

# Dialogic Argumentative Interaction Environments for the Development of Cultural Literacy Dispositions of Inclusion, Tolerance and Empathy

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## RESUM

DIALLS té com a objectiu l'alfabetització cultural dels joves en l'educació formal a través del diàleg i de l'argumentació com a mitjà per entendre les identitats i les cultures europees. La novetat de la proposta rau en la intersecció d'alfabetització cultural, multimodalitat, diàleg i argumentació, i mitjançant l'ús d'entorns d'aprenentatge presencials i en línia on els estudiants poden compartir les seves perspectives les seves diferents cultures a Europa. Els estudiants respondran i produiran textos multimodals que reflecteixin els patrimonis europeus que promouen la tolerància, inclusió i empatia com a disposició fonamental de l'alfabetització cultural. Portarem a terme anàlisis de les interaccions cara a cara a l'aula, i en línia entre aules de diferents escoles i de diferents països. Les anàlisis comparatives de les aules de set països inclouran l'anàlisi de gènere, edat, ètnia, etc.. Les nostres eines innovadores d'ensenyament i avaluació orientaran els professors en el desenvolupament d'una pedagogia dialògica per a l'alfabetització cultural a Europa de demà.

## PARAULES CLAU

Alfabetització cultural, argumentació, pedagogia dialògica, multimodalitat, dispositions democràtiques

## ABSTRACT

DIALLS aims at developing young people's cultural literacy understanding in formal education through the teaching of dialogue and argumentation as a means to understand European identities and cultures. The novelty of our proposal lies in the intersection of cultural literacy, multimodality, dialogue and argumentation, and through the use of face-to-face and online learning environments where students can share their perspectives as they make sense of European different cultures. Students will produce multimodal texts reflecting European heritages with the promotion of tolerance, inclusion and empathy as core cultural literacy dispositions. We will conduct analyses of students' class-based and online interactions, mapping the development of dialogue and argumentation skills. Cross-comparative analyses of classrooms in seven countries. Our innovative teaching and assessment tools will guide teachers in their development of a dialogic pedagogy for cultural literacy in tomorrow's Europe.

## KEYWORDS

Cultural literacy, argumentation, dialogue pedagogy, multimodality, democratic dispositions.

## Introduction

The present work corresponds to the development of the European Project *Dialogue & Argumentation for Cultural Literacy Learning in Schools (DIALLS)* in the Horizon 2020 program in which the role of argumentative dialogue is central to the development of cultural literacy learning in and across schools in Europe. Europe needs education policies that seek to advance intercultural dialogue in a way which reflects its high diversity and promotes respect for the difference enabling the growth of young people identities through better understanding of concepts such as inclusion, empathy and tolerance.

The present work is highly innovative given the two main underlying research foundations: 1. Multimodality and 2. Dialogic interactions and one educational goal: the development of european democratic dispositions (see Figure 1).

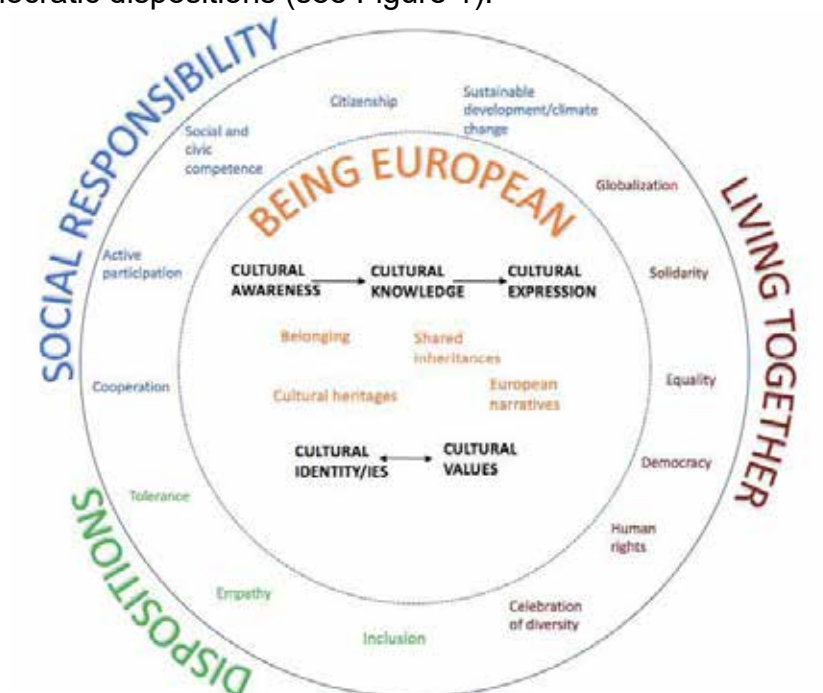


Figure 1. Main Underlying concepts of Cultural Literacy

The main theoretical concepts that underlie the proposal are:

### 1) *Multimodality*

Beyond simply words, literacy in the 21st century is visual and multimodal and involves the use of multiple semiotic resources for meaning making (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, Serafini, 2012). The concept of 'text' extends beyond the printed word to embrace multimodal forms (Cazden, et al., 1996). These texts raise potential questions about cultures, identities and heritages, they can offer stimulating springboards for dialogic discussions as readers young and old interpret their meanings. Example: See Figure 2.

