

Digital Storytelling and Young Adult Literature: A Methodological Combination for the Language Classroom

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Abstract Digital Storytelling (DST) originated in the 1990s as a narrative technique highlighting ‘ordinary voices’ in order to contribute to the public media discourse. Soon it was picked up by education to capture the diverse lived realities of students. This paper presents a methodological development in the form of a combination of DST with extensive reading of Young Adult Literature in the English classroom. A scaffolded methodological approach is outlined where DST is used as a post-reading activity which can be enhanced in any foreign language classroom.

Keywords Digital storytelling. Young Adult Literature. Extensive reading. Foreign language classroom.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Digital Storytelling: Coaxed Life-Narratives and Ordinary Voices. – 3 Young Adult Literature (YAL): From Coming-Of-Age to Social Justice Issues. – 4 From Reading to Storytelling: The DigLit Method. – 5 Towards a Narrative Didactics: Conclusion.



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1 Introduction

Contemporary classrooms across Europe offer the opportunity to engage with a variety of lived experiences that are constantly changing and adapting to the global issues of our interconnected world. Hence, experimenting with new methods and approaches of critical pedagogies are of the utmost importance to value these unique circumstances and its participants. bell hooks reminded us already in the 1990s to aim for a teaching to transgress by which she highlighted particularly the engagement within the classroom on a narrative and dialogical basis. To do so, the individual stories and the dialogue between them are seen as the key essence of any successful teaching. Coming from a Freirean approach of participatory education, hooks' urge to create space for the individual experience of the people within the eco-chamber of an educational classroom has remained salient in our contemporary teaching.

Following these critical notions, Digital Storytelling (DST) as a life-narrative technique aligns with hooks' premises by focusing on the individual stories and experiences of the narrator. Developed in community-arts projects, DST soon entered the educational sphere by offering an easy way to combine narrative skills with digital elements to showcase diverse lived realities and also strengthen language and rhetorical skills (Lamber 2013). Additionally, the creative component of the method allows students to engage fully in their own imagination and aspirations (see Fina, Fazzi, Da Lio, *infra*). This is a crucial benefit for the language classroom. As a result, DST proves to be versatile.

In order to advance the current scholarship and methodological arenas of DST, this paper will showcase how DST can be combined with extensive reading of contemporary Young Adult Literature (YAL). Our aim is to think with bell hooks' and Paulo Freire's ideas of critical pedagogies to value and engage with the diverse lived experiences present in the classroom. Therefore, contemporary YA fiction proves to be a suitable tool that allows, on the one hand, a literary engagement with a fictional text to contribute to the readers' language skills. On the other hand, these literary works offer the possibilities to reflect the students' realities with all their complexities and ambivalences. Hence, the methodological combination of reading YAL and DST allows to creatively bridge competences of reading, speaking and listening whilst at the same time locating their individual realities within structural circumstances. This particular methodological combination can contribute significantly to the juxtaposition of the individual and the collective realities.

Therefore, this chapter will present a methodological development from the Erasmus+ project DigLit¹ that contributes to the vast scholarship on digital storytelling in education by promoting an expansion of the traditional digital storytelling procedures by introducing a combination of DST with the extensive reading of YAL in the English classroom. The paper will outline how a scaffolded methodological approach to YAL in combination with digital storytelling as a post-reading activity can be enhanced in any foreign language (henceforth FL) classroom.

Although, the chapter will present a method designed explicitly for the language classroom and specifically for the English foreign language (FL) classroom in the European context, it is not the aim to engage vastly with aspects of language learning with regard to the method.² However, it is the aim to contribute how the combination of extensive reading of YAL and DST aligns with critical pedagogical premises derived from hooks, Freire and Giroux to engage with global issues within the language classroom by juxtaposing the individual lived experiences with greater structural circumstances. This will also demonstrate how the method can be fruitful for global citizenship education in our changing times (see Menegal, *infra*). Additionally, existing scholarship on using DST in the language classroom has not yet shown how DST can be used as a post-production method for reading and working with YAL (see Fina, Fazzi, Da Lio, *infra*). Hence, this paper aims at contributing to closing this gap and offering a methodological combination of reading YAL and DST.

