

Transmedia Learning in Primary Education: The Case of Rim Tim Tagi Dim

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Abstract

*This paper investigates the integration of contemporary popular culture into primary education, with a focus on the pedagogical potential of transmedia storytelling. Using the picture book *Baby Lasagna* and *Stipe the Cat: A Great Friendship*, published in conjunction with Baby Lasagna's Eurovision 2024 performance, the study explores how pop culture can be meaningfully incorporated into the teaching of Croatian and English language, mathematics, nature and society, physical education, and visual arts. The theoretical framework draws on sociocultural perspectives on literacy (Dyson, 1993; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Marsh, 2004) and research emphasizing the value of authentic and relevant materials for student engagement (Rowse & Pahl, 2022). Domestic literature highlights the importance of connecting educational content with students' cultural contexts and the role of modern media formats in developing children's literacy and critical thinking (Škoda, 2024; Doker, 2021). Within a teacher education course, students developed interdisciplinary lesson plans that utilized the song, video, and picture book as educational resources, demonstrating how transmedia narratives can foster creativity, critical thinking, and intercultural competence. The findings suggest that when thoughtfully integrated, popular culture serves as a powerful pedagogical tool that bridges home and school experiences, enhances student motivation, and supports the development of multiliteracies essential for active participation in contemporary society.*

Keywords: primary education, teacher education, student engagement, media literacy, popular culture, transmedia

"Media exposure during early childhood plays a critical role in shaping cognitive, social, and emotional development. It is essential to consider not only the content and context of media use but also the role of caregivers in mediating media's effects on young children."

— Ellen Wartella, *A Brief History of Children and Media Research: Workshop on Media Exposure and Early Child Development*

1. Introduction

The integration of contemporary media and popular culture into early childhood and primary education has become increasingly important in the context of rapid technological advancement and the omnipresence of digital content in children's lives. Recent research underscores the need to connect educational content to students' cultural experiences and to leverage authentic, multimodal materials for fostering literacy, critical thinking, and engagement [15], [25]. This paper examines the educational potential of transmedia storytelling by analyzing the use of the song, video, and picture book "Rim Tim Tagi Dim" by Baby Lasagna within teacher education, illustrating how such approaches can enrich curriculum and instructional practice.

2. Theoretical Framework

1. Children and Media

Research consistently demonstrates the significance of connecting children's home and school experiences to enhance learning, especially in early childhood education. Marsh [15] emphasizes that young children today are immersed in a rich tapestry of multimodal experiences, engaging with films, television, computer games, mobile devices, and the internet from a very young age. Despite this, national curricula in many countries rarely acknowledge the centrality of these media experiences in children's lives, missing opportunities to leverage their "cultural capital" for learning. Marsh's work highlights not only the prevalence of popular culture in young children's lives but also the ways in



which these experiences shape identity and emergent literacy practices, both at home and in educational settings.

This subject has long been the source of divergent and often conflicting perspectives within academic and public discourse. Wartella [5], an internationally recognized expert on the impact of media and technology on children's development, explains the trend of increasing time children spend with media through several key factors related to technological development and social change. According to her analyses, each new technology over the past hundred years—film, radio, television, computers, and digital media—has brought recurring public and scientific concerns about how children use these technologies. Wartella notes that children are often among the earliest and most intensive users of new media, and concerns frequently center on how they spend their leisure time, specifically how much time is devoted to media rather than to other activities such as schooling or play.

Historical data cited by Wartella demonstrate a continuous rise: as early as 1911, 62% of children aged 11 to 14 attended the cinema once or twice a week; in the 1930s, teenagers spent an average of 10 hours per week with radio, movies, and concerts; while in 1985, children watched television for more than 14 hours per week. With the advent of digital media and mobile devices, this figure has grown exponentially. By 2005, children were spending approximately 6.5 hours per day with media, and by 2015, this had increased to as much as 9 hours daily with various forms of entertainment media.

Wartella emphasizes that this increase is the result of greater availability and diversity of media content, as well as the fact that media have become an integral part of everyday life and childhood. Today, children have access to more devices and platforms than ever before, and media are omnipresent in their environment, which further facilitates and encourages prolonged use. In summary, Wartella explains the trend of increased media use among children as a combination of technological advancement, social change, and the growing role of media in the lives of children and youth.

