literacy, communication skills and enriching vocabulary.

## 5. Didactic Application of Selected English Fairy Tales by George MacDonald in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

The next section of the thesis deals with George MacDonald's fairy tales in terms of teaching English as a foreign language. According to Gass and Selinker, foreign language acquisition "refers to the learning of a nonnative language in the environment of one's native language" (7). The aim of English teachers is to organise materials and activities in the best way to ensure language acquisition. Authentic materials like literary texts show "how far literary language deviates from ordinary language" and "have a powerful function in raising moral and ethical concerns in the classroom" (Lazar 3). Fairy tale is a traditional literary form with its own structure, motifs and each character has its own function. Besides showing how fairy tales can be used in teaching the English language, some issues like patriarchy are addressed while interpreting and discussing the tales.

Three MacDonald's fairy tales are selected – "The Light Princess", "The Shadows" and "The Golden Key". Due to the complexity of the vocabulary and length of the tales, the recommended level of language knowledge is B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 24). B2 learners:

[c]an understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. (Council of Europe 24)

In order to be intrigued by the text presented to them, learners need to be able to understand it. With language proficiency lower than B2, learners might have difficulties with understanding the text (if it is not modified for lower language proficiency) and therefore get demotivated.

The tales are analysed in accordance with methodological principles which are based on the empirical data collected through vast research on language teaching process. The analysis is

presented in the activities before, during and after reading. The activities presented are just suggestions and possibilities of how to deal with a literary text in the classroom. Each activity is then explained in terms of its educational goals and objectives. As already mentioned, it is not enough just to read the fairy tales and use them for language acquisition focusing only on the linguistic and/or grammatical part. A critical interpretation has to be offered as well. The way of presenting and discussing some issues found in the fairy tales depends on the learners' age due to their cognitive maturation and overall understanding of the world around them. MacDonald's fairy tales are in this case aimed for learners aged 13-18 years old. "The Light Princess" and "The Shadows" are analysed for learners aged 13-15, while "The Golden Key" is analysed for learners aged 16-18 years old.

### 5.1. The Light Princess

"The Light Princess" is MacDonald's first fairy tale for children and at the time not considered suitable for them because of its adult search for meaning and obvious sexual attraction between the Princess and the Prince (Knoepflmacher xii-xiii). In class, the attention can be shifted to the princess' childish character and selfishness, thus making that a problem for the learners to deal with, which takes the focus away from the sexual attraction of the two. According to Zipes, the fairy tale is actually a parody of "Sleeping Beauty" and "Rapunzel" and "it reflects MacDonald's disrespectful attitude toward traditional folktales and fairy tales" (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 113). At the beginning of the tale, after a long yearning for a child, a king and queen finally have a daughter and her christening is in order. The king though, forgets to invite his own sister Makemnoit, who is a wicked witch, and thus provokes her wrath which results in her cursing the little princess to be light of spirit and body (MacDonald 17). Due to its length, reading the whole fairy tale in class would take too long. There are two solutions to this problem: either have the learners read the story at home or only read parts of it. The activities below presume that parts of the tale are read in class and the rest is read at home. The issues which MacDonald addresses here are growing up, the gravity of adulthood and empathy one gains through a relationship with others (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 114), so these are the key points discussed with learners when reading the fairy tale.

### 5.1.1. Activities before Reading

The purpose of the activities before reading is to motivate learners, make them interested in the topic. Motivation is important because “there is ample evidence that positive motivation is associated with a willingness to keep learning” (Lightbown and Spada 63). Since dealing with fairy tales, the first activity is to finish the sentence beginning with the phrase “Once upon a time...”. The task will immediately make learners think of fairy tales, and their answers will probably be very similar to “Once upon a time there lived a king/queen/poor boy/princess” and so on. After that, questions such as “Do you like reading fairy tales?”, “Which tale is your favourite one?” are asked in order to start a discussion, elicit their opinions and give the learners opportunity to practise speaking. According to Penny Ur, “the level of language needed for a discussion should be lower than that used in intensive language-learning activities in the same class: it should be easily recalled and produced by the participants, so that they can speak fluently and with the minimum of hesitation” (121-122). If a high language proficiency is required, many learners might feel uncomfortable and discouraged to speak in front of their classmates.

After the initial discussion, learners are provided with basic information about the work and its context. To make it more interesting, some pictures and short video clips are shown instead of dryly enumerating facts. With today’s technology and access to information the lesson’s activities can be very diverse and therefore interesting both visually and orally. And finally, considering the ambiguity of the word “light”, introduction to the tale is made by asking the learners to say what kind of princess they expect based on the tale’s title – bright, pale, of little weight or maybe gentle. The objective of the activity is to make learners aware of different meanings of that particular word and they are asked to explain their answers. Regardless of the meaning of the word “light”, most of them might describe the princess as a beautiful girl, possibly with a long blonde hair, which is a beauty standard imposed to them by popular Western culture and media outlets. In case that (most of) their answers turn out to be describing a tall, skinny, beautiful blonde girl, they are asked whether someone of average height with short brown hair cannot be beautiful as well and worthy of being a princess. It may not make a large difference in their thinking but it is surely worth to address the issue of the imposed beauty standard and prompt them to think outside the box.



### 5.1.2. Activities during Reading

The first chapter called “WHAT! NO CHILDREN?” is read out loud by two or three learners and unknown words are explained. The reading out loud provides an opportunity to practise reading and therefore pronunciation. One cannot expect from learners to understand every word in the text nor is it necessary for understanding of the plot. The meaning of a word can be guessed on the basis of its surrounding context. According to Paul Nation, “[t]here are various effects of guessing procedures. Their main effect should be to raise learners’ confidence in guessing from context, to make them sensitive to the range of clues available, and to help them avoid strategies – such as focusing too quickly on the form of the word – that will reduce their chances of guessing accurately” (271). Guessing the meaning of the word based on its context is a learning strategy employed by learners in which they draw on their knowledge of the surrounding words, context and previous experience when guessing.

A rather problematic sentence that might send a wrong message to impressionable young learners is found right in the first chapter. The sentence in question is: “Why don’t you have any daughters at least?” said he. “I don’t say *sons*; that might be too much to expect.” (MacDonald 15). Basically what the king is saying here is that he values sons more and since it is impossible to have a son, he will be content with the next best thing – a daughter. As aforesaid, fairy tales are an old and traditional literary form. The thinking that sons are more valuable and desirable than daughters stems from patriarchy imbedded in many Western cultures. Since fairy tales come from oral narratives whose purpose was, among others, to teach about one’s position in society, they too carry the load of patriarchal system. Traditional family unit needed sons to inherit the father, or work in the field, be soldiers, etc. whereas daughters, irrespective of their childbearing function, implied paying a dowry. This is a direct legacy of patriarchy that unfortunately can still be found in the contemporary society and if such issues are raised in a fairy tale, they should be discussed with learners. This analysis is directed at 13 to 15-year-olds, who are old enough to be asked directly: “What is wrong with this?”. It must be made clear that that kind of thinking is unacceptable. However, this must come from a short in-class discussion among learners, while the teacher’s function is that of a guide, to guarantee that each learner is given the opportunity to voice his/her opinion and that they all learn something about gender equality. They are asked whether they think a woman can rule a country as well as a man and whether the choice of the

leader should be based on gender or rather on some qualities that the potential leaders possess. Learners can also be asked whether they know any country ruled by a woman.

After reading the first chapter and clarifying any vocabulary or other issues, the second chapter is presented through an audiobook. As David Nunan says, “[l]istening is the Cinderella skill in second language learning. All too often, it has been overlooked by its elder sister – speaking” (“Listening in Language Learning” 238). However, listening is as important as any other skill; it provides input for the learner and “[w]ithout understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin” (Nunan, “Listening in Language Learning” 239). Prior to listening, learners need to know the purpose of the listening and comprehension exercise. To use a text grammatically, Lazar proposes “[u]sing a section of the text to focus on a particular grammatical problem that students may have; for example blanking out all verb forms in a section of the text and asking students to supply the correct tenses” (85-86). They have the text in front of them and they need to fill in the gaps with irregular verbs in the past simple tense during the first listening. The objective of the exercise is to practise listening and revise past simple form of the irregular verbs. When they are finished, they take turns writing the verbs on the board so that every learner can check their spelling.

During the second listening, they pay attention to the questions asked about the text, such as “Who did the king forget to invite?”, “How is Makemnoit described?”, “What did she do to the little princess?” and finally, a parallel can be drawn between the learners’ (assumed) prior knowledge by asking whether the story reminds them of another fairy tale. This kind of listening Nunan calls listening for specific information (“Listening in Language Learning” 239). Assuming that someone says it reminds them of “Sleeping Beauty”, a brief discussion can ensue on how learners expect the story to develop. The goal of this activity is to make learners draw on their previous knowledge of the world and share their opinions, thus giving them the opportunity to practise speaking again. In addition to monitoring learners’ speech, teachers should also be aware of their language use so as not to use a complex vocabulary or talk too fast. The modified or adapted output that teachers use with learners is called “teacher talk” (Lightbown and Spada 32). According to Nunan, “[t]he modifications which teachers make to their language, the questions they ask, the feedback they provide and the types of instructions and explanations they provide can all have an important bearing, not only on the effective management of the classroom, but also on the acquisition” (*Language Teaching Methodology* 7). Therefore, teachers

have to pay attention and modify their language according to their learners' proficiency and needs.

