

Beyond authenticity: Pedagogical recontextualisation of audiovisual media in German language education

Tristan Lay

tristan.lay@sydney.edu.au

The University of Sydney

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Abstract

This article examines how educational audiovisual media are recontextualised when they move across institutional settings in German as a Foreign Language education. Focusing on the documentary series *Auf Fritzis Spuren: Wie war das so in der DDR?*, it explores how a resource originally produced for children's educational broadcasting acquires new pedagogical and epistemic functions in university language and cultural studies.

The study develops the Pedagogical Recontextualisation Model that explains how audiovisual meaning is reshaped through changes in institutional context, multimodal organisation, and interpretive practice. Rather than viewing audiovisual texts as fixed carriers of content, the article approaches them as resources whose educational significance emerges through the ways they are framed, used and interpreted in specific learning environments.

The analysis shows that, in its original context, the documentary supports historical understanding through the interplay of narration, animation, archival footage and personal testimony. In the university classroom, these same features become objects of critical inquiry. Students examine how narrative structure, visual representation and testimonial perspectives shape historical meaning, moving from understanding content towards analysing processes of representation.

The study argues that pedagogical recontextualisation is not simply a change in educational use but a transformation in how knowledge is accessed and interpreted. Audiovisual texts can therefore function not only as sources of linguistic and cultural input but also as spaces where learners engage with the construction of meaning across modes and contexts. By demonstrating how educational value is created through institutional and interpretive

reconfiguration, the article contributes to research on multimodality, audiovisual learning and German as a Foreign Language pedagogy.

Keywords

Pedagogical Recontextualisation Model (PRM); Multidimensional Model of Audiovisual Learning (MMAL); documentary media; multimodal discourse; memory culture; German as a Foreign Language

Introduction

The integration of authentic audiovisual materials has become an important feature of contemporary German as a Foreign Language (GFL) instruction. At university level, such materials are used not only to support linguistic development but also to foster intercultural competence, critical cultural awareness and engagement with the histories and societies of German speaking countries (Byram, 2021; Schiedermaier, 2018). Rather than functioning as supplementary resources, audiovisual texts are increasingly understood as multimodal artefacts through which learners engage with German as a pluricentric language¹, cultural narratives and different interpretations of history and society (Kress, 2010).

Research on audiovisual media in GFL has traditionally focused on narrative film, particularly feature films and fictional adaptations, which have been recognised for their potential to support listening comprehension, visual literacy and intercultural reflection (Brandi, 1996; Schwerdtfeger, 1989). Educational documentaries have received comparatively less attention, despite offering distinctive opportunities to connect authentic language use with disciplinary

¹ Pluricentric language refers to a language that exists in multiple national or regional standard varieties, each with its own codified norms, lexical features, and sociocultural conventions. In the case of German, this includes, for example, standard varieties used in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, often referred to as the DACHL area, which share a common linguistic base but differ in vocabulary, pronunciation, and usage, as well as in their embedded cultural and institutional contexts. In addition, German also comprises regional and non-standard varieties and dialects such as Berlinerisch, which appear in *Auf Fritzis Spuren*, further illustrating internal linguistic diversity beyond the standardised national varieties. The inclusion of such variety forms can enhance perceptions of authenticity in target language learning, as learners are exposed to language use as it occurs in situated, socially embedded communicative contexts rather than exclusively in idealised standardised forms.

knowledge, cultural perspectives and critical engagement. Through narration, situated speech, archival evidence and multimodal organisation, documentaries enable learners to engage with mediated realities and complex social issues beyond fictional narratives (Lay, 2022). This potential is particularly relevant for historically sensitive topics such as the German Democratic Republic (GDR), where understandings of the past are shaped by historiography, oral history and processes of cultural memory (Erll, 2011; Hodgin & Pearce, 2011).

More than three decades after German reunification, the GDR remains a significant and contested part of German cultural memory (Fulbrook, 2005). Public understandings continue to be shaped by tensions between dictatorship and everyday life, repression and agency, and collective narratives and individual experiences. For learners of German, these tensions provide valuable opportunities for cultural learning while also creating considerable interpretive challenges. Engagement with the GDR requires not only historical knowledge but also attention to the perspectives and representational choices through which the past is communicated.

Within this context, *Auf Fritzis Spuren: Wie war das so in der DDR? (On Fritz's traces: What was it like in the GDR?)* represents a particularly relevant yet underexamined resource for university level GFL teaching. Produced by German public broadcasters Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR) and Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), the animated documentary series (*Animadok*²) was released in 2024. It combines animation, archival footage, historical photographs, eyewitness testimony and presenter led narration to explore everyday life in the late GDR through the perspectives of children and young adolescents. The series received international recognition through the 2025 International Emmy Award in the category 'Kids: Factual & Entertainment', highlighting its educational quality and broader pedagogical potential.

² According to Hünigen (n.d.), *Animadok* refers to hybrid forms of animation and documentary film, a term that became more widely known after the Leipzig Documentary Film Festival introduced a dedicated section in 1997. Hybrid documentaries combining live action and animation have existed since the 1930s and are often used to represent abstract or unfilmable content, missing archival material or complex processes. The combination of different representational modes is frequently associated with a certain aesthetic distance from the subject matter.

Building on the narrative world of *Fritzi: Eine Wendewundergeschichte* (*Fritzi: A Revolutionary Tale*, 2019) and *Fritzi und Sophie: Grenzenlose Freundschaft* (*Fritzi and Sophie: A Borderless Friendship*, 2024), the series adopts a thematic rather than chronological structure (Rischk, 2025). Its six self contained episodes, each approximately 15 minutes in length, examine different aspects of everyday life in the GDR. This modular structure makes the series adaptable for higher education, allowing individual episodes to be integrated into specific thematic units and classroom activities. Although originally produced for younger audiences, its accessible language, experiential storytelling and carefully structured explanations provide entry points into complex historical and social issues. In university classrooms, however, these same features become objects of analysis, enabling students to examine how historical narratives are shaped through language, image and narrative organisation.