Numerous scholars reference the research of Anne Haas Dyson due to her innovative approach to studying children's literacy and language development within a sociocultural context. Dyson's work [6], [7] highlights how children construct literacy by drawing on resources from their own social and linguistic experiences, including elements of popular and folk culture. Her analysis demonstrates that, through everyday interactions, play, and informal activities both inside and outside of school, children develop their own "worlds of meaning," which have direct implications for literacy instruction in diverse classroom settings. Dyson also emphasizes the importance of an open, dialogic curriculum that allows children to bring their interests, genres, and social goals into formal school activities. Through ethnographic observation, Dyson demonstrates how children navigate the boundaries between official and unofficial school worlds, utilizing popular media, music, sports, and other cultural materials as starting points for developing written expression and identity. Precisely because of this sociocultural approach, her research is frequently cited in works addressing children's literacy, the influence of popular culture on learning, and the importance of recognizing children's experiences and interests in the educational process. Dyson's work serves as both a theoretical and methodological framework for examining the relationships among language, play, culture, and literacy, especially in multicultural and urban classroom environments, as confirmed by recent scholarly literature and academic reviews [11], [15], [19].

Further, Allison J. Pugh's *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture* [20] is highly relevant to discussions about children, media, and sociocultural influences, as it highlights the intersection between media-driven consumerism and the formation of childhood identities. Pugh's findings complement research by scholars such as Anne Haas Dyson, who focus on the ways children draw on cultural and media resources to construct meaning and identity. By examining the role of consumer goods and media in shaping children's experiences of longing and belonging, Pugh provides critical insights into the broader social, economic, and cultural contexts that inform children's development and family life.

In conclusion, as technological tools, media can create distinctions among children based on who has access to them and how they are used. At the same time, media offer children opportunities to connect with others, as they share messages that can cross boundaries of time and location. In this way, media both separate and bring children together [1].

2. Pop culture in Education

When it comes to the implementation of contemporary pop culture in education, recent works [5], [22] emphasize the significance of authentic and relevant materials, including those drawn from pop culture, for fostering engagement and identity negotiation, further justifying the integration of

contemporary cultural references in education. Domestic literature [23] highlights the importance of connecting educational content with students' cultural contexts and the role of modern media formats in developing children's literacy and critical thinking. In Croatia, media literacy is explicitly incorporated into the primary and secondary school curriculum, particularly within Croatian language classes and the cross-curricular Civic Education module. These curricular frameworks address topics such as media communication, critical analysis of media content, the influence of media, and internet safety. The Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), in partnership with UNICEF Croatia, has played a leading role in advancing media literacy through the launch of the national portal *medijskapismenost.hr* and the organization of annual *Media Literacy Days* since 2018. These initiatives provide teachers and parents with educational materials, research findings, and practical recommendations for fostering critical media consumption and digital competencies among children and youth. Research conducted by AEM and UNICEF highlights both the progress and ongoing challenges [8]: while media literacy is increasingly recognized as essential for active participation in digital society, only a small proportion of Croatian citizens—about 8%—have received formal education in critical media analysis, underscoring the need for continued investment in teacher training and curriculum development [4].

It is therefore of paramount importance to provide future teachers with comprehensive education in media literacy and to equip them with a wide range of opportunities for further expanding their knowledge in this field. This is particularly relevant within the context of higher education in Croatia, where the development of professional competencies among pre-service teachers remains a key challenge. Research indicates that the current system of teacher education often places greater emphasis on academic content than on pedagogical and practical training, which can result in insufficiently developed competencies for real-world teaching, including those related to media literacy and critical thinking [14]. Enhancing the quality and scope of media literacy education within teacher training programs at Croatian universities is crucial for preparing future educators to foster critical and digital competencies in their students effectively.

3. Methodological Framework

The methodological framework of this study was primarily qualitative and interpretative, employing case study analysis to explore the application of transmedia storytelling in the development of communicative and linguistic competencies. Data collection involved the design and implementation of interdisciplinary lesson plans by pre-service teachers, classroom observations, and the completion of reflective student journals. The analysis focused on evaluating student engagement, the integration of multimodal materials (song, video, and picture book), and the perceived impact on linguistic, media, and intercultural competencies. This approach enabled a nuanced understanding of how transmedia narratives can be effectively incorporated into primary education to support holistic learning outcomes [23].