Afterwards the learners' homework is to read the rest of the tale at home. The assumption is that the next lesson is one week away from this one. They get a list of bullet points that they need to provide answers for. In order to make sure that everyone understands the fairy tale's plot, the bullet points are to describe the princess' personality and the importance of water and the lake in her life; then answer the questions about Makemnoit's actions and the prince's sacrifice. In the end, they need to briefly recount how the princess saved the prince and regained her gravity. As previously mentioned, they do not need to understand every word. However, there are going to be some words whose meaning they will need to look up in order to understand the plot. The teacher may provide some list of words considered necessary for the learners to know and tell them to pay special attention to those words. It is suggested to them in class to look up the unknown words in an online Oxford English dictionary (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>) for an English definition or check Glosbe (<https://hr.glosbe.com/>) for the Croatian translation. That way the information is easily accessible for them and the process of finding the meaning of unknown words up-to-date with today's technology and Internet possibilities.

### 5.1.3. Activities after Reading

The aim of the activities after reading is to ensure that all learners understand the plot of the tale and to promote thinking about the content of the tale in order to be able to participate in a discussion. A critical analysis of the development of the princess' character is made. According to Zipes, "[t]he major theme of the tale concerns social integration, but-and this is significant-gravity (social responsibility and compassion) cannot be imposed or learned abstractly. It is gained through passion and experience, and it is also liberating" (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 114). The educational objective of analysing the princess is to come to the same conclusion as she did, "realising her pleasure is not worth the death of a beloved human being" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 114). One does not need to go to the extremes like death but simply make sure that the message that one cannot only think of themselves is conveyed to young learners. Apart from this message, learners can receive a subliminal one, which is that the princess' salvation had to be the prince, that is, a man. However, it is not exactly so. Rather than becoming dependent on the prince, the princess "gains certain qualities

through her relationship with him, just as he benefits from the encounter” (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 114). Through discussion, learners are led to this conclusion by the teacher’s questions and guidelines. The princess could have easily grow out of her childishness, if instead of the prince, a friend of hers was in his place. She just needed a meaningful relationship to grasp the gravity of life. Learners are welcome to offer their interpretation of the text and comment on it since “[f]ocussing on a task which demands that students express their own personal responses to these multiple levels of meaning can only serve to accelerate the students' acquisition of language” (Lazar 17). It is important to encourage them to share their thoughts about what they have read and to make them feel comfortable about doing so because anxiety can interfere with the learning process (Lightbown and Spada 61). To relieve their anxiety and ensure everyone participates in the discussion equally, the teacher needs to provide enough time for them to think of an answer and they can call out the learners who have not been as active as others have. Another possibility is to pair the learners so they would feel more comfortable discussing their ideas with someone else first, and then repeat them in front of the whole class.

After the discussion, the next task is to retell the fairy tale from Makemnoit's point of view. Learners can change Makemnoit's fate but the beginning of the story needs to stay the same. This writing task will prompt creative thinking and put the learners in Makemnoit's shoes, it will help them understand narrative point of view (Lazar 86). The task has two objectives – one is practising writing and the other is deciding on the course of action, that is, learners can decide whether Makemnoit is going to turn good in the end or stay the way she was. This is an example of how literature “can help to stimulate the imagination of our students, to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness” (Lazar 19). Practising writing is important because writing is a complex skill that may be complicated to master in the first language, let alone a foreign one. According to Nunan,

successful writing involves mastering the mechanics of letter formation and obeying conventions of spelling and punctuation; using the grammatical system to convey one’s intended meaning; organising content at the level of the paragraph and the complete text to reflect given/new information and topic/comment structures; polishing and revising one’s initial efforts; selecting an appropriate style for one’s audience. (*Language Teaching Methodology* 7)

This statement confirms that writing is not easy, especially in a foreign language when one needs to think of rules and conventions of another language. That is why it is important to give learners plenty of opportunities to practise writing on a regular basis.

After finishing writing the fairy tale from the villain's point of view, depending on the number of learners in the class, they can be asked to read their stories out loud and they can choose one they like the best. By reading their stories out loud they practise both listening and reading.

At the end of the lesson dealing with "The Light Princess", the learners are able to read and understand a complex literary text, they can use the correct form of irregular verbs in the past simple tense, they can read and listen for a particular piece of information and they are able to write a short story on a specified topic and share their opinions and interpretations on the topics addressed in the fairy tale.

## 5.2. The Shadows

"The Shadows" is a fairy tale about an old man Ralph Rinkelmann who is made the king of fairies. One evening, strange creatures called Shadows visit him and tell him they wish for him to know them better. The Shadows' purpose is to make people repent for their bad actions. They remind them of their bad deeds by playing them out. But they also inspire young artists and make people feel love and affection. Although they need light to be perceived by human eyes, their existence is threatened by too many artificial lights. They take Ralph to their church in Iceland and there he learns more about them listening to their stories. As mentioned in the previous section, MacDonald's fairy tales are imbued with Christian symbolism and the motif of repentance in this fairy tale is no exception. Since learners are not only Christians but of other religious beliefs, the Christianity is briefly mentioned as a possible interpretation of the story and the focus is then taken to a more general issue of repenting for one's bad deeds.

### 5.2.1. Activities before Reading

Since the title of the fairy tale is "The Shadows", learners are shown some pictures of shadows and asked what they see in those pictures. To encourage them to talk, they are asked whether they like shadow play and whether they know the meaning of the idiom afraid of one's own shadow. These kind of questions are used to make a connection between learners and the

topic. It is vital to motivate the learners to speak. According to Penny Ur, “[o]f all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as ‘speakers’ of that language, as if speaking included all the other kinds of knowing” (120). However, it is not enough just to prepare speaking activities since there are some problems that occur during these activities that the teacher needs to be prepared to handle. Among these problems are inhibition because of fear of making mistakes or facing criticism; then some learners complain they have nothing to say, the participation is uneven, and mother tongue is often used (Ur 121). Creating a friendly atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable to speak and share their piece of mind is certainly a good step towards ensuring learners’ participation. When asking questions, teachers also have to have in mind the wait time – “the amount of time the teacher pauses after having asked a question to give the student time to respond” (Lightbown and Spada 138). They need time to think about the question and formulate the answer before they speak. According to Lightbown and Spada, analysis into wait time shows “that teachers typically gave students no more than a second or two before they directed the question to another student or answered the question themselves. They also tended to repeat or paraphrase the question several times rather than silently wait for the students to formulate a response” (132). What needs to be done is to find the right balance between putting too much pressure on learners to respond quickly and creating awkward silences (Lightbown and Spada 132). The wait time largely depends on the teacher’s estimation and knowing one’s learners helps as well.

After the introductory speaking activity, basic information about the author is provided. Lazar suggests that “students do a mini-project on the social and historical background to the story” (84). In this case, a group of students does a presentation on George MacDonald and another group prepares a presentation on the genre of fairy tales. This puts the focus on learners’ work and facilitates independence in gathering certain kind of information. “The Shadows” is not a typical fairy tale and the presentation is surely going to point their expectations one way and it will be an interesting basis for a discussion after reading. When presenting to their classmates, learners practise speaking, and to make sure that their classmates have been listening, they can ask them a few questions about the presented topic. Before reading, learners are given a list of idioms and/or collocations that occur in the tale and are asked to pay special attention to them. Such a list contains: *make a living*, *be taken ill*, *take a hint*, *hold peace*, and maybe some words

the learners may not be familiar with and which are crucial for understanding the plot such as *jest, mien, eerie, dusky, bier* (or *litter*) and so forth.

### 5.2.2. Activities during Reading

Learners use the list of idioms and words that was given to them and find them in the text. First they try to guess the meaning of the words based on the surrounding context. Then they check the meaning in the Oxford online dictionary and write it down. Again, it is important to emphasize to learners they do not need to understand each and every word as long as they understand the overall meaning of the text. If it is necessary for them to understand the plot, they look up more words that are unknown to them. They are instructed to pay attention to how the Shadows are described and what it is that they do. Lazar enlists some problems that learners might have while reading a short story. They might have difficulty following the plot and understanding the characters and vocabulary (76). While reading, the teacher ought to make sure that everyone understands what the story is about. That can be done by asking them short questions or writing down some bullet points on the board for everyone to see. To make it easier for the learners, their task is to read half of the tale for the first lesson and the rest for the next.

While discussing the first half (up to the point when the Shadows come for Ralph Rinkelmann for the second time), learners are encouraged to share their interpretation and understanding of what they have read so far. In the “Fantastic Imagination”, MacDonald himself claims that “[a] genuine work of art must mean many things” (*The Complete Fairy Tales* 7). So every learner provides different insight into the tale they are reading which can serve as an excellent basis for a discussion. They are asked why fairies choose to have a mortal king instead of some immortal being. The explanation provided by the narrator, that “they cannot get rid of the feeling that some men are greater than they are, though they can neither fly nor play tricks” (MacDonald 54) is used to teach the learners that one does not need to have supernatural abilities to be extraordinary. When asking the learners to participate actively, the teacher needs to keep in mind that every learner is different. According to Lightbown and Spada, there are learner characteristics such as intelligence, aptitude (the ability to learn quickly), learning styles and personality that may influence the learner’s language acquisition (57-63). Not every activity agrees with every learner nor is it possible to always accommodate to individual learners’ preferences, but the activities should be diverse so learners can make the best use of them. For

example, when there are thirty learners in the class and five of them give the best results in group activities, the teacher ought to provide such activities on a regular basis when it is convenient. When dealing with personality traits such as extraversion and introversion, the extroverts might be more active than introverts and more readily reply to teacher's questions. The teacher can then call out learners to make sure everyone participates or the class can be organized in a way that the teacher asks a question, learners think about the answer for two or three minutes and then everyone has to contribute to the discussion so as to avoid that only a handful of the same individuals always participate while the others sit passively.