2 Digital Storytelling: Coaxed Life-Narratives and Ordinary Voices

Originated in the 1990s, DST is a narrative method that implies that the narrator tells a personal story and turns it into a short, two to five minutes long, multimedia clip by combining it with photos or videos. The materials for this short story are predominantly from the narrator's archive and are based on personal experiences and memories. Through storyboarding and scripting, they are turned into a multimedia narrative using mobile phone applications or computer software that combine the storyteller's spoken words with memorabilia found in their personal archives, such as photographs, music and

1 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* was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and the findings of this project are presented in this paper (<https://diglit.narrativedidactics.org/>).

2 See Fina, Fazzi, Da Lio, *infra* for more on language learning through the use of YAL and DST in the FL classroom.

sound. Ultimately, these are turned into digital stories in the form of short clips that can be screened on computer, TV or the internet.³

The method was allegedly developed by Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley who founded the San Francisco Digital Media Center in 1994 as a counter-reaction to the growth of Silicon Valley and its technological advancements. Lambert (2013, 37) describes DST as a “movement dedicated to de-centering authority”. It was a period of rapid growth in digital media research and education where digital storytelling coming from community arts and oral history traditions emerged as an activist method to provide a voice for communities (Gubrium, Turner 2011, 474; Flottemesch 2013, 54; Lambert 2013, 36-7).

An important development in the digital storytelling movement was the *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (Lambert 2010) that became the first curriculum and manual for workshops. The increasing opening of relatively cheap and user-friendly digital video technology fostered an expansion in participatory approaches to new media production and furthered the success of DST (Hill 2010, 126-8). Two significant projects contributed to this success as well: the British Broadcasting Corporation’s *Capture Wales* project as well as the *Australian Centre for Moving Image*. Both engaged in highlighting community stories by using digital storytelling and were broadcasted on national television in the early 2000s (Davis 2011, 528; Lambert 2013, 35-6).

Building upon these developments, Lambert’s Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) developed a particular style of it which is based on three distinct pillars: collaboration between facilitator and storyteller, literary voice and style, and form of the digital story. Additionally, seven components are prominent in the style of CDS digital storytelling: (1) self-revelatory, (2) personal or first-person voice, (3) lived experience of the author, (4) still images, (5) soundtrack (music or other sounds to support the voiceover), (6) length and design (under five minutes and minimalistic), and (7) intention of the story relies on the process and not the product per se (Lambert 2013, 37-8). Combining these three pillars and the seven components, CDS digital storytelling is generally a process of creating a short story that is guided by the storyteller and supported by a combination of spoken text and still images, often with the intention to create community building (Fields, Diaz 2008; Davis 2011; Lambert 2013). Therefore, as a multi-modal approach, as Flottemesch (2013, 54) sums up, digital storytelling “brings the ancient art of telling stories to life using technology”.

Typically, multiple partners are involved in the digital storytelling process. The relationships and interactions of the individuals within this process determine the success or failure of the method (Davis 2011, 531). Thus, Flottemesch (2013, 54) describes it as “a

³ Davis 2011, 528-52; Gubrium, Turner 2011, 470; Poletti 2011, 78; Lambert 2013, 47.

participatory nature in the process of emerging stories, which builds the relationship between the storyteller and listener". As a workshop-based process in which 'ordinary people' narrate their lives and create their own short autobiographical clips, digital storytelling can be seen not only as a media form but also as

a field of cultural practice: a dynamic site of relations between textual arrangement and symbolic conventions, technologies for production and conventions for their use; and collaborative social interaction (i.e., the workshops) that takes place in local and specific contexts. (Burgess 2006, 207)

Since its beginning, Lambert (2013, 207) has referred to digital storytelling as a 'movement' which is "explicitly designed to amplify the ordinary voice" and dedicated to "finding an authoritative self-definition" (Burgess 2006, 37). Poletti (2011, 73) adds to this by highlighting the unique possibilities of the method for ordinary people to share their stories from and about their lives. Therefore, digital storytelling can be seen as an example of 'coaxed life narrative', which encourages us to view the very act of narrating life experiences as ordinary.

