



AMORES

An Approach to MOtivating learners to Read in European Schools – AMORES

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

Anna, an 11-year-old primary school student from Poland, always used to do the same thing with the books her class was assigned at school: she would read the book and write a book report. She was a passive reader and often wasn't very interested in reading.

Luckily, this year Anna's Polish teacher and her class are participating in the AMORES project. Now Anna reads and together with her classmates creates e-artefacts inspired by literature. Yesterday her group finished a cartoon on Jánošík, the "Polish Robin Hood", and published it online. Tomorrow during Polish class they will discuss the cartoon with their peers from the UK via videoconference. She is now far more engaged in interpreting what she has read, while her teacher is happy to see more engaged and enthusiastic students. Around 400 similar stories are the result of several hundred students and 14 teachers from five countries across Europe taking part in the AMORES project.

The AMORES project started out with four main aims. The first was to have more engaged learners in literature class at the end of the project. It was believed that student engagement would grow as they became involved in creative activities, working together with their classmates and peers across the EU. The second aim was to improve the digital literacy of students and teachers taking part in the project. This did not just mean that they would learn to use more new technologies, but would also, for example, learn about communicating on social networks, about copyright and how to express themselves using different media. Helping the project teachers develop as educators by using new technologies was the third aim of the project. The teachers would need to work together to develop the methodology that would be used with the students, and find the best way to bring it into their classrooms and contexts. Finally, the fourth aim was to ensure that a community of students and teachers would develop from the project. They would continue to use the methodology in their classrooms and introduce other educators to it. This way the results of the project would spread to other schools in the EU.

The most important result of the AMORES project has been the development of an innovative teaching methodology, which promotes student creativity, interaction and engagement with literature. As opposed to simply reading a book and writing a book report, the methodology includes the following steps: reading the book, creating e-artefacts based on the book, sharing these e-artefacts with peers via social networks and videoconference, and reflecting on the process throughout. An e-artefact is a digital work created in different formats: text, audio, video, image, animation or a combination of these. In the context of the AMORES project, it is a digital work created by students and inspired by literature.

The teachers created the draft of the AMORES teaching methodology as a team, with input from project researchers. It was piloted in the school year 2014/2015 in five schools in Croatia, Denmark, Poland, Sweden and the UK, and finally revised with the input from the pilot evaluation. The methodology as well as the digital materials that will help teachers make the best use of it are now available to all educators.

The project was carried out by the five schools that participated in the design of the draft methodology. Facilitators from universities and other organisations provided help in the way of teacher training workshops, technical and methodological support throughout the project, and finally evaluation of the pilot. News of project progress was disseminated regularly and support activities, i.e. operational and financial management, went on in the background to ensure the project ran smoothly.

The evaluation showed conclusively that the use of the AMORES teaching methodology contributes to greater student engagement. The teachers who took part in the project were very pleased with the way the use of the methodology impacted their class. They are going to continue using the methodology in their literature classes, but there have also been examples of teachers using it in other subjects, such as the social sciences. Several teachers who did not take part in the project were introduced to the methodology and plan to use it in their teaching.

Information and news about the project, as well as project results can be found at the project website <http://www.amores-project.eu/>.

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1. Project Objectives

This section describes the project objectives in greater detail, explains how the project benefits a specific community of users, and describes the potential impact on and benefits to the target user group.

Many primary and secondary students read the books they are assigned at school with little more than superficial engagement and understanding, as they are often only required to write book reports. Even this can be avoided as book reports can sometimes be found online. The AMORES project's primary aim was to improve literature learning by making students more engaged as they offer their interpretations of the literary work they have read. Increased student engagement is achieved through the use of the AMORES teaching methodology. This methodology requires students to be creative in their interpretation of the literary work, and they are encouraged to express their creativity through collaboration and sharing with their peers.

Because the AMORES teaching methodology is very much student-focused, students are able to express their opinions through their creations, and feel more strongly about them than if they were simply writing a book report, which often follows a template.

