





*To those who want to be heard...*



**“I DISCOVERED A NEW WORLD WHEN I BECAME A STORYTELLER”:  
THE STORY OF THE STORYTELLING FROM TRADITIONAL TO  
DIGITAL**

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## ABSTRACT

### “I DISCOVERED A NEW WORLD WHEN I BECAME A STORYTELLER”: THE STORY OF THE STORYTELLING FROM TRADITIONAL TO DIGITAL

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This thesis explores storytelling from traditional to digital, demonstrating the form of today's storytelling. The main problem of this study is how traditional oral storytelling turns into digital storytelling. For this reason, first of all, we will travel back to the concept of traditional storytelling, meddahs, who are one of the most important storytellers, are examined. In addition to specifying the differences that distinguish digital narratives from traditional narratives in terms of form and content, the interactive nature of digital narratives will be explored. With digitization, the author is not alone in shaping his/her story now, and the writer and the reader communicate together. Thus, this thesis also examines how readers or audiences will be able to interact with the story itself without being passive in the face of the content and be active producers in conveying their own stories.

**Keywords:** Storytelling, meddah, digitization, new media, oral tradition

## ÖZET

### “BİR HİKAYE ANLATICISI OLDUĞUMDA, YENİ BİR DÜNYA KEŞFETTİM”: GELENEKSELDEN DİJİTAL HİKAYE ANLATICILIĞININ HİKAYESİ

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Bu tezde gelenekselden dijitalde doğru bir serüven halinde hikaye anlatımı incelenmiş ve günümüzdeki hikaye anlatımının şekli gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın temel problemi, geleneksel sözlü hikaye anlatımının nasıl dijital hikaye anlatımına dönüştüğüdür. Bu nedenle öncelikle geleneksel hikaye anlatıcılığına geri dönlerek, en önemli hikaye anlatıcılarından biri olan meddahlar incelenmektedir. Dijital anlatıları geleneksel anlatılardan biçim ve içerik açısından ayıran farklılıkların belirtilmesinin yanı sıra, dijital anlatıların etkileşimli doğası keşfedilmektedir. Dijitalleşmeyle birlikte yazar artık hikâyesini şekillendirmede yalnız değil, yazar ve okuyucu birlikte iletişim kurmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu tez, okurların veya izleyicilerin içerik karşısında pasif kalmadan hikâyenin kendisiyle nasıl etkileşime geçebileceklerini ve kendi öykülerini aktarırken nasıl aktif üreticiler olabileceklerini de incelemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hikaye anlatıcılığı, meddah, dijitalleşme, yeni medya, sözlü gelenek

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1. Miniature depicting Lâlin Kaba, the famous scholar of the reign of Sultan Murad III
2. Engraving by Thomas Allom in the 19th century, depicting the critic and his audience.



## INTRODUCTION

“The universe is not made of atoms; it's made of stories,”<sup>1</sup> says Muriel Rukeyser referring to the fact that the story is at least as old as human history. Since the time they were able to communicate verbally, people have been telling each other what they see in a composition within the framework of a certain fiction in order to inform each other, to ensure their safety, to explain their needs, to help or even to be hostile. These narratives have occasionally found their place in peoples' cultural memory and have been passed down from generation to generation in the shape of stories, myths, proverbs, and more.

People have told stories since ancient times in order to convey their experiences and make sense of these experiences, and the stories continue to be told today. Storytellers refer to various legends, tales, historical events, and people, current social or political events. Social and political critiques can be conveyed openly or through allusions to audiences through scenarios or contexts. For this reason, storytellers are characterized as a mirror of the social, political and economic conditions of their time.

The stories can only be heard by the narrator, and the listeners can only contribute to the stories thanks to the narrators. The story has a collective production process. The author does not erase this collective process while narrating the text. S/he does not prefer a discourse in which all the information he has acquired is embellished and

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<sup>1</sup> Rukeyser M. (1968). *The Speed of Darkness ; [poems]*. Random House.

incorporated into a single narrative. This collective production process is also represented in the story (Altuğ, 2014, p. 50).

