

PROMOTING STUDENTS' MULTILITERACY, MULTIMODAL, AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP SKILLS IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM THROUGH DESIGNING A DIGITAL CITY TOUR ON IZI.TRAVEL

Tema

È ormai ampiamente riconosciuto che per essere in grado di comunicare nella società contemporanea, gli studenti di una lingua seconda o straniera hanno bisogno di sviluppare diverse competenze legate al pensiero critico, alla cittadinanza globale e al digitale. Il digital storytelling è in questo senso uno strumento ricco e complesso. Combina il potere della narrazione con quello della tecnologia e consente agli studenti di espandere le proprie abilità linguistiche e digitali aiutandoli a sviluppare la propria voce. Nel nostro studio, due gruppi di studenti universitari con un livello elementare e intermedio in italiano L2 sono stati coinvolti in un progetto in due parti finalizzato alla composizione di un racconto digitale sulla città di Venezia. Nella prima parte, gli studenti hanno partecipato sia ad attività in aula che ad attività museali, durante le quali sono stati incoraggiati a mettere in pratica le proprie competenze in italiano e a conoscere il patrimonio culturale veneziano. Nella seconda parte, gli studenti sono stati guidati a realizzare i propri tour digitali della città di Venezia utilizzando la piattaforma izi.TRAVEL. L'analisi multimodale dei due tour mostra che la creazione di storie digitali basate sulla comprensione e interpretazione del patrimonio culturale da parte degli studenti ha promosso sia le loro capacità di narrazione e mediazione nella seconda lingua che il loro ruolo come cittadini globali.

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There is now wide recognition that only supporting students in developing their communicative competence in the target language is not sufficient to handle the “merged, combined, augmented, linked, animated, orchestrated, remixed, and reimagined communication processes” (Lotherington & Ronda, 2014: 24) of today’s globalised world. In this context, researchers have long argued in favour of integrating a multiliteracies approach to second and foreign language education (Warner & Dupuy, 2018), recognising the need to involve students in a multitude of literacy practices that both account for the linguistic and cultural diversity they bring to the classroom and help them develop the multimodal skills they need to communicate with digital media.

Digital storytelling is one of such practices. It combines the power of narration with that of technology and allows students to expand their language and digital literacy skills while also helping them develop their own voices (Kim et al., 2021). While there are numerous studies that have investigated the potential of digital storytelling for language

learners (Castañeda, 2013; Oskoz & Elola, 2014; Kim et al., 2021), little research has been conducted on the effects on second language learning of digital storytelling inspired by cultural heritage (however, see Abdelhadi et al., 2020).

In this study, we aim to show that digital storytelling based on students’ interpretation of cultural heritage may offer an interesting opportunity to: 1) foster students’ mediation skills by helping them express a personal response to creative texts in line with the new “mediation of a text” scale presented in the Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2018), and 2) help them develop their sense of belonging to a global heritage community (Unesco, 2020). In so doing, we first outline the benefits of engaging language students with activities based on museum learning experiences. Then, we discuss the potential of digital storytelling in promoting students’ language and literacy skills and global citizenship. Finally, we present a project carried out in Venice at the end of 2019 (first reported in Fazzi, 2021) in which thirty university students were involved in an

Italian as a second language course in the classroom and in the museum which led to the co-design of two digital tours on the izi.TRAVEL platform. Specifically, we describe the digital storytelling process underpinning the use of izi.TRAVEL and discuss its results in terms of students' multimodal interpretation of the city of Venice in the second language through an analysis of the final digital products.

The power of heritage for language learning

Numerous studies have shown that museums, and heritage sites in general, can have multiple benefits for language students (Ruanglertbutr, 2016; Fazzi & Lasagabaster, 2021). First, integrating heritage and language education allows teachers to expand the limits of monolingual and monocultural teaching by fostering critical and intercultural reflections (Parra & Di Fabio, 2017). In fact, through discussing objects in another language, students “examine not only values and themes of the target cultures but their own cultural biases and beliefs” (Berhó & Defferding, 2005: 272) constructing what Kramsch (2009) refers to as “third space”: a place where plurilingual people are confronted with the relationship between their languages, their thoughts, and their bodies, developing a new sense of self. Second, objects have a power of changing the way people communicate (Scheirer & Picard, 2000 in Aronin, 2012: 180) because they bring into the open things that usually remain untold, such as emotions, feelings, and memories that are connected to environments and materialities (Aronin, 2012). Finally, using tangible and intangible heritage with language students also promotes their civic engagement as global citizens as they come to understand and appreciate “a sense of interconnectedness between communities, populations and countries” (Unesco, 2020: 1).