The innovative AMORES teaching methodology engages students in the reading process by way of digital collaboration and creativity. Students create e-artefacts - in the project these were predominantly videos and comic strips - inspired by the literary works they have read. They then share these e-artefacts with their peers in other countries on social networks or via videoconference. They discuss the literary works with their peers and reflect on the process of making the e-artefacts. As a result, their understanding of the literary works is increased, as is their creative interpretation and the motivation to read literature.

Another aim of the project was to improve the digital literacy of students and teachers involved in the project. As they moved through the various stages of using the AMORES methodology - creating e-artefacts, sharing them with their peers and other teachers, and critically reflecting on their production - both students and teachers developed their digital competencies. These include digital creation, presentation, online collaboration and communication.

The third aim of the AMORES project was to empower the teachers participating in the project. This was achieved on several levels. The teachers drafted the initial version of the methodology together. This means the methodology was devised through the participatory approach, not imposed from above. They were trained - both online and in face-to-face workshops - in using the technology they would be using when applying the methodology in their classrooms. They had technical and methodological support throughout the pilot implementation phase, meaning they were able to try out all stages of the methodology, even the more technically demanding ones such as videoconferences. Finally, perhaps the most important step to empowerment was the community of teachers that developed as they shared their experiences during the pilot and afterwards.

The final project aim was to ensure that the project had a future beyond the lifespan of the project itself. This will be achieved as a result of the intercultural cooperation that took place between the project participants. Students taking part in the project

improved their presentation and communication skills, and for the majority (with the exception of the UK partner) this was done in a foreign language, i.e. English. They shared their creations and experiences with peers from other European countries and saw how their country is part of a larger whole - the EU. Contributing to this awareness of a shared identity is also the international community of teachers that developed as a result of the project, and the international e-artefacts competition organized to promote the use of the AMORES teaching methodology across Europe. The competition is planned to be held annually.

2. Project Approach

The first step was desk research in the area of student learning through creating and sharing digital artefacts (e-artefacts), resulting in the state of the art report. By creating the state of the art report the team established a theoretical basis for the AMORES teaching methodology and identified previous projects and the findings on which the AMORES project could build.

The next step was to identify specific learner contexts and needs of teachers in the partner schools, as well as their experience and the resources they already had related to the usage of e-artefacts in teaching literature. A questionnaire was compiled and distributed to the five participating schools. The user needs analysis report was formed from the responses to those questions. The user needs analysis was used as a basis for developing the AMORES teaching methodology, learning materials and training for teachers, as well as pilot implementation of the AMORES teaching methodology.

After completing the needs analysis, a 3-day face-to-face workshop enabled teachers to get to know each other, to share their experiences and to develop a draft of the AMORES methodology. The new methodology developed through participatory design is focused on improving student engagement with literature through interactive and collaborative use of ICT to create e-artefacts, critically reflect on their production and participate in social interaction.

After the draft of methodology had been developed, the educational technology team selected the appropriate ICT tools that supported the methodology and corresponded to the needs analysis results. This process is described in the Technology selection report.

When the technology selection had been completed, the learning materials for teachers on interactive ICT tools in teaching literature were designed. The design of learning materials and activities were based on the constructivist approach that builds on learners' previous experience, active construction of knowledge and application in learners' specific contexts (Driscoll, 2005).

Training for teachers in the form of an online course lasted 6 weeks and was facilitated by four online instructors. Fifteen teachers from Croatia, Denmark, Sweden, Poland and UK took part. It enabled teachers to develop basic skills necessary for the use of ICT tools for creating e-artefacts and activities envisaged in methodologies. The aim of the training was also to facilitate communication, collaboration and sharing of good practice, as well as to empower teachers by developing competence and confidence for use of interactive ICT tools in the classroom. After the evaluation had been conducted, the revision of learning materials was done in accordance with the evaluation report.

During the pilot implementation the new methodology was tested in actual use by teachers and students, who had a chance to influence the revision of the methodology through the student voice approach. The participating students produced e-artefacts based on works of literature and shared them with their peers via videoconferences and a secure social network. Fourteen teachers and about 400 students from Croatia, Denmark, Sweden, Poland and the UK participated in the pilot.