In particular, the narrators, who have a dominant role in the oral narrative tradition, are the dominant carrier power and the most important link in the oral tradition chain in the transfer of stories (or experiences) consisting of people, events and situations related to the human condition from generation to generation. They imitate when appropriate, use dialect when appropriate, play an instrument and sing a tune when appropriate, read poetry, speak wittily, and sometimes use satire when appropriate. Sometimes they make irony, sometimes they use sharp-critical language. From time to time they make them laugh, sometimes they cry or leave a bitter smile. Ultimately, they also use gestures and mimics to reshape their narratives with the possibilities of the art of animation (Aydemir, 2021, p. 374).

As layered texts emerge in which different voices, genres and discourses come together side by side and face to face within the narrative of the story, the readers not only read an interesting story, but also experience a public space established on an imaginary/fictional plane. An imaginary society composed of volumes, parts, stories, persons, absolute or partial but usually male authors, real or fictional but usually female readers, genres, discourses and their transformations (Altuğ, 2014, p. 62).

In this thesis, I am focusing on the concept of storytelling at the centre. In the process of digital storytelling from traditional storytelling, I aim to demonstrate the adventure

of change of the narrator, the audience and the content more concretely with examples.

The main problem of this thesis is how traditional storytelling is transformed into digital storytelling.

The first part of the thesis focused on story and traditional storytelling. First of all, I focused on the meaning of the concept of the story in our literature and discuss the development process of the story. I then explain traditional storytelling and outlined traditional storytelling elements. I identify the elements of traditional storytelling by stating that traditional story and storytelling are influenced, fed or rooted in other literary genres in the development process. At a point, stories have formed the basis of determining the traditions or rights and wrongs of the people. Similarly, these narratives have become the topic of history and the field of literature today in order to elucidate the culture and history of humanity that served as their foundations. The fact that such a comprehensive action has survived to the present day and still has a current value and has caused it to be in the field of interest of the technology institution, where the greatest development of our age.

Another type of storytelling is meddahism, which I devoted the second part of my thesis to analyse the traditional storytelling in depth. I would like to both examine the tradition of meddah and bring it to light again so that it would not be forgotten in the digitalized world and also to show how the setting has changed from coffee houses to the digitized world. In Meddah narratives, there are stories that have been widely lived, transferred from previous generations, have words, essence and troubles, have common (anonymous) emotional values, as well as educational, instructive,

exemplary features, permanence in memory and are considered the product of oral culture.

Meddah tradition can be defined as the art of telling stories, involving impersonation and animation, and intended to entertain the audience. Those who practice this art are also called meddah. The word meddah is derived from the Arabic word *meth* and is used in the sense of praise, which means one who gives praise. While making his art, Meddah sits in a chair, uses accessories such as a cane (pastry) and handkerchief (macrame) to animate by taking on various identities throughout his story. The stick is used as a solid influence tool, not only to attract the attention of the audience and to strengthen the expressions, but also to represent objects or living things. The handkerchief is used to change sounds or represent a different character. The story of narration, which started with the shaman in Central Asia, continued with the folk poets, and by blending the stages of shamanism and bard, adding elements such as imitation, dialect, and animation to this blend, contributed to the formation of the Turkish meddah style. There are many studies in which meddahs were compared to the stand-up artists. I also believe that they have many similarities. Yet, in this thesis, my approach was not to compare the meddahs to the most similar artists to them. The reason why I choose to compare meddahs and the modern day of storytelling is because I would like to focus more on the narrative style and the art of telling of the meddahs.

Comparison between the traditional art of storytelling by the meddah, and modern day of storytelling, make for interesting contrasts in how stories of traditional and modern

cultures are communicated. Accordingly, the third part of the thesis will be based on explaining the concept of digital storytelling and identifying its elements. In this section, I will explain how traditional storytelling has evolved with technology and how it has become more accessible.

In today's technology, there have been some developments in order to make storytelling more subjective, effective, accessible to more people and more understandable. At the beginning of these developments, spatial and infrastructural changes have shifted towards digitalization or artificial intelligence in line with the working order of today's technology. For this reason, a field of study has emerged within the scope of digital storytelling today. Transforming from conventional to digital, storytelling is a method of showing numerous visuals, photos, video clips, music, and text. The stories grow during this process as the participants share their experiences, and the stories are read aloud or presented to the participants for comments and feedback (Sunal, 2022, p. 221). In short, digitizing storytelling will enable us to experience the qualities we have mentioned with a more functional feature, namely interactive (Mutual Interaction).