Digital storytelling on cultural heritage for language learners

According to Robin (2016: 18), digital storytelling combines “the art of telling stories with a mixture of digital media, including text, pictures, recorded audio narration, music and video” which are all blended together using computer software. Because digital storytelling is a complex and cyclical practice that in-

tegrates task-based and multiliteracies approaches, it is a powerful tool to be used with language students of all ages, language levels, and cultural backgrounds (Castañeda, 2013). On the one hand, designing digital stories facilitates students' second language learning and literacy skills, especially oracy (ibid.), multimodal composition (Oskoz & Elola, 2014), and digital literacy skills (Kim et al., 2021). On the other, it also allows students “to develop and express their own voices” (idem: 2). When creating digital stories inspired by museum objects and cultural sites, students also build their place-related consciousness, connect subject-specific concepts with personal and collective experience, and engage in “understanding current reality and their role in it” (Daskolia et al., 2017: 274). For example, Abdelhadi et al. (2020) report that in the final phase of a project that integrated Arabic language and culture learning, students produced digital stories in which they not only mediated the artworks explored in the classroom, but they also used them as inspiration to talk about matters they cared about (i.e. bullying, discrimination, and poverty).

When creating digital stories inspired by museum objects and cultural sites, students also build their place-related consciousness.

Description of the Italian as a second language module across the classroom and the museum

In the context of our study, digital storytelling on cultural heritage was used at the end of a 40-hour course of Italian as a second language in the classroom and in the museum implemented in Venice at the end of 2019 (see Fazzi, 2021). The course was the result of a collaboration between the Master in Management of Cultural Heritage and Activities (MaBAC) from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and the Dante Alighieri Society of Venice and involved thirty university students of French nationality, aged between 23 and 30 years old. Students had varied academic backgrounds (e.g. History of Art, Management, Archaeology, etc.), spoke multiple languages, and worked or aspired to work in the cultural sector. Specifically, students were divided into

two groups – an elementary group (level A2) and an intermediate group (level B1-B2) – that followed a similar syllabus consisting of three thematic blocks: 1) The Peggy Guggenheim Collection and the relationship between the museum and the city, 2) the Museum of Palazzo Mocenigo and the role of Venice in the history of perfume, and 3) the Museum of Ca' Rezzonico and Venetian art and life in the 18th century. In each block, students participated in different types of group, pair, and individual classroom activities and museum tasks aimed at scaffolding their engagement with cultural contents and multimodal texts (including objects) while also promoting their Italian language knowledge and skills. In so doing, we employed Hooper-Greenhill's (1994) school-museum model adapted for second and foreign language learning (Fazzi, 2021; see the figure below).

During the course, global issues related to the preservation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage, climate change and gender issues were also transversally discussed in trying to explore Venice from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives.

The participatory digital storytelling final project

At the end of the course, the two groups were asked to co-design a digital tour that would reflect their personal and shared experience of Venice in relation to the museums visited and the reflections carried out in class and in the local museums. To develop the tours, we used izi.TRAVEL¹, which is a free and open access platform that aims at transforming the way cultural contents are created and shared by harnessing the power of social media communication and of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006).

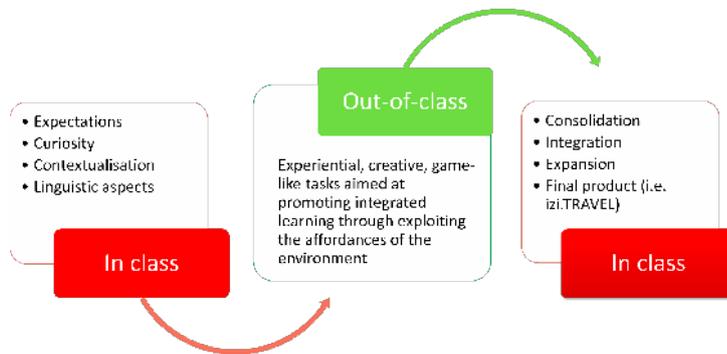
The digital storytelling process

The design of the digital tours took place over 8 hours and was carried out in 9 main steps, integrating Robin's (2016) digital storytelling process with the principles at the basis of multimodal literacy pedagogy (Smith & Axelrod, 2019). The steps are described in the table below:

1 <https://izi.travel/en>

Figure 1

Hooper-Greenhill's (1994) school-museum model adapted in the context of second and foreign language education (Fazzi, 2021)