The explicit pedagogical nature of digital storytelling and its potential for teaching practices aligns with Paulo Freire's (1970) pedagogical considerations of dialogical exchange. Additionally, the use of stories of lived experiences as a way to understand and challenge oppression amplifies how narrative techniques can contribute to a diversified understanding of complex lived realities (Gubrium, Turner 2011; Macleroy, Shamsad 2020). As Macleroy and Shamsad (2020, 485) outline, digital storytelling can be seen as counteracting how educational institutions oftentimes force children and young adults to "chase after a fixed standard literacy that seems distant from their own rich and noisy experience of language". Hence, when listening to collective issues and themes, specifically within a classroom, people have the opportunity to publicly present their experiences through a creative, multimodal media form that may evoke greater illocutionary force by offering up an "array of visual, oral, textual, and aural ethnographic empirical material for analysis" produced by the storyteller (Gubrium, Turner 2011, 470-4). As a result, a powerful framework of connecting media with stories into critical educational practice may be provided (McLellan 2006, 26).

Building on the Freirean dialogical approach, scholars such as Hartley (2009) have pointed to digital storytelling's potential to contribute to the democratization of media. The explicit focus of bringing voices of ordinary and marginalized people in the public sphere and sharing their stories on the internet has been seen as a response to the changing political and social environment (Poletti 2011, 81). Hence, digital storytelling draws on what Burgess (2006) names a

“vernacular literacy”, which are skills and competencies that are not solely learned through education, but are built up through everyday experience and mass media consumption. Thus, digital storytelling shows democratic potential by crossing the line between formal and informal learning. It remediates a “vernacular creativity in new media contexts” by telling personal narratives with personal images remixed with textual idioms of film and television, and ultimately transformed through digital tools into publicly accessible culture (Burgess 2006, 209-10).

Nevertheless, a crucial consideration when working with digital storytelling is the awareness that production processes are not neutral activities but rather a process influenced by economic structures and ideological meanings. Hence, Hill (2010) urges to view digital storytelling as a media-making process through the premises of ethnographic practices and their ethical issues. Similar to forms of ethnography, a production of a text is involved and thus an investigation of the power dynamics, social, cultural, and historical contexts, as well as the dimensions of difference at play is necessary to carefully reflect on the subtleties of privileging and silencing voices as the digital storytelling process unfolds (Hill 2010, 128). In this context, Davis (2011, 528) has warned to view digital storytelling as an “unmediated and direct window on life experiences”, as it is always influenced by compromises of technology, institutional and cross-culture mediation, which determine the success and limitation of the process. Moreover, Poletti (2011, 77) highlights that “stories are often told in the service of relationships” which are in the case of digital storytelling partly pedagogical (Hartley 2009) and partly social (Burgess 2006).

Considering these elements when carrying out DST and within scholarly engagement of this particular participatory method, DST provides the means for dialogical and interactive approaches within the classroom and beyond. Although Lambert and his team from the Center for Digital Storytelling have developed a specific style, over the years variations of this DST approach have emerged due to technological developments and the growing interest in participatory media methods. Some transgress the core definition of digital stories and others simply expand the concept by strengthening the interactive and collaborative component of the method by including interviews, conversations, and/or exchanges within the digital story. This paper will contribute to these expansions as well by outlining how digital storytelling can be used as a post-reading production and a meaningful way to process extensive reading of YAL.

3 Young Adult Literature (YAL): From Coming-Of-Age to Social Justice Issues

Until the late 1930s, young adults fell into the category of children and thus the literary productions aimed at them were not explicitly called “Young Adult Literature” (henceforth YAL) but rather “Children’s Literature”. New debates about this particular category of humans sparked eventually the interest in writing for adolescents which was also the result of a significant development in the acknowledgement of youth culture, as Cart (2016, 9-10) has outlined in the history of YAL. Soon, publishers realized the interest of “older children” in reading books specifically addressing issues relating to their lives and hence, the branding of YAL began. This branding began with categorizing them into ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ books by differentiating the content as ‘sentimental’ and ‘adventurous’, which still lingers with us today (Cart 2016, 10). In the following decades, the market began to grow and more publishers engaged with labeling literature that was defined as a ladder between children’s and adults’ books as YAL. Testing the boundaries and narrating the complexities of growing up, the 1960s and 1970s were a pivotal era for the development of YAL and are today called the “first golden age of young adult literature” (Cart 2016, 34).