The next task is to explain under which circumstances fairies have power over grown-ups. Learners are divided into smaller groups and they have to come up with a possible explanation why fairies can take people only between life and death (MacDonald 54). According to Pyun, "[p]revious research has shown that group work in classroom settings not only promotes higher achievement in communication but also fosters social interaction among classmates which results in a positive learning environment in class" (169). Furthermore, group work "provides the learner with the opportunity to enhance linguistic proficiency" (Pyun 170). However, the problem with speaking activities is that learners too often discuss among themselves in their native language (Ur 121). It is therefore the role of the teacher to monitor their work and encourage them to speak English. Another way to deal with the mother tongue is to "appoint one of the group as monitor, whose job it is to remind participants to use the target language, and perhaps report later to the teacher how well the group managed to keep it. Even if there is no actual penalty attached, the very awareness that someone is monitoring such lapses helps participants to be more careful" (Ur 122). If left unattended, learners will most likely slip into their mother tongue and sometimes even stray off the topic.

After the discussion, each learner is given an extract from the fairy tale and based on its content, they need to write three to five questions in the past simple tense related to the extract. Prior to distributing the extracts from the tale and giving instructions, the rules of forming questions is briefly repeated. When they are finished, they exchange questions with a classmate who then checks them and gives them feedback. If they are not sure whether a question is correct or not, they ask the teacher for clarification. To make sure that the feedback by their classmates is correct, the teacher monitors the activity closely.



### 5.2.3. Activities after Reading

Learners get three different summaries of the story and they have to decide which one is the most accurate (Lazar 85). The bullet points written down during the reading can help them remember and identify the correct summary. By choosing the right one, they also confirm that they have read the tale closely and that they understand the plot.

For their writing assignment, learners have to find a way to help the Shadows. They have to write an essay titled “If I was Ralph Rinkelmann” in which they have to contemplate the Shadows’ problem of disappearing and think of a possible way to help them. The assignment confronts them with two problems – the Shadows’ problem and the problem of structuring the essay and organizing their thoughts. According to Hedge, “[c]lassroom writing tasks need to be set up in ways that reflect the writing process in good writers. We need to encourage our students to go through a process of planning, organizing, composing, and revising” (9). In other words, it is not enough simply to assign a writing task. It cannot be expected of learners to produce a good writing piece if first they are not taught how to organize their process of writing to solve the task successfully. Hedge claims that good writers “start off with an overall plan in their heads. They think about what they want to say and who they are writing for. They then draft out sections of the writing and as they work on them they are constantly reviewing, revising, and editing their work” (9). Therefore, learners should be given clear instructions on how to tackle the problem of composing a well-written story. Otherwise, they might approach the assignment in a negligent way, not grasping the full implications of writing skills. In order to encourage them to become good writers, they also need to receive feedback. The importance of feedback will be discussed anon.

In the end, since there was a group presentation on the genre of fairy tales, learners are asked to reflect on what their classmates told them about the genre, what they expected to read and whether their expectations match “The Shadows”. There are not many human characters in this tale, only Ralph and his family, and the role of his wife, “who must be queen if he was king” (MacDonald 55), is reduced to that of a mother and carer. She makes tea for Ralph and takes care of the children. Even when Ralph wanted to share his adventure with her, the Shadow forbade it. This poses a question why the queen cannot know about the Shadows or about Ralph being the king of fairies. Is she not his equal? Learners can be warned about this issue by simply asking them these questions. There is no definitive answer and it is highly unlikely that all learners

would have the same opinion on the matter but sometimes just asking the right questions and encouraging them to wonder about it instead of just taking the situation for granted is enough to make them aware of the issue: the issue here being the submissive role of women in fairy tales. As mentioned earlier, MacDonald gave female characters more importance. However, there are still instances when women are put into a secondary position in relation to men and it is important to prompt the learners to question them. After drawing their attention to the issue, learners are asked whether they know of a fairy tale where a woman is the main heroine (and is not saved by the prince).

At the end of the lesson, learners are able to read a complex literary text, use online dictionaries on their own and form questions in the past simple tense. Furthermore, they are able to use idioms and collocations found in the story in the right context. They also improve their reading, writing and speaking skills as well as the listening skill. Although materials featuring authentic language such as an audio book have not been used in this particular lesson, listening to their classmates in a real life situation and paying attention to the information provided to them also belong to the listening skill.

### 5.3. The Golden Key

According to Wolff, “The Golden Key” is probably MacDonald’s best fairy tale (134). Wolff offers quite a psychoanalytical explanation of the tale’s plot where the golden key which Mossy finds represents his phallus (137). Since the goal of using these fairy tales in teaching English as a foreign language is to encourage reading and prompt language acquisition and not to analyse it strictly as a literary work, the psychoanalytical explanation will not be used in the classroom. However, Wolff does claim that the golden key may stand for a number of other things such as “poetic imagination, for warmth and kindness, for religious faith, for love” (138) and these interpretations will be offered when discussing the fairy tale with learners. Like the previous one, this tale is imbued with Christian symbolism. In the end a boy Mossy and a girl Tangle reach the country from where all the shadows fall which could be interpreted as heaven. Because of the complexity of the topic and Christianity in this tale, it is destined for learners aged 16-18 years. Their cognitive maturity and world experience will help them grasp the connotations of the tale.

### 5.3.1. Activities before Reading

First, learners are asked what they imagine fairies look like and whether they liked reading fairy tales as children (or if they still like to read them today). The teacher shows them a few pictures of fairies and they have to decide which picture suits their depiction of a fairy the best. Then they write their description down in a couple of words. The teacher then explains that they will read a fairy tale called “The Golden Key”. The teacher appoints one learner to read the first few sentences out loud and learners are asked what they think the golden key opens. Since the golden key is found at the end of the rainbow, learners are then asked what is found at the end of the rainbow according to their knowledge and experience (the answer is a pot of gold).

Regarding the information about the author, learners work in pairs and they have to find his biography on the Internet. Nowadays, everyone has a smartphone and schools have wireless networking. They can use Wikipedia but they are also encouraged to browse more thoroughly rather than just open the first search result they get. They have ten minutes to look up MacDonald and write down the most important information (based on their decision). The teacher monitors the activity closely in order for them not to use the smartphone for texting or other unrelated activities. When they are finished, one pair reads what they have found and other learners add information that was not mentioned but they find it somehow relevant.

The next activity is pre-teaching vocabulary. Lazar suggests dividing learners into two groups and giving each group a word list. Their task is to find the meaning of the words and then explain their words to the other group (77). Group A’s word list contains: *twilight, flit, tumble, linger, dismay, cease, merchant, idle, neglect, disconsolate, slovenly, quarrel, ruddy, precipice, undulate* and *foliage*. Group B’s word list has: *descry, mist, gambol, solemn, queer, heedless, scorch, diligently, obscure, repose, ravishing, rivulet, molten, torrid, mournful* and *ponder*. The choice of words is based on the necessity of knowing their meaning in order to understand the plot and on their frequent occurrence in the tale. Such a pre-teaching of vocabulary helps learners when reading the tale and it may also give them some idea about the stylistics of the text they are about to read. They are instructed to search for the word meaning in the Oxford online dictionary (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>). They can use either their smartphones or the computer in the classroom. When they find the definition of the word, they need to translate it to Croatian. They must not use Google Translate (<https://translate.google.com/>). As the finishing touch intended to motivate them, learners are shown the trailer for the new edition of the book on YouTube, which

features new captivating illustrations (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvTqWQBV2AI>). Showing them the trailer after the pre-teaching vocabulary activity and not at the very beginning of the lesson serves the purpose of maintaining their motivation after looking up words in a dictionary, which might seem as a dull activity to some learners despite its usefulness. Pre-teaching vocabulary helps learners to understand the plot better and prevents demotivation that may arise from not knowing too many words in the text.

### 5.3.2. Activities during Reading

Because of the complexity and rich symbolism of the tale, learners need to be navigated through the fairy tale very carefully by making sure that everyone understands the plot and its possible interpretations. One might ask, why give them such a complex story to read in the first place if the goal is (only) language acquisition? As mentioned before, language can hardly be separated from its literature and culture. Reading might contribute to spontaneous mastering of certain skills Lazar calls literary competence (14). According to her, literary competence “might include anything from recognising and appreciating a full range of genres (from sonnets to allegories) to simply following the plot of a short story” (13). Hence, literature is in this case used only as a resource for promoting language activities, it is not a study of literary work (Lazar 14). Moreover, Lazar has enlisted reasons for using literature in a language course and those reasons justify why giving learners a fairy tale like “The Golden Key” or any other tale is not a mistake or a waste of time. Some of the reasons why literature should be used are because “it is very motivating, it is authentic material, it has general educational value, it helps students to understand another culture, it is a stimulus for language acquisition, it develops students’ interpretative abilities and it encourages students to talk about their opinions and feelings” (Lazar 14-15). Therefore, using fairy tales like these in a classroom certainly poses a challenge for the learners as well as for the teacher, but the possible outcomes obtained from such a practise are worth it.

