

Anglistentag 2022: Sektion TEFL

Exploring the potential of digital media and pop culture for TEFL

Chair: Jr.-Prof. Dr. Theresa Summer (Bamberg); AOR Dr. Ralf Gießler (Wuppertal)

Saturday, 3 September 2022	
11.00	Hashtags as digital texts: What is their potential for language education? <i>Daniel Becker & Ralf Gießler</i>
11.30	Exploring multiliteracies with interactive and hypertext fiction <i>Sean Holt</i>
12.00	The Digital Poetry Escape Room -- Enhancing motivation for modern poeties <i>competicoperatively</i> <i>Isabelle Sophie Thaler & Benedikt Meininger</i>
12.30	What's your story? (Digital) Autobiographic Comics in English Language Teaching <i>Nora Benitt & Verena Fries</i>
Lunch Break	
14.30	Music Videos Revisited <i>Engelbert Thaler</i>
15.00	Let's Play – Together! Game-based Language Learning and Digital Games in Primary School <i>Marius Ritter</i>
15.30	Inter- and Transcultural Learning in Virtual Reality <i>Maria Eisenmann & Jeanine Steinbock</i>
Sunday, 4 September 2022	
15.00	#Literature Goes Digital: Digital Transformations in the ELT Literature <i>Christian Ludwig & Michaela Sambanis</i>
15.30	Through the Digital Grapevine: Participatory Reading Past and Present in the EFL Classroom <i>Natasha Anderson</i>
16.00	Songs in ELT: A survey on university students' beliefs and their experiences in English lessons <i>Theresa Summer, Regina Grund & Michelle Zirkel</i>

Abstracts

Hashtags as digital texts: What is their potential for language education?

Daniel Becker (Münster), Ralf Gießler (Wuppertal)

#blacklivesmatter, #metoo, #freebritney – In recent years, hashtags have become an omnipresent phenomenon in contemporary social media and in the everyday lives of many ‘digital natives’. Far from just being pragmatic tools for indexing conversations, hashtags prominently shape current communicative practices (cf. La Rocca 2020) and play a pivotal role in establishing online identities and communities (cf. Zappavigna 2011). With these important functions in mind, we will ask what hashtags as a new type of digital text hold for English language education. For this purpose, hashtags will be regarded from both a narrow and a broad perspective. In a narrow sense, the hashtag in itself (i.e. the # symbol + the ensuing word/phrase) is an invitation to “join the conversation”. It thus offers meaningful opportunities to foster learners’ communicative competence. Once accepted, writing under the same hashtag can be seen as a form of collaborative authorship. In a broader sense, hashtags in combination with the tweets and posts they subsume, become highly fluid texts with specific discourse patterns that EFL learners in the digital age should become aware of.

We will argue that skills for the reception and the production of hashtags as a relevant communicative practice should be developed as an essential component of digitally enhanced EFL discourse competences. The paper’s theoretical considerations may inspire empirical research on the design process of teaching materials with hashtags. Furthermore, future studies may investigate how hashtag learning materials are used by learners in the classroom.

References

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Exploring multiliteracies with interactive and hypertext fiction

Sean Holt (Kiel)

The talk discusses the potential of interactive and hypertext fiction for the development of digital competence, critical media literacy and literature education in TEFL by exploring these digitally enabled artefacts through the lens of multiliteracy theory. As these well-established digital literary genres can now be easily consumed and produced on an everyday basis they are highly suitable to be included in EFL learning scenarios. The talk wants to address how these literary genres can foster digital and non-digital skills in the field of EFL literature education and thereby contribute to our students’ development as lifelong “digitally literate” global citizens.