### 2) *Dialogue and argumentation*

The European democratic ideal requires that individuals learn to engage in dialogue across diversity, which may be emphasised when individuals come from very different perspectives, due to cultural, linguistic, economic or religious backgrounds. However, these differences can also be understood as advantages in a pluralistic society. This is the core of any dialogical education paradigm, which emphasises “the knowledge and understanding of other cultures patterns of interaction, values, institutions, metaphors, and symbols and well as cross-cultural communication skills” (Bleakly & Carrigan, 1994, p. 16). Argumentation as a specific type of dialogue, aims to create conceptual gains in the participants involved, as they engage in a process of *deliberation* (Felton, Garcia-Mila & Gilabert, 2009) and *epistemic negotiation* (Baker, 2016) where concepts are continuously refined. The individual gains of this process are extremely valuable as they lead to better understanding of the concepts discussed, a higher level of reasoning skills and adoption of a more sophisticated discourse (Felton, Garcia-Mila & Gilabert, 2009; Mayweg-Paus et al., 2016).

### 3) *Cultural literacy (identities, heritages and artefacts)*

Recent scholarly literature has defined cultural literacy as an attitude to the social and cultural phenomena that shape and fill our existence. Cultural identities are created in a constant

dialogue, negotiation, and contest of similarity and difference, sameness and distinction. Therefore, diverse cultural phenomena can be understood as both manifestations of cultural identities and spaces of negotiations and contests where their contents and meanings are formed (Lähdesmäki, 2014). Cultural texts depict ways of living together that include customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. Entering into a dialogue with these texts and with others about them can support reflection and increased understanding of one's own cultural identities. Dialogue then, plays a central conceptual role in the creation of a path to cultural literacy.

## Goal

The goal of the present work is to develop cultural literacy across formal education through the teaching of dialogue and argumentation mediated by wordless texts in order to understand the high diversity of the European identities and cultures. A cultural learning program will be created and implemented to promote tolerance, inclusion and empathy as core cultural literacy dispositions.

## Method

*Design:* It is a mixed design: longitudinal (sessions 3,9 and 15) and cross-sectional (ages 5,9, and 15) in 7 different countries

*Participants:* The sample will be formed by students in preschool (p5), Primary Education (3<sup>rd</sup> year) and Secondary Education (3<sup>rd</sup> year).

*Procedure:* The intervention will last 15 sessions. Previously teachers will have attended a Professional Development Course. Data will be gathered in sessions 3, 9 and 15.

## Analysis

The improvement of the argumentation strategies shown in the dialogic sessions, the quality of the artistic artifacts produced by the students, and the learning of the cultural literacy concepts will be analysed cross countries, across ages and along the repeated sessions.

## Application Context

The innovative nature of the present project lies in the proposal of two analytical focuses to adopt in cultural literacy research and practice, namely: a) the creation of teaching materials and activities to support cultural literacy learning and b) cultural literacy as an emerging, co-construction process, with the teaching of argumentative strategies involved in dialogic classrooms

Teaching materials will be based on cultural wordless texts (see Figure 2 as an example) aimed at stimulating dialogic interactions concerning key issues for European identities and cultures. All of these texts offer a springboard for discussion about migration, notions of 'home', "living together", "immigration", "discrimination", etc., which with careful prompting by teachers can be turned to a reflection of European experiences. As wordless texts, they are suitable for use with students of all languages, and such texts will form a core of resources for the learning sequence that can be used with young people across Europe and provide a basis for cross-cultural analysis.

Children aged 4-7 years old will find plenty to discuss in this story of sameness and difference. A family of owls are disturbed when a family of bats come to share the other side of their tree branch. At first the two families have nothing in common and do not want to accommodate each other's needs. However, when a large storm wreaks on the tree, the importance of solidarity and social cohesion becomes clear to owls and bats alike. This picturebook provides a gentle way to introduce younger children to themes of cooperation, belonging, diversity and

tolerance between different groups of people. The simple, subtle illustrations depict affirming relationship between the two groups.



