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Critical Connections:

Multilingual Digital Storytelling Project

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Workshop 1 - Introduction

Critical Connections Research Context (2012-ongoing)

Over 2,000 children in a digital storytelling community.

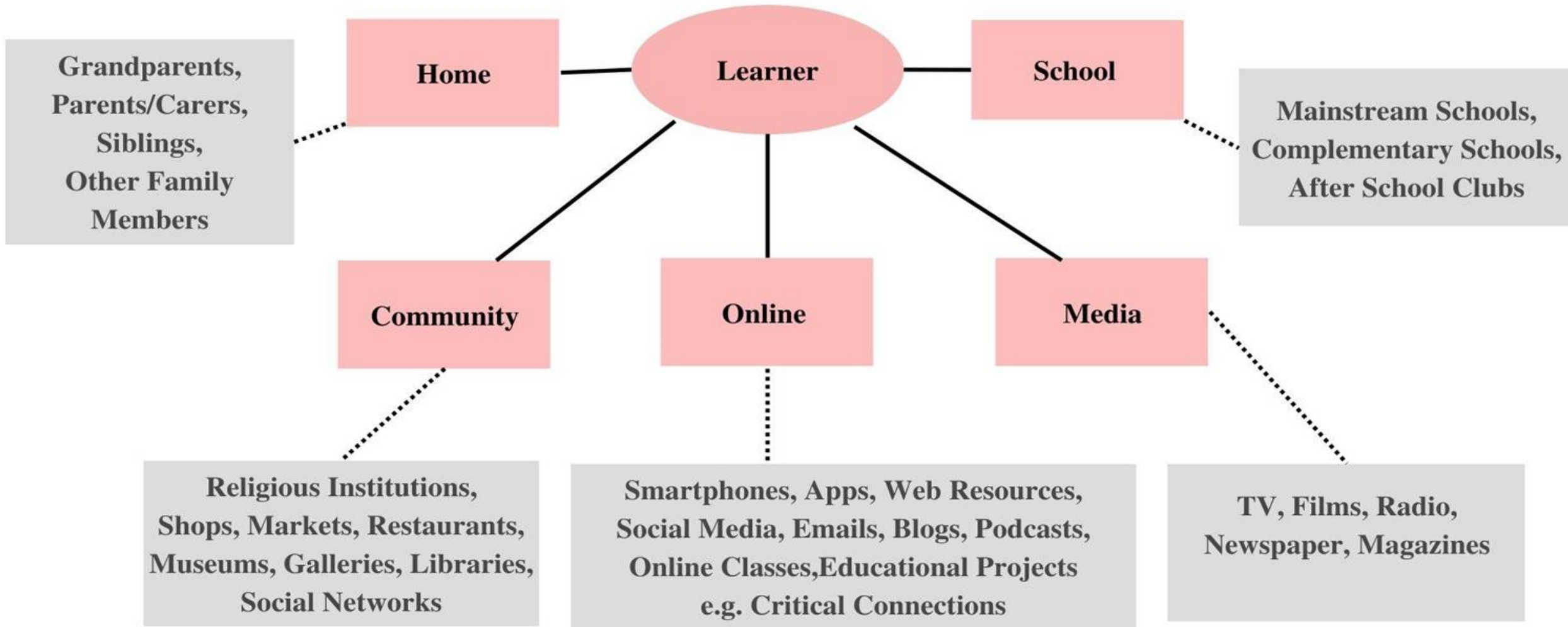In over 50 primary, secondary and complementary schools around the globe.

In 17 countries (Algeria, Australia, Brazil, Cyprus, Egypt, England, Germany, India, Italy, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Palestine, Scotland, Taiwan, Turkey, U.S.A., Wales) from 2012.

In over 44 languages:

Albanian, Arabic, Bahasa Melayu, Bengali, Bulgarian, Cantonese Chinese, Chaldean, Croatian, English, Cypriot Greek, Estonian, Farsi, Filipino (Tagalog), French, Georgian, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Kiswahili, Kurdish, Ladin, Latin, Malay, Malayalam, Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Persian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Semai, Slovakian, Somali, South Tyrolean dialect, Spanish, Tamil, Taiwanese, Telegu, Turkish, Ukrainian and Vietnamese (with either voice-over or subtitles in English).