In the winter semester 2021/22, the question how these narratives can be productively applied for TEFL was the focus of a project seminar for teacher training students at the CAU Kiel. The seminar investigated the variety of (mostly) cost-free, easily accessible, authentic, and often multimodal narratives for their classroom potential. It considered how these digital genres, that

are a prominent part in everyday popular culture, shape how digital media and platforms apply and reimagined concepts such as narrativity, non-linearity, story design, authorship, or character development and how this connects to literature education. The seminar also demonstrated how they embed many of the daily meaning-making and discourse practices that students engage in such as social media, hyperlink navigation, SMS/e-mail stories, and computer games. Finally, by designing our own stories with the Twine-engine¹ we evaluated the process for its potential for language teaching and learning. Arriving at the realisation that they offer many opportunities for interaction, (re-)design and (co-)creation and that the possibilities go far beyond “gamification” or “edutainment”.

The Digital Poetry Escape Room – Enhancing motivation for modern poetries *competicooperatively*

Isabelle Sophie Thaler, Benedikt Meininger (München)

“Poetry is for everyone, and at its core, it is all about connection and collaboration”, claims Amanda Gorman (2018), the youngest inaugural poet. Yet, a year nine did not feel any connection to poetry, which is why a school-university collaboration was initiated, in the hope of sparking more motivation among the students. To this end, a digital poetry escape room was designed. So far, there is only scant research on breakout games for language learning (Bradford et al. 2021). Instead of repeating the traditional, rather cognitive-analytical approach to poetry, this collaboration opted for several changes. First, a *competicooperative* approach is employed. Instead of regarding these two approaches as contradictory, we have decided to see them as complimentary (Tauer & Harackiewicz, 2004) and to combine their benefits and influence on each other. Therefore, in the first phase, our approach combines intra-group cooperation and inter-group competition; in the second phase, it is replaced by inter-group cooperation. Second, a change in skills and material focuses on audiovisual media instead of the usual and often disliked (close) reading of poetry. Third, performance poetry as an example of modern poetries (Thaler, 2019) is presented, taken from formats students are familiar with (e.g. America’s Got Talent). Fourth, people their age (e.g. Amanda Gorman) perform and address contemporary issues students can relate to. Fifth, the digital poetry escape room replaces the traditional classroom as context.

Two pilots have demonstrated the potential (e.g. social contagion of motivation, Radel et al., 2010) and pitfalls of conducting a digital poetry escape room with EFL learners. Our C-Conversation summarises how to increase students’ motivation for poetries by embracing six C’s: context, collaboration, competicooperation, content, contemporary canon and creativity (poetry, Thaler, 2019).

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What's your story? (Digital) Autobiographic Comics in English Language Teaching

Nora Benitt (Lüneburg), Verena Fries (Mainz)

Telling stories and talking about ourselves are common cultural practices. However, doing that in an educational context and in a foreign language poses a number of challenges on learners of different ages and proficiency levels. (Digital) autobiographic comics afford an opportunity for learners to express something that is personal and meaningful to them and experiment with the foreign language in a creative way. However, to avoid students confronting themselves with traumatic or shameful experiences, it should be considered to allow fiction or fantasy narratives as well (cf. Fries 2018). Within the framework of a genre-based approach, a selected comic or an autobiographic novel can serve as a generic model that supports learners producing their own graphic narratives (Hallet 2012: 36).

Our paper discusses the potential of (digital) autobiographic comics for the development of linguistic competence, narrative competence, critical (media) literacy and digital literacy referring to practical examples from two different educational settings - secondary school and university level - to illustrate ways of working with comics in EFL contexts. Depending on the learning goals, the learners and their preferences, autobiographic comics can either be sketched out by hand (possibly digitalised later) or can be created with the help of digital tools, such as Pixton. This application allows users to build their own avatar and choose from different panel templates and stylistic devices (e.g. captions, speech and thought bubbles, icons, sound effect bubbles) to design their individual comic strip.