Step 1 Presentation of the project and of izi.TRAVEL	The aim and structure of the project are described, and students receive a technical introduction on the affordances of izi.TRAVEL for digital storytelling.
Step 2 Multimodal analysis	Students are presented with different examples of digital tours and are asked to analyse them taking into consideration the target audience and categories of genres and purposes (Smith & Axelrod, 2019). In exploring the different types of narration, students are required to identify how the combination of different modes contribute to the interpretation of the cultural object/site and to reflect on the purpose and genre of their narration.
Step 3 Overall design	Students discuss their personal and shared experience of the school-museum module and decide on the message they want to convey and on the target audience of the tour. They also agree on the number of points of interest to be included in the tour and on how they will combine the different modes and languages in their narration.
Step 4 Storyboard	Students work alone or in groups and complete the storyboard (see Figure 2) for each point of interest. They are free to decide how to work on the storyboard and they can help themselves by looking over the contents and language learned in the classroom and at the museum.
Step 5 Feedback	Each group or student presents their storyboard to their peers and to the teacher and receives constructive feedback on the narrative aspects and coherence across the points of interest.
Step 6 Revision	Each group or student revises their point of interest following the feedback received. The teacher helps students reflect on possible grammar mistakes without interfering too much with students' own voice.
Step 7 Building the digital tour	Students collect the resources they intend to use in their narration, pay attention to issues of copyright and fair use, and work on their audio narration. Students also decide on the introduction and final title of the tour.
Step 8 Publishing the digital tour	The final tour is published on the izi.TRAVEL platform and is presented to the community through a live or other type of event.
Step 9 Final reflection	Students reflect on their digital storytelling experience through group discussion and self-assessment.

At the end of the project, two tours were produced, “La dolce vita a Venezia²” (A2 Level; henceforth Tour 1) and “Venezia tra porta d’acqua e porta di terra³” (B1-B2 Level; henceforth Tour 2) and can be freely explored on the izi.TRAVEL platform.

Multimodal analysis of the two digital tours

Methodology

Students’ final tours were analysed to explore the potential of the pedagogical framework in terms of students’ multimodal response to cultural objects and sites. In doing so, we used the multimodal analytical framework developed by Kim et al. (2021), which consists of four dimensions:

- Representational: focuses on how events, objects, and participants are represented in the story.
- Interpersonal: looks at the relationship between the storyteller and the audience, and between participants within the story.
- Compositional: concentrates on how the story is structured and how the different modes are used to create the overall meaning of the story.
- Sociocultural: focuses on the position that the storyteller holds within the social, cultural, and political context.

Results

In terms of the representational dimension, the analysis shows that students decided to include both points of interests related to the museums visited during the course and to other places (e.g. the restaurant *La Zucca*) they thought reflected their personal and shared experience of Venice. Different objects (artworks, food, perfumes, etc.) were also included in the narration to give a sense of the smells, flavours, sounds, and colours of the city. As for the interpersonal dimension, both tours express the personal relationship between the students and the city of Venice and between the students and their audience. Students used the narration to both show what they had learnt about the cultural heritage of Venice and to talk about global issues (i.e. environmental sustainability, job conditions, etc.). For example, in the point of interest n.2 (Figure 3; Tour 2), students imagined a monologue in which the gondolier expresses his worries about the state of the city (“these canals are dirty, smelly and

TITLE:	MESSAGE:
TARGET AUDIENCE:	
TEXT:	
IMAGES: 1. 2. 3.	LINKS TO OTHER RESOURCES:
AUDIO:	