In this constantly changing and transforming age we live in, the effect of progress in information technologies is observed in every field. In this process, which carries storytelling to a different point, digital stories are emotional narratives built from cyber culture. The most important difference between traditional and digital storytelling is that the individual is not only a listener, but also enables interaction by shaping the stories. At this point, the most important tool is the use of information

and communication technologies. In this process, digital storytelling, which has become a cultural tool in a world where it is easy to produce content without the limit of time and space, allows individuals to express themselves. In other words, from the tradition of meddah, which once used canes and handkerchiefs as a means of influence; we have now entered a period in which we have made video and music a means of influence instead of a cane and a handkerchief.

When we travel towards to the digitized world, storytelling becomes a technology-based expression tool, which takes a new name as digital storytelling. It is a participatory, visual method for people to produce, share and disseminate. It provides an advantage in user-based content and in overcoming some obstacles even for educators. Digital storytelling allows computer users to become creative content producers by choosing their own topics, conducting some research, writing a script and developing an interesting story. These stories are also realized by using a wide variety of audio-visual multimedia (Ökmen, 2021). Based on this information, after determining the elements of digital storytelling, I will analyse these elements through the example of social media. In particular, I will talk about the channel named “+90”. The German-based channel introduces itself as a brand new neutral channel for those who would like to follow the latest issues and developments in Turkey. I will examine the videos selected from “+90” in terms of digital storytelling elements and compare them with traditional storytelling elements. In the light of all this information, I aim to demonstrate how the story actually becomes individualized with technology, by shedding light on how digital storytelling helps people to tell their own problems, and troubles, and to face their own problems.

Overall, I will prioritize the development of the concept of storytelling by identifying elements of traditional storytelling and digital storytelling. However, besides pointing out the differences that distinguish digital narratives from traditional narratives in terms of form and content, I will draw attention to the interactive nature of digital narratives. Now the author is not alone in shaping his/her story in the technological world. The writer and the reader communicate together through editing, video making, using sounds and images.... Thus, readers or viewers will be able to interact with the story itself without being passive in the face of the content and be active producers in conveying their own stories. In other words, from the tradition of meddah, which once used canes and handkerchiefs as a means of influence; we have now entered a period in which we have made video and music a means of influence instead of a cane and a handkerchief.

Storytelling has now become a mass activity. The digital story also stands in stark contrast to the central media and capital that has monopolized television and film. It enables non-professionals to tell their stories. As a result, the concept of digital storytelling was assessed not only in terms of being a narrative, but also in terms of its formal and content, as well as its social, economic, and cultural implications (Topuz, 2020).

Narratives (stories) have begun to become more visible to wider audiences and take the shape of hypertext thanks to widespread communication channels, making them more accessible and easier to share within the possibilities of the digital world. With the development of diverse specialities in storytelling, this scenario prompted the

creation of various definitions of the story. While the story has now become interactive, and it will also become personalised.



# CHAPTER 1. “ONCE UPON A TIME”: THE STORY OF THE STORY AND THE TRADITIONAL STORYTELLING

## 1.1. What is a Story?

Once upon a time, there was words by word of mouth. Language, the dominant element in narration, has been pointed out as "the house of being" in Heidegger's words (Williams, 2017, p. 11). Today, it exists as an independent literary art. However, other narratives are used instead of stories in the historical process. At the beginning and the base of these are myths, epic, legends and oral narration, which was first kept alive, told/transmitted, and finally started the modern view of today's story by putting it into writing.

One of the literary genres that emerged as a result of the need to tell is *the story*. In *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, Roland Barthes states, "narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative [...]" (237). For Barthes, the narrative is infinite. At this point, the terminological examination of the story's concept is as follows before moving on to the story deeply, and before that we can define the concept of "tahkiye" (narration), which is the general name of literary texts based on the event.

The concept of "tahkiye" (narration) means the order in narrating an event (Tonga, 2008, p. 372). Narrative expression is a general literary term that includes literary genres such as epic, tale, legend, gazavatnâme, folk tale, fable, parable, theatre, novel, short story, etc. and the term and its broad framework have been narrowed down by the necessity of development, enrichment and specialisation in every aspect of life: First, the narrator was united, and the theatrical arts became independent; Then, while verse dominated the narrative work, this dominance was broken, and after the period of having verse pieces from time to time, prose became dominant (Tonga, 2008, p. 372).

