

Storytelling Revisited

2018

**Gender, Language,
Music, Cinema**

Núria Camps-Casals, Mireia Canals Botines, Núria Medina Casanovas (Eds.)



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This book is the result of work by the consolidated research group “Gender Studies Research Group: Translation, Literature, History and Communication” (GETLIHC) (2014 SGR 62) of the University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC) (C. de la Laura, 13, 08500, Vic, Spain).



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Notes on contributors

Ignasi Arumí Prat has a degree in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences in 2005 (UViC-UCC); Post Graduate Certificate in Applied Science in 2006 (University of Queensland, Brisbane), Masters' degree in Physical Activity and Health in 2009 (University of Wales Institute, Cardiff) 2009, and a PhD in Health, Wellbeing and Quality of Life in 2015 (Universitat de Vic). He has taught both in primary and secondary schools, and worked in non-formal education, in Spain, Gambia and Nepal. He has written four books: two novels and 2 storybooks. He currently organises activities in English related to Intercultural Awareness in primary and secondary schools.

Valeria Arva currently teaches at the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education, ELTE, Budapest, is involved in training kindergarten and primary teachers for bilingual education, and has taught ESP for baby and infant caregivers. Earlier she worked as a pre-kindergarten teacher at an American international school in the Middle-East, and before this at the Centre for English Teacher Training, ELTE.

Mireia Canals-Botines is currently a professor and researcher at UViC-UCC. She is an active researcher in gender, children's literature and social studies and holds a PhD in Communication (2009) from the Ramon Llull University. She is a former MP in the Parliament of Catalonia. She is also an active writer of children books, 36 published by now and a novel for teenagers that earned a grant from the Catalan Government in 2017, all of them dealing with growth and emotions, which have been translated to many languages.

Rossella Certinni is currently Associate professor of Science of Education at University of Florence. She is Erasmus Delegate of School of Humanities and Education. From 1999, she is PhD researcher in “Theory and History of educational processes”. She has coordinated for the A.A. 2016-2017 the Master in “Music Operators for Orchestra and Youth Choirs, adopting the Abreu method. Her mainly research concern educational theories, school and methodological innovations, autobiography, theoretical reflection on pedagogical models.

Marta Corominas Salom completed her degree in Anglo-Germanic Philology in 1989 (UAB) and has a Diploma of Advanced Studies in English Language and Intercultural Practice in 2011 (UViC-UCC). She has taught in Spain and abroad in primary and secondary schools and university. She has worked as a tutor for UViC-UCC students in several social projects in Guatemala, Morocco and Nepal. Her current research field is Intercultural Competences and Awareness. She organises activities in English related to Intercultural Awareness in primary and secondary schools.

Chiara Lepri received her PhD in “Educational research methodologies. Theory and History” in 2007 at the University of Florence. Since 2002 she has continuously worked at the University of Florence as a Research fellow in Children’s Literature. From 2017 she is Researcher of History of Education at the Department of Education of the University of Roma III. She wrote the books *Le immagini raccontano. L’iconografia nella formazione dell’immaginario infantile*, Pisa: ETS, 2016 *Parole in libertà. Infanzia e linguaggi poetico-narrativi*, Anicia: Roma, 2013, *Aedi per l’infanzia. Poeti e illustratori di oggi*, Pacini: Pisa, 2015 and many other papers. She is also interested in reading through the images and conducts training courses for teachers.

Núria Medina Casanovas has a degree in English Philology from Universitat de Barcelona (1986) and a PhD in Translation, Languages and Literatures from UVic-UCC (2014). She has been a lecturer in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the Faculty of Education, Translation and Humanities at UVic-UCC since 1988. Her research field deals with music and English interdisciplinary work. She is co-author of several English textbooks for Primary students *Fancy That* (Alber, 2006). She has published articles about the importance of using music to teach English as a foreign language and is co-author of *Easy English Dictionary* (Eumo Editorial, 2004). She has participated organized several Seminars on Teaching English in Early Years and Primary at UVic-UCC, and has been a guest lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary) from September to November 2018.

Éva Trentinné Benkő is based at Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education (Budapest) as associate professor and head of department. She holds an MEd in TESOL (from the University of Leeds) and a doctoral degree (from ELTE Faculty of Education and Psychology). She wrote her PhD dissertation on teacher education supporting early CLIL. She teaches EFL Methodology, Children's Literature and the Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education. She has 10 years of experience as a primary EFL teacher and a school-based mentor. She is the co-author of *Magicland* and *Magic Friends* (EFL coursebooks) and *The World at Their Feet: Children's Early Competence in Two Languages Through Education*. Her research interests: TEYL, CLIL, teacher development and qualitative research methodology.

Introduction

If Storytelling represents the art of explaining a story, the term itself appeals to everyone. Storytelling allows oneself to express freely and creatively through ideas. A common cultural word represents every single moment of every single part of a lifetime. The term has become popular in a mixed reception, either for education, government, corporate, audio-visual, civil society, but especially in academia which may vary in intensity and interest in a number of ways. However, no matter how, it finds a way to be expressed, so it remains alive.

This book is the result of the **Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya** (UVic-UCC) organising the First International Conference entitled: “Storytelling Revisited: Gender, Language, Music and Cinema in Children’s Literature”, held in Vic (Barcelona), on 28 November 2018. This Conference provided a forum for teachers, students and researchers to go deeper into the relationship between gender, language, music, cinema in children’s literature within the field of EFL teaching for Early Years and Primary Education. It was an interdisciplinary conference organised by the three research groups **GEHTLIC**, **TEXLICO** and **GRELL** at the **Faculty of Education Translation and Human Sciences**. This academic meeting revolved around the study of narrative structures applied to the classroom. The overarching goal was to stimulate discussion and to highlight the importance of establishing criteria regarding the choice of narrative structures for classroom work, in the EFL classroom.

Children's literature, cinema adaptations, gender issues, the use of music and language teaching are fundamental pillars both in the teaching of English for young and very young learners. Particularly, the bias of gender usually found in narrative structures and the multiple languages that they might include. This first volume of *Storytelling Revisited* aims at offering a wide range of approaches to storytelling: picture books for science education, songs and narrative structures in storybooks, autobiography related to storytelling, intercultural practice through storytelling, identity gender, transmedia storytelling and CLIL teacher education.

Storytelling Revisited is a compound of research articles, arisen from the contributions of the authors in this first Conference. The following lines offer a brief of their investigations, with the common ground of storytelling.

Storytelling engages children because it is an exciting, appealing, intimate and entertaining activity. It is recommended by Kang Shin and Crandall (2016) to young learners of English because it is an authentic form of communication, introduces new cultures to children, teaches them in an entertaining way and develops critical thinking skills (p. 210). (Arva, 2018).

In the present research, we wish to study the different narrative structures contained in stories as well as in songs, together with the different types of songs used to learn English as a foreign language. In addition, we wish to examine how many stories are reinforced by songs to get young learners engaged in the participation of storytelling. Narrative structures that are successful in novels and films do not usually fit children's literature (Canals-Botines, 2018), and Language learning benefits in narrative structures through music and literature are a fact (Medina-Casnovas, 2017). (Canals-Botines, Medina-Casnovas, 2018).

Can reading and literature still fascinate through the written page? What can the great classics of literature still communicate to the younger generations and to each one of us? And above all, who are the great writers who have composed admirable works and who have been able to fascinate entire generations for such a long time? (Certini, 2018).

Reading and/or listening to stories is an essential part of many people's childhood. Therefore, we can consider stories as an attractive resource for our early years and primary school English sessions. Apart from learning the language, we can choose stories related to diversity, different origins, conflicts and harsh situations. (Corominas Salom, Arumí Prat, 2018).

In the history of Italian children's literature, 1967 marked a "point of no return": in that year, Rosellina Archinto founded Emme Edizioni, a publishing house destined to transform the concept of illustrated books for children and, consequently, the very idea of reading for children. (Lepri, 2018).

The closing years of the 20th century saw the emergence of challenging films which rediscovered audiovisual language and broke through the boundaries of storytelling rules. One of these projects was *The Matrix* (1999), which told a story developed not only through a film trilogy but also by means of other media, thus resulting in a complex narrative unfolded in different layers. This project broke the ice into changing the relationship between media: they can be combined to generate a greater storyline. This pattern was replicated in many other projects and franchises and was finally coined as transmedia storytelling. (Pujol, 2018).

The foundation course of the CLIL programme is the 'Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education', which used to end with a traditional oral exam. Since 2010 an alternative exam practice has been continuously developed based both on the experience I gained whilst teach-

ing in the KIE's courses as well as on my empirical research findings. This renewed assessment procedure (see Appendix) focuses on students' learning outcomes and beliefs as represented in their creative portfolios and associated reflections. One of the tasks is story writing on the topic of the CLIL teacher's adventures. (Trentinné Benkő, 2018).

While this introduction has explained the elaborated on the structure of this volume and the origins, and provided a thumbnail summaries of the contents, the conclusion will be drawn on each of its articles, serving as a proposal for next years' appointment in the second edition of the Conference, always searching common ground and looking towards the further deepening and development of storytelling theory in the future.

Picture books for science education in bilingual kindergartens

Ways of using picture books in developing language through science education in bilingual kindergartens

Valéria Árva, PhD
Eötvös Loránd University
arvali@gmail.com

Introduction

Storytelling engages children because it is an exciting, appealing, intimate and entertaining activity. It is recommended by Kang Shin and Crandall (2016) to young learners of English because it is an authentic form of communication, introduces new cultures to children, teaches them in an entertaining way and develops critical thinking skills (p. 210). They state that storytelling is authentic because it is part of all cultures. In fact, it has been used to pass down culture and cultural values from generation to generation. It is not therefore surprising that this is reinforced by Pinter (2006), who claims that stories are the most authentic and popular activity for children (p. 51). Last but not least, story time is one of the cornerstones in the life of a kindergarten group and therefore storytelling is an important part of the work of the teacher: storytelling or reading, which centres on the sound of the teacher, can ensure a whole-group experience and a relaxed environment (Bland, 2016).

Picture books are written for preschool children who are in the pre-literacy stage and are preparing to learn to read and write.

These books need to be read aloud to children and are designed in such a way that children can actively participate in the reading experience. The pictures are intended to help them decode the story through their own meaning-making process and become active participants. The aim of the present article is to attempt to explore how picture books can be integrated into bilingual kindergarten programmes, where their role is to support the children's second language acquisition process. More specifically, it focuses on how picture books can be integrated into the science subject area of these kindergartens.

Defining picture books

Stories for young learners of English may be published in several types of books: they can be stories rewritten for coursebooks, graded readers or authentic books such as picture books. In this paper I focus on picture books, which are also called storybooks (Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Ghosn, 2013), real books (Cameron, 2001; Dunn, 1997-2004; Machura, 1991) or even real picture books (Dunn, 2003) or, finally, authentic children's literature (Ghosn, 2013).

Picture books can be classified as baby books, interactive books, toy books, wordless books, alphabet books, counting books, concept books, picture story books, pattern books and easy-to-read books (Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson & Short, 2011, pp. 96-99); or toy books, concept books, alphabet books, wordless books, beginning readers' books, predictable books and picture story books (Temple, Martinez & Yokota, 2014).