This raises a broader question within the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: how can educational media developed for children and young audiences be meaningfully repositioned for adult language learning contexts? While adaptation and simplification are established practices in GFL education (e.g., Arendt et al., 2022), less attention has been given to the processes through which educational materials move across institutional settings and acquire new pedagogical functions. Drawing on Bernstein's (1990) *Theory of the Pedagogic Device*, this article develops the *Pedagogical Recontextualisation Model* (PRM) as a framework for examining how audiovisual resources are transformed when transferred from their original production contexts into university level German language teaching. The model investigates how *Auf Fritzis Spuren* can support integrated language, cultural and historical learning in higher education, extending existing approaches to pedagogical recontextualisation (e.g., Lilliedahl, 2015; Singh, 2002) to the study of educational audiovisual media.

The analysis further shows that *Auf Fritzis Spuren* functions most effectively not as a self contained teaching resource but as part of a broader *Medienverbund*³ that connects different

³ The German term *Medienverbund* refers to a coordinated network of related media formats in which a narrative, content area, or body of knowledge is distributed across interconnected media such as TV, film, print, digital platforms and interactive resources. Rather than simply reproducing the same content, each medium contributes distinct yet complementary perspectives and forms of representation within a

forms of historical documentation. Complementary digital resources such as the German Historical Museum's *LeMO: Lebendiges Museum Online*⁴ provide chronological overviews, archival documents, museum objects, biographies and eyewitness accounts that enable learners to contextualise and critically examine the documentary material. Together, these resources create opportunities for inquiry based, multimodal learning that connects language development with historical literacy, memory culture and critical media literacy (Seixas & Morgan, 2013; Wineburg, 2001).

Building on this perspective, the article develops two complementary models as its main conceptual contribution. The PRM explains how audiovisual resources acquire new pedagogical functions when transferred across educational settings, while the Multidimensional Model of Audiovisual Learning (MMAL) describes how learners construct meaning through the interaction of linguistic, visual, auditory, historical and critical dimensions. Together, these models provide a framework for analysing and designing multimodal learning environments in language and cultural education.

The study makes three contributions to GFL pedagogy. First, it expands the range of audiovisual genres considered valuable for tertiary language education by demonstrating the potential of educational documentary media. Second, it provides a theoretically grounded account of how audiovisual resources can be recontextualised for university teaching. Third, it demonstrates how multimodal documentary texts can support interconnected linguistic, cultural and critical learning in higher education.

shared thematic or pedagogical framework. A well-known example is *Babylon Berlin*, the German neo-noir TV series created by Tom Tykwer, Achim von Borries, and Hendrik Handloegten and loosely based on the Gereon Rath novels by Volker Kutscher (2007). Its narrative world extends beyond the TV series to include the original novels, a graphic novel, soundtracks, and a range of digital and promotional materials, with each medium contributing different perspectives on the social, political, and cultural history of the Weimar Republic. Together, these interconnected resources create a layered representation of the historical period while illustrating the concept of a Medienverbund: <https://gereonrath.de> (18.07.2026)

⁴ Link: <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/> (18.07.2026)

Audiovisual media and cultural historical learning in multimodal context

Audiovisual media have become increasingly important in foreign language teaching, reflecting broader developments in educational linguistics that understand language learning as participation in socially situated processes of meaning making (Kramsch, 1993). Earlier approaches often conceptualised films and documentaries primarily as sources of authentic language input, cultural information and contextualised vocabulary (e.g., Brandi, 1996; Lonergan, 1984). More recent perspectives, however, view audiovisual texts as complex multimodal artefacts in which meaning emerges through the interaction of linguistic, visual, auditory and narrative resources (Jewitt, 2016; Kress, 2010; Lay, 2018; Montero Perez, 2022; Sutton & Webb, 2026). This shift moves attention away from language as an isolated system towards communication as a dynamic process in which meanings are constructed across multiple modes.

From this perspective, comprehension involves more than processing language with visual support. Learners interpret dialogue alongside gesture, facial expression, camera framing, editing, music, sound and narrative structure, integrating these resources to construct meaning. Audiovisual texts therefore reflect aspects of communicative complexity beyond the classroom while providing contextual support that enables learners to engage with authentic language. Their pedagogical value lies in the relationships between modes and in the interpretive strategies learners develop as they integrate linguistic information with broader multimodal and contextual meanings.

This understanding also changes the role of audiovisual media in language education. Rather than functioning only as sources of exposure to authentic input, audiovisual texts provide multimodal scaffolding that supports comprehension and interpretation. Visual context, narrative continuity and auditory information help learners infer meaning, resolve ambiguity and connect language forms with situated communicative practices. Repeated engagement with audiovisual materials can therefore develop awareness of how meanings are organised across different modes and how interpretation depends on the interaction of linguistic and non linguistic resources (Abraham & Lay, 2020; Lay & Nickl, 2019).

The pedagogical significance of audiovisual media extends beyond language development to include engagement with history, culture and collective memory. Historical documentaries and other historically situated narratives do not simply present information about the past but construct particular interpretations through decisions about selection, sequencing, emphasis and perspective. Learners encounter historical knowledge as mediated through representational choices and are encouraged to consider how audiovisual forms shape understandings of events and experiences. This supports the development of historical literacy through attention to evidence, comparison of perspectives and recognition of the social and institutional processes involved in producing historical narratives.

Audiovisual texts are also important for engaging with memory culture, particularly where different perspectives on the past are brought together. Rather than accepting representations as fixed accounts, learners can examine how particular viewpoints are foregrounded, how narratives are organised, and how interpretations are shaped by cultural and historical contexts. Such engagement supports perspective taking and encourages learners to understand memory as a process of negotiation rather than a neutral record of events.

At the same time, working with audiovisual media contributes to the development of critical media literacy. Learners examine how cinematography, editing, sound, narration and visual composition influence interpretation and shape claims about knowledge and evidence. Attention shifts from what is represented to how representation is produced and how certain perspectives are made meaningful. Through this process, learners develop an awareness that audiovisual texts do not simply reflect reality but actively participate in constructing understandings of social and historical worlds.

