Mobeybou - A Digital Manipulative for Multicultural Narrative Creation

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GENERAL TERMS.
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ABSTRACT

Mobeybou, is a digital manipulative (DM) that uses physical blocks to interact with digital content. It intends to create an environment for promoting the development of language and narrative competences as well as digital literacy among pre and primary school children. It offers a variety of characters, objects and landscapes from various cultures around the world and can be used for creating multicultural narratives.

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Figure 1: The physical blocks (top); Examples of interactions.

An interactive app developed for each country provides additional cultural and geographical information about each represented culture.

1 MOBEYBOU – MOVING BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Mobeybou provides elements for creating multicultural narratives, while at the same time it empowers children with diverse cultural backgrounds to create and share their own stories. The manipulation of the digital content is done using physical blocks (see Figure 1 top), which support and promote collaboration and exchange of ideas [2].

The digital manipulative is composed of various sets of blocks, where each set represents a culture. The design of each specific cultural set is based on a careful investigation in order to identify characteristic elements of the culture, which simultaneously have the potential to trigger children's imagination and creativity. By now, we have completed sets for China, Brazil and India (Figure 1).

Each set comprises: one landscape, two protagonists (boy and girl), one animal, one antagonist, one musical instrument and one magical object. The elements are divided into categories and behave according to a set of rules that define its actions in relation to the other active elements.

The relations between the elements were developed following the traditional narrative model from Western cultures. The antagonists attack the protagonists; the animals defend the latter. The protagonists and the animals can join forces to defend themselves from the antagonists, who can also join forces to attack the former. The musical instruments can be used by the protagonists to make all the other "living" elements dance and become happy. The magical objects can be used to help the protagonists escape or to beat the antagonists. A set of environment-blocks (rain, snow, wind, rainbow, night) allows to further customize the stories.

All the elements from the different cultures can be mixed and used together to create narratives, potentially promoting multiculturalism. The visual narratives unfold according to the blocks that the children place on the board while they verbalize their stories. An audio recording function, allows to record children's stories, and can be used, e.g., to assess children's learning curve along time.

We envision that Mobeybou can be used in formal and informal educational contexts with young children, individually, with peers or in groups to promote the development of language and narrative competences as well as digital literacy and multiculturalism through storytelling [1].

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