Framing critical perspectives on migration, fairness and belonging through the lens of young people's multilingual digital stories

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Introduction

This chapter explores critical perspectives of young people (7 – 14 years old) on issues of migration, fairness and belonging in three schools across Cyprus, England and Palestine. It seeks to address how young people draw on their full linguistic repertoire to investigate complex questions of identity, integration and inclusion. The multilingual digital stories presented in this chapter were inspired by the students' desire to be viewed in a different light. The young filmmakers wanted to present themselves as people with talents and skills, with individual stories and empathy, as well as thoughtful citizens documenting their identities and cultures. This chapter presents vignettes from three schools that were part of a 5-year project, Critical Connections: Multilingual Digital Storytelling (2012-2017), which worked across schools, homes and communities, but perceived schools as the hub for transformative pedagogy. Young people engaged with digital technology to compose their alternative stories and worked collaboratively to present strong messages of resistance and hope. They explored themes of fairness and belonging through a project-based approach to language learning that fosters learner agency and multilingualism.

The project, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, reflects the work of the foundation with its commitment to innovation and its vision for engaging schools and implementing project-based learning based on four interconnecting layers: placed (the activity is located in a world that the student recognises); purposeful (the activity feels authentic); passion-led (the activity

enlists the outside passions of both students and teachers); and pervasive (the activity enables the student to continue learning outside the classroom) (PHF and Innovation Unit, 2012: 8). Imagining, hypothesising and transforming knowledge lies at the core of our work in multilingual digital storytelling. This chapter will interrogate how young people sought to represent their notions of migration, fairness and belonging and present alternative perspectives on their languages and cultures.

What is multilingual digital storytelling?

Ganley, in her foreword to 'Digital Storytelling: capturing lives, creating community' (Lambert, 2013), writes passionately about the excitement and engagement of her students in digital storytelling and endorses Lambert's notion that 'a healthy community – no matter the setting – is grounded in belonging, in understanding, in plurality' (Ganley, 2013: xi). In discussing digital storytelling, Lambert talks about having agency: 'Being the author of your own life, of the way you move through the world, is a fundamental idea in democracy' (Lambert, 2013: 2). This approach to digital storytelling came out of folk culture, cultural activism and experimental theatre and Lambert (2013) defined digital storytelling as possessing these seven components: self-revelatory, personal or first person voice, a lived experience, photos more than moving images, soundtrack, length and design (under 5 minutes) and intention (process over product). Our project extended these ideas into the field of language learning and collaborative creativity with a greater focus on audience (online, schools and annual film festivals): 'When stories are created in different languages or combinations of languages, they often carry greater cultural authenticity. They also embody and give positive expression to plurilingual repertoires within individuals and societies providing a deeper literacy experience and a basis for greater intercultural respect and

understanding' (Anderson & Macleroy, 2016: 1). We defined multilingual digital storytelling in our project as a short multilingual story (3-5 minutes) made using photographs, moving images, artwork, sculpture, objects, shadow puppetry, stop motion animation, green screen, poetry, dance and drama. Teacher and learner agency were fostered, the stories were told from a personal perspective, and interculturality was a vital component.

Critical Connections: Multilingual Digital Storytelling Project (2012-2017)

This was an international project to enhance literacy in schools using digital storytelling as a means to encourage students to engage with language learning and embrace intercultural literacy as well as digital literacy. The project involved over 1,500 young people, across primary and secondary age ranges (6-18 years old), in creating and sharing digital stories in a bilingual version. The project included over 15 languages: Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Croatian, English (Mother Tongue, English as an Additional Language, English as a Foreign Language), Estonian, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, Tamil and Turkish. Teacher professional development was an integral part of the project and over 50 lead teachers implemented the digital storytelling work in over 30 supplementary and mainstream schools in England, and in six other countries (Algeria, America, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Palestine, Taiwan). The project moved across the following themes: inside out, journeys, fairness and belonging. The multilingual digital stories have been shared within classrooms and schools, across schools, at film festivals and the project website: https://goldsmithsmdst.com/.