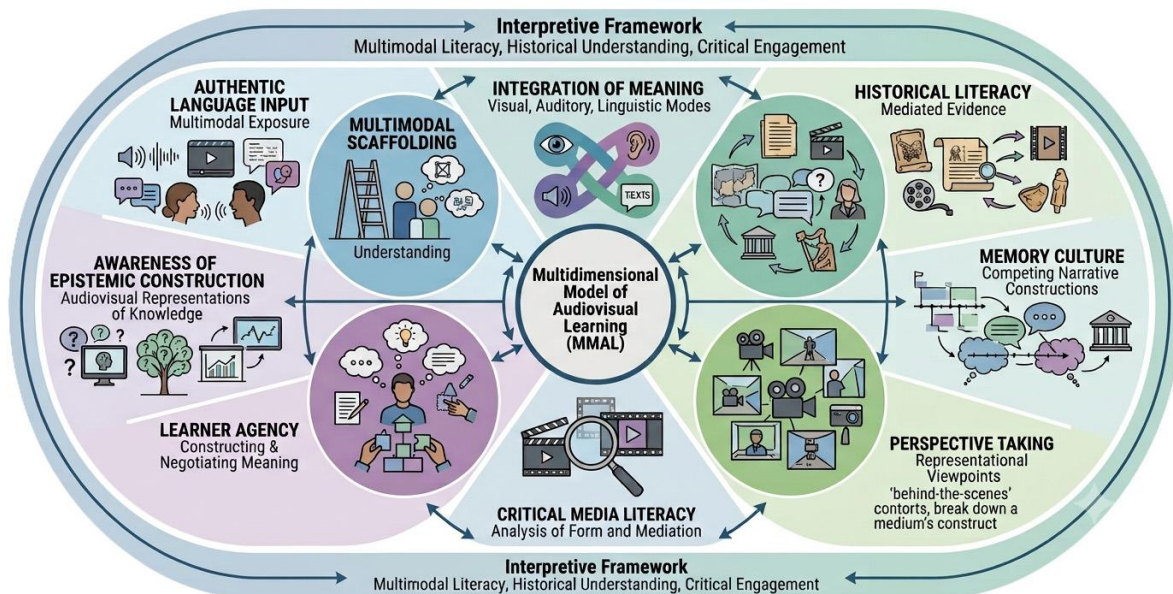


Figure 1. Multidimensional Model of Audiovisual Learning (MMAL)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the MMAL developed in this study, assumes that learners construct understanding through authentic language input supported by multimodal scaffolding that facilitates the integration of linguistic, visual and auditory information. As learners engage with audiovisual texts, they develop historical literacy by interpreting mediated evidence, deepen their understanding of memory culture through exposure to competing narrative constructions, and enhance perspective taking by engaging with diverse representational viewpoints. Critical media literacy is fostered through analysis of the formal and mediating choices that shape audiovisual communication, while learners develop awareness that knowledge in audiovisual media is epistemically constructed rather than transparently given. Throughout this process, learner agency remains central, as students actively interpret, evaluate, negotiate, and reconstruct meaning across multiple semiotic resources. Within the MMAL, audiovisual media function not simply as pedagogical resources but as complex learning environments that integrate linguistic development with multimodal, historical, and critical dimensions of interpretation.

Parallel to these developments, cultural learning in GFL has undergone a significant epistemological shift. Earlier approaches to *Landeskunde* were largely based on the transmission of factual knowledge about German speaking societies, often presenting culture as a stable body of information to be acquired by learners. Cultural content was commonly organised around categories such as history, geography and social customs, with emphasis placed on accuracy, memorisation and background knowledge. While this approach provided learners with an initial orientation to German speaking contexts, it often presented culture as relatively unified and overlooked internal diversity, historical change and competing perspectives within societies (Neuner & Hunfeld, 1993; Hu, 1996).

More recent constructivist and discourse oriented approaches understand culture as dynamic and continually produced through communication, representation and social practice (Kramsch, 2006). From this perspective, cultural knowledge is not simply discovered but shaped through the ways in which texts, media and institutions organise and communicate social realities. Attention therefore shifts towards how identities are represented, how historical narratives are formed and how particular perspectives become visible or dominant. Cultural learning becomes an interpretive process in which learners engage with multiple perspectives rather than acquire a fixed body of cultural information (Byram, 2021; Koreik & Fornoff, 2020). This shift changes the focus of teaching from what culture is to how cultural meanings are produced and understood. Learners are encouraged to examine how social realities are represented through different semiotic forms, including written, spoken, visual and audiovisual texts. Such engagement involves analysing processes of selection, framing and narration, while also reflecting on the assumptions and perspectives that shape interpretation. Cultural competence is therefore increasingly understood as an interpretive capacity that combines linguistic knowledge with critical awareness of representation and discourse.

This reconceptualisation has important implications for the use of audiovisual media. If culture is understood as a process of representation (Hall, 1997), films and documentaries cannot be regarded as transparent reflections of reality. Instead, they are constructed through narrative organisation, visual framing, editing choices and the selection of particular voices and events.

Their pedagogical value lies not only in the cultural content they present but also in the ways they create particular understandings of social and historical realities. Engaging with audiovisual texts therefore requires learners to consider perspective, selection and the relationship between representation and interpretation.

These considerations are particularly relevant to historical documentaries, which are situated at the intersection of language learning, cultural interpretation, and historical representation. Such texts combine archival footage, narration, interviews, photographs, animation and other reconstructive techniques to create accounts of the past (Lay & Scherpinski, 2021). Although based on historical material, they do not provide direct access to historical reality. Instead, they organise evidence through narrative structures shaped by interpretive and institutional choices. Understanding these texts therefore requires both linguistic comprehension and critical awareness of how historical knowledge is produced.