With its uprising in the 1970s, YAL today can be defined as consisting of texts produced specifically for young adults within the age range of twelve and eighteen that feature predominantly first-person narration and addresses independence of young adults (Nilson, Donelson 2012). Typical themes are romance, loss, search for identity and bullying and various formats such as novels, graphic novels, audiobooks, and prose fall into this category (Boyd, Darragh 2019; Cart 2016). Thus, Glasgow (2001, 54) has early on highlighted the benefits of YAL by stating that “young adult literature provides a context for students to become conscious of their operating world view and to examine critically alternative ways of understanding the world and social relations”.

Starting out with portraying classical middle-class white youth coming of age, in recent decades YAL has become widely popular and more sophisticated. Additionally, the imperative of growth has been neglected and more and more books simply highlight storytelling to address their young readers (Coats 2011, 320). As a result, the topics and representations within its literature have expanded and the latest texts are more inclusive, addressing pressing contemporary issues of equality, diversity, and oppression. Protagonists are from diverse ethnic, racial, class, and gendered backgrounds and the topics align with contemporary global debates, such as mental illness, police brutality, discrimination, and climate change. With a growing body of works on race, ethnicities, gender identities and sexual

orientations, YAL has transgressed its old image as “too White” (Lar-rick 1965; Boyd, Darragh 2019, 13-14). As a result, the themes and topics addressed by contemporary YAL reflect global issues that align with principles of global citizenship education to “bring the world into the classroom” through literary texts whilst at the same time aiming to deconstruct problematic aspects of *us/them* and *here/there* (CoE 2019, see Menegale, *infra*).

Another crucial aspect worth mentioning is the emotional component of contemporary YAL, which contributes to its success. As research has shown over the past decades, young adults think differently than children or adults due their use of a different part of their brain, namely their amygdala. This part of the brain is considered the emotional reaction centre, whereas adults rely on the frontal cortex of the brain which relies more on calculating risks and moral considerations. Hence, additionally to rapid hormonal fluctuations, teenagers’ physical and mental coordination is hindered by a growing cerebellum which results in physical clumsiness and instability of emotions. Therefore, emotional issues within YAL resonate ideally with the developmental stage of young adults (Spinks 2002, quoted in Coats 2011, 321).

Moreover, YAL plays a significant role in negotiating the individual lived experiences through a narrative level (Pölzleitner, Schumm Fauster 2022). Thus, Alsop (2010, 13) argues that

teens whose subjectivity is not consistent with those who control society’s economic and cultural structures have an even more difficult time creating a sustainable identity than teens who belong to dominant social, ethnic, or racial groups.

As a result, YAL can function as a medium to fill the gap of this representation and provide the possibilities to see individual disenfranchisement through a literary lens in order to develop a critical literacy (Giroux 1987) which helps to navigate the individual lived experience within social relations. YAL can contribute to the significant part of maturation of

seeing one’s personal subjectivity as part of a larger system of social relationships which often become politicized, thereby seeming to disconnect individual identity from the objectives of the larger social group. (Alsop 2010, 13).

Hence, the teaching of YAL in secondary school has been marked by conceptions of identity and responses to such through the engagement with young adult texts. In this context, Lewis and Dockter (2011, 82) outline that “the teaching of literature has always been and remains tightly connected to readers’ identities’ as it seeks to

influence the ‘making’ of particular kinds of people and particular kinds of readers”. Therefore, not only reading but also interpreting these texts becomes an “act of negotiation of shifting and slippery identities as readers re-imagine and re-identify themselves past, present, and future, and experience new self-possibilities in the process”, as Lewis and Dockter (2011, 83) continue to outline. This process is specifically interesting for the language classroom where YAL can represent global issues in line with global citizenship education (CoE 2019) and simultaneously contribute to the strengthening of various FL learning skills. Hence, the potential of allowing the students to read and engage with YAL provides an authentic language engagement that fosters critical literacy (see Fina, Fazzi, Da Lio, *infra* and Fazzi, Da Lio, Guzzon, *infra*).