Sites of Learning

Grandparents, Parents/Carers, Siblings, Other Family Members

Home

Learner

School

Mainstream Schools, Complementary Schools, After School Clubs

Community

Online

Media

Religious Institutions, Shops, Markets, Restaurants, Museums, Galleries, Libraries, Social Networks

Smartphones, Apps, Web Resources, Social Media, Emails, Blogs, Podcasts, Online Classes, Educational Projects e.g. Critical Connections

TV, Films, Radio, Newspaper, Magazines

Connecting sites of learning

' … learning crosses the school gates and extends to the outer world to include families and communities. Research in recent decades has provided a wealth of evidence showing the importance of parental interest and support for their children's learning including literacy and language development' (Anderson et al. , 2014, p. 83).
https://goldsmithsmdst.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/critical-connections-handbook_web.pdf

Elfi Troi (Herz Jesu Institut, Italy) poses the following question and shares some ideas.

- What possibilities can schools offer so that family members can support the students' language learning during the digital storytelling project?

Maybe some special language days or projects where parents or family members are invited as language experts (introducing the heritage language and teaching some basic vocabulary to arouse curiosity for the language). They could give short taster classes in their language.

Examples of language taster classes: https://www.meits.org/media/taster-classes

Multiple Sites of Learning

1. **Sites of learning:**
   Connecting the local community, family, school, online and offline.

2. **Researching, planning and taking challenge** (Pre-production)

3. **Making enquiries and problem solving** (Production)

4. **Becoming young multilingual activists** (Post-production)

# The Sound that Transcends Time and Space

Comments from the students and the teacher
- Reconnection with the local community

'It is wonderful that our film will be watched by people around the world. Our global audience would be able to participate what we have seen, heard and felt.   Then the traditional Taiwanese culture wouldn't be forgotten.'   (Student)

'The drum team has been established for 16 years, and it is a tradition in our school. However, we have never explored the history and manufacturing process of drums, even though there is a drum factory in our community. I think it would be a great idea to combine this year's theme "Root" and take the children on a project to discover our roots. This project truly connects the children's learning with school, family and community. We started from local but then are able to present it to the world.'
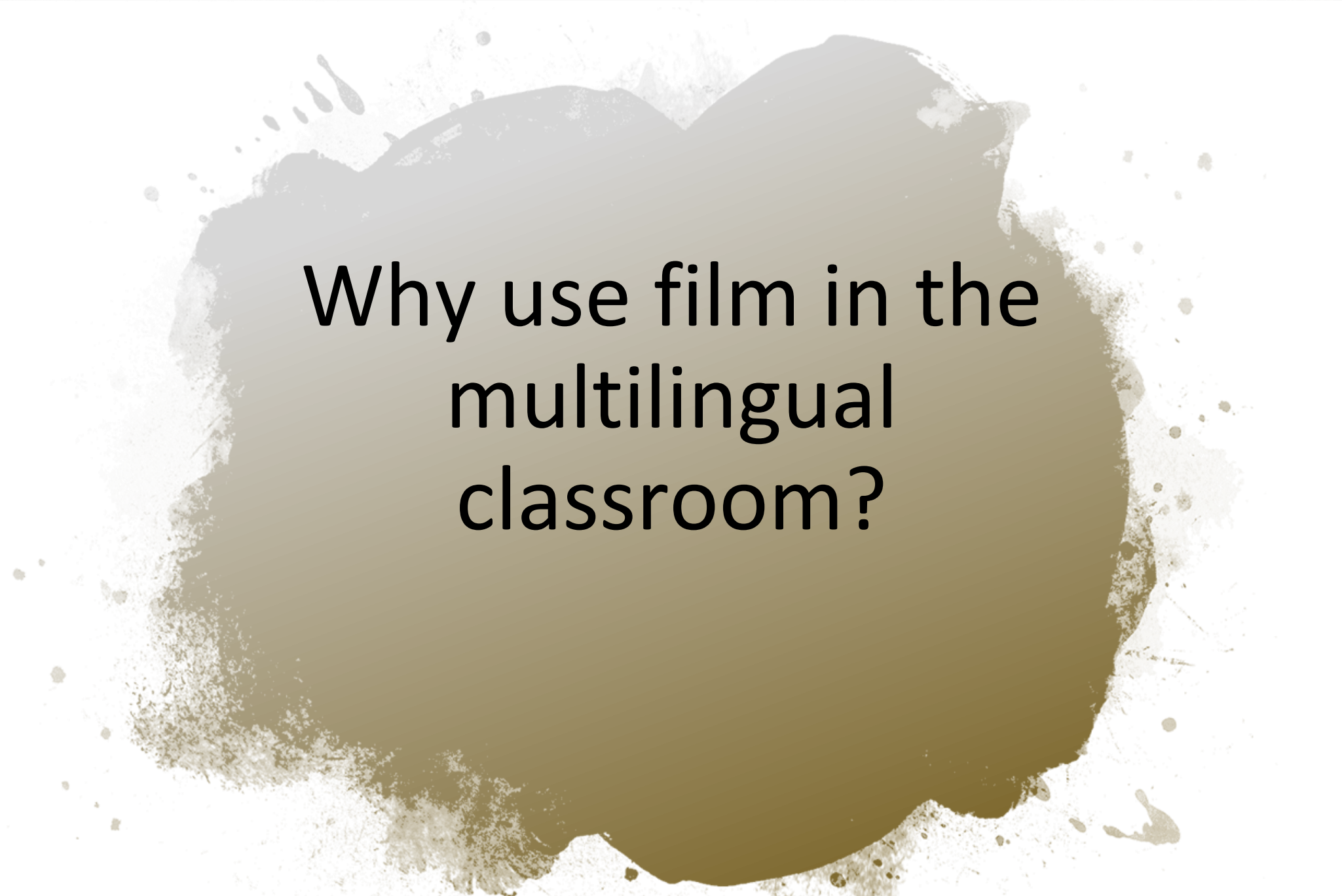(Lead Teacher)
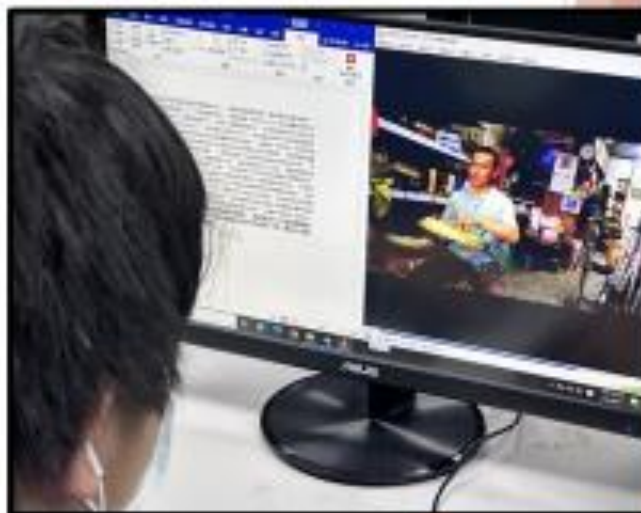
Critical Connections Research Process