When looking at picture books, it becomes quite clear why they are so attractive for young children. First of all, they have a distinct visual appeal to the readers. Second, the story can be fol-

lowed and understood without reading the text: the pictures, which are detailed and often spread over two pages, can tell the story themselves. What is more, not only the illustrations inside the book, but also the front and back covers can add to the story. In general, however, it can be stated that these books are capable of transmitting a complex story with the help of the pictures and the limited text together.

Since the text in picture books tends to be short, the illustrations play a significant role in the unfolding of the story. Bader (1976) calls picture books total design, which refers to the interplay of pictures and words. In Mourao's (2016, 200) opinion, the words and pictures create meaning in a relationship. Bland (2014) points out that picture books encourage children to take part creatively in interpreting the story, which helps them to develop their visual literacy. Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson and Short (2011, 81) say that illustrations in picture books are integral or essential to the story and the story would be diminished without the illustration. Ellis (2014) also highlights the creative powers and imagination that children use when reading these books.

If the illustrations and the text enjoy an equal status, then so must the creators. And indeed, this is suggested by the fact that both the writer and the illustrator are frequently referred to as authors. This can be seen on the cover of books created by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury (*We're Going on a Bear Hunt*) or Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler (*The Gruffalo*). Other authors, such as David Shannon, Eric Carle, Nick Butterworth, Leo Leoni, Maurice Sendak and Oliver Jeffers, are both the writer and illustrator.

The use of picture books in early childhood education to support first and second language development

The reason why picture books are appropriate for an audience between three and six years is that they are often rhyming, repetitive, cumulative and humorous, and tell stories about topics children are familiar with or about animals (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). A further advantage is that they can serve as a link between the children's home and the kindergarten: shared reading is something they are usually used to doing at home, thus playing an important role in first language (L1) acquisition.

The acquisition of a second language in bilingual kindergartens takes place in a process not unlike children's first language acquisition, which explains the role picture books play in bilingual programmes. Ellis's (2014) reasons for using them include the presentation of language in a familiar and memorable context, the fact that children need to match what they can hear with what they can see, i.e. use two modes of learning, the motivating nature of stories, exercising the imagination and the ability of stories to bring the curriculum alive. For Mourao (2016), picture books are 'springboards' for expanding students' understanding of a topic. Ellis & Brewster (2014, pp. 8-9) also use this simile: in their opinion they can constitute complete units of work and mini syllabuses can be based on them. What is more, picture books can be enjoyed even by primary school children (Wright, 2004; Mourao, 2016). In short, the use of picture books in early childhood second language acquisition is twofold: they can be either supplementary materials to reinforce language in a memorable context or the basis of the language learning curriculum.

Since the second language acquisition of children in bilingual kindergartens resembles that of the mother tongue, it should rely

on similarly playful and informal techniques. Some of the best opportunities include childcare, reading sessions and free play (Árva, p. 61). In addition, the usual structured activities in visual arts, physical education, science and music are also an ideal context for the process, as long as they also take place in a playful and informal way. This bears a strong resemblance to content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in primary school (Bland, 2016). CLIL in kindergarten can support the topic-based syllabus, which is common in kindergartens, usually covering the four seasons, holidays and several fairy tale themes. The subject area activities and reading aloud sessions are focused around these topics.

To reinforce what has been written above regarding the role picture books can play in the general cognitive and language development of children, I would like to refer back to my own personal experience as a teacher in an international pre-kindergarten. The children were mesmerized during storytelling sessions, sitting calmly on the rug. But I was also drawn into the world of these books because the stories were complex but at the same time very easy to capture. The school library provided a wide choice of books for each topic in the syllabus and for every festival that was celebrated during the year. The library encouraged the children to choose the books themselves: the books were provided with stickers to show what their topic was. In addition, there was also a fresh selection of books in the reading corner of our room, containing the ones we read together. Gradually, I became interested in finding out why they were so appealing to the children. Later on, during my work in training teachers for bilingual kindergartens, I started to work on finding out how authentic picture books could be implemented in bilingual programmes and started using picture books in my university training courses as well.

The reason for the implementation of picture books in my methodology courses was the essential part that storytelling and reading aloud play in the work of the kindergarten teachers. Storytelling skills and picture books are integrated into the curriculum of the 'English-Hungarian Specialisation for Bilingual Kindergarten' at the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Teacher Training, ELTE, Budapest through one of the literature courses. But they are also part of the syllabus in other courses: for example, storytelling skills are also developed in language improvement and pronunciation courses. The skills and knowledge the students have learnt in these courses can be actively used and tested in their 'Methodology of bilingual kindergarten sessions: Science' course. Here they can experiment with using children's literature in a CLIL environment in the bilingual kindergarten programmes, as also suggested by Kovács and Trentinné Benkő (2014). These stories satisfy the three core principles of CLIL because during reading children become active meaning-makers, they are exposed to something meaningful and their exposure can be comprehensible (pp. 65-66).

The use of picture books in the subject area of science

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the uses of picture books in supporting and reinforcing language acquisition and content learning in science. As described earlier, picture books attract children because they are familiar with their subject and being read aloud is an activity they are used to. The books evoke emotions in children, the pictures induce meaning-making processes, turning the reading into an interactive activity, and they provide opportunities for authentic communication between the children and the teacher. Since they contain authentic but limited language, children can feel competent in following the narrative of the story and, as a result, have a sense of achievement.

Picture books can scaffold and supplement content learning in several different ways, such as introducing new subject language in a meaningful context, reinforcing newly acquired language or providing visual stimulus for the subject and learning through games or creative visual art activities. The range of topics covered in picture books is wide. Having consulted a number of randomly selected titles, the most frequently discussed topic is the weather, not surprisingly followed by animals, colours, family and even sleep time.

The books that can be linked to the topic of animals have been collected in a chart (Table 1). Some of the books are traditional folk stories, such as ‘The Little Red Hen’ and ‘The Mitten’, and others are original stories, such as ‘Brown Bear, Brown Bear’ or ‘Good Night Gorilla’. Their topic may be simple, for example, colours in ‘Brown Bear, Brown Bear’, or complex, like the life cycle of a caterpillar in ‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’. They can also teach about the habitats of animals, like in the case of ‘A Color of his Own’, ‘Inch by Inch’ ‘The Mitten’, ‘Sleepy Places’ or ‘We’re Going on a Bear Hunt’.

Title:	Topic:
Brown Bear, Brown Bear by E. Carle & B. Martin Jr.	animals, colours
A Color of his Own by L. Lionni	animals: chameleon, its habitat, colours
Good Night Gorilla by P. Rathmann	jobs, animals, zoos, sleep
Inch by Inch by L. Lionni	animals, measurements

The Little Red Hen (trad.) by L. MacQueen	making bread, growing wheat, making flour, behaviour: helping each other, doing chores
The Mitten (trad.) by J. Brett	seasons/winter, weather/snow, animals
Rainbow Fish by M. Pfister	sea animals, friendship
Sleepy Places by J. Hindley & T. Freeman	sleep, animals, habitats
The Very Hungry Caterpillar by E. Carle	life cycles, food, numbers, colours
We're Going on a Bear Hunt by M. Rosen & H. Oxenbury	family, landscapes, sleep, fears

Table 1: Animal-themed picture books

These picture books can be used as starting points for structured activities for visual art activities, puppet performances, drama activities, card and board games, such as matching and sorting activities. In the last example, since the children are playing with the familiar images in the games, their attention is devoted to the art or play aspect of the activity, but the new language is used and practised. The book is the background to the learning activities and the children's mind can remain in the world of the picture book.

However, picture books can also be loosely linked to a number of science activities, such as observations or experiments. For example, when reading 'The Little Red Hen', the nature of yeast can be demonstrated with a spectacular experiment called 'Baker's Balloons.'

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to examine and present the roles picture books can play, in addition to reading aloud, in bilingual kindergarten programmes. It has been established that they can be exploited for CLIL, more specifically, for learning about science too. A topic analysis of a number of random picture books showed that several of them are about topics that easily lend themselves to science: animals, their habitats, the weather and snow. They can serve as inspiration for various games, art activities and language input and thus support the second language acquisition process.

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Songs and Narrative Structures in Storybooks for Young Learners

Mireia Canals-Botines, PhD

University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia
mireia.canals@uvic.cat

Núria Medina-Casanovas, PhD

University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia
nuria.medina@uvic.cat

Introduction

New investigation in Neuroscience points to deep relationships between music and language (Patel, 2012) starting in the prenatal period (Levitin, 2006). Musical activities tend to be pleasant for children and are said to be a source of motivation. Singing is a group activity that has been proved to have a positive impact on children's socialization, their emotional development, their creativity and imagination, among other areas. Songs support not only phonetic and language awareness, but also literacy learning.

One of the basic ways of learning a language in the early stages is by using stories. We can use them to teach either L1 or a foreign language since they have motivational, literary, cultural and high-order thinking benefits. Reading and listening to stories helps to increase vocabulary and to improve the four skills. Stories usually have a beginning, a middle and an end, which is one of the reasons why they encourage students to continue reading them until the end, to find out how the conflict is resolved.

Medina (1990) combined music and stories in order to analyse a group of forty-eight pupils from the second year of primary school giving different variables. The result was that using music and illustrations helped the acquisition of new vocabulary. Other research shows the advantages of using music to help language learning. One theory states that music is fundamental to achieve literacy skills in early childhood (Bolduc, 2008).

In the present research, we wish to study the different narrative structures contained in stories as well as in songs, together with the different types of songs used to learn English as a foreign language. In addition, we wish to examine how many stories are reinforced by songs to get young learners engaged in the participation of storytelling.

Language learning benefits in narrative structures through music and literature

Several recent studies establish that music, particularly traditional songs, not only help learning one's mother tongue (Casals, 2009) but they can also be used for second and foreign language acquisition. In fact, language and music come together in songs (Fonseca-Mora, 2000) and they can help learning a foreign language for several reasons. First, they provide a relaxing atmosphere with the consequent lowering of the "affective filter" and contribution to language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Songs produce emotions and a deep trace in memory, as well as helping to acquire vocabulary and improve pronunciation. Moreover, songs improve written expression and enhance reading comprehension by using meaningful texts like the lyrics of the song or inventing new words for well-known songs, thus obtaining the benefits of language play (Crystal, 2007). Other authors (García Conesa &

Juan Rubio, 2015) emphasize the importance of using songs in the classroom since they consider them a great pedagogical tool. The songs collected in the present study contain some of the characteristics that help in the process of learning English as a foreign language, namely *rhythm*, *rhyme*, *repetition*, *alliteration*, and *humor*. Another important factor is the *melody*, which helps children memorize the lyrics of the song.