The first activity is a listening one. Learners are given the text from the beginning to the part where the rainbow disappeared and the boy fell asleep. Their assignment is to listen to the audio book and fill in the gaps with the appropriate words they hear. Since it is a rather large extract from the text, the teacher asks whether it needs to be played once more after bigger chunks of the text so as to avoid listening to the whole extract again, which might lead to

learners losing their concentration and interest. After the listening and clarification of the unknown words and making sure that everyone understands the plot up to this point, the next task is to transform the direct speech into reported speech. Before giving them time to solve the task individually, the teacher writes an example on the board and explains or revises the rules of reported speech. In case the reported speech theory was provided prior to the lesson, the teacher asks the class to explain the rules. When they are done transforming the direct speech from the extract given to them, they read their reported speech out loud in order to check it. Learners continue to take turns while reading the tale further out loud till the end of the paragraph when Tangle runs away from home. They practise their listening and reading skill as well as pronunciation. If a learner does not know how to pronounce a certain word, their classmates are asked to step in before the teacher provides them with the correct pronunciation. In the first part of the exercise, learners had to transform direct speech into reported speech. In the second part of practise, they get the next section of the fairy tale text modified in the way that it contains only reported speech and this time they have to transform it into direct speech.

Furthermore, when reading the fairy tale, learners are asked to compare their description of fairies with the one in the tale. To ensure that everyone understands the plot, the teacher can ask “two or three overall questions to check they have understood the gist of the story” (Lazar 85) such as how Tangle and Mossy got their names, who the mysterious lady that Tangle meets in the wood is, how much time has passed since Tangle ran away from home, what the ambition of the animals is and so forth.

The learners are then instructed to finish reading the fairy tale at home for the next lesson. Their task while reading is to look up any unknown words and choose ten direct speech sentences from the text and transform them into reported speech. Apart from the grammatical task, they need to write bullet points about the most important aspects of the fairy tale. The teacher provides them with a list of points they need to pay attention to. The list contains Mossy and Tangle’s journey, the significance of the golden key and how it fits into the story, what the land where all the shadows fall is and people that Mossy and Tangle meet on their journey. Learners are free to consult with their classmates at any time about these or any other aspects of the fairy tale. When they finish, they need to write a short summary of the fairy tale based on the bullet points they wrote.

### 5.3.3. Activities after Reading

As mentioned earlier, learners need to be carefully navigated through the fairy tale. Therefore, when discussing it after everyone has read it, the most important parts are re-read in class again. When interpreting the main themes of the story, Lazar proposes “providing students with different critical interpretations of the story which they then discuss” (86). It was already said at the beginning that the psychoanalytic interpretation would be avoided, and that interpretations of the golden key as love, faith, warmth and kindness would be offered. Learners may also come up with their own ideas that they can discuss. According to Lazar, some factors that might affect the reader’s interpretation are “the historical period in which the reader is living; the class/social position of the reader; the reader’s religious beliefs” (10). In this case, the best option is to provide learners with different interpretations and leave it up to them to choose the one they like the best. As Lazar claims, “[w]e should not expect to reach any definitive interpretation of a literary text with our students. Rather we should use the text as the basis for generating discussion, controversy and critical thinking in the classroom” (3). It is certainly worth discussing the fact that Tangle’s journey to the land where all shadows fall was much longer and effortful than Mossy’s. One might get the idea that Mossy as a man is privileged to take the straight road to there. Wolff suggests that it is because Mossy has the golden key which gives him that power (145). However, it may still feel as an injustice towards Tangle who had to suffer so much more than Mossy and MacDonald might be saying with this that women are suffering (Wolff 147). It is a complex issue here which might be best approached by focusing on Tangle and her journey by depicting her as a brave woman who manages to withstand all the hardship of life all on her own.

Not only is her journey longer and physically more difficult but when she finally gets to her destination, she has to wait for Mossy for seven years in order to enter the country where the shadows fall. Since they are old enough to have experienced how the society functions and notice the presence of patriarchy, they discuss about the “world-view of values which seem to be depicted in the text” (Lazar 86). More precisely, they critically discuss the depiction of men and women in literature, especially in fairy tales. The lesson is used to promote speaking activities and relate their knowledge of other literary works they have read prior to the “The Golden Key”. With the speaking activity they practise their oral fluency, form and express their opinions as well as listen to other learners’ views on the matter.

After discussing and interpreting the tale, the teacher and learners together check the reported speech they had to write. They exchange their summaries of the tale and correct each other's mistakes, whether grammatical or plot related, under the teacher's supervision.

At the end of the lesson, learners are able to read a complex literary text and provide various interpretations of its symbolism. They can correctly use direct and reported speech and listen to the literary text with understanding. During the lesson needed to analyse the fairy tale, learners had the opportunity to practise all four language skills and develop their critical thinking.

#### 5.4. Overview

This section of the thesis has shown how the selected fairy tales by George MacDonald can be used in teaching English as a foreign language. The fairy tales chosen and the activities described serve only as an example of how it is possible to use a literary text of this genre in the classroom. Since they are not usually part of the school curriculum, any materials related to the tales need to be prepared by the teacher. Lazar suggests that “[w]hen you start working on the design of your own materials, you need, first, to try to pinpoint any problems you think your students may have when reading and studying the story. Your task and activities should then be designed to help students through these difficulties” (86). As stated before, the activities presented here are only possible ways of analysing the fairy tales in the classroom. The activities and their sequence depend on the teacher's estimate of learners' abilities and knowledge. Since the fairy tales are quite long for reading them whole in class, the texts can also be modified, shortened or only extracts from the tales can be used.

## 6. Didactic Application of Selected Czech Fairy Tales by Karel

### Jaromír Erben

The following section of the thesis deals with selected fairy tales by Karel Jaromír Erben in teaching the Czech language. In comparison with MacDonald's tales, Erben's are shorter and contain less complex vocabulary as well as less symbolism. According to that, the recommended minimal language proficiency level is B1/B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (24). B2 level language proficiency is explained in the previous section. B1 level language user

[c]an understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. (Council of Europe 24)

Based on the content and length of the selected fairy tales, learners aged 10-14 years make the best suitable target audience; however these fairy tales (or any other tales by Erben) can be used with older groups as well.

The selected English fairy tales are dealt with in terms of teaching English as a foreign language. Czech fairy tales are dealt with in terms of teaching Czech as a second language. According to Gass and Selinker, “[s]econd language acquisition [...] generally refers to the learning of a nonnative language in the environment in which that language is spoken” (7). Furthermore they emphasize that “learning in a second language environment takes place with considerable access to speakers of the language being learned, whereas learning in a foreign language environment usually does not” (Gass and Selinker 7). In Croatia there is a Czech minority which has several schools where they teach the Czech language, so discussing teaching Czech as a second language is relevant in Croatia.

### 6.1. Czech Minority in Croatia and its Education System

Czechs had started moving to Croatia since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of them settled in the vicinity of Daruvar (Dugački 238). Because of the growing number of Czechs, they founded schools in Daruvar and its immediate vicinity (Dugački 238). Today there are two main Czech elementary schools in Daruvar and in Končanica with their branch schools in villages and cities in various parts of Croatia. In Daruvar there is even a grammar school with a Czech department (“Osvětová činnost”). It is safe to say that the descendants of the immigrants are learning their ancestors’ language in a number of schools in Croatia. However, the Czech language is not spoken only in schools, it is spoken in the environment they live in. For example, there are bilingual signs in Daruvar and a lot of families use Czech as their first language. Therefore it is justified to analyse Erben’s fairy tales in terms of teaching Czech as a second language in the



Croatian context. The fairy tales analysed are “Dlouhý, Široký a Bystrozraký”, “Pták Ohnivák a liška Ryška” and “Tři zlaté vlasy Děda-Vševěda”.

## 6.2. “Dlouhý, Široký a Bystrozraký” (“Long, Broad and Sharp Eyes”)

“Dlouhý, Široký a Bystrozraký” is a fairy tale about a prince who chooses a princess imprisoned by an evil sorcerer to be his future wife and manages to save her. He did not save her on his own though, his success depends on the help of three men: Dlouhý (Long), who can stretch; Široký (Broad), who can widen himself and Bystrozraký (Sharp Eyes), whose sight is so good that he has to cover his eyes, otherwise he would burn and break things with his gaze. According to Petrmichl, most of Erben’s fairy tales focus on the encounter of good and evil (Petrmichl 9). This tale is no exception: the evil here being the sorcerer who imprisons the princess and turns everyone who does not succeed in freeing her into stone statues. The princess in this tale is a passive character. The prince chooses her to be his future wife when he sees a painting of her and his choice is based purely on the fact that she is the most beautiful princess among those offered to him. Therefore, when working with the fairy tale, the passivity of the princess will be in the centre of the speaking activity.