Figure 2. Example of a Wordless Text-Bat-Owl//Owl-Bat

Table 1. Lesson Plan

Lesson Overview   Session Number	
Cultural text:	Bat Owl-Owl Bat
Age	4-5
Theme	living together,
Sub-theme (include definition from glossary)	Belonging, empathy
Learning objectives	Dialogue and Argumentation: Share ideas, reach consensus
	Cultural Learning Objective: TO understand the impact of life conditions in intercultural relationships; to reflect on “home” as a concept
Lesson Procedure	
Share /book (including pre-share task if appropriate)	Students are organized in small groups Each group has access to a computer. The teacher will not give any a priori instruction, students will be asked to reflect about the book images
Activity to stimulate thinking (optional short task)	After watching the book, the teacher will guide the whole class discussion on the subject: what is a home? Eventual questions will be launched:  Where do the bats come from?  Why are they in the owls branch?  Do they like it being there?  What would you do if you were a bat? ,etc. Share the Dialogue or Argumentation objective
Ideas for whole class / group discussion.  Including discussion questions/ talking points/ dilemmas	First activity: the whole class is organized in groups, students must choose a sequence of the4 story, and with words build a narrative of the story  Second activity: in pairs of groups, each group from class A shares with a group in class B. the narrative and aeach group chooses a title and a short explanation
Reflection activity (reflect on learning objectives)	The teacher returns to the question “what is home”? to the whole class and each group responds with 3 key-words.

The teaching materials (see Table 1 for an example of a Lesson Plan) that we develop around each text will be used for promoting discussions between students, within their own classrooms, with students from a different school in the same country, and with students belonging to different countries, targeting classrooms from the UK, Portugal, , Spain, Germany, Cyprus, Lithuania, and Israel. The goal of the project is to investigate how using argumentation

to elicit dialogic responses to a variety of different textual (multimodal) stimuli enhances students' attitudes towards differing perspectives and promotes open and informed opinions and decision-making attitudes. For pre-primary children discussing Bat-Owl, Owl-Bat (Figure 2), teachers can guide a discussion about the concept of 'living together', promoting simple argumentative language structures (such as, 'I think...because...'). Children can engage in synchronous and asynchronous dialogue in-class and using a specifically designed online platform with other same-country and different-country classrooms in Europe, supported by their teachers to engage emotionally and to challenge their own assumptions. The inclusion of Israel as one of the participant countries will promote further dialogue and will offer more challenges regarding the negotiation of values and identities between European and non-European children.

The learning program will include 15 lessons for each of three age-groups: 5-6 year-olds, 8-9 year-olds, and 14-15 year-olds. These concrete ages were chosen to engage same-level students at the first year of the program implementation. However, in the second year lesson plans will be available to children of all ages from pre-primary to secondary.

Students will work together in their classrooms before interacting online with other students of the same age from schools in different regions in the same country; then engaging and pairing similar classrooms from different countries to further develop the online interactions. Even the youngest children will engage online, although their interactions may be non-verbal, i.e. through the sharing of their visual responses to different Cultural Texts. We will base our choices of matching schools from different countries on commonalities of language experience, either as part of the taught curriculum or as part of shared level of expertise in a third language.

This will draw on the analysis and assessment of students' face-to-face and online interactions, and their multimodal cultural artefacts, and it will serve as an assessment rubric tool to support the development of cultural literacy knowledge, skills and competence.

To further address issues around language comprehension, we also include asynchronous learning experiences accompanied by translation where necessary. Moreover, online platforms with graphical interfaces for structuring dialogue and argumentation, as the one we will develop in the project, are seen to reduce the need for 'perfect' language, thus supporting student confidence in operating in a less familiar language. In any case, an ethical consideration regarding students' communication via Internet will be made, as it is well established that this medium is a 'double-edged sword': it can encourage free expression of ideas, diminishing interpersonal pressure, but also allow uncivil behaviors (Levmore & Nussbaum, 2010). Effective teacher moderation of discussions is thus an important aspect of the project.

To understand cultural literacy as an emerging process of collaborative co-construction, we will conduct a comparative analysis and assessment of different types of data, for example, recordings of student interactions, online-chat transcripts, multimodal artefacts produced by students. Our data collection of student interactions will comprise transcribed whole-class sessions. Of the 15 lesson sequences per classroom (see Figure 3), five will be face-to-face, among students from the same classroom, five will also bring together students from the same country but different schools (intra-country sessions), and five will bring together students from two paired consortium countries (inter-country sessions). Both intra-country and inter-country sessions will be blended, in the sense that the online interaction part will be always preceded by a teacher-guided discussion about the dialogic goals of each virtual encounter.