In addition, using stories to learn a foreign language can, according to Mart (2012), create a happy and enjoyable learning environment. Stories are the ideal medium for effective language learning in young learners (Erkaya, 2005). Children like stories, and they find them easy to access and understand. Stories provide an outstanding opportunity for young learners to master a foreign language (Mart, 2012, 105). One of the challenges is to maintain identity construction, so that the reader can feel identified with some of the characteristics of the protagonist of the story. In this way, children's books are a transmitter tool that has been used in our cultures for many years, since tales have an educational component that influence people's identity construction (Garcia, 2013). These tools and ideas will pull children's behaviour and accompany them for a long time (Trepanier-Street & Romatowsky, 1999). Children enjoy being read and told short stories repeatedly. There are usually many ideas, many descriptive situations, many feelings of the protagonist to be explained, and it is extremely difficult to write them for young children in a concise manner. Therefore, considering Truby's capacity for structure analysis (Truby, 2007) and Macià's explanation of short structures (Macià, 2014), there are some structures that work for children's tales. Narrative structures that are successful in novels and films do not usually fit children's literature (Canals-Botines, 2018). They are either too long, in the case of a novel, or, as in the case of a film, they are

visual arts resources, like sound effects and visual effects, which are used for increasing suspense. In this sense, this research focuses on finding the narrative structures used for Foreign Language Learning according to the school year and the materials analyzed.

Types of songs

A. Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes

Mother Goose is a fictitious old woman who is thought to be the source of the body of traditional children's songs and verses known as nursery rhymes.

B. Children's songs

They are used to explain a story, fairy tale, along with music. They are sung at home or at school for the purpose of education.

C. Tailor-made songs

They are songs created with the specific aim of including the vocabulary or the sentence structures teachers might need to use.

D. Songs after popular melodies

Adding the lyrics to a well-known melody of British folklore for using the vocabulary and structures needed.

E. Modern/Present day songs

You can hear them on the radio, television or other media and they remain in fashion for some time.

F. Songs for stories

Some stories might include a song in order to make pupils participate by singing parts of the same story, in order to make them pay attention and be part of it.

Narrative structures

A. Basic Causal Structure

The basic causal structure introduces the characters in the story, offers an element that provokes the crisis and develops the plot until the drama is solved.

B. Dramatic Positive Response in a Causal Structure

The dramatic positive response in a causal structure introduces the main character or characters in the story, offers an element that provokes the crisis and develops the plot until the drama is solved in a negative ending. Then there is a final turning point, which makes the story end positively.

C. Dramatic Negative Response in a Causal Structure

The Dramatic negative response in a causal structure introduces the main character or characters in the story, offers an element that provokes the crisis and develops the plot until the drama is solved in a positive ending.

D. Descriptive Structure

The descriptive structure focuses on describing and informing about an item or a topic. This is the objective of the description.

E. Serpent Structure

The serpent structure introduces the main character or characters, shows different actions of the protagonist throughout a period and then it ends.

F. Repetition Structure

The repetition structure introduces the main character or characters and presents a situation that keeps repeating until the last repetition that offers a slight change, which helps to end the story.

The context

This research has two settings, Vic (Barcelona, Catalonia) and Budapest (Hungary). In this paper, we show the results obtained in Vic during the academic year 2017-18. In the present academic year (2018-2019), we are collecting data from Budapest.

In both settings English as a foreign language is taught, so the approach to the learning of the language will be similar. However, there might be some differences in the curricula established in the different countries.

Methodology

The study

The data reported in this paper provides the results of the music and narrative structure materials of seven groups of preschool and primary school children who were exposed to regular EFL sessions over a period of 10 months, corresponding to one academic year. A grid was sent to the teachers responsible for EFL in all the schools and this same grid was collected at the end of each term (December, March and June).

To analyze the materials used for teaching EFL to preschool and primary education students, four questions guided this study:

1. What narrative structures are used for preschool and primary education in EFL teaching?
2. What is the relevance of pupil's gender construction roles in the narrative structures used?
3. How can we classify the songs used in EFL teaching for preschool and primary education?

4. How do songs and stories help in the competency-based curriculum?

Participants and school context

The present study tested 6 schools in Vic, in which there are 2000 preschool and primary education students. Three of the school were state schools and three state-funded.

Instruments

The instruments we have used at this stage of the research are:

An interview of the teachers

A grid with information related to songs and stories, with the following information:

NAME OF SCHOOL:

ADDRESS:

COUNTRY:

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS:

NUMBER OF STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH:

SCHOOL YEAR	SONG	STORY	VIDEO/FILM	TEXTBOOK	OTHER	FIELD/TOPIC

Data collection and analysis

In order to analyze the data, three data collection times were organized during the academic year 2017-18: Christmas, Easter and the end of the academic year.

We collected data from preschool (3 to 5 years) groups in three schools. The rest of the data, for primary education, which is from six to 12 years old, was collected from the six schools taking part in the research.

Unfortunately, one of the primary schools only provided data for the first data collection time, which is why only these results will be included.

Results and conclusions

The use of traditional songs is reserved for very early years, which is why they are infantilized. Using nursery rhymes to learn a foreign language has forgotten other registers from traditional songs like humor, play on words or acquiring phonetic awareness. We found the opposite occurs with modern / present day songs, which are exclusively heard and sung by pupils in the upper stage of primary education. This is because the vocabulary might be too difficult for early years, and because the pupils at those stages are more in contact with the media, which is the source of these types of songs. Most of the songs considered children's songs in the present research will be very useful in primary education since most of them will help teaching vocabulary from one specific semantic area. Songs like *If you are happy*, will let the teacher introduce vocabulary related to parts of the body, which form part of the curriculum in the early stages of primary education. Textbooks will provide teachers with tailor-made songs for the needs of the teachers and the vocabulary and structures they will have to teach.

Nursery rhymes provide a source for preschool education and modern songs provide a source for the upper stages in primary education, leaving teachers with a gap in between. Publishing

houses solved this by creating their own songs, containing vocabulary and structures that teachers needed to fulfill the demands of the curriculum. So in most of the textbooks, we can find the source for songs dealing with jobs, clothes, days of the week, the simple present, the past, Carnival, Halloween, or any other elements of British culture. If the textbook is published in England or one of the authors of the textbooks is of British origin, some of the created lyrics for a song will be accompanied by a popular or traditional melody of English folklore. This is a very subtle way of introducing children into the culture of the target language, although they will not know it unless the teacher is aware of it.

Apart from songs, another characteristic of primary education is the use of stories to teach English as a foreign language. The most popular age for songs and storytelling is the middle stage, that is to say years 3 and 4 (8 to 10 years old) of primary education. The main reason is that schools frequently invite a theatre company to make a show. These companies combine storytelling with songs to make the children participate and engage them in the stories.

When answering the question of what narrative structures are used for preschool and primary education, the research showed that 6 different narrative structures are used by schools in Vic. The one used most is the Descriptive Structure, followed by the Basic Causal Structure.

As for the relevance of pupil's gender construction roles in the narrative structures used in class, the research offered a very clearly identified pattern: most of the stories have a male and a female character as protagonists. Furthermore, two of the stories found dealt with gender equality.

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Autobiography and Storytelling: an Evident Bond between Life-story and Story-novel

Rossella Certini, PhD

P.A. University of Florence, Italy

rossella.certini@unifi.it

*Every man must be his own law in his own work,
but it is a poor-spirited artist in any craft
who does not know how the other man's work
should be done or could be improved.*

Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself, For My Friends Known
and Unknown*

Read a novel, a poem, a story for children written by great authors today and what emotions can they give us? Can reading and literature still fascinate through the written page? What can the great classics of literature still communicate to the younger generations and to each one of us? And above all, who are the great writers who have composed admirable works and who have been able to fascinate entire generations for such a long time? We are passionate about reading works like *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, or *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, or *The Jungle Book*, but we neglect the reasons (or we do not know them) that inspired these magnificent works and how much the personal experiences of the authors are the background to these events.

Every human context speaks almost exclusively a virtual lan-

guage; it uses mainly digital tools and technologies on communication/information; it fills many hours of our day of social contacts and comments on the web, as if human experience had been reduced to a high speed permanent virtual connection. But the reading of novels and stories resists, survives with tenacity, perhaps in reduced and manipulated forms but it resists. This is thanks to the great authors, the great “classic” writers who continue to give us emotions and tell us fantastic stories through the words of their masterpieces. This is extremely important because it helps to maintain an intimate bond with real life, a human (not virtual) link with the depths of our feelings. This fascination persists because their lives and their works have always been an evident and extraordinary blend that has enriched their work with narrative and educational elements of extraordinary beauty.

In this short essay, the autobiography will be presented as a tool for reading. It is a meeting-point for authors, novels and readers. Three great authors, who lived between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, will show us how writing about themselves can become a kind of guiding model to better decipher and understand their great literary works, which only a myopic reading could define as ‘minor’ works because they are dedicated to young readers.

This is as it should be...

Mark Twain, *Autobiography*

Roald Dahl argues that children’s literature

is really one of the most important fields in literature. Other kinds of books are written to entertain and amuse the adult mind. It is clear that even children’s books have to entertain and amuse, but they must also do something else. They must teach the child the habit

of reading. They must teach him how to read, enrich his vocabulary and, above all, make it clear to him that there are better ways to spend time than watching television (Dahl, 2009)

The *autobiographical stories* of authors and narrators open us to extremely rich worlds to explore, both for the contents (cultural, educational, social, etc.) and for the proposed methodologies, fluid and undefined methodologies – as we will see later – able to capture the attention of the reader who, suddenly, becomes the protagonist of a beautiful and not entirely improbable story. A story, a novel, any narration dedicated to children risks becoming an *anaesthetic* - to quote Dahl again - if some central elements are missing: freshness of language, narrative creativity, the element of surprise, intrigue, and so forth, all of which are essential devices for attracting the attention of the young reader (Dahl, 2009).

Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling and Roald Dahl are, in fact, the three autobiographers briefly interpreted in this essay; and if we read their lives as a starting point to better understand their literary production, we can gain a greater number of different perspectives and at different levels of emotional and existential depth that characterize their works, without however “forcing reality”. Their autobiographies highlight the freshness of memories, the fullness of emotions, daily and personal difficulties, youthful disappointments and sufferings, professional achievements, maturity and awareness of a social and individual adult self. These are some of the elements, among others, that can make these autobiographies topics of reading and reflection. This is important because they create a biographical mix that brings both the work and the author alive and makes them interesting – indeed, captivating.

If we tried to combine, for example, Tom Sawyer's story with Mark Twain's autobiography, would we be able to intercept the points of conjunction, existential commingling, the hybridizations between life-story and story-novel? Do these hybrids exist? How much of the young Mark transpires into young Tom? What kind of education has formed the character and the thought of the famous North American writer? And again: for which reader are these autobiographies written? What is the methodology? Elements emerge from his autobiography that we find in his most famous novels: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This is because Twain used storytelling to talk about the great social problems, the weaknesses and the contradictions of North American society. He was born in the Deep South and was not afraid of facing extremely serious issues like the question of race and freedom of press: he does it through the exploits of his young protagonists who tell stories of marginalization and violence that the novelist was able to see during his life.

Two important elements should be pointed out: 1) Mark Twain's autobiography is erratic and does not follow the literary technique of classical autobiography. The author did not write dates and events in chronological order; there are no classifications; there is no order: it is the story of an erratic life. The focus is on emotions of memories and the importance of human experience. Of his life experience. Which brings us to the second point: 2) The "speaker". Mark Twain uses the same writing model to talk about himself and to talk about the characters in his novels. He confirms, in his autobiography, the mixture between his experience of being a writer and journalist and the adventures in his stories. Huckleberry Finn is born out of the deeds of his brother Henry, and the same is true for Twain's sister, who acts as inspiration for another important character in Tom Sawyer. There are points of contact

and overlap between real and fictional life and in his autobiography Twain gives us all the tools to better decipher his works from an educational and narrative point of view.