### 6.2.1. Activities before Reading

The first pre-reading activity is to get familiar with the author of the fairy tale. The learners work together in a group to make a poster about Karel Jaromír Erben. To make it easier, they are first divided into smaller groups and each group needs to find specific information, for example one group about his early life, the other one about his work and so forth. They can use the Internet to find relevant information about Erben and they choose what to put on the poster. They can use Wikipedia, which is often the favourite source of information, however, they are encouraged to explore some other sources as well. The supplies for the activity are arranged in advance; the teacher appoints learners with a list of supplies they need to bring. The poster needs to contain the most relevant information – who Erben is, why he is famous and a list of his most relevant works. In order to make it more interesting and appealing, learners choose few photos that the teacher can print out using the school printer. During this activity, learners have to communicate and cooperate with each other. The teacher needs to monitor the class closely so the activity does not get out of hand or take too much time. They are given a limited amount of

time to finish the poster and encouraged to communicate in Czech. When they are finished, they hang the poster in the class and revise what they found out about Erben.

After learning about the author, their next assignment is to “brainstorm a lexical set which is important in the story” (Lazar 85). The teacher writes “*fairy tale characters*” on the board and learners have one minute to come up with as many characters as they can think of. Some of the characters that first cross one’s mind are surely a king, a princess/prince, a queen (members of the royal family), a wizard, a dragon and so forth. Some of the specific characters that are found in Czech tales are water sprites (*vodník/hastrman*) and devils. These characters can also be mentioned by learners who already came in contact with Czech fairy tales. A parallel can be further drawn between Croatian and Czech fairy tales regarding the character of the water sprite. Learners are asked whether they heard of the Croatian water sprite and to make it more interesting, the teacher can show some pictures of the two sprites for comparison.

After creating interest and indicating that the lesson is going to be about fairy tales, the learners are shown an illustration of Dlouhý, Široký and Bystrozraký. Based on the illustration, “[s]tudents make very general predictions about the story” (Lazar 84) and are asked how they would name the characters. Some learners might already know who men in the illustration are, so before showing the illustration, the teacher warns those learners to keep it to themselves for a while to give an opportunity to the other learners to guess.

### 6.2.2. Activities during Reading

To make the reading more interesting to the learners, they are divided into the roles of the characters and each learner reads their character’s lines. During reading, they exchange turns so that everyone has a chance to practise reading and pronunciation. The rest of the learners who are not reading at the moment, follow the text in front of them. After a few paragraphs are read, learners look at the words marked in the text and match them with synonyms on the paper they got prior to reading. Besides explaining the words that are marked, learners are encouraged to ask about any other unknown words they find. After matching the marked word with its synonym, they need to come up with the word’s antonym.

To relate the learners to the tale and elicit their opinions, they are asked whether they would like to have friends like Dlouhý, Široký and Bystrozraký, and what they would want to accomplish with their help if they had such companions. They are given a couple of minutes to

think about their answers and a few learners are called out to share their ideas with the rest of the class. Furthermore, they explain who their favourite character of the three titular ones is and why.

To use the fairy tale in order to practise grammar, all the imperative forms are put into the brackets in the infinitive form and learners need to fill in the correct verb form in the imperative mood (Lazar 85). For example, “Ožeň se, synu můj!” (Erben 22) is modified in the following way: “\_\_\_\_\_, synu můj!” (oženit se) (Get married, my son!). The gap-filling exercise with the imperative mood provides them with additional activity in order to break the possible monotony of lengthy reading and engages their thinking. Every learner, regardless of their reading capability – slower or faster - needs to get the opportunity to read. Slower readers might slow down the entire process but it is vital that they are provided with enough opportunities to practise their reading and gain confidence in that area of language use. It is important to practise Czech pronunciation and intonation because unlike Croatian, in the Czech language the emphasis is always on the first syllable. Furthermore, Czech has some sounds that are difficult to pronounce to non-native speakers like /ř/, /h/ (read as the English /h/), /ch/ (read as the Croatian /h/), then /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. Only with regular speaking practise can the pronunciation of these sounds be improved and perfected.

In between reading, learners comment on the issues in the plot. The first issue they stop at is the prince’s choice of the princess. He was standing in a room full of paintings of princesses and he chose this princess because “[s]he was the fairest of all” (Erben and Němcová 87). Before reading further, learners briefly discuss whether extraordinary beauty is enough to fall in love with someone and whether beauty is a guarantee of a good person. The aim of the discussion is to practise speaking and develop learners’ critical thinking. After having read how Dlouhý, Široký and Bystrozraký helped the prince to arrive to the sorcerer’s castle in the first place, learners discuss whether the prince is a real hero or whether he could not have found the princess without them. According to Propp, Dlouhý, Široký and Bystrozraký are the prince’s magical helpers (43). However, it seems that they do all the work for him and not just simply help him while he does most of the work. In order to free her, the prince has to guard her for three nights in a row. Every night, the sorcerer transforms her into a small object and takes her away. It is only because of Dlouhý, Široký and Bystrozraký that she is safely returned to the room just before the sorcerer comes to check up on her. After reading this, learners make the final decision

regarding the hero status of the prince. The final moment in the fairy tale they discuss while reading is the very end, when the prince offers Dlouhý, Široký and Bystrozraký anything they want to stay with him, promising them they would not need to work ever again. However, “they did not like the thought of such an idle life, took their leave and departed. And to this day they wander still somewhere in the world” (Erben and Němcová 96). Learners briefly discuss whether it is better to do nothing all life or to travel around the world and work. In the end, to summarize the plot of the fairy tale, learners get a series of jumbled sentences which they put in the correct order (Lazar 85) and comment on whether they like the fairy tale or not.

### 6.2.3. Activities after Reading

The post-reading activities are focused on developing the writing skills while simultaneously addressing the issue of the passivity of the princess. She is a completely passive character and she is judged only by her external beauty. The sorcerer even took away her ability to speak and the only time she speaks is in the end when she “thanked the prince for rescuing her and she blushed like a rose” (Erben and Němcová 95). The princess here is the victim and her sole purpose is to be saved and become the prince’s wife. Such a tale could make a wrong impression in the minds of young learners and since working with learners aged 10-14, the issue needs to be carefully approached.

For their homework, learners get two possible topics to write a story on. The first choice is to write a short story of how the princess saved herself without a prince or Dlouhý, Široký and Bystrozraký. Due to abundance of computer games, superhero movies, science fiction series and animated movies nowadays that do feature powerful female heroines, and in the end due to their own imagination, learners can surely think of a princess who can escape the sorcerer on her own or ultimately never be captured in the first place. The second choice is not to change the whole story but to change the ending. Their task is to develop a story where the princess, after being rescued by the prince and his companions, refuses to marry him and instead chooses to pursue her own goals. They submit their stories to the teacher who corrects them. According to Hedge, response to writing is important due to a number of reasons. She claims that “writing requires a lot of conscious effort from students, so they understandably expect feedback and can become discouraged if it is not forthcoming” (10). Furthermore, she states that “writing is a truer indication of how a student is progressing in the language” because they monitor their writing

more than speaking (10). However, it is not enough just to correct mistakes, it is equally necessary to point out what was done well because “[r]esponding positively to the strengths in a student’s writing is important in building up confidence in the writing process” (Hedge 10). Understandably, if learners are overwhelmed with negative comments, they might feel as if they failed completely and lose motivation for further writing tasks.

After the teacher corrects their stories, volunteers are asked to read them to the class. After hearing their classmates’ stories, learners then come up with titles for the 'new' fairy tales. Furthermore, they can choose the best story. Activities like these provide a fun opportunity for the learners to write in Czech and share their ideas with the class. Furthermore, with changing the tale in these ways, Propp's 21st function designating the (male) hero's marriage and receiving half of the kingdom (65) is nullified as well as the sphere of action of a princess which constitutes assigning difficult tasks and a marriage (Propp 79). In other words, the victimization and passivity of the princess are subverted and opportunities for language acquisition are created. With older learners (16-18 years old) for example), a straightforward question can be asked: What is wrong with this fairy tale? It would surely be interesting to hear what they have to say since their cognitive development and understanding of the world around them is more sophisticated than in younger learners.

At the end of the lesson dealing with “Dlouhý, Široký and Bystrozraký”, learners are able to read and understand a literary text in Czech; they can correctly use the imperative mood and discuss about their opinions. They had opportunities to practise and improve speaking, reading, writing and listening. Listening skill involves listening to one’s interlocutor, which they had to do when discussing and commenting the fairy tale.

### 6.3. “Pták Ohnivák a liška Ryška” (“Fire Bird and Red Fox”)

This fairy tale sends a powerful message that being good to others pays off. According to Jan Petrmichl, Erben's heroes are a reflection of the national ideal of a man. His origin is not important, what is important is the way he behaves towards others (Petrmichl 10). The youngest prince in this tale is also the kindest one. While his two older brothers refuse to give food to a fox that approached them and asked for it, he shares his dinner with her and in return she helps him significantly on his quest. This tale has a talking Red Fox who poses as a magical helper to the main hero (Propp 43). Although disobeying her advice at the beginning, which starts a chain

of events that at first bring him only trouble, the youngest prince obtains not only the primary object of his quest but much more.