4. Faculty of Education in Osijek – The Course “Children's Media in English”

The study program at the Faculty of Education in Osijek offers a five-year, integrated undergraduate and graduate teacher education, totaling 300 ECTS credits, culminating in the title of University Master of Primary Education. After completing the first semester, students choose one of three modules: Developmental Track (Module A), Informatics Track (Module B), or English Language Track (Module C). Module C, focused on the English language, features an increased number of hours dedicated to English, aiming for advanced proficiency at the C1 level, and emphasizes the integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills through interactive methods. It adopts an intercultural approach, including studies of literature, culture, and history of English-speaking countries, fostering intercultural communication and critical thinking. **The methodology involves practical projects, such as developing teaching materials and utilizing digital tools, while promoting interdisciplinarity by linking English with other subjects, like science and art, through thematic units.** The courses within Module C include advanced language courses, grammar, teaching methodology, early language acquisition, children's literature, and children's media culture in English, designed to prepare students for effective teaching and meaningful engagement with the language in diverse educational contexts.

The course “Children's Media in English” is designed to introduce students to the analysis, evaluation, and pedagogical use of contemporary media intended for children, with a particular focus on English-language materials. The course explores a broad spectrum of children's media, including picture books, television, film, digital content, and music, through critical, cultural, and educational lenses.

Within the course “Children’s Media in English,” students develop and apply various learning strategies aimed at the comprehensive development of their professional competencies as future teachers. The most crucial learning strategies

- familiarize students with key concepts, theories, and debates regarding children’s media and its role in childhood development and education
- develop students’ ability to critically analyze children’s media texts, considering narrative structures, visual elements, and cultural context
- enhance students’ linguistic and intercultural competencies through the use of authentic English-language media content
- equip students with practical strategies for integrating children’s media into primary classroom instruction across subjects
- foster media and digital literacy, including the evaluation of media quality, appropriateness, and ethical considerations.

The selection of instructional materials is a complex process guided by multiple criteria, among which the criterion of relevance and currency holds particular importance. Contemporary educational theory and curriculum development emphasize that materials should not only align with curricular objectives and be appropriate for students’ developmental stages, but should also reflect current events, trends, and issues that are meaningful to learners [2], [17], [18], [1]. Curriculum development is inherently dynamic, evolving in response to shifts within society. Updating and refining a school’s curriculum not only shapes and expresses the institution’s culture but also enables it to adapt to an ever-changing world [24].

5. Baby Lasagna's Song "Rim Tim Tagi Dim"

This concept was operationalized in the previous academic year at the Faculty of Education within the course “Children’s Media in English,” facilitated by the release of Croatia’s entry for Eurovision 2024 and further supported by the marketing initiatives of the artist and his team. The students had the opportunity to work with an unconventional, *ad hoc* educational resource, made possible by the unique and highly popular song that represented Croatia.

Performing as Baby Lasagna, Croatian musician Marko Purišić achieved Croatia’s best-ever Eurovision result in 2024 with his energetic entry “Rim Tim Tagi Dim” (Appendix 1). Rising from reserve contestant to runner-up, Purišić brought international attention to Croatian pop culture. The song, released in January 2024, humorously and poignantly addresses youth emigration, blending wit with genuine emotion. Notably, Purišić wrote both the music and lyrics himself, and the accompanying music video—featuring friends and his local community—became the most-viewed among Eurovision 2024 entries. The song’s catchy rhythm and choreography sparked a nationwide dance phenomenon, making “Rim Tim Tagi Dim” a symbol of Croatian resilience and unity.

