

Introduction

Multiliteracies and Global Citizenship in Language Education: The Interplay of Young Adult Literature, Digital Social Reading, and Digital Storytelling

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In today's rapidly changing world, foreign language (FL) education faces significant global challenges that require innovative approaches to teaching and learning. As educators seek to prepare students for an interconnected future, the integration of multiliteracies (The New London Group 1996; Lütge, Stannard 2022) and multimodal practices (Pegrum, Hockly, Dudeney 2022) have become essential. These frameworks enable learners to navigate diverse forms of communication and expression, which are crucial in our increasingly digital landscape. In fact, while digitalisation in education is not a new phenomenon, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the urgency of exploring how to effectively and meaningfully

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incorporate digital tools in the language classroom. Educators are being challenged to re-imagine the FL classroom, considering how digitalisation, new literacies, and multimodal practices can be fully harnessed to create more inclusive, flexible, and effective learning environments (Kramsch 2023). At the same time, a re-imagined FL classroom is also one in which the current global challenges, including climate change, democratic crises, racism, and migration are discussed through engaging students in different types of activities around different types of texts. In this context, literature can play an important role in constructing a space where students contemplate different scenarios, challenge their beliefs, develop empathy, and learn to read critically to understand the interconnections between words, power, and culture (Bland 2018). However, how to engage students with literary texts both in and beyond the classroom is an open question, especially in light of the increasing presence of digital tools and media in our lives. Using literature in the language classroom today means to “promote dialogue, develop a curiosity towards other cultures, and encourage the sharing of different perspectives and interpretations” (Ludwig 2021, 209). To do so, learner-centred approaches that are deeply rooted in collaborative and socio-constructivist pedagogies are needed. These should include the use of digital tools and platforms that allow students to collaboratively work out the meaning of literary texts, share perspectives and opinions, and express their emotions and feelings in response to the texts. As Ludwig (2021, 210) claims, “digital media and print-based literature share two common, indispensable features: they are both inherently social and dialogic”. In fact, it is now widely recognised that students need to be encouraged to establish a dialogue with and about the text, developing and sharing with others their own interpretations. Digital media can make this process more personal and creative (Lütge 2018). However, the use of digital media is still far away from being integral and common in the language classrooms (Ludwig 2021), especially in combination with literature. In order to effectively address this challenge, contributions from different disciplines are needed. It is in this context that the Erasmus+ project *DigLit: Lit. Up Your Phone: A Digital Toolkit for ESL/EFL Classroom to Combat Social Inequalities in Times of Covid 19 Crises*¹ was developed. Aimed at promoting students’ multiliteracy (including digital, critical, and creative) and global skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) through the reading of Young Adult Literature (YAL)

1 The full description of the project and its outcomes can be found at this link: <https://diglit.narrativedidactics.org/>. This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

and literature-based digital mediation tasks, the project involved three partner universities in Austria (University of Graz), Hungary (University of Pécs), and Italy (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and three upper secondary schools in the same countries (Priv. Gymnasium und Oberstufenrealgymnasium des Schulvereins der Ursulinen in Graz, Austria; Babits Mihály Secondary School in Pécs, Hungary; IIS TronZanella in Schio, Italy). Through this partnership, researchers from different fields (literary studies, cultural studies and educational linguistics) and practitioners (English language teachers) worked together to design and evaluate learning paths that would turn students from simple readers into creators of new meanings through the combination of literature and digital media. Taking a multidisciplinary perspective, this collection aims at exploring the intersections of global challenges, multiliteracies, multimodality, and the transformative potential of literature and digital narratives, providing a comprehensive outlook on the future of language learning in a digital age. The researcher-practitioner collaborative nature of the interdisciplinary project is reflected in this monographic issue which does not only report the perspectives of the students and teachers involved in the project, but it also involves teachers as writers (see specifically the last article written by Reka Lugossy, Mónika Fodor, Laci Szeverics, Magdolna Lehmann). In this context, each article explores both didactic and research aspects that either informed the project or emerged from its collective experience.

The first article by Marcella Menegale is an examination of the significant changes occurring in education as a result of new social and cultural practices. It focuses on the impact of multilingualism and technological developments on learning and teaching and on the use of literature to not only foster reading motivation but also to encourage students to develop critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. Specific attention is paid to the role of literature-based digital mediation tasks, such as Digital Social Reading (DSR) and Digital Storytelling (DST), which were at the core of the project and of this issue for their powerful role in promoting students' deep involvement with literature and the world beyond it.

The second article by Fabiana Fazzi, Elisa Da Lio, and Sofia Guzzon delves into the results of the DigLit online book club in which Italian and Hungarian students were involved in the DSR of four Young Adult (YA) novels using different digital platforms. Specifically, students engaged in pre- and post-reading discussions on Moodle and reading discussions on Glose for Education, a mobile application which allows technology-mediated collaborative reading of two or more readers who can highlight, comment, and respond with emojis to the same virtual copy of a text (Thoms, Michelson 2024). Through the analysis of students' and facilitators' perspectives, the authors come to the conclusion that DSR, when carried out on longer texts and on a mobile device,

can have linguistic and affective affordances, such as increased reading comprehension and motivation in the target language, as well as cognitive affordances, such as the promotion of deep reading. However, the authors also highlight possible hindrances, both physical, such as eye-strain, and methodological, such as the need to promote linguistic skills and social presence to foster students' asynchronous online interaction and discussion around the literary text.

The third article by Nicole Haring explores the theoretical underpinnings of DST and then moves to present the DigLit method, which offers a framework for the use of DST in the language classroom as a multimodal response to YAL. The article starts with a review of the history of DST, with its origins in Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley's work in San Francisco, to then delve into its pedagogical considerations based on Paulo Freire's (1970) dialogical approach, bell hook's (1994) narrative pedagogies, and Henry Giroux's (1987) critical literacy approach. In the second part of the article, the author presents the step-by-step framework that was used in the DigLit project to guide students from reading YA novels to creating stories informed and inspired by the literary texts.

The fourth article by Maria Elisa Fina, Fabiana Fazzi, and Elisa Da Lio investigates how DST enhanced Italian upper secondary students' multiliteracy and mediation skills development in EFL, as well as how the students reflected on the global issues by means of multimodal rewriting. The thirteen digital stories (DS) produced by the Italian students at the end of the DigLit book club (see the article by Fazzi, Da Lio, and Guzzon, *infra*) are analysed multimodally through Visual Communication Grammar (Kress, van Leeuwen 2006), soundscape (van Leeuwen 1999), and remix strategies (Hafner 2015). This analysis is then complemented by a qualitative analysis of the students' reflective diaries and classroom field notes. The authors show that while DST can have multiple affordances, allowing students to develop critical thinking and creative skills in the target language, more time and opportunities for brainstorming and for technical support are necessary in order to help them become multimodally aware creators of meaning.

The fifth and final article of the monographic issue by Réka Lugossy, Mónika Fodor, László Szeverics and Magdolna Lehmann presents the results of a focus group aimed at exploring students' lived experiences with creating digital stories. Conducted with the Hungarian students that participated in the DigLit book club (see Fazzi, Da Lio, Guzzon, *infra*), the results of the focus group show that through DST students were able to develop a deeper understanding of literature, despite some difficulties related specifically to the use of technology and the timeframe of the project. The article ends with an interesting reflection on the potential of YAL for imaginative engagement and dialogue in and outside the classroom and of DST as a potential tool for knowledge construction in several interrelated areas.

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