At the completion of the implementation phase, the evaluation of the pilot methodology assessed the effectiveness of the AMORES methodology by gathering data about learner and staff experiences of the project. The data it gathered are a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, and use a wide range of sources, including surveys and interviews, as well as direct observation of lessons and of the e-artefacts produced by the students. The evaluation showed that the use of the AMORES teaching methodology contributes to greater student engagement. Additionally, the pilot evaluation provided input for the final revision and refinement of the methodology and the training materials for teachers.

The added value of this approach was in its harnessing of school teachers' expertise, and using it to shape the AMORES teaching methodology. The workshop employed participatory methodologies, an approach which emerged as a result of dissatisfaction with top down approaches to providing solutions that have tended to be inappropriate and unsustainable (Tavares et al, 2011). This approach assumes that the participants (i.e. school teachers in this instance) are the experts who understand their practice and, through appropriate facilitation, have the capacity to design relevant solutions. Participative methods enable people to work together where all voices are heard and consensus achieved.

This approach ensured the success of the pilot implementation, which was subsequently shown by the evaluation. It also contributes to the sustainability of the project, giving a good prospect of using the AMORES teaching methodology after the end of the project. Additionally, this face-to-face workshop was useful for building a teacher community. Another face-to-face workshop for teachers, four bilateral visits and communication via social media and videoconferences strengthened the teacher community, which enabled them to share experiences and support each other in using the methodology.

Dissemination is a continuous process that aims to promote and raise awareness about the project expectations, activities, achievements, lessons learned and project outcomes and ultimately engage the project stakeholders. Effective dissemination required continuous monitoring and control of dissemination activities according to the Dissemination Action Plan at <http://goo.gl/YWLIQN> that was prepared at the beginning of the project and endorsed by all partners. The project website www.amores-project.eu is the single point of entry for accessing project results, the social media channels as well as information on project activities, achievements and lessons learned. More than 10,800 visitors have visited our website from all participating countries and many others. We are very proud of our website and it will be available after the end of the contractual period of the project. Early on in the project we organised a logo competition, which enabled us to create the project's visual identity, but also to engage the school community in the project. We also created an online leaflet in all partner languages, published several press releases and articles. The project was presented on a local Swedish TV station as well on the Croatian national television. An extensive number of dissemination events took place with the participation of stakeholders and project partners, including an AMORES presentation session at the European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL) in Tallinn, a presentation at the European Conference for E-Learning (ECEL) in the UK, and the final dissemination conference in Dubrovnik taking place at the CARNet Users Conference that attracted more than 800 participants.

The partnership devoted great effort in order to ensure the sustainability of the project results. The key project result - the AMORES teaching methodology - was

developed by teachers themselves with the support of experts. This made the methodology more sustainable and led to the decision that all teachers participating in the project will use the methodology after the end of the project. The partnership also involved other teachers in project activities ensuring a wider adoption of the AMORES teaching methodology. Those teachers participated in the workshops, downloaded the methodology paper and other supporting materials from the AMORES website, participated in the meetings and international competition of e-artefacts based on national literature. The competition attracted students and teachers from different European countries, resulting in 60 inspiring entries. The project coordinator CARNet will continue to conduct the international competition of e-artefacts with the aim of promoting the use of the AMORES teaching methodology. The project results have also been introduced to other stakeholders, including book publishers and “Beanstalk”, a national volunteer reading programme at schools in the UK. We would also like to note that we submitted a book proposal and expect that a book on the AMORES teaching methodology will be published. The AMORES teaching methodology, AMORES poster, learning materials for teachers, collection of e-artefacts and all other public results are published as Open Educational Resources under CC Attribution ShareAlike licence enabling everybody to use, adapt and share these resources. The results are available for download here <http://www.amores-project.eu/>.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

This section contains a description of the major achievements and results of the AMORES project. Due to space limitations in this report we are unable to list the many other results of the project; however, all public results can be accessed on <http://www.amores-project.eu/results.html>. Confidential results are available to project partners on the internal website <https://sites.google.com/site/amoresllpproject/amores-home-page>.