Research questions were developed under the following strands: language learning and use; mechanisms for critical engagement; learner autonomy, student voice, social justice and

advocacy; sites of learning; and narrative composition, storytelling and creative pedagogy. The following research questions are addressed in this chapter through 3 vignettes that draw on video recordings of the digital storytelling process, interviews with students and teachers, and three digital stories.

1. How do young people use digital storytelling to embody their languages, cultures, identities and interests?
2. How does multilingual digital storytelling extend notions of literacy and inclusion?

Literature Review

In this section, I explore the theoretical framework for the analysis of the 3 vignettes and focus on perspectives of inclusion, identity, and literacy in the context of multilingual digital storytelling.

Reimagining perspectives on inclusion in multilingual digital storytelling

Inclusion in classrooms is intimately connected with how a child feels in those spaces and whether their ideas are valued and listened to. In articulating her understanding of engaged pedagogy, hooks argues that everyone influences the classroom dynamic and everyone's presence should be acknowledged: 'As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence' (hooks, 1994: 8). Thus, an inclusive classroom needs to be open to young people's languages, cultures and experiences to help them make sense of learning. Sheehy (2013), in thinking about what types of borders are useful and which are not talks about how 'school borders thicken so that more school space and time are devoted to one literacy practice: test preparation' (ibid: 407) and what we should, in fact, be looking at more closely is the migration of ideas, people, and objects across specific school borders.

Therefore, developing a transdisciplinary approach to learning in schools can help learners inhabit these borders and connect their separated worlds. In discussing translanguaging, García (2017) conceptualises the notion of being in the borderlands: 'whether we can let ourselves be open to just being in the borderlands, inclusive borderlands, without being forced to cross borders. Only then will we be able as human beings to experience liberation and creativity, as we bring down the walls that separate us' (ibid: 19).

I would also argue that reimagining perspectives on inclusion sees these borderlands and spaces as complex and messy. Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) in thinking about intercultural being, the politics of languages, and how people make sense of and shape the world, coin the phrase 'messy cultures' and put forward the notion that 'cultures are messy, heavy, people-ridden' (ibid: 61). Their concept of culture is steeped in tradition and experience and ideas of weight, complexity and density, describing culture as 'humming with life' (ibid: 51). This concept of messiness fits with ideas that recognise the contradictions inherent in inclusion and the vibrancy of life. It also recognises the importance of learners being open to uncertainty and questioning their own viewpoints by listening to others: 'to enter other cultures is to re-enter one's own' (Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004: 3). Valuing the different languages, cultures, experiences and stories children embody in all their complexity lies counter to ideas of inclusion around a single fixed literacy. Children are often forced to chase after an illusory fixed literacy that seems distant from their own rich and noisy experience of language in its multivoicedness. School literacy is often about exclusion rather than inclusion as much school-based learning builds on answers and 'falls short of preparing pupils to work innovatively and creatively in processes that involve give and take and openness towards the uncertain' (Nyboe & Drotner, 2008: 173).

In fostering inclusion and collaboration, learners need to be supported to take risks and be given the tools to come up with their own ideas. It is this process of developing ideas and creating collaboratively that students find challenging and demanding. Cremin and Maybin (2013) discuss the importance of students developing 'ideational fluency' and note that there are few studies that explicitly examine young people's 'collaborative construction of new meanings through imagined experience' (ibid, 281). In the process of making multilingual digital stories, young people are asked their opinions on what makes a good digital story and they have to decide collaboratively on what matters to them and look critically at themselves as well as others. In this approach to language learning, empathy and openness are vital and Mercer believes 'it can be powerful for learners to actively imagine other lives through literature, films, role-plays, photos and art' (Mercer, 2016: 104).

In using multilingual digital storytelling to reimagine perspectives on inclusion and carve out spaces for languages, the willingness for classroom teachers and students to take risks, experiment, work collaboratively and learn new skills was at the core of the project's success. This way of working runs counter to current trends in the education system in England where the school curriculum 'does little to foster cross-disciplinary working' (Sefton-Green and Brown, 2014: 9) and 'all sense of process has disappeared by packing excessive content into each school year' (Wrigley, 2014: 35). The danger of this new curriculum in England is that there is no space to include children's messy and complex ideas and it undermines 'critical preparation for democratic citizenship and lacks any sense of the need to involve young people in active debate or inquiry or challenge' (Wrigley, 2014: 35). Multilingual digital storytelling allows young people to define inclusion on their terms.