How can the Critical Connections MDST project make change happen?

- Supporting multilingual repertories (whether first or second; foreign or heritage languages).

- Understanding young people's digital stories are creative, but also critical of the status quo.

- Challenging the lack of imagination and time given in our current educational systems to local languages and cultures.

- Recognising project-based learning as a key way to open spaces for multilingualism.

- Seeing schools as the stepping off point to provide resources and structures for project-based learning to happen.

- Acknowledging communities, both offline and online, can provide real audiences and feedback for students' work.

- Opening up opportunities for activist citizenship.

- Valuing children's multilingualism as vital to their sense of identity and well-being and the way they learn and access the curriculum.

Anderson, J. & Macleroy, V. (2021) What is a multilingualism activist? Multilingual moves: Changing the mindset of teachers and policy makers. In A. de Medeiros & D. Kelly (Eds) *Language Debates,* pp 173-184, London: John Murray Learning.

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Why use film in the multilingual classroom?

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What might you use?

How to choose?

Trailers
Short films
Feature films (extracts or bit by bit)
Film music
Songs/Poetry/Rhymes/Jokes
Speeches
Picture books/Comics/
Graphic novels/Novels

Motivation
Exploration
Comparison
Stimulus
Memory aid
Context/Theme
Narrative
Language

Critical Connections in relation to current directions in language pedagogy

- Critical Connections is a multilingual project which values and respects all languages and language varieties as well as their relationship to culture.

- It brings together foreign, first, second and heritage languages.

- It prioritises learner agency, co-construction of knowledge and active citizenship.

- It draws on intercultural, interdisciplinary (CLIL / PBLL) and multiliteracies pedagogy.

- It involves creative use of technology for global communication.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging: When students are allowed to make use of all their linguistic knowledge to complete a task this is referred to as translanguaging. This can include discussing a task in one language while actually carrying out the task in another. (E.g. talking to a partner in L1 about the task being completed in L2), making use of more than one language to get a message across, or gathering information in one (or more) language(s) to be made into a presentation in another language. Teachers should be prepared to make space for other languages, as this will enrich the overall language learning experience.