This perspective aligns with contemporary approaches to intercultural learning in GFL, where intercultural competence is increasingly understood as the ability to engage with multiple perspectives, manage ambiguity and reflect critically on one's own interpretive frameworks. Audiovisual media are particularly valuable in this regard because they make the relationship between representation and meaning visible. Learners engage not only with what is communicated but also with how communicative choices influence interpretation. Multimodal literacy and intercultural learning therefore intersect through the analysis of meaning making practices.

This analytical orientation also connects multimodal literacy with critical media literacy, particularly in relation to documentary film, where questions of evidence, authenticity and interpretation are central. In higher education, this is especially significant as learners are expected to move beyond comprehension towards critical engagement with representational systems. This aligns with graduate attribute frameworks in Australian higher education, including the *University of Sydney Graduate Qualities Framework*⁵, which emphasises

⁵ Link: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/students/graduate-qualities.html> (18.07.2026)

disciplinary expertise, critical and analytical thinking, and ethical engagement. When pedagogically recontextualised, audiovisual media can support the development of these capabilities alongside linguistic and intercultural competence.

Despite these developments, an important conceptual gap remains. Research on multimodal learning has largely examined how learners interpret audiovisual texts, while intercultural research has focused on communication and cultural understanding. Less attention has been given to how the pedagogical and epistemic functions of the same audiovisual resource change when it moves across educational settings.

The following section introduces the PRM as a framework for examining how audiovisual resources acquire new pedagogical functions as they move across institutional contexts.

Conceptual framework: The Pedagogical Recontextualisation Model

The *Pedagogical Recontextualisation Model* (PRM) builds upon Basil Bernstein's *Theory of the Pedagogic Device*, particularly his concept of recontextualisation, which explains how knowledge is selected, reorganised, and redistributed as it moves from fields of knowledge production into pedagogical practice. Educational knowledge is therefore not transmitted unchanged but is continually reshaped by curricular priorities, institutional expectations and pedagogical purposes.

Bernstein's account provides an insightful explanation of how educational knowledge is institutionally transformed. However, it was developed primarily to explain the circulation of pedagogical knowledge rather than the multimodal organisation of audiovisual texts or the interpretive practices through which learners engage with them. Documentary films communicate through the interaction of spoken language, moving image, sound, editing, narration, animation, archival material and other semiotic resources. Their pedagogical significance therefore depends not only on institutional recontextualisation but also on how these multimodal resources are interpreted within particular learning environments.

The PRM extends Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation by integrating institutional framing with multimodal organisation, learner interpretation and pedagogical mediation.

Rather than conceptualising pedagogical meaning as an inherent feature of audiovisual resources, the model frames educational meaning as emerging through the interaction between audiovisual design, institutional context and pedagogical practice.

The PRM developed in this study comprises six interrelated dimensions that together explain how pedagogical recontextualisation unfolds.



Figure 2. Pedagogical Recontextualisation Model (PRM)

A key assumption underpinning the model (Figure 2), which will be examined in the findings section of this article, is that audiovisual documentaries do not retain a stable pedagogical function across contexts. Instead, when transferred into new educational environments, their epistemic role is reconfigured. A resource designed to communicate historical knowledge in an accessible form may, in higher education, become an object through which the construction of knowledge itself is explored. This proposed shift is not simply a matter of increased analytical depth but reflects a change in what counts as legitimate engagement with the text. The model conceptualises this transformation through six interrelated dimensions that are not sequential stages but mutually constitutive processes shaping how audiovisual meaning is pedagogically realised. The findings presented later in the article examine the extent to which this conceptualisation is supported.

The first dimension, original pedagogical design, refers to the institutional and pedagogical conditions under which an audiovisual text is produced. Educational documentaries are shaped by assumptions about audience, accessibility, and learning progression. These assumptions inform narrative structure, language choice, and multimodal composition. In materials designed for school audiences, for instance, clarity of explanation and controlled linguistic input often are prioritised over analytical complexity. Importantly, these design decisions remain embedded in the resource after it is transferred into new contexts, where they become available for reinterpretation rather than simple reception.

The second dimension, multimodal affordance structures, captures how meaning is distributed across linguistic, visual, auditory, and narrative modes. These modes do not operate independently but interact to produce interpretive possibilities. Importantly, affordances are not fixed features of the text but relational potentials that become pedagogically significant depending on instructional focus. The same sequence may support comprehension in one context and critical analysis of representation in another. This shift highlights that meaning potential in audiovisual media is inseparable from how it is activated through pedagogy.

The third dimension, contextual displacement, describes the movement of audiovisual resources across institutional settings and the resulting reconfiguration of their pedagogical role. When a documentary moves from its original production context into university teaching, it is repositioned within a different epistemic system. Curricular expectations, disciplinary norms, and assessment practices redefine what the resource is for. In school contexts, audiovisual texts may primarily support understanding of historical content. In higher education, they are more commonly approached as objects of analysis through which representational practices, evidential claims, and narrative construction are examined. The material text remains unchanged, yet its pedagogical identity is fundamentally altered.

The fourth dimension, interpretive reorientation, captures the corresponding shift in learner engagement. Rather than viewing audiovisual input as transparent, learners begin to focus on how meaning is produced. In this approach, spoken language is examined as discourse that positions historical actors, while visual composition is understood as a form of argumentation

and archival footage as curated material shaped by processes of selection and framing. Eyewitness testimony, in turn, is interpreted as situated memory rather than as direct access to historical truth. This shift marks a transition from content recognition to the analysis of epistemic construction.

The fifth dimension, multimodal scaffolding, refers to the pedagogical mediation that enables this interpretive shift. Scaffolding operates through structured tasks, guided comparison, and progressive sequencing of analytical activities that move learners from description towards interpretation and evaluation. Its function extends beyond support, enabling learners to connect audiovisual analysis with broader linguistic and historical understanding. In this sense, scaffolding does not simplify complexity but makes complexity accessible through staged engagement with multimodal and conceptual resources.

The sixth dimension, advanced learning transformation, describes the emergent outcome of these interacting processes. Through the combined effects of design, affordances, displacement, interpretation, and scaffolding, audiovisual media support integrated disciplinary learning. Language development occurs alongside historical understanding, intercultural awareness and critical literacy. Importantly, this transformation is not located in any single component of the model but arises from their interaction within specific institutional contexts of use.