Reconceptualising identity in multilingual digital storytelling spaces

In reconceptualising identity in multilingual digital storytelling spaces, learner agency was a core principle in the meaning-making process. Darvin & Norton (2014) argue that digital storytelling is a powerful medium for affirming identities for 'migrant learners who traverse transnational spaces and ways of thinking' (p.61). Digital storytelling links with research exploring youth, theatre and the ethical imaginary that looks at how concepts of care and hope can develop young people's broader civic engagement (Kushnir, 2017). With our project's focus on multilingualism and creation of bilingual digital texts, young people had to imagine how to use language in new contexts and negotiate interfaces between different cultural landscapes: 'A key principle underlying the approach has been to allow students to represent themselves and their bilingual/plurilingual repertoires positively through their work' (Anderson & Macleroy, 2017: 8)

In proposing ways to expand our conceptualisation of the goals of language teaching and learning, Leung and Scarino (2016) return to important notions of personal development and aesthetics. They argue that any exchange in communication involves interpreting self and others and examine how the aesthetic 'opens space for exploring the multiplicity of meanings, the openness and uncertainty of the interpretation and creation of meanings, and how historical and cultural references are encoded' (ibid: 89). Thus, in developing as multilingual users, language learners are involved in expressions of imagination, creativity, playfulness, comparison, critical appreciation and meaning-making.

Nyboe and Drotner (2008) use the term ‘competences of complexity’ in relation to creating digital narratives to describe what they see as an aesthetic practice of sense-making, perception and manipulation in which young people push boundaries of themselves and others. Providing space in the digital storytelling process for students to explore, make meaning and represent their multilingual selves was a crucial part of learner agency, creativity and interculturality in the project. This transformative pedagogical approach builds on the work on identity texts (Cummins and Early, 2011) which capture the intercultural and interlinguistic experiences of students and their multiple and fluid identity positions. However, these multilingual identity spaces have to be promoted and fostered across different sites of learning to give students the confidence and desire to express alternative perspectives in and through their languages.

Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) point out languages are an integral part of students’ identities and how they shape their environment and so making space for students’ languages in schools and education becomes a social justice issue. By focusing on encounters, on meaning and on understanding, the concept of “being intercultural” moves beyond language versus culture and beyond the ‘captivities of culture’ (ibid: 168). Students need to be given the courage and confidence to interrogate language and cultural practices. Habib (2017) argues that students should be given the chance to contest cultural traditions and practices. She discusses local and global belongings and how students learn about identity itself: ‘students need a space to interrogate how identities are influenced and affected by social structures too, and how this impacts upon their everyday lives. We can give students the chance to critique cultural mores, as they reflect upon social constraints and challenges for freedom’ (ibid: 144). In making multilingual digital stories, students are given the space to think about how their languages and cultures are perceived by others and interrogate their own identities,

experiences and place in the world. Lambert (2013) recognises the powerful effect of transforming personal stories into film and how this process helps people to imagine other viewpoints and reconceptualise identities: 'the story allows some shifts in perspective about events in our lives, and we believe that those shifts are particularly useful to work in identity' (ibid: 12).

Reshaping literacy in multilingual digital storytelling

Views of literacy are continually evolving, but approaches towards teaching literacy 'have a tendency to revert back to a notion of literacy as a set of technical skills that need to be mastered (Anderson & Obied/Macleroy, 2011: 18). In contrast, I argue here that to become literate means making sense of oral, written, visual and digital forms of expression and communication. In reshaping notions of literacy in multilingual digital storytelling, literacy became entwined with images of movement and physicality. Making the digital stories gave students the freedom to explore outdoor spaces in their representations of migration, fairness and belonging. Connecting literacy with the action of the feet, the freedom to roam, to explore, to get lost and learn to map real and imagined worlds draws on the work of Mackey in her story of learning to be literate where she was 'surprised at a recurring scrap of a nebulous mental image: it always involved feet' (Mackey, 2010: 325). She develops the notion of 'reading from the feet up' and interpreting the world through the action of the feet as 'many children learn to read just at the same time they are beginning to move through their own world more significantly' (ibid: 325). This concept of 'foot knowledge' (ibid: 338) is intricately linked with the way a child learns to move through stories and imagine in multidimensional ways.

