

Feng Chia University

Outstanding Academic Paper by Students

Title: “*The Grandmother*” and “*Grandaunt Tiger*” : Raising Children’s
Awareness of Safety by Teaching Them Literature

題名：透過教導孩童文學以提升其對自身安全的警覺力：以「外婆的故事」與「虎
姑婆」為例

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Abstract

Little Red Riding Hood is one of the most popular fairy tales both in the Eastern countries and the Western countries, and there are lots of versions throughout the world. *The Grandmother*, the version from France, and *Grandaunt Tiger*, the version from China, are popular and comparable; besides, they both have the same educational implication for warning children not to talk to strangers when they are alone. As the outside world is dangerous and unimaginable; moreover, there are increasing numbers of criminal cases in Taiwan, it’s significant for adults to raise children’s awareness of security. According to Henderson & Malone (2012), one of the useful ways to teach children ethical messages is “case examples”. Using well-known fairy tales and apply them into teaching is a useful way for adults to counsel children. As a result, parents can warn children of safety by using the two fairy tales: *The Grandmother* and *Grandaunt Tiger*. In my study, I prove that literature really plays an important role in our lives, and it can be used as a good teaching technique when counseling children.

Keywords: fairy tales, ethics education, parents’ care, problem-solving skills, safety

摘要

《小紅帽》是世界上廣為流傳的童話故事之一，在歐亞洲各地都有不同世紀流傳的不同版本，其中，在法國眾所皆知的傳說「外婆的故事」，和流傳於台灣與中國的民間故事「虎姑婆」，不僅在情節上非常的相似，故事也都蘊含著教育意義，讓孩童在閱讀後可以反思並從中學習。現今台灣的社會治安惡化，犯罪率有逐漸升高的趨勢，孩童不論是獨自在外或是獨自在家都可能身陷於危險之中，更因為多數孩童的心智尚未發展成熟，無法了解、應對外面險惡的世界，因此，提升孩童對於自身安全的警覺是相當重要的議題。根據研究顯示，教導孩童關於倫理觀念最有效的方法之一，是運用知名的故事並使他們置身於故事情節當中，讓他們思考並從中學習。因此，透過教導孩子「虎姑婆」和「外婆的故事」，讓他們想像自己是故事中的主角，會讓他們比較能夠了解到注意自身安全的重要性。透過研究，我說明了文學對於孩童的重要性，也證明了文學在孩童教育扮演著相當重要的角色。

關鍵字：童話故事、道德教化、父母關懷、危機處理能力、安全

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Issue

There are many kinds of folktales from all over the world; some of them are generally known by people and have significant educational implications for children. The story of a little girl who wears a red cape or hat and who meets a bad wolf on her way to take her grandmother some food and drinks is one of the most well-known fairy tales (folktales) in Western countries. Various versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* are there in Europe and America.

1.2 Statement of the Facts

According to *NBC news* article “Such deep roots you have: How Little Red Riding Hood's tale evolved”, Alan Boyle (2013) mentioned that the origins of *Little Red Riding Hood* can be traced back to versions from European countries. The different versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* are included within the following two books: “*Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked: Sex, Morality, And the Evolution of A Fairy Tale*”, by Catherine Orenstein (2003); “*Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook*”, edited by Alan Dundes (1989). All the versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* are generally about a young girl and a bad animal, but there are still significant differences in plots, characters, and endings. Take four prevalent versions for

examples: First, Italy’s version of *Little Red Riding Hood* is called “*Little Red Hat.*”

There are three characters in the story: the little girl, an old grandmother, and the ogre (the bad figure). The ogre kills the young girl’s grandmother and tricks her to drink her grandmother’s blood, eat her grandmother’s jaw, intestine, and teeth. At the end of the story, Little Red Hat is swallowed by the ogre. And the French version is called “*The Grandmother.*” There are four characters in the story: a little girl, a mother, a grandmother, and the bzou (werewolf). In the story, the bzou also kills the little girl’s grandmother and tricks her to eat her grandmother’s flesh and drink her grandmother’s blood. However, instead of eating by the bzou, the little girl notices that the bzou is a villain so she tries to find ways to escape. Finally, she overcomes the difficulty and comes back home at the end of the story. In “*Little Red Riding Hood*” (Charles Perrault’s version), there are four characters in the story: the little red riding hood, a mother, a grandmother, and the wolf. In this version, both little red riding hood and her grandmother are eaten by the wolf at the end of the story. Fourth, the well-known version from German, which is published by the Brothers Grimm, is called “*Little Red Cap.*” Different from other versions, there is a male character in the story—the huntsman. Though the little girl and her grandmother are eaten by the wolf,

they are both saved by the huntsman at the end of the story. From different versions of the story, we can know more about the social backgrounds at the time and the symbols of the characters. For example, the appearance of the huntsman may represent that there are just people who appear to maintain the social order at the time.