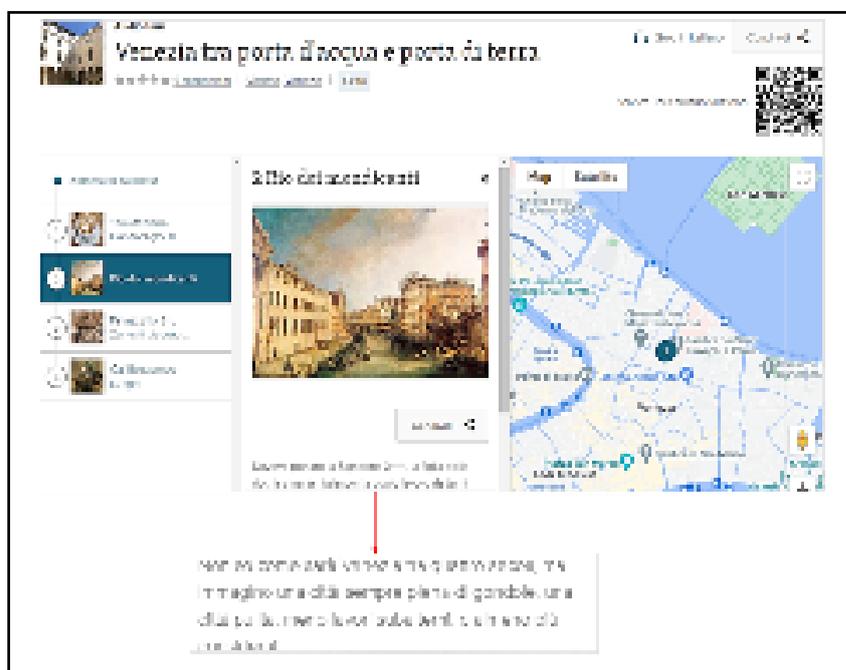
Figure 2

Storyboard format for digital storytelling on izi.TRAVEL

over populated”) and envisions a more sustainable future by also hinting at the precarious condition of those who work in the cultural sector (“I don’t know what Venice will be like in four centuries, but what I imagine is a city full of gondolas, a clean city, less temporary jobs or, at least, more appreciated”).

Figure 3

Point of interest n. 2 “Rio dei mendicanti” (Tour 2)



As for the relationship between the storytellers and the audience, students often verbally acknowledged that the main aim of their tour was to offer other fellow international students the possibility to explore the city in a fun and non-traditional way. For instance, in the summary

- 2 “La dolce vita a Venezia” (A2 Level): https://izi.travel/en/5118-la-dolce-vita-a-venezia/it#tour_details_first
- 3 “Venezia tra porta d’acqua e porta di terra” (B1-B2 Level): <https://izi.travel/it/b445-venezia-tra-porta-d-acqua-e-porta-di-terra/it>

of Tour 1, students wrote “this adventure is for you” and “we can’t wait to see you there!”. Also, both products are characterised by conversational “hooks” that try to connect and interact with the potential visitor (e.g. “Are you ready to discover exotic animals, sensual gondolas, romantic melodies and coffee fragrant smell?”). In terms of the compositional dimension, both tours present a multitude of narrative genres (i.e. descriptions, fantastic monologues and dialogues, recipes, etc.) and employ different discursive and rhetorical features that characterise cultural communication on social media. Specifically, students used descriptive and evocative terms (i.e. “sensual awakening”, “a magic museum”, etc.) and an informal style of communication, but also showed a certain expertise in describing specific concepts related to the museum sites and objects (i.e. the main facts about the painting or about the composition of a perfume). Students also used different types of remix (Kim et al., 2021), by combining images both downloaded from the internet (see Figure 4) and personally-created (see Figure 5).

As for the sociocultural dimension, the participants often positioned themselves as both international students and future cultural professionals. In the summary of Tour 2, for instance, they describe themselves as “transnational” and “adventurous” students and in the Point of interest n.3 of the same tour they hint at the cultural mission of Palazzetto Bru Zane (Centre of Romantic French Music in Venice).

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored the potential of digital storytelling based on cultural heritage for the development of learners’ multiliteracies, multimodal, and global citizenship skills in the second language classroom. The multimodal analysis shows that students were not only successful in experimenting with different types of narration and cultural communication on social media in the second language, but they were also able to develop their own voices as co-designers of new cultural meanings. Also, by presenting, describing, and expressing their own reaction to cultural objects and sites, students also demonstrated their abilities in mediating a text (Council of Europe, 2018). In so doing, the pedagogical framework made sure that students’ engagement with cultural contents and production of digital tours were continuously scaffolded – through different activities and strategies – allowing even students at A2 level to develop the necessary vocabulary and language skills for creating new narratives.

As language educators, we have great challenges to tackle and integrating heritage and language education through digital storytelling can go a long way in empowering students with the multiliteracy and multimodal skills they need to act in today’s world. Future research should explore how language, literacy, and culture interconnect in such experiences and how we can best promote students’ skills in mediating cultural objects in different contexts and at different language levels.



Figure 4
The rhinoceros (1751) painted by Pietro Longhi in Point of interest n. 4 “Ca’ Rezzonico-Longhi” (Tour 2)

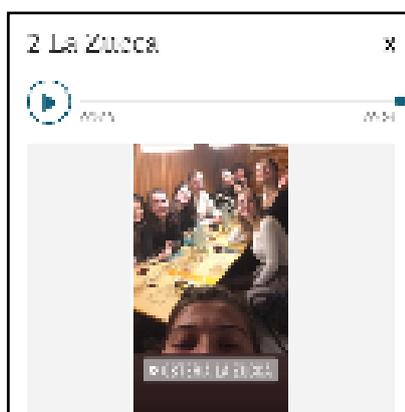


Figure 5
Picture of dinner at La Zucca in Point of interest n. 2 “La Zucca” (Tour 1) first published on one of the students’ personal Instagram account

Students used the narration to both show what they had learnt about the cultural heritage of Venice and to talk about global issues

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