Keaveney, S. and Lundberg, G. (2014), *Early Language Learning and Teaching: Pre-A1-A2*. Utbildningshuset/Studentlitteratur. Sweden.

Critical Connections and the development of students' language awareness

- CC offers a valuable opportunity for students to gain a conscious understanding of the nature of language and a curiosity about words and the stories contained within them.

- CC recognises the value of translanguaging and the complex process of translation to create bilingual scripts.

Given the wide range of languages represented in the project there is much scope for:

- **language comparison**
- **learning about different writing systems**
- **becoming aware of how languages change and influence each other**
- **appreciating personal, emotional, multisensory and cultural aspects of language**

Multilingual language learning

- bilingual scripting activity
- explaining meaning of some words/concepts (e.g. subject based terminology)
- enhancing communication (taking account of cultural aspects, playfulness, humour, etc)
- language/cultural awareness / broader literacy activities
- pair/group work interactions between students?
- some classroom management situations

Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) - 1

Project-based language learning is an approach that focuses on acquiring language skills and proficiency through the completion of real-world projects or tasks. This method is particularly effective for language learners as it provides context and purpose for language acquisition. Here are some key features of project-based language learning:

1. **Authentic Context**: Projects are designed to mimic real-life situations, making the language use more authentic and relevant. Learners use language skills in a practical way to complete tasks.

2. **Student-Centred:** Learners take an active role in selecting and designing projects based on their interests and goals. This promotes a sense of ownership and motivation in the learning process.

Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) - 2

3. Interdisciplinary: Projects often integrate language learning with other subjects or skills, such as science, history, or technology. This approach provides a holistic learning experience.

4. **Task-Based Learning**: Language skills are developed as a means to accomplish specific tasks or goals within the project. Learners acquire language naturally while trying to achieve project objectives.

5. Cultural Awareness: Projects may include elements of the culture associated with the target language. This helps learners gain insights into the cultural nuances of the language.

6. Collaboration: Project-based language learning often involves teamwork, requiring learners to collaborate, negotiate, and communicate effectively in the target language.
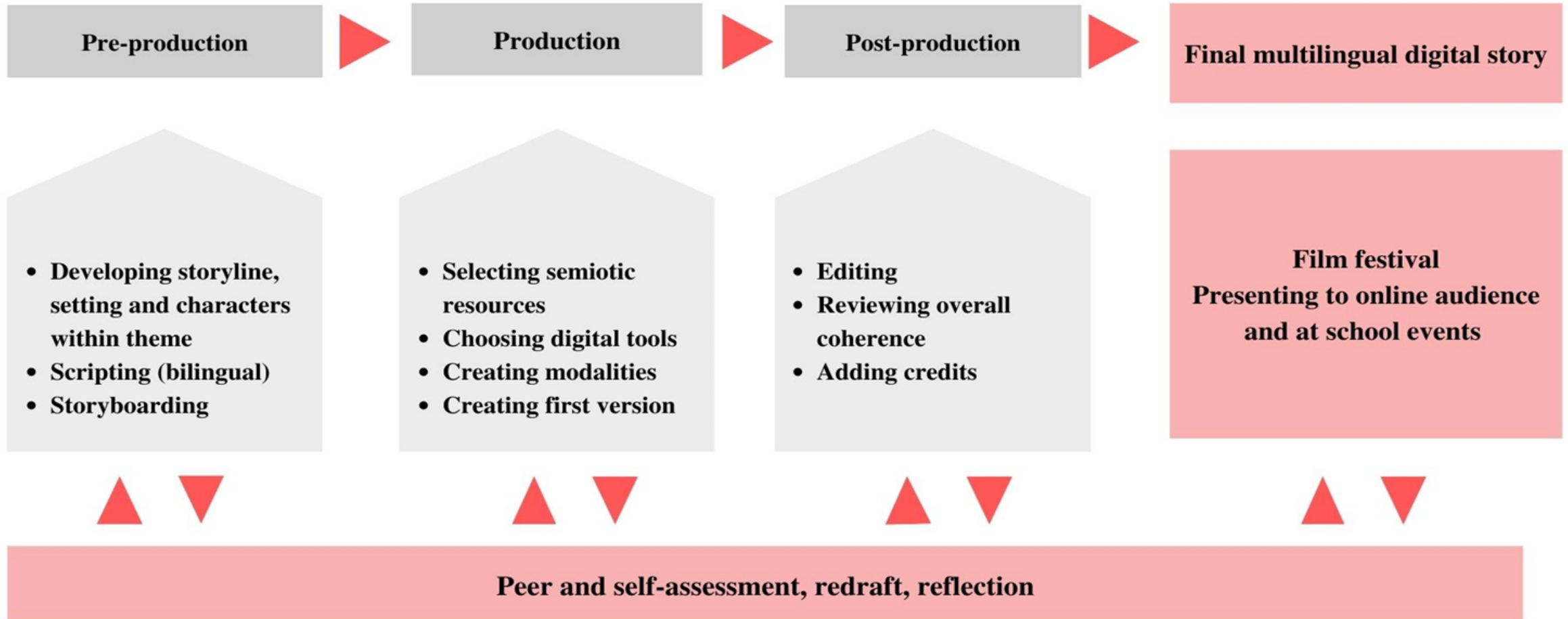
Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) - 3