The story is a word derived from the Arabic root *ha-ke-ve*. In Arabic, the word story has meanings such as transmitting and narrating much news, resembling an object, imitating an actual or verbal object, conveying a word from someone, imitating for entertainment, imitating a verb, copying a text (Tonga, 2008, p. 373). The "story", which was transferred from Arabic to our language, was used in the sense of "imitation" rather than "explanation of an event" in Arabic literature in the early days and later became widespread with the meaning of "transfer and repetition" and settled with its current expression (Tonga, 2008, p. 373).

On the other hand, the story, with two different definitions by the Turkish Language Institution, is "1. Oral or written narrative of an event (or) 2. The type of prose describing real or imagined events is a story" ([www.tdk.gov.tr](http://www.tdk.gov.tr)). When we consider these two definitions separately, the fact that the story can be verbal and written and tells about real or unreal events meets the definition of the story.

The story, which started its journey orally, met with writing, a new means of expression, which could be considered the leading actor in its (literary) specification. The story, one of the oldest literary genres, was encountered in works such as epics, tales and legends before it became an independent writing genre. The story's starting point is the parts that are outside of the extraordinary and unreal parts of these genres, and that tell people, places and time following reality.

The work, which significantly contributed to the story's development and the novel, dates back to the 3rd-2nd BC. These are *Miletos Tales*, in which Miletos and Aristeides gathered many stories with realistic motifs over the centuries. In Asia, especially in India, there is a long tradition of storytelling. During the Middle Ages, many Indian stories spread to Europe through their Arabic translations. The story achieves its first and most significant success in Italy. In particular, his work titled *Decameron*, where wit and adventure are intertwined, Boccaccio set an example for contemporary French and Italian storytellers. The first examples of the story in the West began to be seen in the 18th century, and in the 19th century, it was called a short story to distinguish it from the novel genre (Kaplan, 1992).

In Turkish literature, before the Tanzimat, there were works of stories: of masnavi such as *Leyla and Mecnun*, *Hüsrev-ü Şirin*; Folk tales such as *Tahir and Zühre*, *Kerem and Aslı*, *Dede Korkut*; Epic historical stories such as *Danişmendname* and *Battalname*. The western style story in Turkish Literature is seen after the Tanzimat

period. Translations were made from Western literature, and because "story" was used in exchange for novels, they were called short stories (Kaplan, 1992).

According to William Lowell Randall, three things are required for a narrative to be defined as a story, and these can be listed as follows: First, the person telling the story from his or her point of view. Second, the characters in the narrative. The third is the plot. It can also be seen that when people communicate with each other and talk about anything, these three elements come together to form a story (Ökmen, 2021, p.13).

Moreover, stories should also contain originality. From the oral tradition, it is seen that the narratives feed off each other. As genres in the field of literature can feed from each other, other arts, such as cinema, can often be fed from literature. In this respect, it is an inevitable reality that the stories are similar. However, changing the names of the characters, some characteristics of the characters or development in the plot can add originality to that story. This is important for the story's success (Ökmen, 2021, p.13).

The structure of the stories expressed orally and in writing has changed according to the period. The first or traditional stories are oral contents. With the discovery of the manuscript, the contents of the stories began to be created in written and printed form. With the invention of cinema and digitisation, the contents began to be created under the structure of cinema and television. All these processes took place in different periods. There have been significant changes in content and structure in each period.

However, it shows that the narrative is the only thing that does not change. Even though the channel and structure in which the contents were transferred changed, somehow, the narratives continued to be formed (Ökmen, 2021, pp. 14-15).

## **1.2. The Concept of Storytellers and Traditional Storytelling**

First of all, there was the word, and there was also a word for communication. For the spread of the word, story and storytelling have an important place in human life. People have communicated with each other through stories since they lived around a fire in caves. For this reason, since the existence of human beings, stories are the elements that connect people and ensure the transfer of culture from generation to generation. People use stories to tell themselves, create meaning, make sense of the world, teach values, and integrate others into change. In other words, storytelling, which we encounter in every aspect of daily life, is a cultural element used to share past experiences and convey new developments.

Storytelling as a cultural carrier; the ability of individuals to communicate their experiences, the chain of tradition that passes an event or situation down from generation to generation, can be defined as a type of wisdom based on life experience (Sütçü, 2013). This style of narrative is an art form from a time when oral culture was prominent.