Revised methodology and training materials

We consider the revised AMORES teaching methodology and training materials the most important result of the project, as the majority of other results contributed to its successful completion. This revised version is the result of piloting the methodology in the classroom, and evaluating the success of the pilot. The methodology provides teachers across the EU with a framework to improve literature learning. Its key contribution is that it enables students to engage with what they are reading by using their creativity and collaborating with their peers. This was successfully demonstrated in the five schools which took part in the project.

The digital training materials are intended to help educators make the best use of the methodology in their classrooms and have also undergone several stages. This revised version is the result of the experience and input of the project teachers, and the insights gained during the pilot. Both results are available on the project website: <http://www.amores-project.eu/>.

Collection of e-artefacts

Another important result of the project is the collection of e-artefacts created by the students who participated in the project. In the context of the AMORES project, e-artefacts are digital works created by students and inspired by literature. They were created in a range of different formats, but the e-artefacts included in the collection are predominantly comic strips and videos. They are based on the literary works covered by the students in the school year 2014/2015 in the five participant countries. The collection of e-artefacts shows the range of student creativity and level of engagement with the literary works they read in class, and we feel that it effectively demonstrates the potential of using the AMORES teaching methodology in teaching literature. Of course, it must not be forgotten that creating e-artefacts is only one step in the methodology, and that its full value lies in students sharing e-artefacts and discussing them with their peers, as well as reflecting on the entire process. The collection of e-artefacts is available on the project website: <http://www.amores-project.eu/collection.html>.

International competition

The next key result is the setting up of the international AMORES e-artefact competition. The aim of the competition was twofold: to familiarise EU educators and students outside the project with the AMORES project and teaching methodology, as well as to recognize the hard work students on the project had put into their e-artefact creations. The competition was organised in each of the AMORES schools, and on a Europe-wide level. The winners won a trip to Dubrovnik and an opportunity to share their work on the e-artefact they had made, and their experience of using the AMORES teaching methodology, with a wider audience. The competition attracted

an impressive number of entries, which were judged by a renowned jury panel. We feel that excellent foundations have been set for an event that is planned to be held annually. As an international event it will continue to promote the teaching methodology to a wider audience in the years to come. Details of the competition are available on the project website: <http://www.amores-project.eu/e-artefacts-competition.html>.

Evaluation of the pilot methodology

Next, the pilot evaluation report is an invaluable result. It demonstrates clearly how the use of the AMORES teaching methodology was successful in the schools and classes that took part in the project. It is a detailed document containing the case studies of project schools and the voices of teachers and students who used the methodology in their classes during the pilot. This document shows that the teaching methodology can also be used in subjects other than literature. Finally, it also details possible pitfalls and describes what to watch out for if educators are to successfully apply the methodology in their classes. The evaluation report can be found on the project website: <http://www.amores-project.eu/d4-1-evaluation-report>.

Project website <http://www.amores-project.eu/>

The project website is the central hub containing all the relevant project information. Visitors can find information on the project team, access and download the results, view the collection of student e-artefacts, read about competitions organized during the course of the project and follow news updates and press releases. The website also contains links to the AMORES Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/amoresproject>, Flickr account <https://www.flickr.com/photos/amoresproject/albums> and YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK3lktOiQkWG40cHKfTlbFw/videos>.

4. Partnerships

This section describes the value that the partners from different countries brought to the project, and the importance of working together with other European partners. It also describes how establishing partnerships with groups outside the project was crucial to project success.

We believe that the AMORES consortium is a good example of a well-balanced partnership. It consisted of 9 partners with a range of competences and backgrounds. The following types of organisations were included: primary and secondary schools, universities, a school department of a municipality, a national research and network agency, and private companies: an umbrella institution, a non-formal educational centre, a consultancy and training services. The most relevant competencies of the partners include research, teaching, technology-supported learning, participatory design, instructional design, training adults, project management, and dissemination and quality management.