7. Problem-Solving: Learners encounter real-world problems and challenges during project execution, which encourages critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the target language.

8. Flexibility: Projects can vary in length and complexity, allowing for adaptation to learners' proficiency levels and available resources.

9. Motivation and Engagement: Learners are generally more motivated and engaged in project-based learning because they see the direct application of language skills to real-life situations.

10. Feedback and Reflection: The process often includes regular feedback and opportunities for learners to reflect on their language development and project experiences.

Key Stages in the Filmmaking Process

Pre-production	▶	Production	▶	Post-production	▶	Final multilingual digital story

Pre-production
- Developing storyline, setting and characters within theme
- Scripting (bilingual)
- Storyboarding

Production
- Selecting semiotic resources
- Choosing digital tools
- Creating modalities
- Creating first version

Post-production
- Editing
- Reviewing overall coherence
- Adding credits

Final multilingual digital story

Film festival
Presenting to online audience and at school events

Peer and self-assessment, redraft, reflection

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Planning steps in pre-production

- Introducing multilingual digital storytelling project (aims, timescale, audience)

- Multilingual dimension (make students aware that this filmmaking process is about exploring critical connections between languages and how their languages and cultures can be represented in their digital stories)

- Showing and discussing examples of digital stories including how screens are designed so that images, text and sound each contribute to overall meaning (ref. 'What makes a good digital story?' activity – see workshop 2)

- Organisation of groups – Focus on effective teamwork. Students may rotate roles or take on multi-roles in the film-making process.

See 'Handbook for Teachers' - Chapter 2 (Simple steps and tools, pp. 19-30)

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Planning Approaches

Overview Plan
Includes the broad aims and outcomes of the unit, cross-curricular links, and means of evaluation.

Mapping Plan
Mapping content learning objectives and main activities. Identifying specific language functions and thinking skills and then key structures and subject-specific vocabulary and terminology.

Detailed Plan
Teacher and student activities (including review procedures)

See 'Handbook for Teachers' - Chapter 5 - Planning Approach and Templates, pp. 45-52

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Timescale of the Project

Preparation

Think carefully about how you will fit the project into your educational setting and discuss with others.

Decide on the age and number of students to work with on the project.

Complete the consent forms with students (signed by students and parents/carers)

Project

Discuss with other lead educators time allocated to the project. Students will probably need at least 12 – 14 hours to prepare, plan and film their digital stories. Timings will vary across schools depending on the filmmaking process. Animation needs more time.

Reflections

Students require time at the end of the project to reflect on the learning process and the multilingual digital stories presented at the film festival.

See 'Handbook for Teachers' - Chapter 5 - Planning Approach and Templates, pp. 45-52