In the ages when oral culture dominated, storytelling, which existed in many cultures through movements and imitations, took place face to face. In many societies, storytelling has been seen as a field in which oral literature exists. However, this does not mean that storytelling does not include the subject of other narrative tools (Sekmen, 2015, p. 3). The narrative has been the most studied genre in terms of understanding the transition from oral culture to written culture, because the most common type of verbal expression that has continued from the primary oral culture to the advanced literate and electronic information processing culture is the story. The story, which is the backbone of many arts, is in a way the most important of the verbal art forms.

Storytelling, again, which is the expression of a tradition that dates back to ancient times, is in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, in fictional stories describing abundance ceremonies held in the name of the God, Dionysus, and in Eastern culture in *Arabian Nights*, *Nasreddin Hodja*, *Dede Korkut* and *meddah* showed itself in these narratives (İnceelli, 2005, p. 135). Then, we can talk about the permanence of oral storytelling when it becomes written. We can state it has moved to another dimension as storytelling has become something that can be studied or listened to over and over again. We can talk about the fact that storytelling has now become a value preservation, an interest out of necessity, an effort to spend time well, rather than just a need, adding value, and security, and a primitive narration in sudden situations.

The Turks, who migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia in the 10th century, brought their stories along with their unique traditions. These people, who took the names of shaman, poet, baksı, minstrel and meddah with social and cultural changes over time,

also responded to the religious needs of the society. On the other hand, they were also the representatives of the branches of art of their period such as poetry, story, music and dance. These storytellers formed one of the most respected groups in society with their sacred qualities (Bars, 2019, p.6).

Mehmed Fuad Köprülü talks about the poets who are called by different names such as "shaman, kam, caretaker, baksi, bard" in different Turkish tribes. These people have a great reputation among the people. The first poets, who gathered many qualifications such as magic, dance, music, medicine, sacrificed to the gods in the sky, sent the soul of the dead to the ground, prevented the demon, illness and death brought by the evil, treated the sick, and sent the souls of some deceased to the heaven (Köprülü, 2004, p. 72).

In time, the Turks' entry into different faith circles changed the position of poets in society. Some of these baksi, which we can count as folk poet musicians and even storytellers, are dervish (Köprülü, 2004, p. 79). Every century that passed over the lives of these dervishes continued their memories among the people and made their lives a legend.

Ozan-baksıs told all kinds of events in life. Among these issues, there were principles and moral parts to be considered in social life. Bards had a very important position, especially among the Oghuz. They would travel around the city with kopuz in their hands, participate in various entertainments, and tell stories about both ancient and

daily events. They were semi-sacred in their community. As a result of social and cultural developments, the bards lost their former sanctity and were replaced by minstrels in the Anatolian and Azeri fields, and baksi in the Turkmen field, starting from the 15th century. Some of the Baksi were dervish. Baksis sang saz to the accompaniment of saz and told folk tales such as *Köroğlu, Ahmed and Yusuf*, especially during long winter nights in Turkmen tribes (Köprülü, 2004: 147).

The minstrels which started to be seen from the 16th century, constitute the most important storyteller group of the society after this period (Günay, 2005, p. 54), The stories told by lovers often do not end overnight. Âşık Müdami says that his grandfather, Posoflu Süleyman, told the story of *Kerem* in 40 nights (Boratav, 2002, p. 130).

Meddahs, on the other hand, formed another important storyteller group besides minstrels after the 15th century. They appealed to people of all classes and levels, from coffee houses to palaces, and told their stories by embellishing them with various imitations and jokes. Meddah is a realistic storyteller. He is a humorist who tells daily life with dialect imitations, lively speeches and dramatization. His success depends on telling his story convincingly. The common feature between him and the lover is that he interacts closely with the audience/listeners and shapes his story according to their reactions. Being listened by spectators from all walks of life and sitting side by side during the show distinguish them from storytellers in foreign cultures (Bars, 2019, p. 8).

Although the stories told by the minstrels were mostly spread around the villages, the meddah stories developed in the cities, tradesmen, merchants, civil servants, in the palace and in their rich mansions (Boratav, 1999, p. 68). According to the story it tells, Meddah excites the audience, arouses their curiosity, sadness and pity; he establishes a bond of sympathy and identification between the story heroes and the audience.

Storyteller gained experience in storytelling as a profession to be written and worked on. In this case, the story, which expresses a relevant cultural structure and forms a whole with the narrator and the listener, should talk about a change in human life, that is, the story should both contain a sudden turn and talk about something that people do not know. There is no story without purpose, therefore stories are not just told.

