The Reading Avatar: Literacy and gaming

How can gaming and the digital avatar stimulate reading in literature education? This paper presents the findings of what characterizes explorative reading activities in a gamified design for the literature classroom. Although researchers have been pointing out the connection between reading fiction and playing a video game (Ryan & Thon, 2014), there is a lack of studies addressing the implementation of such game designs in the literature classrooms (Ortiz, Chiluiza, & Valcke, 2017)

The study is an educational design project with a qualitative, explorative approach doing research on the intervention (McKenney & Reeves, 2018). A design for gamification of the literature classroom is created. The target group is young people in the new media landscape. The game design legitimizes the students to act as characters in the classical novel Herr Arnes Penningar by Selma Lagerlöf by descending in the story in the form of a digital avatar. In the center of the study is the implementation with the focus on the students reading activities. The aim is to contribute to new knowledge about students reading activities in a gamified design for literature teaching, there the gaming elements avatars, quests and experience points are included. The design assumptions made there the gamified reading as a creative activity, an explorative activity and as a participatory activity. In focus in this paper is the explorative activity.

The design was implemented during spring 2018 in both the mother tongue and the second language classrooms in upper secondary school. The material is 167 avatar texts and 68 avatar films made by 48 students. Twenty-two students and four teachers were also interviewed, semi-structured. The material is analyzed by thematic coding (Mason, 1996). The preliminary results are the students explore the novel through their avatar by taking different positions in the original story and are moving around by the use of visualization, the narrative and an imitation of Lagerlöf's literary language. Through the different positions the students reinterpretate the original story and are exploring borders of gender and social class.

References