The same thing also happens for the other two authors, although with different methods and objectives.

In contrast to the writing model presented by Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling's autobiography is very cultured and sophisticated. His education was extremely refined and followed the family tradition and certainly it was not a common one. He lived a condition of extreme comfort and enjoyed incredible rich and stimulating experiences both from a linguistic and cultural point of view. We find this sophisticated educational art in his autobiography and his works: his reflections on English and Indian society are accurate and with *The Jungle Book* he proposes the metaphor of a complex society through the hierarchical organization of the animal community. Young readers can also learn about the political and social issues of Kipling's time through the reading of his stories. All social, political and human events are present in Kipling's most important novel and also in his autobiography.

Roald Dahl's autobiography is different from Twain's and Kipling's and was written as a children's story. It seems like a fantasy story but the similarities with the author's life are more than explicit:

An autobiography is a book a person writes about his own life and it is usually full of all sorts of boring details. This is not an autobiography. I would never write a history of myself. On the other hand, throughout my young days at school and just afterwards a number of things happened to me that I have never forgotten. None of these things is important, but each of them made such a tremendous impression on me that I have never been able to get them out of my mind. Each of them, even after a lapse of fifty and sometimes sixty

years, has remained seared on my memory. I didn't have to search for any of them. All I had to do was skim them off the top of my consciousness and write them down. Some are funny. Some are painful. Some are unpleasant. I suppose that is why I have always remembered them so vividly. All are true (Dahl, 2009).

Family, childhood, adolescence, school: these are the pillars of his narration. The unexpected, the humour and the suspense! *Boy* is a great adventure, full of comic events, painful, unexpected: it is a story of passions and emotions where the young Roald, along with his large family, goes through many different human experiences. The life of a child employed to tell other children about the most important facts of human experience. It is an extraordinary means by which to capture the attention and interest of young ones, who can recognize themselves in these adventures and bring them back to their own reality: it is an educational process of recognition and acceptance. Roald Dahl wrote more than six hundred letters to his mother during school, and when she died, her family returned all the letters to the writer.

She had kept all of them in the original envelope, with the postage, bound with green ribbons: his childhood and youth were all gathered there: "It is an immense fortune to have such material to refer to in my old age" (Id. 9. 85): it would be like retracing the paths of a long adventure.

Finally, autobiography ...was used to learn more about our authors and to give a different and deeper meaning to their novels. It would be interesting for the young readers to know a good deal about the life of the authors they read, because every word, every sentence, every verse would take on a different form: more alive, more evident, more real.

But how could all this happen?

They were called Boazers, and they had the power of life and death over us junior boys.....

Roal Dahl, *Boy*

Everything has a value that can appear to us in the right place and at the right time. The problem is to recognize this value and know how to use it in the most diverse situations. All the information we have received from reading the three analyzed autobiographies, can add value to the reading of the novels of these three great storytellers. The task of life stories is to document, observe, collect information, pay attention to exceptional facts and then place them in the right space, place and time, to create continuity between the different narratives. How can we begin to create these bonds? Furthermore, how can we help younger people to understand the importance of this *double work* of reading and research? As educators and teachers, we must build new educational and didactic models to facilitate this literary process, which dialogues with the new generations. We should think of young readers as *young explorers*. We should think of our students and young people as if they were novice researchers, and give them all the clues and information to activate new ways of reading and research.

First of all, solicit ENCOURAGE their curiosity by proposing more than one novel to read. Second, ask which of these books they have chosen. Then ask what the elements that have caught their attention are. Finally, ask what they know about the author. Through these first steps, we can solicit ENCOURAGES their creativity and they can become the main agents in their educational and knowledge process. The most important meaning of things often seems hidden because it is very familiar and simple. But it is this familiarity that makes the interweaving between the reader and the author even more powerful and important. It would be

highly advisable for young readers to come to these discoveries autonomously. We, as experts in reading and education, can advise and direct the research work of young people. We can urge them to compile a collection of experiences that emerge from the chosen texts. And we can suggest that they collect other objects and other information about authors and characters. The structure of the work will appear clearer if it is filtered through the experiences of those who wrote it. This experimental style is an operative (theoretical) method that is able to develop: 1) motivation and love for reading; 2) an independent and interdisciplinary working method; 3) research not only as an educational and scientific tool but also as a *forma mentis*. So, to close this brief pedagogical reflection, Tom Sawyer's raft could be, for young readers, a means to lead young Tom along the great river but, at the same time, could be an emblem of freedom, a symbol of emancipation, a metaphor of a difficult journey that distinguishes the writer-author-character's time and that could redefine our time as adult-children readers. Author and reader become agents of the same story because, as Italo Calvino reminds us, every story is unrepeatable.

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Intercultural Practice in English through Storytelling.

Questions and contributions

Marta Corominas Salom

University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia
marta.corominas@uvic.cat

Ignasi Arumi Prat, PhD

University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia
ignasi.arumi@uvic.cat

Introduction

Reading and/or listening to stories is an essential part of many people's childhood. Therefore, we can consider stories as an attractive resource for our preschool and primary school English sessions. Apart from learning the language, we can choose stories related to diversity, different origins, conflicts and harsh situations. In this way, the intercultural competences of the pupils will also be enhanced. The following three sessions will make the pupils practise English, learn about Nepal and empathise with the kind of life that Nepalese street children have to endure.

Sunil's story (year 6)

PRE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES (1 HOUR)

Relaxation Technique

Ask the pupils to sit down in a circle. Ask them to cross their legs, to put their backs upright, to close their eyes and breathe in and out through their noses slowly.

Tell them you are going to burn some incense and play a Tibetan bowl while they try to relax by closing their eyes, by breathing slowly and by not paying attention to their thoughts.

Nepal Quiz

Ask the pupils to sit down at their tables in groups of 3 or 4. Tell them that you will show a PowerPoint which will include some questions about Nepal and about street children in Kathmandu. The questions will be accompanied by pictures so as to help them understand both the questions and their possible answers. The pupils will have some time to discuss the answers and they will be given a sheet of paper where they can choose between answers A, B or C. Next, they will be asked to say their answers aloud. Go round the groups to help if necessary. A token will be given to the groups for every right answer. Each token is worth ten Nepalese rupees, which is the coin used in Nepal. Tell the pupils that some of the questions can have more than one possible right answer.

Questions:

Where is Nepal?

- a) Africa
- b) Asia
- c) America

Which is the capital of Nepal?

- a) Singapore
- b) Pokhara
- c) Kathmandu

Which is the highest mountain in Nepal?

- a) Annapurna
- b) Mount Everest
- c) K2

Which country is bigger: Spain or Nepal?

- a) Spain
- b) Nepal
- c) They are the same size

In 2015 a natural disaster happened in Nepal:

- a) An earthquake
- b) A flood
- c) A volcano eruption

How many children live on the streets of Nepal?

- a) More than 5,000
- b) Between 1,000 and 2,000
- c) Less than 500

Why do these children live on the streets?

- a) They like to live there
- b) Their families abandoned them
- c) They need money from the tourists

Which are the main problems of these children?

- a) They are abused and take drugs
- b) They cannot attend school
- c) They are very hungry

Reflection time:

After the Nepal quiz ask the children how many Nepalese rupees they have. Tell them that 100 rupees are (approximately) the equivalent of 1 euro. Ask them to calculate how much money they have in euros and cents and to think of what they can buy with that amount of money (e.g. a loaf of bread). Tell them that a Nepalese street child can earn 75 Nepalese rupees a day on average (they can earn them collecting rubbish for 12, 13, 14 hours and begging the tourists). Ask them what they think a street child can buy in Nepal with 75 rupees (= 0.75€). It is actually two dishes of plain rice.

WHILE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES (1 hour)

Relaxation Technique

Ask the pupils to sit down in a circle. Ask them to cross their legs, to put their backs upright, to close their eyes and breathe in and out through their noses slowly.

Tell them you are going to burn some incense and play a Koshi chime while they try to relax by closing their eyes, by breathing slowly and by not paying attention to their thoughts.

Recalling

Ask the pupils to share aloud the important ideas that they can remember from the previous session.

Sunil's story

Tell the pupils they are going to listen to a true story about Nepalese children on the streets of Kathmandu. The story will be ac-

accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation with pictures in order to facilitate understanding. Preferably tell the story in a lively and participative way rather than reading it, this way you can check whether they can understand the message. The pupils will be asked to choose from several options which describe the way Sunil may have reacted. After having chosen their option, ask them why they did so.

Story:

Sunil is 9 years old; he lives in a village in the mountains. He climbs the mountains up and down like a goat. He collects grass for the cows, he cuts wood for the fire and he has a bath in the river. Sunil's family have little money; there is no food for everybody, there is no school for Sunil.

Sunil's family is: mum, Sunil and a stepfather. The stepfather makes alcohol at home, he drinks a lot and he abuses Sunil physically and sexually. For Sunil abuse is normal.

Sunil has an older brother, Mahesh. He loves his brother. Mahesh used to help Sunil very much, but now he is in Kathmandu. They cannot see each other. Sunil feels alone in the village, he feels scared, sad, he is usually silent.

On the 25th April 2015 there was an earthquake in Nepal. The earthquake destroyed houses, temples and mountains. Sunil's family lost their house and everything inside. They built a hut with wood and plastic, they had no beds and it was very cold. The stepfather was very sad and angry and he drank even more alcohol. He was very aggressive and he hit Sunil and his mum. Sunil was very sad, angry, disappointed and he said: "... enough, no more, stop"!!! He thinks of 3 options:

- a) Stay at home and help his mum.
- b) Leave home and go to Kathmandu.
- c) Look for somebody to help him and his mum.

It is option B, going to Kathmandu like his brother. His brother, Mahesh, is in Kathmandu. In Kathmandu people can find a job, have money, buy food and buy a mobile phone. One morning, he runs away from home. No money, only a very old T-shirt, short trousers and flip flops. He walks through the mountains, he travels on people's motorbikes, and one week later, he arrives in Kathmandu. In Kathmandu there are a lot of children on the streets. Sunil is looking for his brother but his brother is not there. He meets a group of street children, they play together, they help each other but he has to sleep in the street, he has no clothes and not much food. Sunil has three options:

- a) Stay in Kathmandu with the other street children.
- b) Go back to his village with his mum.
- c) Find a school in Kathmandu.

It is option A. Sunil stays in Kathmandu with the street children. Sunil plays football, plays marbles, runs and jumps around the city. Sometimes he works collecting some rubbish and he asks some Nepalese people or some tourists for food. The nights are very cold and he sleeps under a temple with one of his friends, under some blankets, and next to some dogs to be warm. The children on the streets of Kathmandu are not healthy: they take glue, smoke cigarettes and, sometimes, marihuana. (Tell the children that inhaling glue has the effect of not noticing hunger and cold but it is also a product that makes children very ill and eventually die). Sunil is only 9 years old and he does not know what is good or what is bad for him, so he only follows the routine and the habits of the other children because he wants to look strong to have

the respect of the other children.