### 6.3.1. Activities before Reading

For creating interest in the story, one of Lazar's suggestions is making “[p]redictions about the story based on reading the first paragraph only” (84). “The Fire Bird and Red Fox” begins with a description of a king’s garden where there is a tree that produces one golden apple a day. However, the apple keeps disappearing night after night and nobody knows why. It is important to know that at this point learners do not yet know the title of the fairy tale. The teacher asks for four volunteers who will have a separate task, while the rest of the class works in pairs. The learners’ task is to guess who is stealing the apples and try to predict what will happen next. Since the tale begins with a mystery, it will surely make the learners curious and therefore interested in reading it. The learners work in pairs and each pair provides their solution to the mystery and the whole class then chooses three solutions they like the best. The teacher writes them down on the board for everyone to see.

While the rest of the class is trying to guess who is stealing the apples, the four volunteers get to read what happens. The three king’s sons each guard the apple tree one night and the youngest one succeeds in discovering the thief – the Fire Bird. The four learners each get a role – one is a narrator and the others are the three brothers. Their task is to show the rest of the class how the story develops to the point where they find out about the Fire Bird. After each pair suggests a solution to the mystery and three best are chosen, the narrator reads the story and each 'son' plays his role accordingly. The story is compared to the solutions written on the board and learners are asked if they like how it has developed or if they prefer some of their solutions. The activities so far give the learners plenty of opportunities to speak and listen as well as observe a small role play staged by their classmates.

### 6.3.2. Activities during Reading

The primary goal of reading this fairy tale is building vocabulary. Before reading further, learners are divided into pairs and each pair gets a list of words they need to find in the text as they read. Their task is to guess the meaning of a word based on its context. The words chosen are *rmoutit* (grieve), *kalený* (hardened), *zármutek* (grief), *chřadnout* (wither away), *zvolit*

(choose), *chatrný* (shoddy), *získat* (obtain), *meškat* (procrastinate), *pochodit* (end up), *zahynout* (perish) and *odpravit* (execute). Of course, these words are just suggestions and the choice of words depends on the learners' knowledge. After the vocabulary task, learners read the tale to the point where the prince is about to take the Golden Mane and when they get to that point, they are divided into two groups. One group's task is to read the story a little bit further and decide whether to tell the other group exactly what happens or choose to invent a different course of action. Only that group is given the rest of the text. While the first group works, the other group checks the list of words and finds the synonyms of the words on the list in an online dictionary "Slovník spisovného jazyka českého" (<http://ssjc.ujc.cas.cz/>). They take turns and write the correct answers on the board. While they write, the first group (who should be finished by then with reading a part of the tale and deciding on the course of action) checks their answers. One member of their group narrates what happens when the prince gets the Fire Bird and the second group has to decide if they are telling the truth or if they are lying. This is a complex activity, having two groups and each having its own assignment. It does present an idealistic working environment with plenty of time for organization and cooperation, but activities here are just suggestions and there are many ways they can be combined. After all, the aim is just to show many ways of working with a fairy tale to promote language acquisition. The problem with this kind of group work is that some learners may do all the work while some may do nothing. It is the teacher who has to supervise their work and make sure that everyone is participating. Also, the instructions for this kind of work need to be very clear. Penny Ur suggests that "when giving instructions for a group-work task [...] it is advisable to give instructions before you divide the class into groups or give out materials, not after!" (17) in order to have the class' full attention. To make sure that everyone understands what the assignment is, the teacher can ask one learner to briefly paraphrase the instructions (Ur 17).

Since doing an extensive amount of work in class, learners need to read the rest of the fairy tale at home for their homework and they have to write a short summary of the part they had to read at home. The next activity is a discussion about the prince's actions. Although the Red Fox advises him well, the prince disobeys her three times. However, had he not disobeyed her, he would not have obtained the Fire Bird, horse Golden Mane and princess Golden Hair. As it can be seen, gold is the main motif here, which is not surprising since gold is a symbol of wealth. A short discussion takes place in the class regarding the prince's disobedience and

learners are asked whether it is good that he disobeyed the Red Fox or whether he should have listened to her and return home only with the Fire Bird. In this case, the fairy tale sends a subliminal message that disobedience and not listening to someone's good advice may lead to more gain, however, the issue can be tackled in a way so as to show it in a more positive light – that people make mistakes. And despite those mistakes, they still deserve a second or even third chance when they are a good, kind person willing to help others.

### 6.3.3. Activities after Reading

It is shown on the example of the previous fairy tale how the issue of passivity and victimization of the princess can be addressed. Because of that and the fact that in this fairy tale the princess is a bit more active (although still passive), here the thesis focuses on the character of the prince and the issue of punishing the villains – the prince's brothers. The two older brothers did not help the Red Fox and as a consequence she did not help either of them. Logically, since the youngest prince got not only the Fire Bird but the Golden Mane and the golden-haired maiden, there was nothing left for the brothers to take. At the beginning, before they parted their ways, each of them planted a twig in the ground, “[w]hose twig sprouts leaves, he will have found the Fire Bird – that shall be our sign” (Erben and Němcová 70). All three brothers return at the approximately same time. The main hero arrives the first and rests. The two older ones come back when the prince and his company are asleep and seeing their brother's major success, they plot against him immediately: “[t]hey cut their brother's body into many pieces and threatened the golden-haired maiden with death if she betrayed the truth (Erben and Němcová 79). Tolkien's eucatastrophe cannot be avoided so the happy ending awaits for the prince despite his gruesome death. The Red Fox comes to his aid once more with the help of live and dead water. So she sprinkled the prince's chopped body with dead water and then with live water and “the prince awoke as if from a dream” (Erben and Němcová 83). He returned back to his kingdom and started working as a stablehand. When he finally revealed himself to his father and recounted how his brothers had murdered him, “[t]he King was enraged and had both of them executed immediately” (Erben and Němcová 84). The problem here that the thesis would like to address when working with this particular fairy tale is precisely the King's punishment of his sons. Yes, they did a terrible deed, murdering their brother and taking credit for themselves but is the correct response to their actions immediate coldblooded execution? Could he have



punished them by banishing them from the kingdom or imprisoning them? The writing task after reading the fairy tale is to write a short story about the two brothers and their punishment. They must not be harmed in any way but learners need to think of some other forms of punishment and they can decide whether the brothers will repent and make peace with their father and brother, thus giving the story both a punishment and a happy ending without executing the villains. One might say that killing a villain is a common deed in fairy tales, however, killing one in combat or in self-defence differs greatly from a king ordering an execution of his own two sons. The argument for that course of action might be that they deserve it after what they inflicted upon their own brother, but how would the world work if everything was done this way? Not to stray from the topic, it is an issue that would be good to address when working with this particular fairy tale. As already said, although the primary aim of using these fairy tales is prompting language acquisition, the content of these tales must not be taken for granted.

Since the aim of reading this tale is vocabulary enrichment, as the last post-reading activity the learners are given sentences from the text with blank spaces. Synonyms of the words they need to fill in are in the brackets. The aim of the activity is to revise the new vocabulary intended to be acquired while reading the fairy tale.

At the end of the lesson, besides being able to read and listen with comprehension to a literary text, discuss their opinions and cooperate in a group work; learners acquired new words and can use them in the appropriate context as well as provide synonyms for those words.

#### 6.4. Tři zlaté vlasy Děda-Vševěda (The Three Golden Hairs of Grandfather Know-All)

One might think that the main character of the fairy tale is Grandfather Know-All. However, he is only a secondary character. The main character is a poor boy Plaváček whose fate is to find himself in many perils, successfully overcome them and marry the king's daughter. That is the fate prophesied to him by three Fates, old ladies dressed in white. The king overhears the Fates talking about Plaváček's destiny and does everything in his power to avoid its fulfillment. Despite the king's attempts to thwart Plaváček's fate, among other things by sending him to obtain three golden hairs of Grandfather Know-All, he cannot escape his fate. The princess here is a passive character again, Plaváček is judged only based on his looks and the king stops at nothing to prevent his daughter from marrying Plaváček. These are the main issues

of the fairy tale that are discussed with learners in order for them to practise speaking and to develop their critical thinking.

#### 6.4.1. Activities before Reading

Their first assignment is a short writing task. They have to choose one fairy tale character (from any fairy tale), briefly describe it and explain why they chose that particular character and what they like the most about them. The teacher asks which characters they chose and calls out learners to read their descriptions so that each chosen character is described only once. If other learners have something to add about the character, they can mention it. They are then asked whether they have heard of Grandfather Know-All. Some may say yes and some no. The learners that answer affirmatively then tell their classmates what they know about him. After that, the teacher inquires about the author of the fairy tale and some basic information about Erben are given. With older learners who have learned about Czech history already, Erben's work can be related to the period of the National Revival to reinforce and draw on their existing knowledge.

The teacher then plays the first two minutes of the audio book. Learners are instructed to write down what the Fates give to the baby. After clarifying the events so far, learners discuss whether the baby boy will fulfil his destiny or not. In case that he does not, they are required to provide possibilities that would lead to that. Older learners can be asked if they believe that everyone's fate is predetermined or if everyone makes their own destiny. Since not everyone may be comfortable discussing one's own personal beliefs, the teacher does not call out anyone in particular but volunteers participate in a brief discussion.