A story is always loaded with meaning and value judgements, otherwise it is not considered a story but a simple series of events (Fulford, 2017, p. 19). Technically, we can talk about three elements of traditional storytelling. These are the storyteller, the listener, and the story.

The storyteller is always at the forefront in traditional storytelling. There is also verbal expression of that story in a way that is dramatic, emotional, sometimes rational, but always maintains its dynamism in its own genre.

At the same time, it is known that there were people who told stories and were always approached with care by their listeners during the Ancient and Middle Ages (Lipman,

1999, pp. 45-46). In these periods, when there was a lack of advanced information and information sources, the information presented in an effective way was really useful and could be considered correct most of the time. In this sense, the storyteller must also have a manipulative feature. In traditional storytelling, if the story told does not directly affect the person, there may be shortcomings in the narrator. That is why believability and logical fiction are also very important in traditional storytelling.

The storyteller also engages the audience/audience and makes them part of the story. If the listener/audience becomes a part of the story, it becomes easier to keep both the narrator and the story in their memory (Elgin, 2016).

It is important to focus on the second important element of traditional storytelling, the story itself. The story is a structure that creates the flow, existence and channel of a narrative. In this sense, it is a verbal activity that carries the narrator to the listener/viewer and has a dynamic integrity in every sense.

In traditional storytelling, the story is inspired by a legend, myth, folk poems, religious narratives, yet it is shaped by the initiative of the narrator, sometimes continues according to the reaction of the listener, but has a definite end. Certainly, even if they contain some ordinary events with important subjects, the stories that should be equipped with interest include the existence of cultures, concrete and abstract accumulations, morality, the immoral, and sometimes past events that help the discipline of history. For this reason, it is also important in terms of collective

consciousness, as there is definitely a big story or stories behind mass movements, the emergence of great wars, some rebellions and revolutions. Likewise, the next period in these movements becomes the subject of stories. Many times, especially in Western culture, there have been people who attribute being the subject of stories to immortality. Therefore, being the subject of a good story means not to be forgotten in name or physically, in a way it overlaps with giving an important work or immortality (Snævvarr, 2010, p. 58).

Moreover, stories are flexible areas, that is, they may contain some exaggerations, extreme naturalness, metaphysical events or beings, heroes with superior features, and evils that can also be found excessive. In this sense, stories are areas where people are not limited, so even people can be happy to listen to stories. At the same time, its contribution to the development of intellectual cultures such as philosophy, science and technology cannot be denied as it allows people to think outside of their own limitations.

As the third element, it is important to mention the audience/audience as those who can decide the course of the story at some point with their instantaneous reactions, where storytelling is shaped, the outcome is measured. The listener determines the quality of the story, the feelings of the storyteller, and the outcome of the story. Because the listener is the element that does not finish the story after it is told, it will definitely be in his/her memory for a few times, maybe until s/he dies. Likewise, moods during storytelling automatically determine the emotions of the storyteller, and

if s/he is very interested in the story, it can make the story end quickly because s/he wants to hear the outcome immediately, if not more surprisingly.

The most basic feature of traditional storytelling, which is directly related to human emotions, has started to be criticized for its features such as being completely put on paper, a narrator losing his/her existence and losing his/her side that will motivate people, since the 20th century (Benjamin, 2012, p. 51). At this point, the stories started to become more detailed, and storytelling evolved towards another path in the modern stage, as the dominance and control of the storyteller disappeared. This path also reveals the point of view of the individualized person to the stories. Collective consciousness has started to become more passive but more controlled as it takes action as a result of storytelling that is shaped by people's own truths. At this stage, the meaning, details, metaphors and inferences in the stories for the reader began to increase, and the value of even a simple story began to increase in line with a cognitive effort. Moreover, this modern period storytelling has begun to guide people with a definition of power that they will not be alone in life but will not be helpless.<sup>2</sup>

Stories and storytellers are at the forefront of the leading carriers that will ensure the operability of cultural memory and the connection of the past with the present.