One day when Sunil is very, very hungry and very dirty, he meets a tourist, and he pulls a sad face. He begs the tourist for some money to buy food. The tourist looks at him and... imagine you are the tourist, what will you do?

- a) Give Sunil some money to buy food.
- b) Buy some food and give it to Sunil.
- c) Find an orphanage for Sunil.

It is option C. The tourist takes Sunil to an orphanage. He has decided to sponsor Sunil. They will be together in Kathmandu for 15 days.

The orphanage looks great, there are 20 children living there. They are between 5 and 12 years old, they have several rooms and a big kitchen. It looks clean and tidy. Krishna, the owner of the orphanage, tells the tourist about all the activities and all the things they teach the children. He also shows him the school where the children study. Sunil is very happy. He kisses and hugs his new friend every time he meets him. Now, Sunil has food, hot showers, and clean clothes. Krishna is very nice to Sunil and the tourist, who pays for Sunil's orphanage and the first month in school. During the 15 days that the tourist and Sunil are together, they go to the zoo and to bathe in the river. The tourist leaves Nepal, he is very sad, he is crying and he promises Sunil that he will come back one day. What do you think the tourist will do when he is back in his country?

- a) He will stop paying for Sunil's orphanage and school.
- b) He will continue paying for Sunil's orphanage and school.
- c) He will continue paying and he will also pay for a tutor for Sunil. This tutor will help Sunil when he needs it.

It is option B. The tourist is in his country now, and he is very happy with Krishna because he thinks he is a very good person, but this is not true. Krishna does not give a lot of food to the children, only some rice. He does not take the children to school, he does not give them clothes. He uses the money for himself. Krishna and his sister also abuse the children physically and sexually. The only time the children are fine and happy is when volunteers from other countries come to help in the orphanage. Only then Krishna plays, studies and laughs with all the children. The children cannot tell the volunteers the truth because they do not speak English and they are scared of Krishna. After 6 months Sunil is very sad and angry in the orphanage, so, what do you think he will do?

- a) Go to the police and denounce the orphanage.
- b) Stay in the orphanage because he has a bed to sleep there.
- c) Run away from the orphanage.

It is option C. Sunil steals Krishna's money and runs away from the orphanage. He goes back to the street and he meets his friends again. This time he is not shy anymore, he is older, stronger and he wants to be the best in his group. He smokes all day, he fights with other children and he inhales glue. After inhaling, it is difficult for Sunil to walk or talk and saliva runs down from his mouth... he is like a drug addict. He becomes dirtier and dirtier every day, and he has more insects on his head and body. He gets money from tourists and he also steals money. He has problems with the police. After one year, what is Sunil's situation?

- a) The police take him to a centre for street children.
- b) He dies.
- c) He meets his brother Mahesh.

It is option C. One day Sunil meets his brother Mahesh and his friends. They are happy, they talk and laugh. His brother is very happy to see Sunil; he holds and hugs him and he kisses him and shakes his hair full of insects. Mahesh takes Sunil to Options, his orphanage. Options helps the street children, they give them food, a bed to sleep, clean clothes, education. Options accepts Sunil. He will participate in a new project: The Circus! Sunil is very happy, finally he has a home, friends and his brother. The problem is that he is not free in the orphanage and he misses drugs, the street, smoking and inhaling. At the end, Sunil...

- a) Sunil goes back to the street because he wants freedom and drugs.
- b) Sunil goes to India to make money.
- c) Sunil stays in Options with his brother and he plays in the circus.

There's no definite answer for the end of the story as different street children will choose different options.

Reflection time

Give pupils some minutes to ask you questions and to share what they have learnt through the story.

POST-LISTENING ACTIVITIES (1 hour)

Relaxation technique

Ask the pupils to stand up around the classroom so as to have space to stretch their arms horizontally. The activity consists of breathing in and out slowly through their noses. While breathing in they will lift their arms up until their palms touch the top of

their heads and while breathing out their palms will lower down together until they reach their chest. They will lower their arms and will begin the exercise again. The idea is not to stop the movement but do it in a circular way. After a few times ask them to go back to their seats slowly and without making a noise.

Tell them you are going to burn some palo santo (“holy stick”) and play the Hang. Meanwhile they can close their eyes and rest their heads on their tables.

Recalling

Ask the pupils to share aloud the important ideas that they can remember from the previous sessions.

Making a poster

Ask the pupils to work in groups of four. Give them a copy with three questions and ask them to write the answers together. Read the questions with them beforehand to make sure they understand them.

Questions:

1. Why are you not living on the streets?
2. Imagine you are Sunil. What can you do to survive on the streets of Kathmandu?
3. Imagine you are Sunil. What can you do to change your situation and leave the streets of Kathmandu?

When they finish give every group a piece of fine cardboard. Ask them to write a title, to write the questions and their answers and to draw something to represent their new learning, their feelings, sensations... Ask all the children to read and look at everybody’s poster.

Reflection time

Ask the pupils to share their opinion about the three sessions.

Conclusion

During the three sessions, Year 6 pupils practised old and new language. They acquired new words and expressions such as orphanage, beg, breathe in, breathe out, children are abused, etc. We could also listen to them making profound reflections of the kind “we do not always value what we have”, “not all orphanages are a good place for children”, “why are people racist towards other people just because they are poor?” etc.

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Identity and gender in the picture book.

The case of leo lionni

Chiara Lepri, PhD

Università degli Studi di Roma Tre
chiara.lepri@uniroma3.it

1. A major turning point in italian children's literature

In the history of Italian children's literature, 1967 marked a "point of no return": in that year, Rosellina Archinto founded Emme Edizioni, a publishing house destined to transform the concept of illustrated books for children and, consequently, the very idea of reading for children. Following a trip to the United States, Mrs. Archinto was struck by the deep gap between American and Italian culture and decided to launch an ambitious project to promote the use of new formats, images, words, content, and techniques in children's books. At the very beginning, Emme Edizioni was a small-sized company: the editor relied on the work of an expert graphic designer, she personally selected the books to publish and also managed contacts with authors and illustrators. Meanwhile, Mrs. Archinto travelled extensively to study the pedagogical-cultural climate of those years. She attended the Cooperative Education Movement (*Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa - MCE*), visited the kindergartens in Reggio Emilia designed by Loris Malaguzzi and the Casa del Sole in Milan, as well as booksellers, publishers, writers and intellectuals who had been operating during those fervent and significant years. The first picture book

in the catalogue is *Piccolo blu e piccolo giallo* (*Little Blue and Little Yellow*) by Leo Lionni, published for the first time in America in 1959. It is a revolutionary book, as will be discussed below, based on a modern project as well as on an innovative idea of representation. Then followed *Where the Wild Things Are* (1969) by Maurice Sendak, which tells the story of a child who embarks on a metaphorical journey between dream and reality in his own room, and the extraordinary works by Bruno Munari (*The Circus in the Mist*), Iela and Enzo Mari (in particular, the silent book *The Little Red Balloon* and *The Apple and The Butterfly, The Tree...*), Emanuele Luzzati (*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*), Tomi Ungerer (*The Three Robbers*: in Italian *Tre feroci banditi*), Eric Carl (*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*: in Italian *Un baco molto affamato*, currently published with the title *Il piccolo Bruco Maisazio*), Guillermo Mordillo (*Crazy Cowboy*) and Etienne Delessert, to name just the most famous authors, some of whom, long-time artists and designers, address the world of childhood for the first time.

What is the secret of this formula? Rosellina Archinto realized that young children, when approaching books, pay attention mostly to the pictures. Therefore, in order to restore dignity to the reading of images, the graphics, symbols and colours, as well as the fantastical and real elements of narration, should match the authentic needs and feelings of children. As a result, it is necessary to create not a poor, mediocre, improvised or “dull” editorial product but an original, carefully crafted product. In short, an artistic work.

Leo Lionni can therefore be considered, like Bruno Munari and Maurice Sendak, one of the founding fathers of the picture book, which is now a renowned narrative form, recognized for its special expressive dimension that is conveyed through the compelling interplay between the iconic and verbal language. The rel-

evance of Lionni's contribution to children's literature, however, is evident not only in the formal and expressive aspects of his production – which counts, among the numerous works of art as well as artistic and editorial collaborations, more than twenty books for children – but also in the ethical commitment that characterizes his work and in the particular attention paid to the themes of identity, difference and solidarity (Negri, Cappa: 2014, IX), masterfully narrated with the delicacy that only a powerful metaphor can generate. In other words, Lionni's work represents a major turning point in children's literature: the story develops through different channels of communication, uses the language of art and conveys a stronger meaning, which the reader gains from the power of suggestion that goes beyond logic. The reader initially perceives the possible, shifting implications of the tale, then the narrative opens up to multi-level meanings, by meeting the experiential universe of those who approach the story. This process certainly includes some "unintelligible" elements that will not lead to problems of comprehension; rather, they represent a challenge and a stimulus to the use of a lateral, creative thinking. As the designer Andrea Rauch, also an illustrator of children's books, writes: "Lionni's messages never speak the austere, cold language of the self-referential graphics, they never regard clarity and efficiency of communication as absolute pluses" (2011: 30). The result is a rich and light narration, able to stimulate even in children preludes of reflection on fundamental issues of growth and common living.

2. Identity and gender in Lionni's picture books: two cases in point

Little Blue and Little Yellow was published in New York in 1959. Leo Lionni, painter, writer, graphic designer and sculptor, certainly could not have imagined that his work would mark an extraordinarily disruptive moment in the international history of illustrated and children's books. The explanation of how the book came to be recalls the charm of a fairy tale, were it not for the fact that almost all literary classics for children are the result of a unique and exclusive encounter with the special recipients of their narrative – at least those destined to strongly impress children's imagination because of their ability to authentically reproduce the themes, style and message of children's communication. To entertain his grandchildren during a boring train ride, Mr. Lionni opened his job folder and tore a page of the magazine "Life" into small blue, green and yellow circles. They became the improvised characters of a simple yet revolutionary story of encounter between two blobs of colours that readers can easily identify with two children. At the beginning of the book, Little Blue and Little Yellow are introduced to readers through words and images that describe their family (*traditional*, composed of father, mother, son/daughter) and their everyday activities (listening politely to the lesson or playing freely outdoors). Their friends are circles of different colours: red, brown, white, orange, etc. One day, Little Blue goes out looking for Little Yellow. The two young boys (or *girls*: being blobs of colour there is no connotation of gender) meet, play and give each other such a big hug that they turn green. When they return home, the result of their merging cannot be hidden from adults: this happy meeting has changed the two friends so much, that their parents cannot recognize them. However, like most fairy tales, this is a story with a happy ending: the adults

finally understand what happened and they merge in turn and run to their neighbours “to bring the good news”. The allegorical message that the story conveys is that friendship between two different individuals may change them and that the joyful encounter with *the other* is a source of enrichment.

Little Blue and Little Yellow is a clear example of ingenious storytelling made of images destined “to speak to the hearts of men for a long time” and “to change the way people look at and think about books for children that, after all, are suited for older readers, too” (Negri, 2014: 332). What are the exceptional elements of this storytelling? They are numerous and involve different aspects. Moreover, they all seem to deal with the demolition of canonical, consolidated, univocal and conforming models.