Alongside enriching vocabulary, the fairy tale is used to teach and practise the accusative case. Therefore, before reading, the rules of the accusative case are introduced or revised. As a vocabulary activity, Lazar suggests “[m]atching important words in the story with their dictionary definitions” (85). The words and/or collocations are chosen based on their relevance to understanding the fairy tale, which depends on the teacher’s estimation of the learners’ knowledge. In this case the list of words contains the following lexical items: *škulina* (hole), *čekat se* (about to give birth), *vyvážnout* (escape), *sudička* (Fate), *usnout* (a euphemism for die), *švarný* (handsome), *meškání* (delay), *oddat* (marry), *věno* (dowry), *zprostit se* (get rid of), *roboty* (hard work), *poselství* (mission), *slzy jako hrachy* (large tears) and *pacholátko* (boy). After they successfully match the words with their definitions, they are given the instructions to read the

fairy tale out loud. Each lesson varies in tempo. Reading and writing activity like the next one sets the tempo slow and reflective (Ur 217) so there has to be enough time provided to finish the task.

#### 6.4.2. Activities during Reading

The learners are given a modified text where they need to fill in the correct form of nouns and their belonging pronouns in the accusative case which are written in the brackets in the nominative case. For example, the sentence: “Byl sám a sám, přišla noc a král byl rád, že našel na mýtině chalupu” is modified in the following way: “Byl sám a sám, přišla noc a král byl rád, že našel na mýtině \_\_\_\_\_ (chalupa)“ (He was alone and lonely, the night has fallen and the king was happy that he found the cottage on the clearing) (Erben 57). This way they practise both the accusative case and reading. While reading, any unknown words that have not been explained are clarified and the teacher asks a few questions about the plot in order to check that everyone understands it.

The king is an arrogant man who does not want a poor coalman’s son marrying his daughter. However, it is precisely the king’s actions trying to thwart that fate that leads to its fulfilment. After encountering a grown-up Plaváček, thinking he was dead because he sent a servant to kill him as a baby, the king sends Plaváček to the castle with a note ordering his queen to kill him at once. Of course, Fate interferes and he brings a note saying that the king wants him to be married to his daughter right away. The only Plaváček’s quality up to this point are only his looks. Lazar suggests that learners “choose from a list of adjectives which ones are most appropriate for describing a particular character” (85). They need to choose adjectives to describe the king and Plaváček. The king should be fairly easy to describe according to his vile actions but Plaváček is only handsome. So they also need to think of some adjectives to describe what a personality he ought to have in order to be the hero of the fairy tale. After enlisting a number of traits, it is briefly discussed whether it is necessary for Plaváček to be extremely handsome or good-looking in the first place. Then there is the issue of murder. Rather than allowing his royal daughter to marry a poor coalman’s son, the king restores to an attempt to kill a baby and then an innocent young man. Without a doubt, the king is the villain of this fairy tale and his description has to match his status. Choosing adjectives to describe a character not only benefits vocabulary acquisition but also understanding the characters, which, as Lazar claims, is

one of the problems learners might have when reading a short story (76). Apart from Plaváček and the king, learners also have to choose adjectives to describe Grandfather Know-All. After providing his description, learners are divided into two groups and they have to discuss whether Grandfather Know-All really knows everything, because he did not seem to realize that Plaváček was hiding in his house waiting to get his three golden hairs. They have to briefly discuss whether he really did not know about him or whether he pretended not to know and why that might be. They are also asked to comment on the ability to know everything and whether it is a good thing or whether some ignorance is bliss. They need to write short bullet points and then recount to the other group to what conclusion they arrived. As mentioned before, working in a group motivates learners more to share their opinions and by sharing their opinions they develop their critical thinking and speaking skill. As it can be seen on this example, the lesson about “The Three Golden Hairs of Grandfather Know-All” is primarily a lesson focused on developing the speaking skill. One more character is discussed while reading and that is Plaváček’s father who sold him to the king for a substantial amount of money. Learners are asked to comment on his morally wrong behaviour and they need to think about arguments for and against such an action.

Furthermore, Lazar suggests providing title for each paragraph of the story (85) but the plot of this fairy tale is not so complex that every paragraph would need to be summarized in a few words. Instead, learners are instructed to work in pairs and divide the tale into three main parts and then provide titles for those parts. Each pair shares their division and titles with the rest of the class. Summarizing the tale into three titles helps learners to better understand the plot and also the structure of a literary text. The first part is marked as the introduction, the second part as the main plot and the third part as the end or the outcome of the tale.

#### 6.4.3. Activities after Reading

The post-reading activities are concerned with the characters of the queen and the princess. They do what the king tells them to do, even if it means marrying a complete stranger. They are both fascinated with Plaváček’s good looks and the princess cries every day all day when the king sends him away on a quest to obtain the three golden hairs of Grandfather Know-All. Again, the princess is a passive character who does what she is told and her only function is to be married and mourn her absent husband. The learner’s next assignment is to adapt their love story to be more realistic. Once again, learners are divided into groups and they need to develop

the story of the princess and Plaváček in the following way: Plaváček arrives to the palace with the letter ordering the queen to marry the two, however, the princess refuses to do so until she knows him better. The king will be absent for a long time on his journey and the two have enough time to get to know each other. Learners can decide whether they fall in love and choose to marry or whether they each choose their own path. There is the element of fate, but the argument for dismissing it can be that everyone creates their own destiny, which allows Plaváček/the princess to marry someone else. It can also be converted into a tragic love story. It is up to the learners' imagination. Each learner works individually and submits their story to the teacher.

In the end, learners are divided into smaller groups of three and each group chooses one scene from the fairy tale to play it in front of their classmates (Lazar 86). They are given the liberty to change some things and are encouraged to be creative when preparing their play for the next lesson. Before roleplay, the teacher asks each group which scene they chose and they play their scenes in sequence which matches the fairy tale.

During reading this fairy tale, learners were developing mainly their speaking skills and their vocabulary but they also had the opportunity to practise listening and writing. As for the grammatical aspect of the lesson, learners revised and practised the accusative case.

## 6.5. Overview

This section of the thesis has shown how the selected Czech fairy tales by Karel Jaromír Erben can be used in teaching Czech as a second language. Although primarily focused on teaching it as a second language, the activities suggested can be used with learning Czech as a foreign language as well, either with younger learners or with students at a university whose bachelor's study is the Czech language. Although the minimal language proficiency recommended for reading these fairy tales is B1, A2 learners might benefit from them as well, but some modifications may need to be done in order to make it easier for A2 learners, for example simplify the vocabulary or shorten the tales. Despite that, these fairy tales can be used as a fun activity to promote reading and language acquisition.

However, in spite of many benefits mentioned throughout the analyses of the selected fairy tales, there are difficulties that might appear when using them in the classroom and they will be addressed in the following chapter.

## 7. Possible Issues

The aim of this chapter is to recapitulate the possible issues that one might encounter when giving learners fairy tales (but other literary texts as well) to prompt language acquisition. The minimal language proficiency required to read the fairy tales with comprehension is recommended for both MacDonald's and Erben's fairy tales. However, the learners, although considered as having a certain language knowledge level acquired, may differ in their language proficiency, which may reflect in their comprehension of the text. Furthermore, individual differences like intelligence, aptitude and anxiety (Lightbown and Spada 57-63) may also influence the learners' understanding and processing of the text in a foreign language. When dealing with a text or more precisely a short story, Lazar summarizes some of the problems that learners may have (76) and these problems may appear while reading the selected fairy tales, both in English and in Czech. Some learners may use inadequate reading strategies, which means that instead of focusing on the general meaning of the text, they tend to focus on every word (Lazar 76). That is why it is important to emphasize that they do not need to know the meaning of every word as long as they understand the overall meaning of the text. The teacher can further help learners by giving them the words necessary for comprehension in advance.

Another problem that Lazar mentions is making interpretations. Learners need to have confidence to make their own interpretations based on the ambiguities that can be found in a text (76). In order to tackle this problem, the teacher needs to encourage learners to come up with and share their own interpretations. As it was seen, that can be accomplished by dividing learners into groups or pairs where they can exchange their ideas and talk more freely. It has to be said that there is not one correct interpretation and that it is alright to perceive the text differently so as to remove the fear in learners that they do not understand the text because their interpretation differs from someone else's, because the emphasis is on the speaking activity, not on the critical analysis of the text.

The aim of the thesis is to show how these selected fairy tales can be used in the classroom to promote language activities. The goal of the usage of the tales is also to motivate learners to read further in the foreign language, which can influence their language acquisition in a positive way (building vocabulary for example). However, instead of motivating them, the learners might feel quite the opposite when reading a short story in the class. The reasons for the lack of motivation may be that the content of the story is not interesting to learners, they might consider the story irrelevant to passing the exam; the lack of confidence may also result in the lack of motivation and if learners do not read much in their own language, reading in a foreign one might not seem motivating to them either (Lazar 76). One cannot accommodate every learner individually, some learners will get motivated by reading the fairy tales in the classroom and some may not. It is up to the teacher to estimate whether they would like such an approach and carefully observe how learners behave when given a fairy tale. It was said that the teacher's feedback is very important to learners and the same applies vice versa. Learners need to give feedback to the teacher whether they are satisfied and motivated when reading fairy tales for language acquisition purposes or not. The teacher then has to decide on the course of action based on their feedback. It is not good to enforce activities that do not agree with learners. In that case, the lack of motivation may have negative impact on their language acquisition.