Piloting the AMORES teaching methodology in five countries was essential to project success. Although the pilot implementation was a small-scale trial of the methodology, the differences in tested contexts in 5 countries made it far more representative at the European level than if it had been conducted in only one country.

Another reason why working with partners from a range of EU countries enriched the project is that students learned about the literature of other countries, not just their own. This increases student awareness of both their own and a shared European cultural heritage. Sharing e-artefacts they created, both online and offline - when they took part in bilateral exchange visits - students were able to compare and contrast their lives first-hand with those of their peers from other countries. They were able to learn a lot from this, both about literature and a multitude of other aspects of living in Europe, leading to a heightened sense of contribution to a European community.

Likewise, teachers and principals of participating schools were able to compare the education systems they work in first-hand, and were exposed to several useful examples of good practice. This led to an overall improvement of practices in all participating schools.

There were several examples of establishing partnerships with stakeholders outside the project. These include the AMORES international e-artefacts competition, where schools and students all over Europe discovered the AMORES teaching methodology and are consequently able to improve student engagement in literature classes. The competition would not have been as successful if the judges had not contributed their expertise in the fields of digital materials publication, art and design education, copyright and digital literacy, and so on. The project team formed relationships with schools where workshops were held for teachers on how to use the teaching methodology. This has helped establish a network whereby it will be possible to encourage more educators to use the AMORES teaching methodology in their classes.

Another example of a relationship with outside stakeholders was a meeting with the UK Partnership manager of “Beanstalk”, a national volunteer reading programme at schools. They are very interested in using some of the AMORES techniques and

collaboration on future projects. Thanks to the pilot implementation findings, the AMORES team was also able to officially contribute to the National Reading Strategy that was under development in Croatia in 2015, and open to public comment.

The participating partners were:

- P1 - Croatian Academic and Research Network - CARNet, Zagreb, Croatia
- P2 - Silkeborg Municipality, School Department, Silkeborg, Denmark
- P3 - Coventry University, Coventry, United Kingdom
- P4 - Staffordshire University, Stoke on Trent, United Kingdom
- P5 - 36.6 Competence Centre, Lodz, Poland
- P6 - Primary school Horvati, Zagreb, Croatia
- P7 - Karlbergsskolan, Köping, Sweden
- P8 - NSF CYBERALL ACCESS, Athens, Greece
- P9 - University of Northumbria at Newcastle, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, United Kingdom

Fourteen teachers and about 400 students from the following schools participated in the pilot:

- St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom
- Karlbergsskolan, Köping, Sweden
- Primary School Horvati, Zagreb, Croatia
- Skægkærskolen, Silkeborg, Denmark
- Primary School ABIS "School4Child", Lodz, Poland

5. Plans for the Future

This section describes how the project results will be exploited beyond the lifespan of the project. These activities were planned and set out in an Exploitation Action Plan developed together by the partners, and subsequently agreed upon formally in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which is to be signed by all the project partners.

The goals of the consortium are to ensure that the project will go on after the funding period, and ensure the sustainability of the project by allowing the project results to be used by the broader European education community. These goals will be accomplished by undertaking several activities. These are:

- the AMORES teaching methodology and learning materials for teachers will continue to be available in English, as well as in Croatian, Danish, Polish and Swedish to all interested users on the AMORES website I
- the AMORES teaching methodology and learning materials for teachers will continue to be available in Croatian, Danish, Polish and Swedish to all interested users on the websites of the participating schools
- the AMORES teaching methodology and learning materials for teachers will continue to be available in English, Croatian, Danish, Polish and Swedish to all interested users via CARNet Open courses on their content repository
- the five schools that took part in the project will continue to use the AMORES teaching methodology - this refers to the teachers participating in the project, but each school will also involve at least 5 other teachers in participating schools
- the international e-artefacts competition for pupils that was held for the first time this year will continue to be held annually
- the collection of e-artefacts will be made available to all interested users via the AMORES and CARNet websites
- a book proposal has been submitted to Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, with the aim of publishing project insights in book form. The working title of the book is “Motivating children to read through digital creativity and collaboration” and it is aimed at school teachers, academics involved in teacher training, postgraduate teaching students, researchers, information professionals and school librarians. This will also be of interest to those who develop and/ or support e-learning.
- bilateral exchanges of teachers will be arranged between the Danish and Swedish partners

It is also important to note that the consortium’s aim is to have the key project results to be as widely disseminated as possible. They have been published as open educational resources (OER), which means there is no intention to charge for the use of the service – now nor at a later stage.