First of all, as far as form is concerned, the iconic language plays a leading role together with the verbal language, which accompanies each illustration with a few precise words. The two codes support, integrate and complete each other; in fact, it would not be possible to fully understand the story if one of the two were missing. This is a fundamental characteristic of a well-conceived picture book, a genre of which *Little Blue and Little Yellow* represents a paradigmatic but also radical example (Negri, 2014: 335) since it uses images as metaphors. The use of the visual metaphor, although easy to understand, opens to multiple interpretations, engaging readers of all ages in a fascinating adventure where the look of the observer is captured by new images and multi-level meanings.

On the level of meaning, this picture book breaks the established tradition of a stereotyped and uninspiring children’s literature, designed to quiet more than to guide children in their growth by suggesting them quality, enjoyable and meaningful readings. Fur-

thermore, *Little Blue and Little Yellow* introduces the theme of identity, built by the encounter with diversity, and deals with the topics of freedom and independence, and, therefore, with the issue of growth. This is the result of the unconventional choice, made by the author, to draw blobs of different colours rather than human figures or animals – which are generally used in picture books and with which young readers always identify. These colourful circles become a symbol, as they eliminate any reference to gendered bodies and create a form of representation that is universal. Moreover, it is important to stress the *material* nature of such representation, as the changes produced by the union of pastels, tempera, blue and yellow pencils may be easily experienced.

This appears to be an educational element of great innovation that breaks established codes, considering that at present, even in the best books for children, gender stereotypes are deeply rooted and illustrations, in particular, show a clear gender polarization expressed, more or less explicitly, in the use of colours (pink for girls, blue for boys), in the distinction of roles (the mother is responsible for household chores, the father works or reads the newspaper in an armchair) and professional futures (different jobs for boys and girls) as well as in the representation of the traditional family. However, it is important to stress the emergence, in North America and Europe – thanks to the contribution of artists and intellectuals such as Leo Lionni – of small, independent publishing companies that carry out a careful activity of research, focus their work on cultural and brave choices and publish quality picture books, very attentive, among other things, to emerging social issues. They are an example of *healthy* publishing, able to understand, with intelligence, originality and attention, an increasingly plural and complex reality.

The theme of identity is also widely dealt with in a subsequent picture book by Leo Lionni, published in 1975: *Pezzettino* (the title stays in Italian in foreign versions, too). The main character of the book is, again, a spot of colour, this time orange and squared, similar to a brick and, again, it is a book about a journey. Pezzettino feels a “little piece”, “a piece of somebody else”, “a missing piece” compared to all his friends who are big, brave and made of many colourful pieces. For this reason, he decides to find out who he really is and starts his journey. He meets “The One-Who-Runs”, “The Strong-One”, “The Swimming-One”, “The One-on-the-Mountain”, “The Flying-One”, and asks each of them: “Am I a little piece of yours?”, always receiving a negative answer. Only The Wise-One will be able to direct him towards an island that looks like a pile of stones, where Pezzettino falls and breaks into many little pieces. He thus becomes aware of himself and of the “pieces” that form him. Finally, after picking himself up, he goes back looking for his friends to tell them happily: “I am myself!”.

The complex process of growth is again reduced, on a graphic level, “to the minimum”, but a more profound reading of the text reveals multi-layered meanings and suggests countless implications. By reading the tale, it is possible to deduce that one’s identity is composed of many elements (experience? feelings? skills? somatic traits? social roles?), even though people are often unaware of it. A further message is that everyone is different and that each of us has their own unique and inimitable identity. The story enables the readers to understand that the journey (= the urge to explore, which is innate in the child) is always an enriching experience and that the encounter with *the other* allows us to get to know one’s self and the other-than-oneself. Moreover, the story tells us that sometimes it is necessary to “break up into pieces” to know ourselves better. Finally, thanks to such a happy outcome, readers

realize that by respecting other people's diversity, it is possible to live together perfectly well, and much more. It is also worth noticing that in this book, the personal reflection on identity takes place outside, moving around the world, meeting *the other*.

Once again, Leo Lionni does not use a didactic language but an abstract narration that proceeds by subtraction. He does not waste energy and prefers to keep it simple by offering his young readers colours, words, signs, meaning. Pezzettino can be anyone (there is no indication of gender: the name, in Italian, is declined to male: Pezzettin-o and not Pezzettin-a). He represents the potential human being, disoriented but impatient to express his own individuality, while other readers may identify with The Flying-One, The Strong-One, The One-on-the-Mountain, depending on their own attitudes and/or ambitions.

3. Semiotics of the picture book

The picture book is characterized by a very complex semiotics because, as Marco Dallari writes, it is based on the interplay of five codes: 1. the iconic code; 2. the verbal code; 3. the graphic code (relating to the composition of the page and the relationship between the codes); 4. the "packaging" code (materials, layout, cover, binding); 5. the mediator's code and the way in which the reading takes place. None of these codes is autonomous from the others, and in a good book, each of these codes expresses its own independence and relevance (Dallari, 2012: 48-49).

As for the visual code, it develops on the surface of the page, it is perceived as a whole and then in detail, according to the laws of visual perception and based on one's personal ability to identify symbolic elements, make connections and associations. Therefore,

in order to decode (or, at least, *reveal*) an image, which, by nature, is characterized by *democracy* and *immediacy*, the hermeneutic contribution of readers - who will integrate words and images, in the case of the picture book, with their previous knowledge - appears to be fundamental and allows them to perceive the story's full meaning through a process of integration and inferences, as is the case for verbal texts.

In a picture book, images are not subordinate but complementary to words; in particular, in a children's book, images seem to be stronger than words (Dallari, 2012: 51). Moreover, illustrations seem to immediately fascinate readers and have a lasting impact on them as the pictures not only catch their attention, but also promote the process of visual literacy and strongly impress one's personal imagination.

What happens while reading these two picture books by Leo Lionni, then? It may be stated that their abstract nature challenges the traditional idea of observation.

As Maria Nikolajeva notes, in the picture book the tension between the two codes, verbal and iconic, creates unlimited possibilities of interaction between words and images: "The process of 'reading' a picture book may be represented by an hermeneutic circle as well. Whichever we start with, the verbal or the visual, it creates expectations for the other, which in turn provides new experiences and new expectations. The reader turns from verbal to visual and back again, in an ever-expanding concatenation of understanding. Each new rereading of either words or pictures creates better prerequisites for an adequate interpretation of the whole" (Nikolajeva, Scott, 2006: 2).

The interplay between the text and illustrations plays an important role in understanding *Little Blue and Little Yellow's* and *Pezzet-*

tino's meaning. As already mentioned above, in these two works words are indispensable; without them, readers would probably perceive only the movements of the blobs of colours, which merge together or break into pieces while a more profound level of understanding, involving a reflection on the theme of identity, would be hardly reached. And that, in spite of the fact that the sequence of images aims at achieving the same narrative purpose as the verbal text. The use of the visual metaphor may disorient the readers, who will be challenged to go beyond the literal meaning and give their own interpretation.

The interpretation work, in these two cases, stems from the perception of an anomaly, a dissonance between the visual and verbal text due to which the expectations generated by one text are disregarded by the other and vice versa (Contini, 2012: 216). In particular, the child will have to continue reading the book to understand that the blobs of colour, that act and feel like humans, symbolize children. Implicitly, however, although it is easy to identify differences in age and role (parents and adults in general are longer, larger blobs, taller than children, or composed of many blobs), the reading will not reveal any differentiation and/or connotation of gender. This, as already pointed out, is certainly the most extraordinary and 'progressive' of Lionni's picture books, whose neutral verbal language strengthens the meaning of 'politically correct' images. The text will rather make the readers perceive the playful and symbolic aspects linked to the game of colours: yellow, a bright colour linked to the idea of light, suggests a feeling of expansion and movement; while blue, a colour connected to darkness and the sea, may symbolize melancholy, but also quiet and recollection (Contini, 2012: 219). Finally, *Little Blue and Little Yellow* will convey the message that "two primary but opposite colours, when mixed, give rise to a new colour; likewise, when two indi-

viduals (= original and autonomous entities) have a strong bond of friendship, they mix their different characters, ideas and projects, giving birth to new things” (Contini, 2012: 220).

4. Concluding considerations

According to Ada Fonzi and Elena Negro Sancipriano, metaphors are more creative when the image associated with the metaphorical term is weak. The metaphorical image is not limited to the iconic element but opens up to sensations, feelings, thoughts “that constitute a dynamic and unrepeatable whole” (Fonzi, Negro Sancipriano, 1975: 34). Therefore, it may be stated that *Little Blue and Little Yellow* and *Pezzettino* are open to multiple interpretations thanks to their unconventional and original nature. Even though they may seem “too simple”, these books are able to convey a wide range of meanings that focus on the value of diversity from a “gender-friendly” point of view, but also encourage reflection on the concept of multiculturalism, diverse abilities, or simply of friendship between individuals with their own peculiar prerogatives.

It can be argued that Leo Lionni’s work is ethical (and civic), because “it challenges mental habits, prejudices, cognitive and axiological canons and leads us beyond identities, while not denying them, and towards a logical-epistemic and ethical universe built on the encounter and dialogue with the other, as well as on the idea of melting-pot. It leads us towards new life perspectives and new types of relationship and exchange in which the rule is: stay *with* the others, live *together* and create common spaces” (Cambi, 2006: 7).

Storytelling is an essential human activity, in its diverse forms (oral, written): it unravels meanings, outlines further perspectives

capable of shedding light on one's identity and the world. Since childhood, and starting from the elements that they find *within* stories, people build their own consciousness, which, among other things, is composed of categories and references relating to identity and behaviour.

The scopic experience of the gaze, which provides an analogical representation of objects, is predominant in children who are not yet able to read written words: the image imprints itself more powerfully and quickly in the mind than speech acts do. The abstract and artistic images of *Little Blue and Little Yellow* and *Pezzettino*, supported by the verbal text, need long pauses and thoughtful silences before imprinting themselves in the deepest part of the reader's consciousness, where they will remain, over time, after having being untangled, processed and associated with other experiences. They will contribute to enrich readers' fantasy and imagination, providing not only a set of meanings, but also a tool of emancipation from the literal meaning, supported by a personal disposition to open up to new, unusual and different things.

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Transmedia storytelling. Expanding narratives beyond the borders

Miquel Pujol-Tubau, PhD

University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia

miquel.pujol@uvic.cat

1. Introduction

For many years it was assumed that the discovery of new media implied the disappearance of others. In this respect, when cinema consolidated around the first years of the 20th century, it was commonly agreed that it would cause the disappearance of such an essential art as theatre. Likewise, when television entered households and became the fundamental pastime in society, it was expected to be the end of the radio as a basic domestic medium. None of this happened. Instead, all of the media above mentioned made their way forward and gained an audience slot. Furthermore, the closing years of the 20th century saw the emergence of challenging films which rediscovered audiovisual language and broke through the boundaries of storytelling rules. One of these projects was *The Matrix* (1999), which told a story developed not only through a film trilogy but also by means of other media – comic books, video games or anime films among others–, thus resulting in a complex narrative unfolded in different layers, all of them under the direction and supervision of Larry and Andy Wachowski. This project broke the ice into changing the relationship between media: they can be combined to generate a greater

storyline. This pattern was replicated in many other projects and franchises and was finally coined as *transmedia storytelling*.