In extending concepts of literacy and thinking about the physicality of learning to be literate, Heath (2013) explores the idea of 'the hand of play in literacy learning' and the need for whole-body movement to expand language learning. She connects this view of literacy to language learning for additional languages where role playing and re-enactment improve fluency and advance empathy. As our digital storytelling work developed, drama became a more integral part of our approach to language learning and storying. This links with the work of Alrutz (2015) on digital storytelling, applied theatre and youth where she recognises the power of personal narratives to move people and the power of performance to disrupt systems of power. She explores these connections between digital storytelling and applied theatre and how performing one's personal story matters as it places value on individuals and their experiences and engaging in applied theatre means 'valuing the ideas and input of the participants, emphasizing collaborative discovery and revision, and creating a space for reciprocity between participants, facilitators and audiences of the work' (ibid: 13). In our project, drama became integral to providing space to develop literacy across students' languages in the making of their digital stories.

In our approach to developing literacy in the making of multilingual digital stories, we were inspired by the work of Pahl and Rowsell (2010) on artifactual literacies and we used objects and cultural artefacts to enable students to explore, uncover and tell stories about migration and belonging. Pahl and Escott (2017) use young people's films as a lens for an expanded view of language and literacy and see understandings of literacy as 'moving along a continuum that includes language, visual, together with material, gesture and non-verbal modes of communication (ibid: 4). From this perspective, literacy is bound up with the languages and materials it is formed from and this is transforming how literacy is conceptualised. Mills and Comber (2013) recognise the spatial turn in literacy research with

its shift towards the materiality of lived, embodied and situated experience and how 'material spaces and places shape the identity and literate practices of youth' (ibid: 413).

In making digital stories, young people are learning to work in and across different modes of communication and it is this translation of meaning across multiple modes that expands and extends their literacy. Mills (2016) views this transmediation process as key to understanding how multimodal literacy practices work. Learners have to invent connections across modes and 'choose from multimodal semiotic resources that do not have direct equivalence, thus inviting creativity and transformation (ibid: 68). Transmediation is a complex and challenging literacy process as it involves transforming knowledge by degrees, recognising the limitations and possibilities of the different sign-making systems and learning how to use the tool itself. An added level of complexity for young people in developing their multilingual digital stories is the act of translation. It is in this act of translation that language learning deepens and students grapple with the complexities and ambiguities of their languages and how to make meaning as they move between their languages: 'the creative, human activity of translation is at the heart of languaging and being intercultural' (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004: 149). As well as translating across their languages, young people had to think about audience and how the voice-over would be heard in the target language and the subtitles read and seen on the screen in another language (usually in English).

Narrative approaches to data analysis within a critical ethnography

Our multilingual digital storytelling project was a cross-disciplinary qualitative study in which we adopted a critical ethnographic perspective incorporating a social justice dimension and making links to ecological, collaborative and multimodal perspectives (Anderson &

Macleroy, 2016: 134). Ecological perspectives were important in viewing the educational setting as a hierarchy of nested ecosystems; collaborative perspectives in recognising the importance of incorporating the multiple perspectives of teachers, students, parents and community members; and multimodal perspectives in understanding how different sign systems work together to make meaning (ibid: 140).

The corpora presented here was analysed using narrative and biographical analysis. This allows the researcher to construct a narrative analysis with illuminating quotations from participants. Narrative analysis together with biographical data enables the researcher to focus on key decision points in the story or narrative, critical events, key places, and key experiences. A narrative analysis 'keeps text and context together, retains the integrity of people rather than fragmenting bits of them into common themes and codes and enables evolving situations, causes and consequences to be charted' (Cohen et al, 2017: 665). This approach to analysis views 'narratives as powerful, human and integrated; truly qualitative' (ibid: 665).