There are also similar tales like *Little Red Riding Hood* throughout the world as follows: *The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids* is a fairy tale collected by the Brother Grimm, the story is about seven young goats and the big bad wolf, and it is told in parts of European countries and the Eastern countries— and there are still other variants told in various regions of the world. And in Japan, Korea and China, there is *The Tiger Grandmother*, which is also known as *Grandaunt Tiger*. Besides, There is a fairy tale called *Motikatika and the Ogre* or *Motikatika* in Africa (Boyle, 2013).

Among all the similar stories of *Little Red Riding Hood* from all over the world, the most alike story, which is also called “The Eastern Little Red Riding Hood,” is “*Grandaunt Tiger*.” The stories of *Grandaunt Tiger* are very popular in China and Taiwan in all kinds of versions. Like *Little Red Riding Hood*, the important moral message of the story is that children should never talk with strangers while alone. The version of *Grandaunt Tiger* I read is one of the most popular versions in China, which

can be found in the book: *Little Red Riding Hood: a Casebook*.

1.3 The Importance of the Issue

As adults, we can know that the outside world is not as simple as it seems.

There are lots of wolves in sheep’s skins; the gentle wolves are actually the most dangerous one of all. However, most of the children are innocent and simple-minded, they don’t have the ability to tell whether the strangers are good or bad, and they are not strong enough to protect themselves. According to National Police Agency (Taiwan), MOI, there is the latest public safety statistics of Taiwan, the statistics from January to April, 2014, shows that there are increasing numbers of criminal cases in Taiwan. In comparison to the criminal cases of the corresponding period of time last year, the rate of criminal cases raised about 11.72%. Therefore, it is significant for people to pay attention to our safety, especially to children’s safety.

1.4 The Purpose of the Paper

Through telling children the kind of stories like *Grandaunt Tiger* and *Little Red Riding Hood*, parents or teachers can simply accomplish the educational purpose of counseling children or students on how dangerous the outside world is. According to Henderson & Malone (2012), they mentioned that one traditional method used to

teach children is case examples. Using well-known fairy tales to let children place themselves in the protagonist’s position and let them face the ethical situations in the story is viewed as a useful way to teach them moral messages. Parents or teachers can warn their children or students not to talk to strangers by telling them the story Little Red Riding Hood; tell their children that if they talk to strangers, they will have the same ending as the little girl does in the story. Therefore, through the study, I want to prove that literature really can influence our lives and children literature is very important in educating no matter in Western or Eastern countries.

1.5 The Significance of the Paper

Though living in different space, adults in Eastern and Western countries all commonly use the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* (or *The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids* or *Grandaunt Tiger*) to raise children’s awareness of security. In a lecture from “National Taiwan University Open Course Ware”, Professor Lu presented a general idea of how the culture differences between Western and Eastern countries can influence and form the two well-known fairy tales: *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Grandaunt Tiger*. As most of us heard of the two stories, understanding how the well-known stories of different origins can be used as teaching medium to reach the

same educational purpose will also help us go deeper into our cultures and literature.

Through the study, people will know the importance of literature and how to use it as teaching techniques and how to let their children easily comprehend what they said.

Fairy tales are not just simple story for children, but have lots of implications for everyone to ponder again and again. After I read all the famous versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, I found that “*The Grandmother*,” the version from France, is more comparable with the Eastern fairy tale “*Grandaunt Tiger*,” version from China; therefore, I based on the two stories in my paper.