In this paper, we aim at describing how this phenomenon is devised, addressing its main characteristics and illustrating them with examples from two prominent transmedia franchises: *The Lord of the Rings* and *A Song of Ice and Fire* (also known as *Game of Thrones*). The article will conclude suggesting possible applications of this phenomenon for educational purposes in Primary education.

2. A definition

The first views on the combination of media for narrative purposes date back to 1983, when Ithiel de Sola Pool observed what he called the “convergence of modes”. In his own words:

A process called the ‘convergence of modes’ is blurring the lines between media, even between point-to-point communications, such as the post, telephone and telegraph, and mass communications, such as the press, radio, and television. A single physical means –be it wires, cables or airwaves– may carry services that in the past were provided in separate ways. Conversely, a service that was provided in the past by any one medium –be it broadcasting, the press, or telephony– can now be provided in several different physical ways. (Pool, 1983: 23)

This notion of “convergence of modes” expressed a new paradigm on how media could interact. It experienced an evolution in 2006, when Henry Jenkins published *Convergence Culture*. In this book, Jenkins analysed the case of *The Matrix* labelling it as a *transmedia storytelling*. He defined this state-of-the-art phenomenon as a new type of storytelling that “unfolds across multiple media platforms,

with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (Jenkins, 2006: 95).

3. Principles

This brand-new approach of telling stories increasingly consolidated both in the academic and professional domains. In 2009, Jenkins published a post in his blog “Confessions of an Aca-fan” where he described the essential principles of transmedia storytelling: 1) Spreadability and drillability; 2) Continuity and multiplicity; 3) Immersion and extraction; 4) Worldbuilding; 5) Seriality; 6) Subjectivity; 7) Activity. We will briefly comment them as follows.

3.1 *Spreadability and Drillability*

Jenkins (2009) understands spreadability as the audience’s capacity for engaging actively in the circulation of contents through social networks, a movement that fosters both the economic value and cultural wealth. As a contraposition to spreadability, drillability encourages the audience to look for a profound and thorough experience into specific aspects of the story. In Henry Mittel’s opinion (2009), drillability fosters “a mode of forensic fandom that encourages viewers to dig deeper, probing beneath the surface to understand the complexity of a story and its telling.” For example, *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy runs deeper into Frodo’s and Aragorn’s narrative cues instead of expanding narratively other story lines, thus exploring the concept of *drillability*.

3.2 *Continuity and multiplicity*

According to Scolari (2013: 40), continuity of narrative elements in transmedia worlds is to be nurtured by the different languages,

media and platforms through which these projects are expressed. The author illustrates this opinion by stating that a user will expect a certain character to behave equally in a film as he or she has acted in the book where it may have been introduced. Concerning continuity, Jenkins observed in a revision of the concept published in 2011 that “a high level of coordination and creative control [is required] and that all of the pieces have to cohere into a consistent narrative or world”. Marvel and DC superheroes provide good examples of continuity in a franchise: the characters’ behaviour is always consistent in the different comics published.

Continuity is complemented by the notion of *multiplicity*, that is “the creation of narrative experiences presumably incoherent as regards to the original narrative world” (Scolari, 2013: 40). In Jenkins’ perspective, multiplicity enables fans “to take pleasure in alternative retellings, seeing the characters and events from fresh perspectives, and comics publishers trust their fans to sort out not only how the pieces fit together but also which version of the story any given work fits within” (Jenkins, 2009). He sees multiplicity as a chance for fans’ contributions to be regarded as another instalment to the full transmedia project and justifies it by stating that unauthorized extensions of a central mother ship (i.e. a central storyline) increase fans’ implication, extend knowledge of the original source and provide new knowledge on the characters and their development.

Commonly applied to fans contributions, multiplicity is sometimes also exercised by the franchises themselves. One example can be found in *Game of Thrones*, where certain characters experience a differing development in the source books and the HBO series.

3.3 *Immersion and extraction*

Jenkins (2009) defines immersion and extraction as the relationship between the transmedia diction and daily life. The concept of *immersion* is the capacity of achieving that users enter the world where the story is taking place and reaching what Coleridge (1817) referred to as “suspension of disbelief”. Jenkins illustrates the immersion principle with Hayao Miyazaki’s Studio Ghibli Museum in Tokyo. This museum devoted to Miyazaki’s works is also a living homage to the world of animation, with a specific immersive design. Other examples of immersion can be found in Disney and Warner Bros themed parks, or in filming sets turned into touristic attractions, for instance the numerous *The Lord of the Rings* filming locations in New Zealand.

Extraction consists of giving fictional elements a daily and real use. This principle includes all forms of merchandising and is sophisticated into the cosplay movement, extremely popular in Japan. Scolari (2013: 40) completes this principle with an inverse product placement, that is, a fictional product that ends up in real commercialisation. The scholar provides the example of the Duff beer brand, which was originally created for *The Simpsons* (1989) animation series.

3.4 *Worldbuilding*

Strongly related to the “suspension of disbelief” mentioned earlier, this principle is based on the notion that the design of a transmedia project implicitly requires a world creation. In Scolari’s point of view on worldbuilding (2013: 41), story authenticity is constructed on small details which nourish and foster the encyclopaedic knowledge of fans. Concerning worldbuilding, Jenkins

(2006: 114) quotes the following Hollywood scriptwriter's change of priorities in story creation:

When I first started you would pitch a story because without a good story, you didn't really have a film. Later, once sequels started to take off, you pitched a character because a good character could support multiple stories. And now, you pitch a world because a world can support multiple characters and multiple stories across multiple media.

This reflection provides evidence to conclude that this principle has become a priority for the entertainment industry. Jenkins also points out that worldbuilding has been a common feature in the science-fiction and fantasy works and, thus, it is not a new principle but the popularization of an existing one. We count on numerous literary examples including Frank Baum's world of Oz, J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-Earth, C.S. Lewis' Narnia, Lewis Carroll's Wonderland or J.M. Barrie's Neverland just to name a few.

3.5 *Seriality*

This principle is inspired in the instalment-based stories made popular in the 19th century by authors like Charles Dickens. The difference, however, lies on the fact that those stories were linearly sequenced in a single medium. In a transmedia context, they follow a non-linear sequencing and unfold in multiple media to become what Scolari (2013: 41) has labelled as "a hypertextual network".

To describe how seriality works, Jenkins (2009) draws the distinction between story and plot. On the one hand, story refers to the user's mental construction of a number of actions of a narrative which can only be created after knowing all the fragments of in-

formation. On the other, the plot is the organized sequencing of all these fragments. Thus, seriality implies the creation of a story, its fragmentation and the further dispersion of contents in multiple instalments. The different fragments are related to each other through story techniques, for instance “cliff-hangers”, where the fragments end in a suspense situation which implies the need to read, watch or interact with the following fragment to continue the story.

3.6 *Subjectivity*

One of the most promising potentialities of transmedia stories is their possibility to focus their extensions in secondary characters of the story. Frequently, secondary characters in a central storyline become the protagonists of expansions or take the role of narrators in new instalments of the franchise, thus offering their perspective from the story. In Scolari’s words (2013: 41), transmedia stories “are characterized by the presence of multiple subjectivities where looks, perspectives and voices are mingled. [...] They tend to foster a polyphony motivated by a great number of characters and stories”. For instance, the videogame *Aragorn’s Quest* (2010) develops the story of the One Ring from Aragorn’s perspective following a thread that sometimes deviates from the main storyline.

3.7 *Activity*

The last principle deals with active participation: all transmedia projects require the active presence of fans. This principle is based on two different concepts (Jenkins, 2006). On the one hand, projects are to be “cultural attractors”, in the sense that they should attract communities with shared interests. On the other, they have

to act as “cultural activators”, that is to say that they have to ensure that this community remains active. Examples abound on the active participation of fans ranging from fandubbing YouTube videos to amateur short films, encyclopaedic wikis or web portals welcoming fictional written expansions. One example of the latter could be “Pottermore”, a website devoted to J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter which welcomes complementary writings to the stories taking place in the magicians’ world.

Active participation in transmedia projects transforms users from being consumers into “prosumers”, a term resulting from the fusion of the notions of “producer” and “consumer”.

4. Expansion techniques

A fundamental characteristic of transmedia projects is their capacity to expand through different media, a feature directly related to the principles of drillability, continuity, multiplicity, seriality and expansion explained above.

A first expansion technique to be applied is what Geoffrey Long (2007: 59) coined as “migratory cues”, that is using any reference to characters, places or secondary lines mentioned in the core storyline to develop expansions in the same or other media. A second source of expansion possibilities is found in the so-called “negative capabilities”, which consist of including narrative voids in the main story to be filled by texts that may expand and evolve the story towards unexplored directions. For instance, the short film *The Hunt for Gollum* (2009) develops a narrative void found in Tolkien’s literary work dealing with Gollum’s escape after being caught by Aragorn. This escape will end up being paramount for the final outcome in *The Lord of the Rings*.

5. Semiotic connections

Be it using migratory cues, negative capabilities or other techniques, we observed that connections in the texts belonging to a transmedia storytelling are created through different semiotic bindings in the way their story elements are portrayed. Characters, places or actions are developed by means of the written or oral word, with intended image uses –for instance applying certain colours to specific characters or races– or defining a specific meaning to a certain shape or icon which is further replicated in other texts of the same franchise. For example, George R. R. Martin’s *Game of Thrones* book gives different levels of information on the powerful House Lannister. First of all, the sentence “A Lannister always pays his debts.” becomes a recurring statement throughout the whole series. The book also provides information on their shield, showing a golden lion on a crimson field. This information is extensively used in the TV series so that the spectator relates both these colours and the lion icon with the Lannisters and is further used in other visual texts related to *Game of Thrones*.

From a semiotic perspective, the acoustic material in audiovisual transmedia texts can prove to be significant connection-wise. On the one hand, musical information can be meaningful in a story when certain melodies and songs are connected to specific characters, races or cultures. On the other, the voice tone of actors and actresses is associated with the characters they play. Thus, in subsequent instalments of a story, their voice is to be maintained in the dubbing of the same characters. When that is not possible, film producers and videogame developers opt for an actor or actress whose tone and pitch resemble that of the original actor or actress for the sake of the continuity and immersion principles mentioned above. For instance, Ian McKellen not only played the role

of Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy but also dubbed the different videogame expansions of this saga. When the actor has not taken part in other audio-visual texts where Gandalf appears, for example in videogames or fan films, Ian McKellen's voice and tone has been imitated. This pattern clearly contributes to the immersion and continuity in transmedia projects.

6. Conclusion: Possibilities for applying transmedia storytelling in schools

In my opinion, the principles, expansion techniques and examples of transmedia storytelling addressed above validate the consolidation of this new means of telling stories in successful entertainment franchises. Despite its complex nature, motivated by the collaborative connections involving different media, the expansion possibilities in a transmedia project open a myriad of creative options that overcome the traditional rules of storytelling. Besides this, from a semiotic perspective, the combination of word, image and sound offers a boundless potential to be explored.