Within this framework, recontextualisation is conceptualised as an iterative and relational process rather than a linear progression. It proposes that original pedagogical design shapes the interpretive possibilities available within a text, while contextual displacement influences which of these possibilities become institutionally relevant. Likewise, interpretive reorientation is expected to depend on how scaffolding structures engagement, and the depth of scaffolding is proposed to influence the extent to which advanced learning transformation takes place. The pedagogical significance of audiovisual media is therefore understood as emerging through dynamic interaction rather than additive combination. These conceptual foundations guide the analysis and are examined in the findings section.

In the present study, the PRM is applied to *Auf Fritzis Spuren*. The series is characterised by accessible narration, structured explanation and multimodal support through animation, archival footage and eyewitness testimony. These features reflect its original pedagogical design and its orientation towards guided historical understanding. The study examines how these characteristics are reconfigured when the series is recontextualised within university German language and cultural studies, where it is expected to function not primarily as a resource for conveying historical knowledge but as a site for disciplinary analysis.

This process is supported through multimodal scaffolding that structures engagement from descriptive observation towards critical interpretation. The integration of LeMO extends this scaffolding by introducing complementary historiographical resources, including documents, timelines and interpretive essays.

To clarify how *Auf Fritzis Spuren* operates in relation to LeMO across the PRM dimensions, Table 1 summarises the interaction between the documentary, the PRM model, and LeMO as a complementary historiographical resource within the recontextualised learning space.

PRM Dimension	Function within PRM	Role of LeMO in recontextualisation
1. Original pedagogical context	Establishes the baseline pedagogical design and communicative intent of the documentary, typically oriented towards guided comprehension and accessible narration.	Provides an external historiographical reference point that enables systematic comparison between simplified pedagogical storytelling and institutionally historical synthesis.
2. Multimodal semiotic repertoire	Accounts for the interaction of linguistic, visual, auditory, and narrative resources in meaning construction.	Supplies an archival knowledge structure, including entries, sources, and biographies, which allows triangulation between audiovisual representation and documented historical knowledge.
3. Institutional recontextualisation	Explains the shift in function when educational media move from school-based broadcasting contexts to higher education disciplinary settings.	Operates as a structured epistemic system that supports the transition from receptive understanding to analytical and interpretive engagement with historical content.
4. Interpretive reorientation	Describes the shift from content reception to critical analysis of representation and meaning making.	Enables comparative interpretation between documentary narratives and historiographical accounts, particularly in relation to political structures, social life, and historical transformation.
5. Multimodal scaffolding	Extends learning through layered engagement with audiovisual and contextual resources.	Enhances learning through access to chronologies, object-based entries, primary materials, and thematic dossiers that deepen cultural and historical understanding.
6. Integrated PRM system	Positions PRM as a dynamic, non-linear framework for recontextualised meaning making across dimensions.	Functions as a continuous epistemic reference system that connects audiovisual narrative structures with historical knowledge across all PRM dimensions.

Table 1. Recontextualisation of *Auf Fritzis Spuren* through LeMO within the PRM

Read in this way, the table illustrates how the PRM conceptualises recontextualisation as a relational process rather than a combination of separate instructional elements. The relationship between the audiovisual narrative and external historiographical resources such as LeMO shows how meaning emerges through the interaction between multimodal design and institutional knowledge structures. It is this interaction, rather than the individual resources alone, that enables a shift from guided comprehension towards disciplinary interpretation.

The pedagogical significance of combining *Auf Fritzis Spuren* and LeMO lies in the different forms of historical representation they bring together. While the documentary emphasises narrative coherence and personal experience, LeMO provides analytical organisation and contextual documentation. Their combination creates opportunities for learners to explore how

historical knowledge is produced through different sources, perspectives and modes of representation.

From the perspective of the PRM, this relationship demonstrates that recontextualisation operates not only within individual texts but also across the knowledge systems that are brought together for teaching purposes. The PRM therefore extends Bernstein's account of the pedagogic device by highlighting how multimodal and digital historical resources become part of the processes through which disciplinary knowledge is selected, organised and reinterpreted. In this way, the model provides a framework for understanding how audiovisual media can support learning environments that integrate language development, historical literacy and critical media analysis.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive research design, which views educational meaning as socially constructed and shaped by the contexts in which texts are produced, selected and used. From this perspective, the *Animadok* is understood as a multimodal educational text whose functions emerge through the contexts in which it is interpreted, framed and applied.

The study investigates how *Auf Fritzis Spuren* is recontextualised when embedded into advanced university-level GFL teaching. It does not seek to evaluate the historical accuracy of the series or measure student learning outcomes. Instead, it examines how multimodal representations of history are transformed into teaching materials within university-level GFL education. The PRM provides the overarching conceptual framework for examining how learning materials acquire new functions through curriculum design, disciplinary expectations and pedagogical practice.

Data sources

The primary corpus consisted of all six episodes, analysed collectively to identify recurring patterns in historical representation, narrative structure and multimodal construction across the series. A second source of material comprised historical resources from LeMO, including

digitised historical documents, photographs, archival sources and explanatory texts. These materials were selected as complementary sources to the episodes and were analysed alongside the audiovisual corpus to examine relationships between different forms of historical representation.

Analytical framework

The analysis combines multimodal discourse analysis with pedagogically informed media analysis. Multimodal discourse analysis examines how meaning is produced through the interaction of different semiotic resources, including visual, verbal and auditory modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2003; Kress, 2010). Applied to *Auf Fritzis Spuren*, this perspective focuses on how spoken language, animation, archival footage, photographs, maps, sound and visual sequencing work together in the representation of historical narratives.

Pedagogically informed media analysis complements this approach by considering audiovisual materials in relation to their educational purposes and contexts of use. It examines how media features connect with learning objectives, curriculum design and instructional practices, providing a basis for analysing the documentary's integration into university level GFL teaching.