Fig. 1. The picture book *Baby Lasagna and Stipe the Cat – A Great Friendship*, published by Rockmark in three languages (Croatian, German, and English)



Source: <https://www.rockmark.hr/trgovina/>

6. Implementation of the Picture Book in the Course

Alongside the extensive media and merchandising campaigns for Baby Lasagna's "Rim Tim Tagi Dim" is the publication of the picture book *Baby Lasagna and Stipe the Cat – A Great Friendship*, co-authored by Igor Jurilj (Yellow Yuri) and Marko Purišić (Baby Lasagna). The story follows Stipe the cat and Baby Lasagna as they create their Eurovision entry, win Croatia's national selection, and perform internationally. Published in Croatian, English, and German (Figure 1), the book broadens access for a multilingual audience and promotes Croatian culture globally. Inspired by real events, the narrative centers on the friendship between Baby Lasagna and his one-eyed cat, Stipe, with illustrations that depict their everyday life and preparations for Eurovision. These visuals not only advance the story but also introduce young readers to themes of empathy, loyalty, and intercultural awareness through relatable scenes and cultural details.

By aligning course content with current trends in children's media and popular culture, the curriculum was designed to provide future teachers with practical strategies for integrating authentic, multimodal resources into primary classroom practice. This approach aimed to bridge theoretical knowledge and real-world application, supporting the holistic development of linguistic, media, and intercultural competencies in teacher education. The presentation of the picture book *Baby Lasagna and Stipe the Cat – A Great Friendship* was of significant educational and methodological value to the students, with a particular emphasis on fostering the development of linguistic, media, and intercultural competencies among prospective teachers (Table 1):

Table 1. Key Aspects and Learning Outcomes of Using Children's Media in English Language Teaching.

Aspect	Description
Methodological Aspects	Analysis and adaptation of authentic English children's media for classroom use.
Language Competence	Expansion of vocabulary and pronunciation practice through reading and discussion.
Media and Digital Literacy	Critical evaluation of media content
Intercultural Dimension	Discussion and connection of cultural heritage and diversity in English lessons.
Practical Application	Application in (future) classroom activities

- **Methodological Aspects of Presenting the Picture Book**

→ through the analysis of the picture book, students had the opportunity to engage with a contemporary example of authentic children's media content in English, which is highly significant for the development of their future teaching practice. Through collaborative reading and interpretation of the text in English, students developed skills in comprehension, translation, and adaptation of content for lower primary school pupils.

- **Development of Language Competence**

→ working with the picture book in English enabled students to expand their vocabulary, acquire new expressions related to everyday life, friendship, and music, and practice pronunciation and intonation through reading aloud. Additionally, students had the opportunity to compare the original with its English translation. Special attention was given to the analysis of dialogues and narration, which served as a model for students to design their own English teaching activities.

- **Media and Digital Literacy**

→ the course "Children's Media in English" emphasizes the importance of a critical approach to children's media content. In addition to the picture book itself, students analyzed the accompanying music video, social media, and marketing aspects related to the song "Rim Tim Tagi Dim." In doing so, they developed the ability to assess the quality and appropriateness of media content for children.

- **Intercultural Dimension**

→ the picture book, as well as the song on which it is based, contains elements of Croatian and European cultural heritage, which enabled students to discuss the importance of respecting diversity, connecting the local and the global, and promoting positive values through English language teaching.

- **Practical Application in Teaching**

→ as part of their coursework, students were assigned the task of designing a variety of lesson plans for subjects included in lower primary education (grades 1–4, ages 7–10). A key feature of this assignment was the transmedia integration of the contemporary cultural phenomenon “Rim Tim Tagi Dim” by Baby Lasagna, utilizing not only the song itself but also its official video and the accompanying picture book (both in Croatian and English). By engaging with these interconnected media formats, students explored how a single narrative or motif can be adapted and expanded across different platforms to enhance learning and engagement. Working in pairs, they were encouraged to apply interdisciplinary approaches and adapt content to the developmental level and interests of young learners. This collaborative process led to the creation of innovative lesson topics that align with curricular requirements while fostering creativity, critical thinking, and motivation.