The corpora was collected from video recordings and photographs (observing the making of digital stories in schools; presenting digital stories at film festivals; interviews with students, teachers, parents and community members) and documentary materials (school policies; teaching plans and materials; students' work including notes, storyboards; field notes; digital stories in draft and final versions). The Critical Connections pedagogical framework was developed with a 10-stage model across pre-production, production and post-production for embedding digital storytelling within a thematic unit of work. The 10-stage model evolved through trials in different school contexts and regular meetings with project teachers (Anderson & Macleroy, 2016). It should be noted that all the research participants took part

with consent and teachers and schools were named and students acknowledged as filmmakers in the research. This fully funded research project had ethical approval from our university ethics board and signed consent from all research participants that their digital stories, photographs, recorded interviews and film footage could be used for educational purposes.

For most project teachers allowing students to exercise more control over their learning was a major pedagogical shift, but what stood out for these teachers was how students moved beyond their expectations and demonstrated 'increased engagement and depth of learning' (Anderson, 2016: 233). Teachers and students took part in media training and workshops to develop their filmmaking and editing skills. The following 3 vignettes were selected for narrative analysis in response to the research questions as they present strong narratives about how young people perceive and interpret inclusion.

Introduction to the vignettes

These digital stories will be explored as vignettes to illustrate the work of the project and its potential for challenging dominant discourses on migration and displacement. The first Arabic-English digital story, *Young Palestinian Talents,* encourages young people to take pride in their lives, challenging existing stereotyping: 'There is a tendency to show "the other" in specific terms. The Palestinian is often shown to be a victim, or a freedom fighter or a terrorist, but seldom as a normal human being who wants to live and enjoy life to the full' (Teacher, Ealing Arabic School). The second Bulgarian-English digital story, *Question Mark Movie,* challenges the way that adults categorise children as numbers and they argue forcefully to be seen as individual children by their educators. The third Greek-English digital

story, *Irene – a refugee's story* is filmed in Cyprus in a sculpture park and shows how 7-year old children can empathise and imagine stories of migration and loss.

The bilingual digital stories are full of movement, exploration and vitality as young people investigate and represent their environments and think more deeply about being in a place and belonging. Learner agency was a core principle at all stages of the project and as the project expanded the role of drama, media and the arts became more prominent in the making of the digital stories. They were given the time and space to reimagine perspectives on inclusion and the platform to present and exhibit their stories to a wider international audience.

Vignette from Hajjah Rashda El Masri School (a mainstream girls' secondary school in Nablus, Palestine)

Young people were given the freedom to explore complex issues of identity and inclusion from their own standpoint. The Arabic-English digital story *Young Palestinian Talents* was created by 4 teenage girls (14-15 year olds) at their school in Nablus, Palestine. The school was interested in the multilingual digital storytelling project to develop students' skills in English as a foreign language, improve their ability in storytelling, and empower and encourage the girls to become more confident in expressing themselves in English. Reem, a lead Arabic teacher on the project in London, forged the link with the girls' school in Nablus, her childhood city. The girls who were involved in the project wanted to position young Palestinians in a different light, not framed as the victim or trapped. Reem commented that although the girls involved in the project had all been 'subjected to the hardship of life under occupation; they still reflected a part of them that celebrated hope despite the difficulties and hardship' (Teacher, EAS). Reem describes the talent, imagination and resilience of the

students to make their film as truly amazing and ‘a brilliant document of what was happening on the ground at that time’ (Teacher, EAS). In making their digital story, the girls wanted Palestinians to be seen as ordinary people with talents and desires. They captured this emotion and reflected a confident and exuberant side of their nature.