Moreover, as contemporary YAL attempts to cater to the growing literary market of diversity literature, it encompasses a wide range of representations of marginalized groups. Noteworthy Anglophone authors here are Elizabeth Acevedo (*Poet X*, 2018; *Clap When You Land*, 2020), Angie Thomas (*T.H.U.G. - The Hate You Give*, 2017), Kacen Callender (*Felix Ever After*, 2021) and Cherri Dimaline (*The Marrow Thieves*, 2017). In their writing all of them aim to address topics close to young adults’ lived experience whilst highlighting the complex interrelated issues of our contemporary world including climate change, growing inequalities, border regimes and unequal distribution of wealth. Through these diverse narratives, a critical literacy can be practiced where the individual young adult “recognizes the overriding importance of a fair and just society that respects the rights of all over the individual needs of one” (Alsop 2010, 13). As a result, they also contribute to the premise of global citizenship education by providing a literary narrative of pressing global issues (CoE 2019, see also Menegale, *infra*).

4 From Reading to Storytelling: The DigLit Method

As the discussion of both digital storytelling and YAL has shown thus far, both emphasize a critical literacy which aims at amplifying the localization of the individual identities and lived experience within social relations. Therefore, the methodological combination of the two follows the same critical literacy approach as outlined by Henry Giroux in his introduction to Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo’s *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*:

The issue of literacy and power does not begin and end with the process of learning how to read and write critically; instead, it begins with the fact of one’s existence as part of a historically constructed practice within specific relations of power. That is, human

beings (as both teachers *and* students) within particular social and cultural formations are the starting point for analyzing not only how they actively construct their own experiences within ongoing relations of power, but also how the social construction of such experiences provides them with the opportunity to give meaning and expression to their own needs and voices as part of a project of self and social empowerment [...] To be able to name one's experience is part of what it meant to 'read' the world and to begin to understand the political nature of the limits *and* possibilities that make up the larger society. (Giroux 1987, 5; italics in original)

Thinking with these negotiations of Giroux on critical literacy not only as the result of knowing how to read and then to read, but as a crucial aspect of seeing one's lived realities in relation to structural circumstances provides the grammar for the methodological combination of reading YAL and digital storytelling.

As research on reading in the foreign language classroom has shown, the activities involved are crucial to enhance a successful outcome. Moreover, the DigLit methodology based on these critical approaches follows the pedagogical lens of reader-response theory, as introduced by Louise Rosenblatt and Robert Probst. Guided by the belief that the reader of any text brings knowledge to it and that their response "are mostly valid products of personal experience in combination with textual representation" (Alsop 2010, 7), reader-response theory highlights that personal responses are essential to understanding any literary texts and are thus seen as a valid component to any reading, specifically in educational settings (7). Furthermore, research has shown that when reading YAL with students within the foreign language classrooms and then encouraging a personal response by the students to the text, a more positive reaction towards the overall reading experience is provided by the individuals involved, as Alsop (2010) proclaims.

Guided by reader-response theory, the DigLit methodology⁴ provides a scaffolded approach of combining extensive reading of contemporary YAL with digital storytelling as a post-reading production. Based on the two simple, yet intriguing steps of, firstly, reading a contemporary young adult literary text with students in the foreign language classroom, and then doing a DST workshop afterwards, the DigLit method proposes to see the process of these two parts as the most crucial component rather than the outcome of the digital

⁴ The DigLit methodology was developed in 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*, which was co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

storytelling. We are aligning here again with Lambert's (2013) idea of the storytelling process as the central focus in any workshop despite the common urge to focus on the final product of the digital story. Hence, the engagement with contemporary YAL begins to set the scene for the unfolding of the methodology (Bergner et al. 2023).