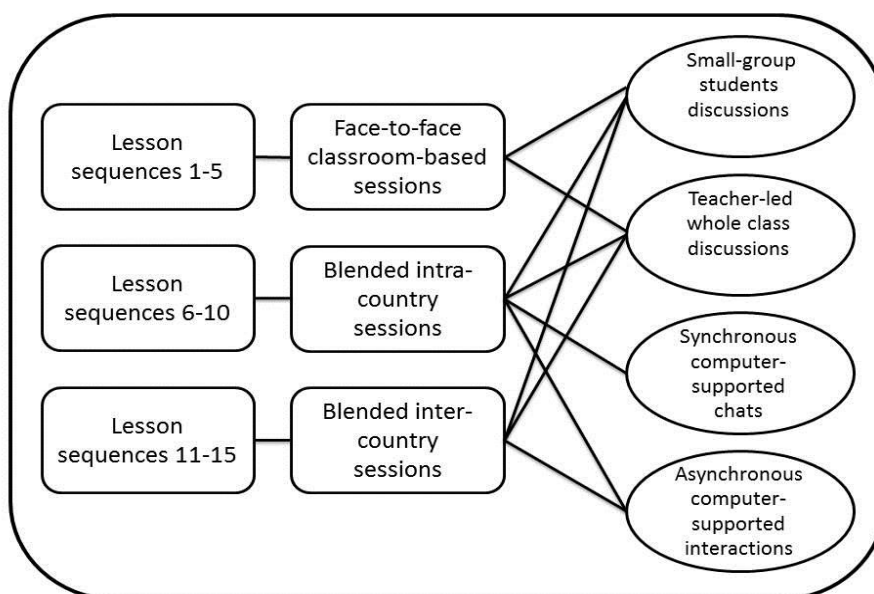


Figure 3: Structure of the lesson sequences

To achieve an understanding of young people’s cultural literacy in formal education (Objective 1), the target variable is cultural literacy as manifested in students discourse and artefacts. This variable is operationalized as: (a) cultural values that relate to European cultural heritage; (b) quality of classroom dialogue; (c) students’ constructive argumentation moves.

To conduct the dialogue and argumentation analysis, a variety of approaches will be used to ensure a deep consideration of the several variables enacted when young people constructively engage with each other and build their own cultural literacy knowledge, skills, and competences. For the analysis of the quality of classroom dialogue (b) we will use the Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis (Hennessy et al., 2016) and further developments of that scheme that include indicators for high, medium and low levels of dialogue. For the analysis of students’ arguments (c) as reasoned opinions about the cultural literacy issues discussed, we will use the following indicators: explicitness of argument structure, based on the levels of argumentative discourse proposed by Erduran, Simon and Osborne (2004); and dialogical and argumentative relevance, meaning the reconstruction of students interactions as a network of moves that contribute to a common communicative goal (Walton & Macagno, 2016).

### Expected Results

Fostering students’ positive attitudes towards diversity and their capacity to negotiate and rebalance the concept and meaning of being European is the main challenge addressed by DIALLS. In line with the European Science Foundation COST program “Cultural literacy in Europe today” (COST- ESF, 2013), DIALLS aims to embed cultural literacy and its active teaching in different European schools’ curricula. The value of dialogic and argumentation practices is emphasised by several educational policy-making documents (EU, 2006; Council of Europe, 2008; S-TEAM, 2010). We consider that dialogic classrooms are the perfect environments for cultural literacy to emerge both as knowledge and as skill. Co-constructive dialogue about Cultural Texts enables the assessment of cultural literacy as a progressive competence reflecting identity construction, empathy, and deep awareness of other points of view. Moreover, we place a particular focus on the production of cultural artefacts by students of different ages as result of their dialogic engagement. Intercultural dialogue is further guaranteed through the engagement of schools in differing cultural contexts. Conceiving

culture in its broader sense, comparative analysis will be achieved through pairing groups of students from the same or different countries.

It is expected to contribute to better understanding and enhancing cultural literacy for the young generations, which will lead to greater appreciation of diversity. Also, we will develop i) A method of assessing cultural literacy competence. Through analysing students' progressive acquisition of cultural literacy knowledge and skills, on one hand, and through assessing its integration and multiple uses in interaction on the other, we will better understand cultural literacy competence. Students' cultural literacy will be enhanced as they will not only understand about cultural literacy but they will be gradually able, as result of DIALLS pedagogical intervention, to talk as being culturally literate. Systematic comparison between students from different age levels will enable developmental differences to be identified and shared with other researchers through the scale of progression for cultural literacy (Knowledge, Skills and Competences).

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