Third party use is permitted and made simple to encourage dissemination – the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>) should be used. Third parties can share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially) under the licence terms.

6. Contribution to EU policies

AMORES promotes language learning and linguistic diversity as one of the objectives of the Lifelong Learning Programme. The teachers have met with colleagues from partner schools and developed an online community as a support for the implementation of a new methodology which will improve student engagement in reading of national and European literature through a methodology based on interactivity and collaboration. Students from 5 different countries were exchanging their e-artefacts on national literature during the project online via video conferences and social media as well as live at the bilateral visits and the Final event. They were using their mother tongue and English as a common working language.

Another objective of the Lifelong Learning Programme the AMORES project addresses is supporting the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning. This project has enabled teachers, by participating in creation of innovative pedagogies and by training them in the use of interactive ICT tools, to motivate their students to learn. Teachers piloted new methodology for using interactive ICT tools in literacy, specifically reading and learning national and European literature. Implementation of new pedagogy led to creation of e-artefacts based on literature. The methodology, learning materials and e-artefacts were published as open educational resources.

Specific Objectives of the Action this project addresses is to help young people acquire the basic life-skills and competences necessary for their personal development, for future employment and for active European citizenship. New methodology based on interactivity and collaboration supported by ICT increases students reading literacy, which is a prerequisite for inclusion in learning and the labour market. The cross-European component in which learners share with peers from other countries introduces the added value of promoting a sense of EU identity. Thus, they will develop skills and competences that will enable them to become fully engaged European citizens of tomorrow.

The AMORES project provides support for the basic skills and "transversal key competences" as one of the Priorities of EU. Students and teachers involved in the project improved both basic and transversal key competences, specifically reading literacy, communication in the mother tongue, communication in the foreign language (English), digital competences and cultural awareness and expression.

AMORES fully endorses a second strategic objective of Education and Training 2020 Work Programme - improving the quality and efficiency of education and training. The project developed a new methodology in teaching reading and literacy and provided teachers with training in the use of interactive ICT tools, thus enabling them to provide teaching of a higher quality to their students. This not only made students more knowledgeable, but also more efficient in their learning.

Furthermore, the project is fully aligned with the EU agenda on advancing Open Educational Resources. More specifically, the project is heavily based on Open Educational Resources that are teaching, learning or research materials in the public domain or released with an intellectual property license that allows for their free use, adaptation, and distribution. As the Commissioner, Mrs Androulla Vassiliou, stated in her speech at the informal Ministerial Conference "Opening up Education through Technologies", in Oslo, Norway on 10 Dec 2012, Open Educational Resources

represent a strategic opportunity to improve the quality and enhance the equity of education, and one of the key objectives of this project is precisely to support this.

The notion of European added value (EAV) means that the project has relevance for all the Member States of the EU, or, at least, for a substantial number of EU Member States. AMORES was developed in such a way to ensure that learning materials, practices and case studies developed within the project go beyond the confines of the project and offer a solution for broader, European issues, such as ICT competences of students, their basic and transversal skills, as well as developing their cultural competences, thus enabling students to become fully engaged European citizens of tomorrow.

7. The AMORES teaching methodology in four simple steps

The AMORES teaching methodology in four simple steps



AMORES



Reading



Reflection



Creating e-artefacts



Sharing and discussion



The AMORES teaching methodology has been piloted with 400 students in Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Croatia and the UK. It has been proven to improve literature learning by increasing student engagement with literature. Try it out with your class!

E-artefact /i-ˈɑːtɪfækt/ NOUN [COUNTABLE] Digital work created in different formats: text, audio, video, image, animation or a combination of these. Within the AMORES project used for digital works inspired by literature and created by students.

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