Step 1: Selecting Contemporary YAL

The DigLit method encourages educators to select together with their peer group an ideal text for the extensive reading. This selection of literature can be done using various ways. However, it is crucial that the process is based on a democratic participatory principle where the educator and the students have an equal say in the decision (see also Fazzi 2023). Principles from participatory research in education drawing back to Freire (1970) are crucial to understand that agency of the individuals involved in the process enables a better outcome of the method. To cater to this paradigm, the DigLit project has provided an online selection of contemporary YAL accompanied by tags and keywords, which can be used to start the selection process and to equally involve the students and educators in the selection (YAL Collection DigLit project 2023). Making use of the developed digital collection may support the research process for both the educator and the students where the tags and keywords are helpful posts to find texts more efficiently. In addition, the collection is also built to function as a blog, where everyone can add to the list and thus, create an interactive archive of contemporary YAL texts.

Moreover, the inclusion of the students within the selection process of the literary text is crucial to enhance a better understanding of what content and genre appeals to the individual groups. Hence, Alsup (2010, 7-9) points out that when the YAL provides characters, settings, and/or situations familiar to the readers, young readers can readily identify and the narrative structures and plotlines can provide fruitful insights for them on how to make sense of the world surrounding them.

Step 2: Reading YAL

The selection of the young adult text is followed by reading it; ideally over a longer period of time to give the students and the educator enough time to engage with the text. Again, the DigLit method encourages a participatory pedagogical approach of including the students in defining what an accurate amount of time is necessary to finish the book. Through this active engagement, the reading process will be less stressful and the time frame for the individuals can be

considered in contrast to the educator providing it for them. Every step of the methodology follows a participatory and dialogical pedagogy, which is crucial for the project to work and to live by the principles of bell hooks and Paulo Freire aligning with a critical literacy.

This step can be done analogously where the students receive hard-copies of the chosen YAL or a digital social reading project can be realized. The DigLit method offers both approaches depending on the availability for the participants. Digital Social Reading relies on digital technologies where the students read the text on a digital device (e.g., smartphone, tablet, computer). Depending on the software or app, the participants have a variety of options to read, annotate, comment, and engage with the text digitally (see Fazzi, Da Lio, Guzzon, *infra* for more on digital social reading).

Step 3: Engaging with YAL

In order to engage with the literary text after the extensive reading period, this paper proposes one method as essential before the digital storytelling, namely the close reading of the text with the help of a catalogue of questions. This can be integrated when conducting a digital social reading project or an analog reading project. As Alsup (2010, 10-11) points out, it is significant in working with literary texts with students to engage with the literary representation as a means to show the similarities and differences represented in the narrative and their own experience. Therefore, before moving to the storytelling process where the personal experience is in the center, the DigLit method proposes to include a thorough engagement with the text by using provoking questions as outlined in the following catalogue of questions:

- a. Catalogue of Questions
- b. How does the story begin?
- c. How are the women, men and other gender identities shown? What are the characteristics of them? What are their social positions?
- d. What kinds of relationships between women and men, and women and women are described (business, sexual, etc.)?
- e. Are the relationships presented institutionalized, family wise or other?
- f. What sort of conflicts arise from these relationships?
- g. Where does the action take place? What happens when and where?
- h. What or who influences the movement of the narrative?
- i. What sort of situations are presented and how do the women behave in these situations?

- j. In which stages of their lives are the women and queer people shown?
- k. Which age groups and age differences are there?
- l. Do the portrayed women and people from the LGBTQI+ community have choices within the framework of the story? Do they have the power to make decisions?
- m. Do the women and people from the LGBTQI+ community change in the course of the story? Do they develop a different view of themselves and others?
- n. How do they reflect these changes (perspective from within), how do others (outward perspective) evaluate these changes?
- o. What kind of futures do the women and people from the LGBTQI+ community envision?
(Maierhofer 2017)

The aim of these questions is to stimulate critical engagement with the literary text by provoking the readers to look closely and adapt their reading strategies to find clues on how the narrative structure and the protagonists act. Additionally, the questions are following a critical feminist literary approach of pointing the readers towards unraveling the different and similar representations between gendered groups and how these allow an interpretation of the power dynamics and social relations within narrative constructions (e.g., Fetterly 1978; Bartky 1975; Rich 1979).