Young Palestinian Talents opens with a collage of photos and the voice-over in English: ‘Each Palestinian has a dream, a talent that he wishes to be real’. The girls then shift the focus to their lives: ‘Each one of us has her own story and her own adventure with her talent so let’s start the journey of our young Palestinian talents by telling you about us’. The girls choose to film outside in a park overlooking Nablus where a noisy background adds to the rough, authentic nature of the footage. This digital story is full of movement, colour and life. In their search for young Palestinians with talents they uncover the way people make art in and around the margins of a city. The film shifts to a young unicyclist performing tricks in a deserted yard with a high wall and with background music adding to the upbeat mood. As the story moves through the landscape the girls discover more talents and the film shifts seamlessly into Arabic when they share the poetry, rap and songs of young Palestinians. A young Palestinian performs a rap he has written in Arabic about injustice in Palestine, collective responsibility and standing up for your rights. He moves though the urban landscape with graffiti as his backdrop and the strong rhythm of rap in his footsteps. The digital story ends outside in the park with the strong message that young Palestinian talents need to be nurtured and cared for and their stories heard by a wider audience.

Figure 1: Screen shot of the Arabic-English digital story *Young Palestinian Talents*

Young Palestinian Talents was exhibited in the film festival in London in 2014 under the theme of journeys. In Skype interviews with the students in 2018, carried out by the lead Arabic teacher in England, they reflected upon making the film: 'The idea came to us when we were walking … you hear a beautiful voice or you see someone who has some talent and they do not receive their just recognition and cannot show their talent' (Student, HRMS). One of the students talked about how making the digital story changed her personality, her experience and perception of herself and another student viewed it as an exceptional film that showcased their goal to show young Palestinians in a different way. Another student added: 'This was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. I was very enthusiastic and motivated and very much enjoyed making the film'. Finally, a student captured the experience in two words: 'confidence and courage'.

The narrative analysis of *Young Palestinian Talents* demonstrates how students have made the key decision to take literacy outside the classroom and present their culture as 'humming with life' (Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004). These students were critical of the way their culture has been 'othered' and in joining an international community of storytellers wanted to 'be allowed room to express themselves in resistance to the dominant cosmopolitan imagination' (Holliday, 2011: 12).

Vignette from Shkolo Vasil Levski (a Bulgarian complementary school in London)

The Bulgarian-English digital story *Question Mark Movie* is striking in the way the young people have confidence and courage to interrogate the concept of belonging. The 10 young people involved in making this film in 2017 were different ages (10 – 14 years old) and included 9 girls and one boy. In an interview I carried out at the Bulgarian School in 2018 the students reflected upon the process and how they looked 'deep into the word' and what it actually means to belong here and to belong to yourself. Milena, the headteacher, explained how the students discussed belonging from different angles and points of view and that in Bulgarian a person would say: 'I am Bulgarian, not I belong to Bulgaria'. The students believed the hardest challenge in making the digital story was to get the main point across to the audience and show the audience what you were thinking. Iva, one of the older students, talks about the title of the film *Question Mark Movie* and the main question: 'who are we?' She thinks they took a risk in framing the main message as a question and they were 'scared in a way … to get the point out'. The main message that they wanted to present to the audience was that young people should not be labelled for what they like and what they are good at; they do not have to be in different groups because of their interests and hobbies. Mirela and Stefani, the two sisters, explained how in the making of the digital story, the students learned about other people's talents and thought about how they bonded together in

the same group: ‘as we’re all friends and even ages don’t matter to us, we get everyone’s ideas and then mix them together to make the best cake ever’.

Figure 2: Students editing for the Bulgarian-English digital story *Question Mark Movie*

The digital story opens in silence with a large question mark that fills the screen. The next shot is of a 12-year-old girl, Alexandra, pacing around a backyard on her own and being introduced by the numbers that define her and then hanging about with a friend throwing small pebbles into a river. The Bulgarian voice-over and subtitles in English continue with the narrative of numbers and as the film shifts inside Alexandra is seen typing at a computer: ‘Sometimes I think that I’m just a number surrounded by loads of other numbers … Numbers, numbers, numbers. My head can’t fit them all in’. The digital story has a strong pace and rhythm and it is full of movement and vibrancy. As well as critiquing the way children are divided and controlled, the students show their energy, skills and creativity. The film includes scenes of students playing music, sport/gymnastics, dance and art. The students wanted to include a scene with dance steps from Bulgarian folk dancing ‘as it shows what our country is about … although it’s a small country we still have a big heart’. They described why they included art: ‘it really expresses our feelings when we’re drawing’ and in the scene they are drawing a typical Bulgarian house from a village (figure 4).