References

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Music Videos Revisited

Engelbert Thaler (Augsburg)

After the launch of MTV in 1981 had generated a lot of academic attention, music videos experienced a decline both on TV and in academia. Recently research, however, is growing, triggered in parts by the advent of new genres, e.g., literal music videos, participatory clips, user-generated content, remixes, alternate length types or hi/low-definition forms. This paper will

present these new genres and discuss the question whether definition, rationale and methodology of music videos in TEFL have to be adjusted. In particular, the competences of the German educational standards (2003, 2012) will serve as a guideline for exploring their teaching potential.

Let's Play - Together! Game-based Language Learning and Digital Games in Primary School

Marius Ritter (Münster)

This paper aims to investigate the potential of using digital games in a primary school English context. In doing so, it will connect the two currently separate spheres of primary school English language education and game-based language Learning. Playfulness is an important characteristic of early foreign language teaching (Büning 2012). However, when discussing “playful learning”, the multimodality of modern games is underrepresented. With game-based language learning, a conceptual framework for the use of such media has been established in recent years (Reinhardt 2019) and concrete use-cases have been developed (Becker 2021). However, a major part of current research on the use of digital games in language education is focused on secondary and higher education. Popular games such as Minecraft, Fortnite and others, already are an important part of many young learners’ digital lives and can serve as the basis for meaningful and authentic second language use. This paper will argue that the “playful” realm of early English language education offers a fertile ground for the development of game literacy that can both help game-based secondary school approaches realise their innate potential and build on the strengths of early language learners. Using Minecraft as an example, the paper will then elaborate on how digital games can be used as the basis for authentic and relevant speaking opportunities in a primary school English classroom.

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Inter- and Transcultural Learning in Virtual Reality

Maria Eisenmann, Jeanine Steinbock (Würzburg)

In an increasingly globalised, digital world, inter- and transcultural competences (ITC) are an essential prerequisite of participation in modern day society. For EFL teaching, recent developments such as **teaching critical perspectives on race and racism** in the context of critical pedagogy (Gerlach 2020) demand a critical reflexion of the possibilities and constraints, digital technology brought into the classroom to enhance authentic cross-cultural communication and exchange even beyond the physical limitations of the classroom. In this context, innovative digital technology such as virtual reality (VR) opens up new pathways of addressing cognitive, affective and behavioural skills through aspects of presence, immersion, embodiment, agency and

empathy by using avatars, contexts, and virtual objects as initiators and facilitators of cultural learning processes (Shin 2018; Johnson-Glenberg 2019).

The aim of this research project is to identify virtual reality assets that are beneficial for fostering inter- and transcultural competences among learners of senior classes. Therefore, our research questions are:

- 1) How can virtual reality be beneficial for intercultural and transcultural learning processes in EFL teaching?
- 2) How should a teaching unit on the topic of "racism" be structured to initiate inter- and transcultural learning processes by means of virtual reality assets?
- 3) How is the *InteractionSuitcase* perceived and used by university students while designing ITC focussed lessons?

In a first step, an *InteractionSuitcase*, a collection of virtual objects characterised by different levels of stereotyping, was developed and, in a second step, implemented to be used by students in the context of an advanced TEFL seminar taking place which took place in winter 2021/2022. Concomitant research consists of questionnaires on students' perceptions of the VR assets' quality in terms of ITC as well as an observational study of the use of the *InteractionSuitcase*.

In this contribution the results of this study will be presented and further implications for the development of inter- and transcultural VR learning scenarios will be discussed.



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#Literature Goes Digital: Digital Transformations in the ELT Literature Classroom

Christian Ludwig, Michaela Sambanis (Berlin)

Digital technologies are rapidly transforming when, where, what, and how we read (Johnson, 2021). Print literature seems to be destined to appear into oblivion as the physical boundaries of the print-bound text appear increasingly unimaginable to a new generation of reader-writers. However, as incompatible digital media and (paper-bound) literature may seem, digital technologies not only open up new avenues for working with print literature but also with new forms of born-digital which are characterised by the increasing intertwining of literary, cultural, and social media practices (Thomas, 2020). Against this background, this talk sets out to explore the yet unearthed potential of social media platforms, namely Instagram and TikTok, for creative (literary) expression and new forms of (literary) engagement and the ways their engaging nature can help enhancing foreign language students' literary competences.