The topics developed through this exercise included: exploring emotions and friendship through literature, practicing basic arithmetic using song lyrics, investigating family and pets in social studies, expressing musical rhythm and movement in physical education, introducing traditional Croatian crafts in art, and expanding basic vocabulary and conversational skills in English language lessons. Through this transmedia approach, students demonstrated their ability to connect theoretical knowledge with practical teaching strategies, while also highlighting the importance of culturally relevant, age-appropriate, and media-rich materials in contemporary classroom practice (Table 2)

Table 2. Detailed Overview of Lesson Topics by Subject (Suggested by the Students)

Subject	Lesson Topics/ Activities
Croatian Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading a picture book (together as a class or individually). • discussion about the story: identifying and naming main and supporting characters in the picture book. • character analysis: describing the traits of the characters, their actions, and feelings • connecting with personal experiences: “Which character do you relate to the most and why?” • role-play: dramatizing parts of the picture book, expressing the feelings and attitudes of the characters.
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counting how many times a specific word appears in the song (e.g., “rim,” “tim,” “dim”). • comparing the number of children in the class who enjoy dancing, singing, or having a pet. • simple addition and subtraction using examples from the song.
Science and Social Studies (Nature and Society)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussing who has a pet and how we care for them. • drawing your family and home. • short story: “What would I take with me if I went on a trip?”
Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making a group poster: “Our class dances Rim Tim Tagi Dim.” • drawing lace or making paper lace (introduction to the tradition of lace-making, e.g., Pag or Lepoglava lace). • discussion and demonstration of traditional handicrafts, such as crocheting, and making simple patterns using paper or yarn.
Physical and Health Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning simple dance moves to the song (jumping, clapping, spinning in a circle). • “Dance train” game – everyone dances together and follows the rhythm of the song. • talking about how we feel when we dance • learning basic folk dance movements, playing and dancing to traditional Croatian music.
Music Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction to traditional instruments (e.g., <i>tamburica</i>, <i>ljerica</i>, <i>diple</i>, <i>sopile</i>, bagpipes) characteristic of specific Croatian regions. • listening to and recognizing the sounds of different instruments, and making simple rhythm instruments from recycled materials.
English Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading a picture book (together as a class or individually, depending on students’ age and reading skills). • “Memory” game with cards showing pictures and words from the song. • Singing the chorus of the song in English



7. Conclusion

In summary, the transmedia approach to integrating “Rim Tim Tagi Dim” and its associated media formats into primary education demonstrates the value of authentic, culturally relevant, and age-appropriate materials for developing key competencies among future teachers and their pupils. By engaging with contemporary pop culture across multiple platforms, students and educators can bridge the gap between home and school experiences, promote intercultural awareness, and foster creativity and critical media literacy. These findings highlight the importance of ongoing curriculum innovation and targeted teacher training to ensure that educational practices remain responsive to the evolving cultural and technological landscape.

However, it is essential to note that the findings are context-specific, reflecting experiences within a single teacher education course and a relatively small group of participants. Further research could explore the application of similar transmedia approaches in different educational contexts or with larger and more diverse samples. Additionally, future studies might employ quantitative methods to complement qualitative insights and more systematically assess the impact of transmedia learning on student motivation, creativity, and literacy development. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of how popular culture and digital media can be leveraged to enrich primary education and teacher preparation.

App. 1. Baby Lasagna’s “Rim Tim Tagi Dim” (Lyrics)

Rim Tim Tagi Dim Ay, I'm a big boy now I'm ready to leave, ciao, mama, ciao Ay, I'm a big boy now I'm going away and I sold my cow Before I leave, I must confess I need a round of decompress One more time for all the good times Rim tim tagi digi dim tim tim	I hope I find peace in the noise Wanna become one of them city boys They're all so pretty and so advanced Maybe they also know our dance Bye mom, bye dad Meow, cat, please meow back Don't cry, just dance Rim tim tagi digi dim tim tim
Gonna miss you all but mostly the cat Gonna miss my hay, gonna miss my bed Most of all, I'ma miss the dance So come on y'all, let us prance	There's no going back My presence fades to black Yeah, there's no going back My anxiety attacks Rim tim tagi digi dim tim tagi digi
Now don't call, don't write I'm leavin' with the first light Don't cry, but dance Rim tim tagi digi dim tim tim	There's no going back My presence fades to black There's no going back My anxiety attacks Rim tim tagi digi dim tim tagi digi
There's no going back My presence fades to black Yeah, there's no going back My anxiety attacks Rim tim tagi digi dim tim tagi digi	There's no going back My presence fades to black Yeah, there's no going back My anxiety attacks

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