Furthermore, apart from not knowing the vocabulary, some learners may experience problems with comprehension of the plot, the characters and the narrator (Lazar 76). When reading a text in a foreign language and not understanding what one read can be frustrating and it may seem pointless to the reader. One cannot guarantee that there will not be one or two learners who might experience these problems while everyone else comprehends the story given to them, but it should be avoided giving learners stories that are too complex, contain much to them unknown vocabulary or are hard to follow even to an experienced reader, let alone a learner struggling to grasp the rules and conventions of another language. Here it needs to be mentioned that at first the teacher ought to have realistic expectations of the learners. Even when one wants to use a particular fairy tale with learners, it may need to be modified according to their needs and language proficiency.

Lazar mentions two more problems that one may anticipate when working with short stories – appreciating the style and understanding the cultural background to the story (76).

However, the assumption is that when working with these selected fairy tales, the two problems should occur in rare situations due to the fairy tale's universal structure and style of writing.

The overview of the possible problems that may appear when using fairy tales in teaching a language shows that there are a lot of possible obstacles to overcome, but the benefits that derive from the analyses indicate that one should not be afraid to at least try to use fairy tales in teaching a language.

## 8. A Short Comparison of the Selected English and Czech Fairy Tales

As stated in the introduction, since dealing with two different cultural backgrounds and two different authors, the analyses of the selected fairy tales will provide a glimpse at the differences between the two literatures. The plot of the fairy tales is not described in great detail, however, what has been said and discussed is enough to draw on some conclusions about the differences (and similarities) of the selected English and Czech fairy tales. Only a few points are mentioned since the comparison of the tales is not the aim of the thesis. While both MacDonald's and Erben's fairy tales are literary and therefore modified fairy tales, Erben's tales follow Propp's fairy tale structure almost to a fault. "The Light Princess" by MacDonald is the closest to the established fairy tale conventions, while "The Shadows" and "The Golden Key" stand out from the usual expectations of a tale with their plot and hidden symbolism. No prince or princess in distress are found in these two tales. On the other hand, all three selected fairy tales by Erben feature a passive princess who serves as a reward for the main character. In "The Light Princess", MacDonald puts the princess in the centre and the reader can follow her growing up. He also emphasizes the wisdom of women, while "the king is a banal figure" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 113). Erben's main characters reflect the national ideal – a good-hearted man who is kind to others (Petrmichl 7). Despite their differences, all the selected fairy tales have what Tolkien calls Eucatastrophe – a happy ending (Tolkien 153). The main difference between the selected English and Czech fairy tales here is that Erben's have a more traditional structure while MacDonald experimented with the plot and portrayal of some characters. The points mentioned here prove what has been claimed at the beginning of the thesis – MacDonald subverted the genre of the fairy tale, while Erben based his tales on the oral folk narratives he collected throughout his life, which portray the ideal of a good man.



## Conclusion

The thesis has shown how a traditional literary form like the fairy tale can be used in language teaching. Reading in another language contributes to the overall literacy, communication skills and expanding vocabulary. As it can be seen, the selected fairy tales can be used as a basis for numerous activities, whose goal is to motivate learners and prompt language acquisition. There are many benefits deriving from reading and analysing fairy tales in the classroom. Learners have the opportunity to develop their speaking, reading, writing and listening skills. Furthermore, the sentence constructions found in the tales can be used to practise various parts of vocabulary and grammar. Since it is the young who usually delight in reading fairy tales, the analyses in the thesis are for learners aged 13-18 for MacDonald's and 10-14 for Erben's tales. However, there is no reason why these tales should not be used with learners younger or older than the age group selected here. The only difference is in the approach and interpretation of the tales. Young learners need to be guided through a discussion, whereas older learners can directly be asked about some issues present in the tales. The primary goal of using fairy tales in language teaching is language acquisition but discussing the text helps learners develop their speaking skills as well as critical thinking. To help learners gain confidence to express themselves, speaking activities can be organized in pairs or in groups.

To use the fairy tale for practising listening skills, short parts of an audiobook can be played in class, followed by assignments to check listening comprehension. The thesis mainly introduces writing assignments after reading and their purpose is to reflect on the plot of a tale and perhaps subvert the issues of patriarchy and murder, as well as develop the skills needed to be a good writer. The thesis has shown that using fairy tales in language teaching can introduce numerous fun activities, which often require learners to think outside the box. However, it is not enough to introduce interesting activities; rather the teacher has to provide learners with feedback, especially on their writing assignments. It is important that the feedback has an equal amount of both positive comments and error correction in order to motivate learners to invest more effort.

The possible issues that can appear when using fairy tales in the classroom can be avoided or minimized by the right choice of the fairy tale, appropriate language knowledge of

learners and by checking their comprehension throughout the activities during and after reading, as well as paying attention to their feedback on the material being used.

Most of the modern schools have computers and the Internet in the classrooms, and probably all learners have a smartphone, all of which can be used to present various information as well as quickly find out the meaning of an unknown word. Instead of having them search for words in paper dictionaries, learners can simply type in the word in an online dictionary which is possibly more familiar to them than a paper one.

Since reading an entire fairy tale in class might take a lot of time, whether a tale will be read only in parts or whether some parts will be read in the class and some for homework depends entirely on the teacher's judgement of the time needed, the skills that learners have and most importantly on learners' needs. The activities presented in the thesis are just suggestions how to use fairy tales in language teaching. However, the possible outcomes of the suggested activities show numerous benefits deriving from using fairy tales for language acquisition, which is why they should be incorporated in the language teaching process.

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## Abstract in English

The thesis shows how the selected English fairy tales by George MacDonald (“The Light Princess”, “The Shadows”, “The Golden Key”) and selected Czech fairy tales by Karel Jaromír Erben (“Long, Broad and Sharp Eyes”, “The Firebird and Red Fox”, “Three Golden Hairs of Grandfather Know-All”) can be used in teaching English as a foreign language and Czech as a second language. Each selected fairy tale is analysed according to methodological principles and the analyses are presented in stages before, during and after reading activities. The analyses show possible activities that can be used with the selected fairy tales to promote language acquisition. Fairy tales can be used to practise all four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing. The selected fairy tales used here are only a suggestion and serve as examples on which possible activities are based. The choice of fairy tales and activities depends on the teacher, or more precisely, on the teacher's estimate of learners' language proficiency, needs and interests.

Both cases presented in the thesis are applicable in the Croatian context due to English being taught as a foreign language in Croatian schools and Czech being taught in schools founded by the Czech minority. Besides numerous advantages of using fairy tales in teaching a language such as building vocabulary, practise reading and therefore pronunciation, there are also issues that can occur when using tales in the classroom. However they can be avoided or minimized by a good planning and organization. Alongside using fairy tales linguistically, they can be used for developing creativity and critical thinking when discussing about the issues that can be found in the text itself, such as patriarchy and murder/punishment. Despite the fact that the primary goal of using the fairy tales in language teaching is language acquisition and not critical analysis of the texts, these subliminal messages are worth addressing in the classroom and they make an excellent basis for a discussion, or more precisely, a speaking activity. All in all, using fairy tales in language teaching can be a good basis for fun activities which motivate learners and promote language acquisition.

### Key Words:

fairy tale, MacDonald, Erben, language teaching, language acquisition

## Abstract in Czech (Shrnutí v češtině)

Diplomová práce ukazuje jak se vybrané anglické pohádky autora George MacDonalda (“The Light Princess”, “The Shadows”, “The Golden Key”) a vybrané české pohádky Karla Jaromíra Erbena (“Dlouhý, Široký a Bystrozraký”, “Pták Ohnivák a liška Ryška”, “Tři zlaté vlasy Děda-Vševěda”) mohou využít ve výuce anglického jako cizího a češtiny jako druhého jazyka. Každá vybraná pohádka je rozebrána podle metodických účelů a rozbor je prezentován ve fázích aktivit před četbou, během četby a po četbě. Rozbor pohádek ukazuje aktivity, jež lze využít s vybranými pohádkami pro osvojování jazyka. Rozborem pohádek je možno procvičit všechny čtyři jazykové dovednosti – mluvení, poslech, čtení a psaní. Vybrané pohádky jsou jenom návrh a příklad, jak lze aktivity organizovat. Výběr pohádek a aktivit k rozboru záleží na učiteli nebo učitelce, totiž na jejich soudu jazykových znalosti, potřeb a zájmů svých studentů.

Výuka angličtiny jako cizího jazyka a češtiny jako druhého jazyka je relevantní pro Chorvatsko, jelikož se angličtina učí jako cizí jazyk na chorvatských školách a čeština se učí na školách založených českou menšinou. Kromě početných výhod, jež vyplývají z používání pohádek ve výuce jazyka, jako jsou obohacování slovníku, procvičování čtení a výslovnosti, může také dojít k různým problémům a potížím, avšak s trpělivostí a organizací se problémům může vyhnout aneb je minimalizovat. Kromě pro lingvistické schopnosti lze pohádky využít i pro rozvoj kreativity a kritického myšlení během diskuzí problematiky, která se může v textech objevit, jako je třeba patriarchy a vražda/trest. Navzdory tomu, že primárním cílem používání těchto pohádek ve výuce jazyka je osvojování jazyka a ne kritická analýza textů, tato neuvědomělá problematika vytváří vynikající základ pro diskuzi, respektive pro vylepšení mluvy studentů. Celkově, pohádky ve výuce jazyků mohou být výborný základ pro zajímavé aktivity, které studenty motivují a zároveň podporují osvojování jazyka.

### Key Words (Klíčová slova):

pohádky, MacDonald, Erben, výuka jazyků, osvojování jazyka