1.6 The Arrangement of the Development

In my study, I use the two fairy tales, one from Eastern countries and one from Western countries, as representatives of the East and the West to analyze: First, I will compare the two selected stories with the structures, plots, parents’ care, children’s problem solving skills, and moral messages (similarities and differences). Then, I will show the importance of literature (fairy tales) in early childhood. Finally, I will present how parents and counselors teach their students decision-making and problem-solving skills by literature; besides, how can fairy tales be used as teaching medium.

2. The Similarities and Differences between the East and the West—

“*Grandaunt Tiger*” and “*The Grandmother*”

2.1 The Structures and the Plots of the Stories

According to Orenstein (2003), the French folk tale *The Grandmother* is about a little girl who was in danger on her way to take bread to her grandmother alone, but she finally overcame the difficulty with her wisdom and safely went back home. The structure of the Chinese folk tale *Grandaunt Tiger* is similar to *The Grandmother*, which is about a little girl who faced difficulty at first but she overcame it at the end of the story (Dundes, 1989). However, the plots of the two stories are quite different: First, there are only four characters in *the Grandmother*: a little girl, her mother, her grandmother, and the werewolf. But there are five characters in *Grandaunt Tiger*: mother, father, two daughters, and a tiger. Second, in *the Grandmother*, the little girl is asked by her mother to carry something to her grandmother alone; however, the two children are left at home alone in *Grandaunt Tiger*. And at the end of the story, the little girls from the two stories used different methods to overcome the difficulty they faced. In *the Grandmother*, the little girl deceived the werewolf that she wanted to go to a toilet; she tied the rope, which the werewolf used to tie on her leg to prevent her

from running away, to a plum tree and successfully escaped from her grandmother’s house to her home. In comparison with the ending of *the Grandmother*, in the Taiwanese folk tale *Grandaunt Tiger*, the older daughter hidden herself on the tree and tricked the tiger to carry boil oil for her and she finally killed the tiger by pouring boil oil into its mouth.

2.2 Parents’ Decision-Making on Childcare (Stay Home Alone V.S. Go Out Alone)

Comparing the two stories, the mothers of the Eastern and the Western stories both are lacks of responsibilities. In *The Grandmother*, the mother let her daughter go out alone without protecting her; similarly, in *Grandaunt Tiger*, the mother is irresponsible as well because she leaves her children for a long time without warning them not to open the door to strangers. Ruiz- Casares & Heymann (2009) said that “Poverty, social integration, local norms, and child development frame parents’ decisions of care.” Various factors will influence the ways parents deal with their children.

According to Orenstein (2003), during the French old regime age, most of the people have to endure starvation and cold. Therefore, the plots of eating human beings are conventional seen in the folk tales, and cases of cannibalism are here and

there in the rural area at the time. Living under such circumstances, French parents may have no mood to take care of their children. Therefore, I think that the mother may be intended to let her daughter set foot on the dangerous journey to her grandmother’s house alone, and hope that her daughter will never come back again.

In traditional China, it’s very rare for a mother to leave the house alone overnight and does not take her children with her. If the family is rich and has servants, the mother doesn’t need to go out even to buy things; therefore, we might suspect that the family is too poor to have servants. The mother of the lower class might have to work in the fields and doesn’t have time and energy to take good care of her children. It’s poverty that causes the mother in *Grandaunt Tiger* decide to leave her children alone at home and let them be in danger (Dundes, 1989).

2.3 Problem Solving Skills

In the two stories, after knowing the terrible tricks of the bad animals, the girls began to find excuses for escaping. They both tell the bad animals that they need to go to the toilet outside. Although the tiger and the werewolf granted the girls’ requests, they were afraid of the girls going too far. Therefore, in *The Grandmother*, the werewolf tied the little girl to a rope on the leg in order to prevent her getting away; in

Grandaunt Tiger, however, it’s the girl who asked the tiger to tie a rope to her leg because she wanted to lower the tiger’s suspicion. As the girls left the house, they smartly tied the rope, which is originally used by the animals to control them, to the other objects—a tree and a water bucket. Orenstein (2003) mentioned that the rope may be a metaphor to umbilical cord; the actions of tying the rope, which originally on the girls’ legs, to the other things and escaping was seen as a classical metaphor—gained independence from their mothers. It gave us the idea that the children at the time, especially girls, are severely controlled and oppressed by their parents and they always want to escape from them. No matter in the East or in the West, as children faced difficulties, grew up, had enough knowledge and experiences, they would be stronger, and gradually develop problem-solving skills and risk-management abilities.