The young people in making this Bulgarian-English digital story are learning how to frame and present their ideas. They talk about the importance for 'children to be free outside and play with their friends' and how movement is 'how your personality forms'. They understand how the different camera angles change the mood of a story and how to use space and movement to communicate the main message. The young people discussed their ideas in depth in Bulgarian, improvised the scenes, edited the film, wrote the final script in Bulgarian for the voice-over, and translated the script into English for the subtitles step by step and frame by frame, changing the words around to make meaning. The film ends with the powerful message: 'Adults, please remember!!! We are not numbers!! We are only kids'.

The narrative analysis of *Question Mark Movie* reveals how key decisions were made collaboratively fostering an inclusive pedagogical approach to learning (hooks, 1994). The students reflected: 'we all gave in our ideas, even if someone didn't like something but someone else freely liked it, we tried to work with it so everyone gets an equal part in it. We worked well together and everyone was listening to everyone's ideas, so we didn't really argue, we tried to make compromises and all get what we wanted'. The analysis of critical events in the digital story demonstrates how these students wanted to counter the dominant school narrative of numbers, competition and test preparation (Sheehy, 2013). In making *Question Mark Movie* the students moved across borders of languages, spaces and friendships, cultivated an ideational fluency (Cremin & Maybin, 2013), and created a deeply collaborative perspective on inclusion.

Vignette from the Second Primary School of Liopetri, Cyprus

The Greek-English digital story *Irene – a refugee's story* is a strong example of how young children (aged 7-8 years old) can imagine, empathise and represent the complex emotions embodied in the stories of refugees. The name, Irene, means peace in Greek and the young children in making the digital story explore what it means to be constantly on the move and not belong anywhere. The children came up with the idea that Irene was lost in the sculpture park and they would map out her journey through the landscape. The open air sculpture park has sculptures created by sculptors from around the world and it's located in a rocky landscape with the sea as a backdrop. The young children take their story outside to the Ayia Napa sculpture park and their interaction with the sculptures forms the backbone of their story.

In the making of this digital story, the children were learning how to tell a story from different viewpoints and perspectives and understand more literary, poetic language. Sotia, the primary school teacher had a research background in bidialectism and she opened up the space on the project to explore the concept of a refugee in the Cypriot Dialect and translate and adapt the ideas into Modern Standard Greek in the filming process. In viewing the young children's language varieties as on a continuum, Sotia was able to use the Cypriot Dialect to deepen the children's understanding and their linguistic repertoire. Chryso, the project drama tutor with a research background in applied theatre and citizenship, worked in close collaboration with Sotia and the children to devise a way into the story of a refugee. In an interview in 2018, Sotia reflected: 'it was really impressive how 7-year-old students engaged so actively in the making of the story bringing constantly new ideas to the table. Students collaborated creatively and critically to produce their story using all of all their available linguistic resources'.

In thinking about how to explore the idea of belonging Sotia discovered an educational resource designed for 5-8 year olds on the website of the UNHCR United Nations Refugee Agency for Cyprus. This was an animated Greek adaptation of a German children's story, *Karlinchen* by Annegert Fuchshuber (1995). The children engaged in watching part of the animated story about a young girl who is a refugee, but not the ending. The poetic language is moving and sad and there are images and echoes from this story that emerge in the story the young children created in the sculpture park. The young girl in the original story wears a brown coat and a red scarf and encounters different characters along the way, including the Stone Eaters.