Together, these perspectives guided the examination of how the documentary, historical sources and teaching materials function within a university learning environment. The PRM provided the broader conceptual framework for understanding how educational resources acquire new functions when they move across pedagogical settings. During the analysis, attention also turned to the interpretive demands created by multimodal historical texts, which informed the development of the MMAL framework as a complementary perspective on critical engagement with audiovisual representations.

Analytical procedure

The analysis followed a process in which observation, interpretation and conceptional refinement continuously informed one another. Rather than applying a fixed sequence of

analytical stages, the documentary corpus was revisited throughout the study as observations were examined in relation to relevant theoretical perspectives.

The first stage involved repeated viewing of all episodes to develop an overview of the series structure, narrative organisation and the development of historical themes. Initial observations focused on the sequencing of events, relationships between episodes and recurring visual and thematic patterns.

Subsequent viewings involved detailed qualitative analysis of selected scenes and sequences. Attention was given to how animation, archival footage, historical photographs, narration, music and eyewitness testimony worked together to construct historical meaning. Particular focus was placed on transitions between animated and archival material, relationships between spoken and visual information, narrative pacing and the ways audiovisual choices shaped representation. Rather than analysing individual modes separately, the study examined how different resources interacted within broader multimodal configurations.

Analytical notes were maintained throughout the process to document recurring observations, developing interpretations and connections across the documentary corpus. These notes supported comparison between episodes and helped identify broader patterns rather than isolated examples.

The interpretation focused on key themes emerging from the analysis, including historical representation, multimodal construction, narrative positioning, intercultural perspectives and the pedagogical potential of audiovisual media. These themes functioned as flexible analytical lenses rather than predetermined categories, allowing insights to develop from engagement with the material.

The documentary analysis was subsequently considered alongside the LeMO resources and the curriculum materials developed for university level GFL teaching. This comparative stage examined how different forms of historical representation interacted and how the documentary was repositioned within a new pedagogical context. The analysis therefore explored how audiovisual narratives, historical sources and instructional design contributed to processes of pedagogical recontextualisation.

Findings and discussion

Reorganising pedagogical meaning

The analysis demonstrates that *Auf Fritzis Spuren* acquires a different pedagogical role when it moves from children's educational broadcasting into university level GFL teaching. Although the documentary itself remains unchanged, its educational significance is reshaped through the institutional context, pedagogical framing and interpretive practices surrounding its use. From a Bernsteinian perspective, this shift reflects pedagogical recontextualisation, whereby knowledge is reorganised according to new curricular priorities, disciplinary expectations and learner roles. The PRM extends this understanding by showing that recontextualisation involves not only curriculum design and teaching practice but also the ways multimodal texts are interpreted and mobilised in new educational settings.

Within its original production context, the documentary is designed to support accessibility and guided understanding. Across the six episodes, historical developments are presented through themes that connect everyday experiences with wider political and social change in the GDR. These include youth culture, everyday restrictions and the significance of the Berlin Wall (Ep. 1), state surveillance and the role of the Stasi (Ep. 2), youth subcultures and alternative forms of identity, including punk and breakdance (Ep. 3), working life, leisure and environmental issues (Ep. 4), mobility restrictions and escape attempts (Ep. 5), and border control, political repression and the transition towards reunification (Ep. 6). By organising history through personal experiences and familiar social contexts, the series provides its audience with an accessible account of how political developments shaped everyday life.

Rather than presenting the history of the GDR as a sequence of abstract events, the documentary grounds broader developments in individual experiences. Narration connects these experiences with wider historical processes, creating continuity across episodes and supporting viewers in understanding the relationship between personal memories and social change.

This pedagogical orientation is achieved through the interaction of animation, archival footage, narration and eyewitness testimony. Animation makes experiences visible that cannot be directly captured through historical recordings alone, enabling viewers to engage with everyday life, personal perspectives and social realities across divided Germany. Throughout the series, animated sequences provide access to diverse experiences of life under division, including social control, personal agency, mobility and memory. These reconstructions are combined with archival footage of political events, public life and historical developments, while eyewitness accounts provide personal perspectives on growing up in the GDR, social relationships, surveillance and political change. Narration links these different modes into a coherent explanatory framework suited to the documentary's original audience.

When the documentary is introduced into university level GFL teaching, these same features become available for a different form of engagement. Rather than primarily supporting historical orientation, they become resources for analysing how historical narratives are produced through language, image, sound and sequencing. The focus shifts from understanding the historical account presented by the documentary to examining the choices through which that account is constructed.

This shift is particularly visible in the documentary's narrative structure. The movement from youth culture, everyday restrictions and the Berlin Wall (Ep. 1), through surveillance and youth subcultures (Eps. 2 and 3), towards mobility restrictions, escape attempts, border control and reunification (Eps. 5 and 6), provides a carefully organised progression from everyday experiences to broader political developments. In university teaching, this progression itself becomes a focus of analysis. Students can examine how the sequencing of themes shapes interpretation, why certain experiences are foregrounded and how the emphasis on everyday life influences understandings of the GDR. The documentary's focus on personal experiences rather than political institutions alone can therefore be explored as a deliberate representational choice.

The multimodal design of the documentary also takes on new significance through recontextualisation. Animation can be analysed not only as a means of simplifying complex

historical material but also as a form of representation involving selection, abstraction and narrative organisation. Students can examine how different episodes construct particular views of the past and how visual choices influence interpretation. Archival footage can be considered as historically situated evidence whose meaning depends on its relationship with narration, editing and other modes, while eyewitness testimony can be explored as a form of historical knowledge shaped by memory and perspective. Comparing personal accounts with documentary evidence enables learners to consider how different sources contribute to the construction of historical understanding.

Such approaches do not replace the documentary's original educational purpose but expand the ways in which it can be engaged with. Within GFL teaching, the Animadok becomes both a source of linguistic and cultural input and an object of critical inquiry. Students engage with spoken German through interviews and narration while developing the language needed to describe visual material, evaluate perspectives and discuss questions of evidence, interpretation and representation.