2.4 Educational implications

After reading *The Grandmother* and *Grandaunt Tiger*, I think there are two important moral messages for children: First, children should never talk to strangers while alone. Through the stories, we can know that the root of all troubles is the conversation between the girl and the stranger (the wolf). Second, children should

keep calm and think of how to overcome the difficulties instead of just sitting still waiting for death. In the Chinese version, the girl smartly tricked the tiger into trusting her and successfully killed the terrible animal in the end. Though the two stories are from different countries and origins, they both can be educational implications—raising children’s awareness of safety.

3. The Importance of Fairy Tales

Literature plays an important role in our lives, especially in our early childhoods. We can find many studies in proving the significant effects of literature on children in many aspects: According to Hong (1996), the scholar proved that it’s effective for children to boost mathematics learning through children literature; Lee (2011) explored the way teachers in South-Korea using folk tales to teach children traditional beliefs, and found it useful. Moreover, Smogorzewska (2014) found that story-telling is an effective method for teaching children and developing children’s language creativity. Most of the fairy tales have moral messages or ethical lessons for readers to ponder over the underlying messages. For example, after reading *Grandaunt Tiger* and *the Grandmother*, we can know that it’s important for children to beware of strangers, and develop decision making skills and build up problem

solving abilities. While counseling students, we can use fairy tales as useful teaching medium. Henderson & Malone (2012) mentioned that "An important part of counseling students' training is learning to navigate ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in their careers." Besides, using fairy tales as samples is a good way to intensify student's understanding of the complex world. As above, we can know that literature really influences children in many ways and fairy tales can be used to tell children some important moral standards, and intensify their ethical comprehension abilities.

4. Using Fairy Tales as teaching Medium

According to Henderson & Melone (2012), "One traditional method used to teach children ethical theory is case examples, and a creative way to apply case examples to ethics education is adapting well-known fairy tales into ethical dilemmas." In order to intensify children's understanding of the complicated world and develop their decision-making skills and problem-solving skills, counselors used characters from well-known stories to lecture; they found that the use of popular characters would help children to decrease their uneasiness while learning, and it was helpful for students to comprehend and blend themselves into the circumstances

(Henderson & Malone, 2012). They used six famous fairy tales as teaching tools; let students imagine themselves as characters of the tales to practice facing representative ethical dilemmas which may happen in the real world. Literature can not only let us know more about different cultures, but also can be corresponded to our real lives. Therefore, in order to raise children’s awareness of safety and crisis- management abilities, using related fairy tales such as *Grandaunt Tiger* as teaching medium is easier for children to understand such circumstances and know that it may be dangerous to talk with strangers.

5. Conclusion& Recommendations for Future Research

I show the cultural differences of rearing children between the East and the West through *The Grandmother* and *Grandaunt Tiger* in many aspects: the plots and structures, the parents’ decisions of children’s care and the social backgrounds at the time, children’s development of problem-solving skills and risk-management abilities, and the moral messages of the two stories. I found that both *The Grandmother* and *Grandaunt Tiger* have the same ethic implication for children. Besides, in order to prove that fairy tales have significant influences on children in their early childhood, I highlighted the importance of literature. Lots of studies proved that fairy tales are

very powerful for children in many aspects, especially in counseling children. As the outside world is dangerous, it’s important to raise children’s awareness about safety.

Henderson & Malone (2012) presented how to make use of the fairy tales while counselors educating their students and they give six case examples in their study. As a result, *The Grandmother* and *Grandaunt Tiger* can be two good teaching medium for parents to warn their children not to talk to strangers.

However, in my study, I didn’t give examples of how parents or teachers use fairy tales as teaching materials in Taiwan. Moreover, I didn’t provide data and statistics of how many children are taught not to talk to strangers by fairy tales in Taiwan, and how many of them have heard of the two stories. Therefore, in future research, I will provide more data and proofs: First, I want to investigate children’s general educational background at home in Taiwan, and investigate how many of them have heard of the two stories and learned moral messages through fairy tales. I will take children from kindergartens to elementary schools in Taiwan for examples, and the investigation will focus on the real teaching at schools and at home. I also will figure out how culture differences can influence the children’s action when they face difficulties and their parents’ educational policies.

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