Although they have different names, every civilisation and every nation has unique stories and storytellers. They are both guardians and carriers of social, historical and

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<sup>2</sup> According to Nietzsche's understanding of will to power, one of the most important philosophers of the modern era, an individual who can establish relationships in a hierarchical context without needing anyone is a strong person. The fact that he is renewed with a technique in his stories in a way that does not make the individual feel powerless despite being alone supports this situation. See: Friedrich Nietzsche, Will to Power, Translator: Nilüfer Epçeli, Say Publications, 2022.

cultural codes. They transmit the past and the information recorded in the cultural memory to the society within the framework of the determined structure and rules. With the activities of re-recording, remembering and transmitting, they ensure that the encodings related to memory continue their mental flow on the one hand and transform into temporal and spatial ones, on the other hand, to be remembered and experienced by the participant group themselves.

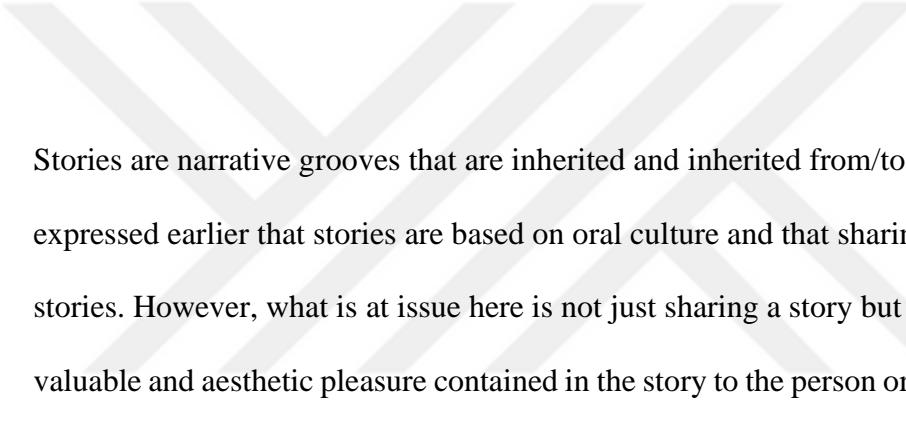
The historical origin of the relationship between story and storytelling and human beings is profound. According to Robert Fulford:

Stories that transcend cultures and generations and accompany people for centuries touch all of us. Putting events together in the form of a fairy tale is the only method of communication and entertainment that we all like from seven to seventy. Stories allow us to connect with our ancestors, whom we never met, with people who lived ten or twenty thousand years ago. Research on pre-written cultures reveals that storytelling goes back much further than human learning to write. Millions of anonymous storytellers created the narrative; when they learned to convey their knowledge to others through their observations and stories, the history of civilisation began (Fulford, 2015, p.12).

Parallel to such an argument that the history of civilisation begins with storytelling, Benjamin also states that stories/tales are the first teachers of humanity (2014, p. 93). At this point, two fundamental characteristics of stories and storytelling are highlighted. According to the first view, every story and storytelling action is a communication channel. It conveys messages from mind to mind, from emotion to emotion, from culture to culture, and from belief to belief. Thus, the interaction between people and societies begins, and the basic necessity of civilisation formation is fulfilled. In the second view, it is desired to explain that stories are a

teaching/learning tool, that people learn the first information about life from stories (tales), and that they provide people's contact with life right after language acquisition.

However, no story is just a simple channel of information transfer. The stories reveal the life wisdom of societies and reflect their feelings and experiences; They serve the social appropriation of individual experiences. In this respect, they ensure the production of a joint (mass) way of thinking, having a collective perspective, living and gathering around common principles (Aydemir, 2021, p. 373).



Stories are narrative grooves that are inherited and inherited from/to someone else. I expressed earlier that stories are based on oral culture and that sharing is essential in stories. However, what is at issue here is not just sharing a story but conveying the valuable and aesthetic pleasure contained in the story to the person or the audience and ensuring the expected interaction. In works of art, this is called the pleasure and utility principle.

The pleasure principle is the feeling of beauty that is shared with the way of expressing the thing being told. It is about form rather than essence and is felt only through the sharing of the artistic. The pleasure principle is vital in storytelling. Because the only key to making the narrator listen to what s/he is telling is to be able to tell it artistically, a flat, dry, didactic, vulgar and full of burr expression will not create the expected effect on the listener no matter what is told; moreover, it will prevent even listening to the story. Therefore, just as the existence of storytelling without an audience is

doubtful, the importance and value of the artistic narrative that connects the audience to the story are vital. The principle of utility, on the other hand, is about the essence. It is not how the narrator tells but what s/he tells. In other words, the messages that are wanted to be given in the story are the words that should be said to people. Here, the listener is provided to be informed and to contribute his/her equipment about life (Aydemir, 2021, pp. 373-374).