Learner positioning and disciplinary interpretation

The shift in pedagogical role is closely connected to changes in learner positioning. In Bernsteinian terms, recontextualisation involves changes in framing and in the distribution of control over knowledge construction, shaping how learners engage with content and participate in learning processes. This is particularly relevant in foreign language education, where disciplinary inquiry and linguistic development are closely interconnected.

Within children's educational broadcasting, viewers are positioned primarily as recipients of guided explanation. The documentary's narration, sequencing and repetition provide contextual support, enabling audiences to follow historical developments and personal experiences within a coherent narrative structure. These features guide interpretation by establishing connections between events, individual experiences and broader historical processes.

In a university-level GFL context, however, the pedagogical function changes. The documentary becomes a resource for examining how historical knowledge is constructed through language, image and sound. Rather than receiving meaning primarily through expert narration, learners engage with multiple modes of representation and develop greater interpretive agency. Attention shifts towards how narrative structures, visual arrangements and linguistic choices shape historical perspectives.

This shift also transforms the role of language in the learning process. *Auf Fritzis Spuren* enables learners to use German not only to access information but also to analyse, discuss and interpret complex multimodal texts. Narration can be examined through lexical choices, evaluative language and discourse organisation, while visual and audiovisual elements provide additional resources for interpretation.

From the perspective of pedagogical recontextualisation, this shift demonstrates how teaching materials acquire new functions through changes in context and framing. Features that support accessibility in children's broadcasting become analytical resources in university teaching, allowing audiovisual media to operate simultaneously as linguistic input, cultural material and a focus of critical inquiry.

Secondary recontextualisation through LeMO

A further layer of pedagogical recontextualisation occurs when *Auf Fritzis Spuren* is combined with external historical sources such as LeMO. Rather than functioning simply as supplementary background information, LeMO introduces different forms of historical documentation that reshape how the documentary can be interpreted. Through its combination of archival photographs, historical documents, timelines, biographies and explanatory texts, LeMO places the documentary within a wider field of historical representations. This creates opportunities for learners to examine how different sources construct, organise and communicate knowledge about the past.

The inclusion of LeMO reshapes the interpretive context in which *Auf Fritzis Spuren* is encountered. The documentary is no longer approached as a self-contained historical account but becomes one representation among several that can be analysed in relation to other forms of evidence. This shift is particularly relevant because the documentary foregrounds personal experience and everyday perspectives, while LeMO provides broader historical contextualisation through archival and documentary sources. The combination of these resources therefore enables learners to explore how individual memories, historical documents and institutional narratives contribute differently to the construction of historical knowledge.

Documentary focus in <i>Auf Fritzis Spuren</i>	Related LeMO materials	Recontextualising potential in university GFL teaching
Youth culture, everyday restrictions and the experience of living in a divided Germany (Ep. 1)	LeMO materials on everyday life, youth culture, society and living conditions in the GDR, including photographs, documents and explanatory texts	Enables learners to compare individual experiences represented in the documentary with broader social and historical contexts
State surveillance and the role of the Stasi (Ep. 2)	LeMO materials on the Ministry for State Security, surveillance practices and political control in the GDR	Allows learners to examine how personal experiences of surveillance relate to wider political structures and systems of power
Youth subcultures and alternative forms of expression, including punk and breakdance (Ep. 3)	LeMO materials on youth cultures, social movements and forms of cultural expression in the GDR	Supports analysis of how young people negotiated identity, conformity and individual expression within the constraints of the GDR
Working life, leisure and environmental conditions (Ep. 4)	LeMO materials on employment, society, everyday conditions and environmental issues in the GDR	Creates opportunities to explore the relationship between everyday experiences and wider economic, social and environmental developments
Mobility restrictions and escape attempts (Ep. 5)	LeMO materials on the inner German border, escape attempts, border controls and related historical documents	Enables learners to analyse how personal narratives of mobility and restriction are connected to political structures and historical documentation
Border control, repression and the transition towards reunification (Ep. 6)	LeMO materials on the Peaceful Revolution, 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification	Allows learners to compare eyewitness accounts with archival sources and examine different ways of representing historical transformation

Insert Table 2. Examples connecting *Auf Fritzis Spuren* with complementary LeMO resources

For example, Episode 1 presents youth culture, everyday restrictions and experiences of growing up in the GDR through personal memories, narration and audiovisual reconstruction. The focus on young people's everyday lives and their encounters with the realities of a divided

Germany provides learners with insights into how historical experiences are remembered and represented. When combined with LeMO materials on everyday life, society and living conditions in the GDR, including photographs, contextual explanations and historical documentation, these personal accounts can be examined in relation to broader social structures and political developments. Rather than viewing individual memories as isolated experiences, learners can explore how personal narratives connect with wider histories of East German society.

A similar process occurs in relation to Episodes 2 and 3, which focus on state surveillance, the Stasi, youth subcultures and alternative forms of expression in the GDR. Through interviews, narration and audiovisual reconstruction, the documentary presents personal experiences of political control as well as young people's attempts to negotiate identity and self-expression within the constraints of the state system. When these representations are placed alongside LeMO materials on the Stasi, political surveillance and youth culture in the GDR, learners can compare individual testimonies with institutional and historical perspectives. This comparison encourages discussion of how historical experiences are shaped by different forms of representation and how personal accounts and documentary sources contribute to understandings of life in East Germany.

The relationship between *Auf Fritzis Spuren* and LeMO is particularly productive when examining the historical transformation of 1989. The episodes *Mauer* and *Wende* present the division of Germany, experiences of the Berlin Wall and the events leading to reunification through personal accounts, archival footage and narrative sequencing. By connecting these episodes with LeMO's historical documentation of the German division, the Berlin Wall and the Peaceful Revolution, learners can examine how the same historical developments are represented through different media forms. The documentary creates meaning through personal experience and audiovisual storytelling, whereas LeMO organises historical knowledge through archival evidence and chronological contextualisation. Bringing these perspectives together allows students to explore how historical narratives are shaped by selection, emphasis and perspective.

