

Two-Day Online Symposium: Born-digital literature in the Foreign Language Classroom

Friday, 25/02/2022 — Saturday, 26/02/2022

We invite researchers and teachers of foreign languages at all levels to participate in a two day symposium on ‘born digital’ literature in language learning contexts. Born-digital texts are those created and existing exclusively in digital spaces which cannot be fully converted to print. In addition, born-digital literature may only exist for a limited time in a digital space, and so the texts themselves are ephemeral (Selfe & Hawisher, 2012). Born-digital literature, and our interactions with it, differs from traditional printed forms of literature in a variety of ways. In this symposium we are interested in exploring how such texts are being used in contemporary language learning contexts. Literature and language teaching are sometimes separate areas of research and practice (Paran, 2008), and to bridge this divide, we invite talks from both research and theory based approaches, as well as practical applications.

The main aim of this symposium is to continue conversations about the role of born-digital texts in the contemporary foreign language classrooms. This is motivated in part by our recognition that born-digital literature offers opportunities for learners to connect their ‘in-the-wild’ reading and interactions with literature with their language learning. In an earlier event we invited talks on born-digital texts (broadly defined), and this time we would like to continue the investigation to look at varieties of creative texts (which we consider to be literature). Born-digital literature can be narratives appearing in written or multimodal form, i.e. apps, television/film, podcasts and of course online social media content. Learners may be viewing or reading the literature and creating their own digital artifacts, learning to read critically or developing personal responses to literature (CEFR, 2018). The potential for contemporary learners to interact with born-digital texts can be investigated by analysing and discussing how language is used in creative and critical interactions with literature. Language learners are already engaged in interactions with narratives and creative works daily but may not perceive it as language learning. For example, following favourite sports personalities on social media or interacting with a fan community. Ephemeral narratives created for a short time in the style of social media ‘stories’ are examples of born-digital texts, whose very structure shapes the interaction. The symposium aims to explore the kind of digital literature that emerges in digitally mediated communication (in the classroom and beyond the classroom).

The two-day format will feature short talks and workshops allowing participants to exchange ideas about born-digital literature and language learning. We expect that each session will be 20 minutes long with 10 minutes for discussion. For those interested in presenting a workshop or a spotlight talk (45 minutes), please contact us with your idea explaining why the talk would be suited to a longer time-slot. The symposium will start with a focused talk, addressing key questions around the study and use of born-digital literature. The event will conclude with a session open to all participants.

The two broad topics for the symposium are:

- a) using and creating digital-born literature (fanfiction, digital stories, diaries, video projects, podcasts, etc.) in language learning contexts
- b) analysing born-digital literature (stories/poems, film/short film, TV, art, photography, mixed media) through critical reading, reader-response, audience theory and related theories of language acquisition

How to join the symposium:

If you would like to participate in the symposium, please send us an email by 15/11/2021 to: borndigitalliterature@gmail.com. Your submission should include: name, institution, email address as well as a working title (max. 10 words), an abstract (250max.), and a short bio (50 words max.). Presentations can discuss teaching any foreign language, but we ask that the presentations be delivered in English. Your presentation should address one or several of the following key questions:

- In what ways can the use and creation of born-digital literature be facilitated in language learning contexts?
- How can the analysis of born-digital texts be integrated into the second/foreign language classroom?
- How can we build inclusive and creative classrooms using born-digital literature?
- How do learners engage with born-digital literature (and how does this differ from using textbooks or other print media)?
- How are language learners using narrative such as social media stories for their own language learning, and what is the significance that these texts are ephemeral?
- What is the role of collaborative analysis/writing when working with born-digital literature?
- What are some examples of best practices when working with born-digital literature?
- How might born-digital texts fit with courses using the CEFR (2018) descriptors i.e. mediating texts, reading as a leisure activity, expressing a personal response to literature and analysis and criticism of creative texts?
- What is the role of fan fiction in contemporary language learning contexts?
- What kinds of learning can occur when learners engage with born-digital literature in the 'digital wilds' beyond the classroom?
- How might interactions with stories and narratives which exist online help us look after our own well-being and that of our students?

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the symposium will take place online using Zoom. Registered participants and presenters will receive an invitation with a link before the symposium. The contributions to the symposium are intended to be collected in an edited volume after the event.

Thank you for your submissions and contributions.

Organisers:

Tara McIlroy
Christian Ludwig
Saskia Kersten
Luke Draper