Of all the aspects of transmedia storytelling dealt with in the paper, I would like to highlight the principle of active participation. This revolutionary empowerment of receivers, who are given the chance of engaging in their favourite stories with their own contributions, makes a radical difference with the traditional storytelling and provides a unique opportunity for education. Thus, we will conclude this paper with a suggestion on possible ways into which transmedia storytelling can be incorporated in school education.

A fundamental factor behind the possible uses of transmedia storytelling in Primary education lies on the story chosen. The exam-

ples provided in the paper appeal to a young or adult audience and are probably not suitable for children, but the vast range of stories available in all media enables us to find the right material to be worked with Primary students, giving a priority to stories with interesting characters, places or actions and appropriate values to work in class.

Regardless of the story chosen, I suggest this educational approach should pivot around the principle of active participation and address the students as educational prosumers in the sense that they both experience the story chosen as active readers, watchers or users and contribute to this story with their own creations. Depending on the intended learning objective and available resources, this creation could follow some of the principles commented in section 3. Considering the notions of *drillability* and *subjectivity*, students could make their visual or written expansion of certain characters in the story and run deeper in their lives still unknown. Another approach could encourage students to spread the story further by inventing characters, places or new actions in the world the story develops in.

This simple proposal should be further detailed and tailored as required by the learning objective. Introducing transmedia storytelling in schools would certainly foster the students' engagement and immersion on stories by inviting them to experience the benefits of media connections with their creative and collaborative lenses.

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And They Taught Happily Ever After...

Éva Trentinné Benkó, PhD

Eötvös Loránd University

trentinne.benko.eva@tok.elte.hu

Introduction

During the past thirty years, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become a successful educational innovation in Hungary as an increasing number of CLIL teaching programmes appeared for learners aged 3-18. However, this trend has led to the emergence of various needs, in the field of teacher training, to name just one area. Followed a few years later by kindergartens, primary and secondary schools soon sought competent teachers and professional support. At the beginning of the 2000s, it was first the KIE¹ who answered these needs by organising in-service CLIL teacher training courses. In 2006, the former ELTE Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education² (ELTE TÓK) launched a CLIL specialisation at BA level for future preschool teachers (Trentinné, 2015, 2016). In 2008, a CLIL module became available for primary trainees too, thus widening the scope of the target age groups to include all learners aged 3-12.

The foundation course of the CLIL programme is the 'Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education', which used to end with a *traditional* oral exam. Since 2010 an *alternative* exam practice has been

1. The Association for Bilingual Schools

2. Simultaneously with a few other teacher training institutions.

continuously developed based both on the experience I gained whilst teaching in the KIE's courses as well as on my empirical research findings³. This renewed assessment procedure (see Appendix) focuses on students' learning outcomes and beliefs as represented in their creative portfolios and associated reflections. One of the tasks is story writing on the topic of the CLIL teacher's adventures. Below, some findings will be introduced based on the pedagogical analysis of 373 stories collected between 2008 and 2018. Given the complexity of the topic, an in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

Body

CLIL is an acronym used as a generic term to describe all types of dual-focused educational approaches in which a certain subject (or subject content, other than the language) is taught *through* and *with* an additional language other than the learners' native language. The aim of CLIL is to promote simultaneous learning of content and the foreign language (cf. Marsh-Langé 2000, Marsh 2002, Eurydice 2006, Mehisto et. al. 2008, Coyle et al. 2010). Nowadays, CLIL seems to be one of the most relevant and effective methods for teaching English to young learners. It offers both meaningful context and rich language input whilst fostering children's holistic development, as well as catering for different learning styles and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. However, the key to any teaching programme for young learners is the teacher, whose expertise and personality greatly influence the success of the learning process.

3. PhD studies (2005-2013) at ELTE PPK, Budapest (tutored by Professor Ágnes Vámos) doctoral dissertation (unpublished): 2013. Published: Trentinné Benkő, 2015.

Early bilingual education requires numerous professional competences ranging from proficiency both in the native (L1) and the target language (L2), knowledge of the instructed subject matter and its methodology, age-specific L2 teaching methods and techniques, intercultural awareness and sensitivity. The CLIL teachers' professional profile includes other pedagogical, psychological, social, cognitive and communicative components, beliefs and personal dispositions. Their knowledge, skills, desirable attitudes and autonomy form a complex system of competences that are needed for effective CLIL teaching (cf. Bertaux et. al. 2010). The aim of CLIL teacher education is to enable teachers to cope with all the multifaceted tasks, challenges and problems that may occur on a regular basis in CLIL contexts.

During the course⁴ we experimented with several qualitative techniques and creative tasks such as writing recipes, drawing sketches and creating metaphors to describe the CLIL teacher (Vámos, 2003). I used a self-made grid (Kovács-Trentinné, 2016:170) and the brand personification technique⁵ to help students discover metaphors and explanations in 10 different categories⁶ for the purpose of investigating the CLIL teachers' necessary competences. Following these preparatory activities, students had to complete the exam portfolio tasks⁷ including the story writing at the end of the term. I suggested 'The CLIL Teacher's Adventures' as the working title for the story, with no specific instructions beyond the hint that this tale might be about the protagonist's tribulations and victories. As needed, I also used synonyms like 'hardships' or 'miseries'. I was pleased when participants gave new titles to their

4. The Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education

5. What/who would you be if you were a(n) ... (certain category), and why?

6. The categories included 'animal', 'story character' or 'famous person', among others.

7. In this paper only the story writing exam portfolio task is mentioned

stories matching their own plot, message and characters. No restrictions were placed on the students, who could reach their own decisions regarding the theme, genre, length, style and language. Using these stories and reflections, I conducted a participatory research project focusing on a pedagogical⁸ rather than a literary analysis with the aim of assessing and understanding students' implicitly expressed beliefs and learning outcomes.

Since language selection was made based on an individual, independent decision I was always genuinely interested in the students' choice. More than half of them tended to choose L1 (Hungarian) whilst the rest wrote their stories in L2 (English). However, many English phrases and sentences appeared even in the Hungarian stories, most often in the form of dialogues. The contexts for L2 questions and answers were quiz-like trials testing the protagonist's theoretical knowledge on bilingualism, CLIL and early language learning. There were also practical trials, when teacherly skills, attitudes and personal qualities were assessed and evaluated in various contexts. These 'job interviews' or 'exam situations' most often took place in dangerous, remote or magical places involving typical fairy story characters to expose the questions and the tasks. Finally, the descriptions of language acquisition processes contained L2 dialogues or texts of English children's games and children's literature. Concerning the style, students sometimes used different versions of L1 e.g. dialects characteristic to certain regions or phrases of subcultures or even archaic forms that suited their chosen genre, theme and style the best to enhance the expressive, creative or literary value of their stories.

8. cf. Vámos, 2008

The participants used a wide range of genres and story types that were often mixed. The students' view that language learning is indispensable to everyone was well reflected by this genre diversity. The proportion of fairy tales was the highest. The second most frequent choice was creating fables i.e. animal stories. The third most favoured genre was folk tales.⁹ Then came a number of biographies and anecdotal stories that had no imaginary characters, scenes or plots but resembled everyday life and featured realistic situations. Love stories were also encountered several times, most often in cases when students themselves had personal experiences of dating or marrying someone with a different linguistic background.¹⁰ The above categories compiled the majority of students' tales. Other than these, there were a few humorous 'catch stories'¹¹, some didactic tales, first chapters of a children's novel, a couple of beautifully illustrated picture books, as well as some modern stories with a twist, a few philosophical tales and some stories written in verse. Although the proportion of genres might seem traditional, the characters and the plots were original and creative.

The gender of the protagonists and the role of the names were issues of significance. The protagonists were mainly female: often the youngest daughter of a poor man or the king, and had no name, she was just a 'girl' who was usually beautiful, smart, kind and devoted to her profession. All the characteristic features, archetypes and functions typical of fairy tales could be identified in most cases while simultaneously demonstrating the same com-

9. It should be noted here that the Hungarian understanding of folk and fairy tales does not correspond with the Anglo-Saxon culture's categorisation.

10. Although many folk and fairy tales had a theme or a happy ending that involved a romantic relationship, these were not categorised as love stories.

11. A type of folk tale that ends in an unexpected way, which tricks or surprises the listener.

plexity as is found in traditional stories. The most common initial problem situations were related to two main topics: 1) happiness and/or the job hunt; and 2) lack of communication, foreign language knowledge and/or intercultural tolerance within a particular community or in one person. Overcoming this incompetence required active intervention from the protagonist (language learning or language teaching) depending on the particular situation. The causes included ignorance, wickedness, envy and fear of the unknown. The helpers could always be easily identified whilst recognising enemies was more difficult since they changed, developed or played simultaneous roles. After coping with all of these various challenges, students' stories always had a happy ending in which the desired job and often love were both found at the same time. However, practising teachers' stories did not always have a happy ending, probably due to their life experience, wisdom and judgement of reality.

Conclusion

Between 2008 and 2018 I asked nearly 400 CLIL teachers and trainees to write stories on the CLIL teachers' adventures and reflect upon them. By using this indirect projective technique my aim was to encourage and help the participants to project and give voice to their underlying beliefs concerning the theory and practice of early CLIL. During the oral and interactive analysis of the tales, important details and explanations were recorded. In the past five years, written reflections have also become a part of the assignment task in which students explained their motifs, decisions, thinking and writing processes and the symbols they had decided to use. Students could elaborate on the plot, the title, the characters, the message and the story elements. Some exciting

issues were always discussed in person such as the moral of the story, the choice of the protagonist's name or parallels between the storyline and the student's own life events.

In general, it is important to note that most of the stories corresponded to the category of tale in structure, language and main functions. Autobiographical threads or other similarities between the protagonist and the author along with the desired vision of the future could be traced in many cases. Most stories highlighted relevant anticipated problems, possible dangers, and different ways and strategies of combating and overcoming these obstacles. As a conclusion, it might be stated that almost all stories and reflections suggested that the students had achieved the necessary learning outcomes.

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Appendix: Creative-Reflective Portfolio Exam Tasks

- 1) *Create a visual mind map on the topic of early CLIL.*
- 2) *Create the visual image of the ideal CLIL teacher.*
- 3) *Write a story about the CLIL teacher's adventures.*
- 4) *Design a board game about the process of becoming a competent CLIL teacher.*
- 5) *Write reflections for each creative task (e.g. the thinking process, the choices, the reasons, the message, the symbols, the process of making the portfolio, the product, the feelings, etc.)*

This book is the result of the Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya (UVic-UCC) organising the First International Conference entitled: “Storytelling Revisited: Gender, Language, Music and Cinema in Children’s Literature”, held in Vic (Barcelona), on 28 November 2018. This Conference provided a forum for teachers, students and researchers to go deeper into the relationship between gender, language, music, cinema in children’s literature within the field of EFL teaching for Early Years and Primary Education. It was an interdisciplinary conference organised by the three research groups GEHTLIC, TEXLICO and GRELL at the Faculty of Education Translation and Human Sciences. This academic meeting revolved around the study of narrative structures applied to the classroom. Our overarching goal was to stimulate discussion and to highlight the importance of establishing criteria regarding the choice of narrative structures for classroom work, in the EFL classroom.