From the perspective of the PRM, this illustrates that pedagogical meaning emerges through interaction between different recontextualising fields. The documentary initially reflects the educational aims of children's broadcasting, where accessibility, narrative coherence and guided understanding are central. When introduced into university level GFL teaching alongside LeMO resources, it enters a new pedagogical environment shaped by disciplinary inquiry, historical interpretation and language learning objectives. LeMO does not replace the documentary's original educational function but extends its possibilities by transforming it from a resource for historical orientation into a basis for critical examination of evidence, perspective and representation.

Implications for GFL pedagogy

From a GFL perspective, the combination of audiovisual and documentary resources broadens the linguistic and communicative practices involved in engaging with historical material. Learners move between different genres and registers of German, from the more accessible spoken language of interviews and narration in *Auf Fritzis Spuren* to the formal explanatory language used in historical documentation on LeMO. This movement provides opportunities to examine how information is organised, how perspectives are communicated and how meaning is negotiated across different contexts. For example, students can compare the way an eyewitness describes personal experiences of life in the GDR with the way the same historical period is presented through a LeMO timeline or explanatory text.

The integration of complementary historical resources supports a broader understanding of cultural and historical learning in foreign language education. Historical knowledge is not encountered as a fixed collection of facts but as something shaped through particular sources, perspectives and forms of communication. By comparing audiovisual narratives with documentary materials, learners develop an awareness that historical understanding depends not only on the information presented but also on the ways in which that information is constructed and communicated.

The findings indicate that the educational potential of documentaries extends beyond their use as sources of linguistic input or cultural information. Through the interaction of image, sound, narration and testimony, audiovisual texts provide opportunities for learners to explore how meanings are created and how different forms of representation influence interpretation. This challenges approaches in which audiovisual materials are used primarily for listening comprehension or as introductory resources for cultural topics. While these functions remain important, *Auf Fritzis Spuren* demonstrates that audiovisual media can support more complex forms of engagement in which learners analyse perspectives, compare sources and reflect on processes of meaning making.

The study also highlights the close relationship between language learning and disciplinary engagement. In this context, German functions not only as a means of accessing historical information but also as a tool for analysing representations, comparing viewpoints and developing interpretations. Engagement with audiovisual historical texts creates opportunities for learners to use German for a range of communicative purposes, including description, explanation, evaluation and argumentation. Language learning therefore becomes connected with broader processes of cultural and historical inquiry rather than being approached as a separate area of study.

The use of LeMO further demonstrates the value of connecting audiovisual materials with complementary sources. Rather than approaching documentaries as self contained classroom resources, bringing together different forms of representation encourages learners to compare perspectives and consider how historical knowledge is produced. This positions students as active participants in interpretation rather than passive recipients of cultural information. By examining how the GDR is represented through different media forms, learners can reflect on the relationship between sources, perspectives and historical narratives.

These implications extend beyond the specific case of *Auf Fritzis Spuren*. The educational value of audiovisual resources depends on the pedagogical contexts in which they are used and the forms of engagement they are designed to support. The contribution of pedagogical innovation therefore lies not simply in introducing digital or audiovisual media into the

classroom, but in creating learning environments where these resources foster linguistic development, cultural understanding and critical reflection. When appropriately recontextualised, audiovisual materials can support learners in developing both communicative competence and an informed awareness of how knowledge and meaning are constructed.

Conclusion

This article has examined how *Auf Fritzis Spuren* is pedagogically recontextualised from children's educational broadcasting into university level GFL instruction. The analysis shows that the educational value of audiovisual media emerges not from the resource itself, but from the interaction between multimodal design, pedagogical framing and institutional context.

By integrating Bernstein's *Theory of the Pedagogic Device* with multimodal discourse analysis, this study extends research on pedagogical recontextualisation to audiovisual educational media and introduces the PRM as a model for explaining how resources acquire new functions across learning contexts. Complementing this, the MMAL framework captures how learners critically interpret and construct meaning from multimodal historical texts. For foreign language learning more broadly, and GFL pedagogy in particular, the findings demonstrate that documentaries can support integrated linguistic, cultural and historical learning by enabling learners to engage with perspectives, representation and the construction of knowledge. Extending beyond the specific case, the study demonstrates how audiovisual materials can be pedagogically recontextualised across language learning settings to foster critical and reflective engagement. While based on a single case study, the research provides a framework for understanding how such materials are transformed through pedagogical use. As audiovisual media become increasingly integrated into language education, multimodal recontextualisation offers a valuable perspective for designing learning environments that connect language development with critical engagement with historical representation.

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Alt Text

Figure 1. Multidimensional Model of Audiovisual Learning (MMAL)

The model conceptualises audiovisual learning as a multidimensional process in which meaning is constructed through the interaction of multimodal resources, historical interpretation, memory culture, and critical engagement with mediated knowledge.

Figure 2. Pedagogical Recontextualisation Model (PRM)

The model illustrates how the pedagogical potential of audiovisual media is realised through the interaction of six interrelated dimensions within processes of pedagogical recontextualisation in specific educational contexts.

Disclosure statement

The author report there are no competing interests to declare.

Declaration of generative AI use

Generative AI was used by the author solely for language editing and proofreading. Specifically, ChatGPT (GPT-5-mini; OpenAI) was used as an assistive AI tool to provide suggestions for improving grammar, clarity, readability, writing style and overall language. All intellectual content, including the conception of the study, research design, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and academic argumentation, was developed independently by the author.

Figure 1 and 2 were created using the licensed desktop version of Canva (version 1.122.0), which incorporates generative AI features as part of the Canva AI 2.0 (“Canva Create 2026”) update.

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Biographical note and contact details

Dr. Tristan Lay is Chair of German Studies and Director of the Diploma of Language Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia. His research spans German as a Foreign Language, Applied and Educational Linguistics, and multilingual acquisition, with expertise in film- and image-based teaching, visual arts in language education, and cross-cultural learning.

The University of Sydney

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

School of Languages and Cultures

Brennan MacCallum, A18

NSW 2006, Australia

Email: tristan.lay@sydney.edu.au

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7427-6884>