The first part of the presentation focuses on the emergence of participatory literary performances on social media which can be celebrated for being authentic, intense, and personal as much as they can be criticised for being simplistic, self-contained, and without context. We then move on to discuss how modern-day poetry performances can be harnessed for the EFL classroom, arguing that social media poetry is more than a mere "appropriation of self-help culture" (Pâquet, 2019: 296-314) but a form of expression for a whole generation. The talk concludes by providing selected real-world examples of social media poetry and tasks that support learners of English in reading, analysing, and responding to these highly multi-modal literary texts.

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Through the Digital Grapevine: Participatory Reading Past and Present in the EFL Classroom

Natasha Anderson (Mainz)

Despite the temporal divide separating the nineteenth century from today, Victorian audiences and contemporary readers display crucial similarities in inventively engaging with popular narratives. Participatory culture both past and present thrives upon creative interactions, ranging from literary tourism to collaborative fanfiction composition in digital forums. By examining and integrating participatory elements, the online classroom empowers EFL learners to hone their interpretive, collaborative, and presentational skills while exchanging insights into audiences' involvement with nineteenth-century novels and pop culture. Based on practical examples from undergraduate and graduate courses taught from 2020 to 2022, this presentation demonstrates how students develop digital literacy and conduct transtemporal analysis by evaluating both fan communities' multimedia projects and online texts' intermediality.

Primarily, students examine the popular legacy of the famous Victorian authors Charlotte Brontë and Wilkie Collins. Both the British Library's videos of Haworth Parsonage and online archives of

nineteenth-century periodicals highlight how writers' sociocultural inspirations and serialized publications shape Victorian reading experiences. Today, audiences assert the continued relevance and widespread resonance of Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Collins's *The Woman in White* by reflecting on the narratives in imaginative blog posts, watching movie adaptations, and travelling to the authors' European abodes. Students compare past and present readers of Victorian novels with the nostalgia in the *American Girls* fandom and focus on the Victorian character Samantha Parkington in New York, a heroine of contemporary children's literature. English language learners explore fanfiction and podcasts to discuss their favored books in connection with the Victorian era, modern popular culture, and the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Podcasts encompass a dual function of participatory reading by uniting hosts' literary perusal with the global audience's communal listening. In the EFL classroom, students hereby gain insights and inspiration from transnational participatory cultures, expand their digital literacy, and produce their own creative, multimedia projects

Songs in ELT: A survey on university students' beliefs and their experiences in English lessons

Theresa Summer, Regina Grund, Michelle Zirkel (Bamberg)

The potential of songs in EFL education is increasingly being explored and attested in recent research (e.g., Alisaari & Heikkola 2017, Tegge 2018, Bokiev & Ismail 2021). Yet so far, the focus of corresponding surveys has been on teachers' beliefs and practices. The present study directs the emphasis on university students' views on songs in ELT. By focusing on their previous experiences with songs during their English lessons at school, this study sheds light on songs' actual use in the classroom from former pupils' perspectives and on the potential that they (as future teachers of English) see in them. By means of an online survey on poetry and song lyrics (conducted as a part of an interdisciplinary research project at the University of Bamberg together with Valentin Werner and Manfred Krug), students of English from various universities in Germany reported their experiences with lyrical texts in ELT during their schooldays and their current attitudes towards them.

In this talk, we will focus on the parts of the survey that deal with songs in particular. Items for instance enquired participants' reading and listening habits, how often they were confronted with different types of songs in their English lessons, and how they evaluate the use of songs according to various criteria. After a presentation of the survey results, we will discuss implications for ELT and the role songs might play in future English classrooms.

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