The simple questions may provide a starting point for the classroom discussion of contemporary YAL through the application of close reading strategies to interpret the text and find evidence for the individual readings within them. Thus, the categorical structure of the questions aims at guiding the students through their reading to eventually be able to relate their personal experience with the one represented in the text. Moreover, these questions aim at amplifying the “similarities and differences between the text and their own experiences” in order to create the “so-called educated imagination or the holistic reader - the reader who is able both to *experience* a textual world and to *view* it with distanced aesthetic awareness as a creation of the author’s imagination” (Alsup 2010, 11; italics in original).

Step 4: Digital Storytelling

Following the reading and the engagement of the chosen young adult literary text is the digital storytelling workshop. The steps outlined before follow a scaffolded approach of selecting, reading and engaging with the text as the first crucial steps. However, the DigLit method emphasizes specifically on the post-reading production activity in the form of DST as a means to combine the extensive reading with

the engagement on a more personal level resulting in a storytelling process.

As a result, DST functions within the DigLit method as a creative counterpart to the reading process and aims at stimulating the students' imagination to create a short two-to-four-minutes-long video using their own narrative voice and videos or photos from their personal archives. The digital storytelling process follows Lambert's *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* premises by centring participatory and dialogical ideals within the classrooms. Students will go through the processes of brainstorming ideas for the digital storytelling, sharing them with their peers and then eventually writing the script for their digital story and recording it by using their own voice and materials.

Moreover, the DigLit method⁵ encourages a narrative connection between the YAL and DST by amplifying the similarities and differences between the content of the read text and the lived experience of the students. Educators are invited to provide enough time for the students to brainstorm and find a suitable outlet for their experiences to be turned into a digital story. The content of the digital story can be freely chosen by the students and there should not be too much interference of the educators should happen in order to leave enough room for creativity and personal engagement with the digital storytelling process (e.g., Lambert 2010; Macelroy, Shamsad 2020).

Eventually, the stories created will replicate a connection to the literary text in a personal and creative way that allows discussions on how extensive reading and critical close reading techniques can lead to a personal engagement with the topics, themes and narrations of the selected YAL. As outlined in detail before, contemporary Young Adult fiction aims at addressing the lived experiences of the youth and make thus the connection between the fictional level and their circumstances easily recognizable. At the same time, the crucial aspect is to find a way to tell the personal story within the realm of the digital storytelling method. Enough time for this production is therefore a crucial part of the process where the educators are in charge to democratically discuss with their students on how much time is necessary for this process in order to cater to the individual needs.

Ultimately, the DigLit method encourages to organize a collective screening of the digital stories within the classroom to prepare a stage for the created products to be enjoyed collectively. This is a crucial step within the method and should not be neglected or underestimated. Following the principles of digital storytelling, collectively watching and discussing the digital stories at the end of the project contributes to raising awareness for different lived experiences and to showcase how the individuals involved engaged with

⁵ See Bergner et al. 2023 for a detailed description of the method.

the topics and themes of the readings (Lambert 2013). Additionally, it sums up the overall method by collectively and respectfully engaging with each other's stories as a means of valuing each other's participation and production.

5 Towards a Narrative Didactics: Conclusion

To conclude, the DigLit method aims at contributing to the continuous developments of digital storytelling and the use of contemporary YAL in the FL classroom. To do so, it provides a novel approach of combining the two aspects in the service of experimenting with participatory practices. The recent developments with regard to YAL which focuses more and more on social justice issues have provided an ideal terrain to explore how a person's engagement in the form of digital storytelling can be seen as a fruitful narrative approach to link the lived realities of today's diverse classrooms in Europe with FL learning. Hence, aligning with aspects of global citizenship education (CoE 2019). Engaging with critical pedagogies of participation, democracy, and engagement, the DigLit method practices how multi-media methods can be used to foster an awareness for the individual within a collective structure, where one's story can become a linkage to the world students are experiencing today. With all its limitations, DST and contemporary YAL nevertheless share the common goal of bringing personal experiences to life by experimenting with storytelling techniques that amplify ordinary voices. Thus, the methodological combination presented in this paper may contribute to critically engaging with the lived experiences of the individuals within our classrooms by reading fiction to spark their imaginations and make connections on how to better understand the world we are living in.

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