Design Principles for MDST
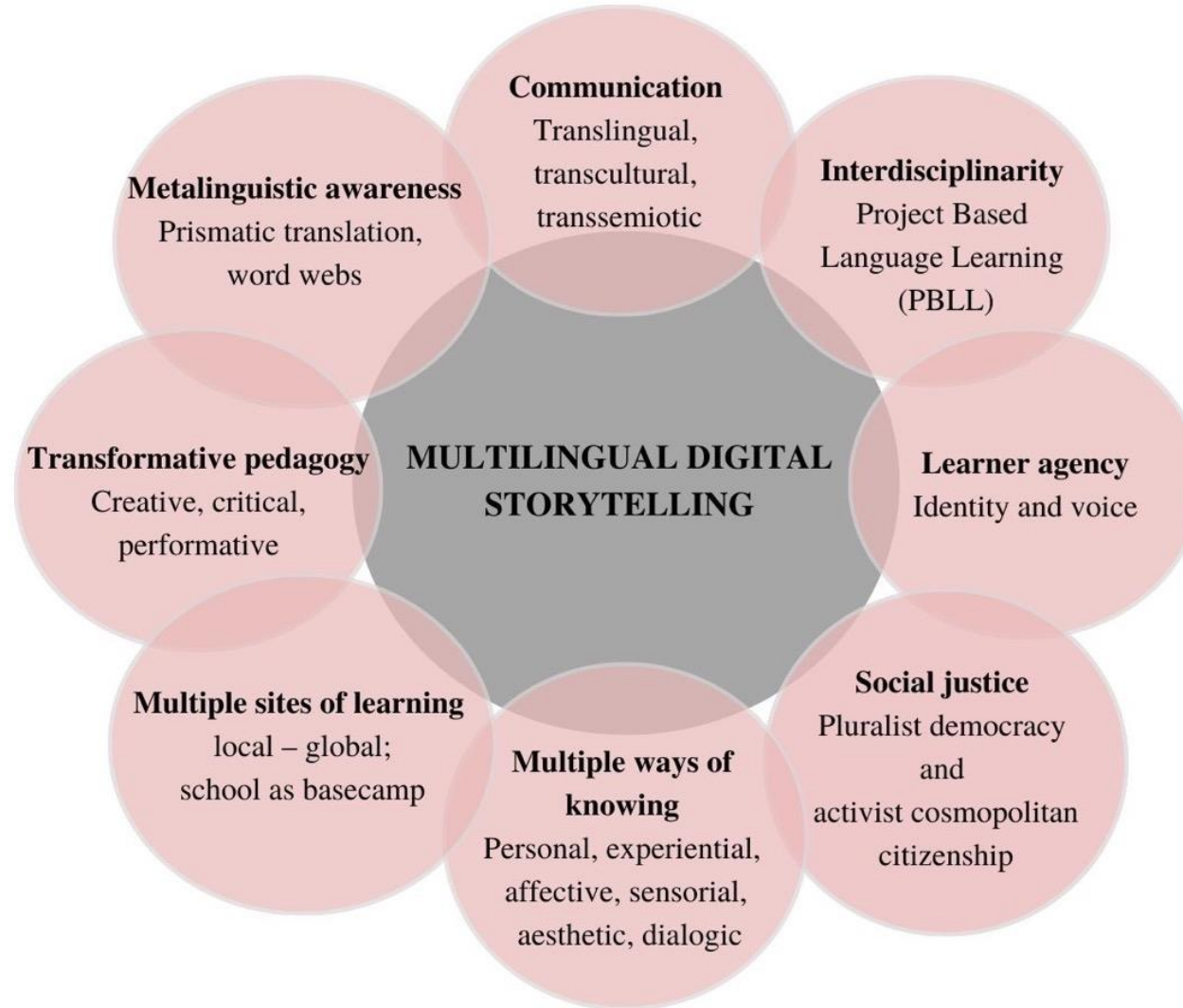
Digital Storytelling

The California-based Center for Digital Storytelling, directed by Joe Lambert (now known as StoryCenter) founded the digital storytelling movement in 1993. Digital storytelling became linked with an emergent movement of media justice and media activism. Digital storytelling is viewed as a form of activist citizenship and a digital tool to explore lived experiences and create stories that matter.

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' (p. 2).

Lambert, J. (2013) *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (4th edn).New York: Routledge.

Story Center (Listen Deeply, Tell Stories) – short film of its origins:
https://www.storycenter.org/history

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Social justice and intercultural citizenship

There are important parallels between fostering social justice and developing intercultural citizenship. Both concepts promote critically in that educators enable students to reflect critically on language, discourse, and culture with regard to power and inequality.

(Byram and Wagner, 2018: 147)

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Celebrating multilingualism

„Niemand ist einsprachig" (Brigitta Busch, 2012).

'Nobody is monolingual'.

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Critical Connections Project Team

Key features
- Building confidence
- Emphasising process and collaboration
- Developing partnerships with different schools
- Including parents and community members

Watch the introduction to the Critical Connections project that was created by film and media students (16–18-year-olds) at Elstree UTC during the second phase of the project. Add your own points and ideas.
https://vimeo.com/170820764

See the Critical Connections Team members: https://goldsmithsmdst.com/project-team-2022-23/