Irene – a refugee's story opens with a shot of a young girl's feet walking through the rocky landscape. The image of walking predominates the action in the digital story and the young girl's experience of not belonging anywhere. There were several students who wanted to play the young refugee, Irene, and this was resolved by the young children in an ingenious way. Almost seamlessly, the different girls interchanged in the role as the young refugee but always wore a signifying brown coat and pink scarf. This deepened their empathy and understanding of how anyone could be forced to go through these experiences. The children were aware of the obstacles and barriers that a young refugee would face and in the first encounter the sculpture acts as a gateway and you only see the hands of the boy as he asks: 'what does a child want here alone?' Irene enters the land of the Enchanted Sculptures and the story unfolds through the interaction with the sculptures that take on different voices and characters. This creates a powerful and moving story as Irene is overwhelmed at times by the size of the sculptures and the growing sense that she does not belong there: 'No one likes me because I came from another country and I'm different'. In the children's creation of the story, Irene is searching for her parents and she is told she will find them in the Land of the

Frightened Refugees. The children decided to use a sculpture of two figures huddled in an embrace to represent the parents standing still and terrified. A hug, a hand reaching out, become symbols of hope but the fear remains. The story ends with the words: 'However, she never stopped being frightened'.

Figure 3: Making the digital story *Irene – a refugee's story* in the Ayia Napa sculpture park

The narrative analysis of *Irene – A refugee's story* shows key decisions that students made in constructing their migration narrative. At the end of their story there is hope in the hand reaching out, however, in contrast with *Karlinchen* written by an adult for children and having the typical happy ending, these young children in *Irene – A refugee's story* represent a deep empathy with the sadness and trauma embodied in the refugee experience. In a self-recorded review of the narrative, a student reflected upon this critical event: 'I would like to add that Irene was very sad and that fear never left her'. In making *Irene – a refugee's story*

the students have taken their story into the local landscape, walked in the footsteps of their character (Mackey, 2010), and developed a deeply empathetic perspective on inclusion.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how young people use digital storytelling to embody their languages, cultures, identities and interests. A narrative analysis of the digital stories demonstrated how young people wanted the space to express themselves in resistance to dominant narratives of 'othering', competition and exclusion. Digital storytelling is connected with ideas of hope, justice and compassion and in constructing alternative narratives 'perhaps digital storytelling is trying to call new communities into being' (Hartley, 2017: 221). This was reflected in the way these young people chose to become part of a multilingual community of digital storytellers. In making their digital stories, these students drew on their full linguistic repertoire and made key decisions about how their languages would be included and represented. Narrative analysis of critical events in their digital stories demonstrated how these students had repositioned themselves in relation to their own cultures and the culture of others (Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004). The analysis of key experiences represented in the digital stories demonstrated how these young people were pushing boundaries of themselves and others (Nyboe & Drotner, 2008) and developing 'competences of complexity' in relation to their identities, others' identities and belonging to a community.

This chapter also examined how multilingual digital storytelling extends notions of literacy and inclusion. Narrative and biographical analysis of the digital stories revealed that these young people constructed stories that mattered to them and their collaborative narratives were not simply 'story for story's sake' (Hartley, 2017). The narrative analysis of key places in the

digital stories showed how digital storytelling permeated school borders and how material spaces and places shaped the literate experiences of these young people (Mills and Comber, 2013). As well as engaging in the multiliteracies' process of transmediation (Mills, 2016) and learning to make meaning across multiple modes, these young people were making decisions about their languages and reflecting on the extent their languages are included in school settings.

Project-based experiential learning has the potential to open up spaces for young people's languages and cultures in school (Anderson et al., 2014). The students in Palestine presented their culture in an upbeat and creative way; the Bulgarian students in England began to understand what it means to belong in two languages and two cultures (Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004); the students in Cyprus used translanguaging in Cypriot Greek and Modern Standard Greek to enhance their meaning-making processes (García, 2009) and ideational fluency. In becoming more critically aware of how their languages and cultures are included in school contexts and wider society and more insightful of dominant narratives about education and migration these young people were able to frame alternative narratives on what it means to belong in school classrooms and beyond.

Project website

https://goldsmithsmdst..com/

Multilingual digital stories in the three vignettes

Young Palestinian Talents https://vimeo.com/138513881

Question Mark Movie: https://vimeo.com/220131613

Irene- A refugee's story: https://vimeo.com/219229870

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