Every true story contains helpful something, either explicitly or implicitly. This usefulness may be a moral lesson in some stories, advice from another, a proverb or a maxim in a third. However, in any case, the storyteller is the person who can advise his/her reader. If giving reason is perceived as outdated today, it is because experience is becoming less and less transferable. Therefore, we no longer have the mind to give to ourselves or others (Benjamin, 1995, p. 80). Undoubtedly, every story was formed in line with the principles of pleasure and utility, built on the legs of these two principles. In other words, each story established a relationship with the listener, thanks to the balanced use of these two principles, and thus realised its existence.

However, among the primary motivations that should be in every story, it is necessary to point out the following basic features: It contains little essence, it is intense and dynamic, it leans on the current and relates the narrative with it, it is fluent and emphatic, it contains both tension and curiosity and gives the funny and the intellectual, it is interesting, contains persuasiveness in its entirety, contains expression grooves that are prone to creating images / making dreams come true, having a spoken

language naturalness, and the language is densely adorned with idioms, proverbs, sayings, poetry, mani, slang, and humour (Aydemir, 2021, p. 374).

The narrator is the main factor in conveying these motivations audience in a balanced way through a story, which are stated before. The narrator can only hear the stories, and the listeners can only contribute to the stories, thanks to the narrators. In particular, the narrators, who have a dominant role in the oral narrative tradition, are the dominant carrier power and the most crucial link in the oral tradition chain in the transfer of stories (or experiences) consisting of people, events and situations related to the human condition from generation to generation. They tell stories, but unlike everyone else, they have superior speaking and vocal skills, as well as sharp-practical intelligence and creative bodily expression techniques required by performance art. They do not tell straight; They imitate when appropriate, they use dialect when appropriate, they play an instrument and sing a tune, they read poetry, they speak wit, and they satirise when appropriate. Sometimes they make irony, and sometimes they use solid critical language. From time to time, they make them laugh. Sometimes they cry or leave a bitter smile. Ultimately, they also use gestures and mimics to reshape their narratives with animation possibilities.

The vital bond that the narrator establishes with the listener in the formation of unity consciousness between the narrator - the listener - story trio actually depends on the bond that the narrator will establish with the story. How strong a narrator's bond with his/her story is and how to tell it correctly, the more likely it is to pass it on to the listener and to have the desired effect on the listener. In other words, the bond between

the narrator and the story is that the story is sufficiently internalised; with the narrator's familiarity with and assimilation of what is being told; It is related to the fact that the story is first felt by the narrator with his whole being and lived in it. Recognising the story is essential. For this, the narrator must enter an analysis/understanding process, which we can call story dramaturgy (Aydemir, 2021, p. 375).

"Stories themselves also have thresholds: places where things end and new things begin, such as changes of time and place or the beginning of a new episode. You could also see the beginning and end of stories as thresholds between the 'real' world and the world of the story. In stories, these places need new energy or impetus, a change in pace and tone of voice. Without these changes, a story will be monotonous and undifferentiated and may even send us to sleep. Such thresholds bring fresh air, vitality and a new note to the ear. These places also cue listeners into important developments in the plot, alerting us, for instance, to a new character" (Ramsden & Hollingsworth, 2013).

Another technique that makes the memory of the storyteller work is the creation of rhythm and weighing related to the body and voice (intonation, intonation, emphasis, etc.). There is no doubt that all bodily (gesture-mimic) movements accompanying the words bring the memory of the current words. Voice-playing techniques such as emphasis intonation are also among the narrator's basic remembering instruments. In the story's connection with the listener, the narrator's ability to speak and the performance of the animation are also vital. In this context, the storyteller needs to know his/her own body, voice and senses well. Because the richer the narrator's senses are, the more successful the portrayal of his story to the audience will be. (Aydemir, 2021, p. 376).

Another of the main tools of the narrator in storytelling is space, the use of space as a reinforcing element. Undoubtedly, in order to establish a healthy relationship between

the narrator and the listener, besides the clever use of factors such as language, sound, object and body, the size of the space, the light design and the seating arrangement of the audience are vital. Transforming the narrative into a magical world is only possible by creating an atmosphere. In identifying the atmosphere, the importance and function of the space are dominant. Especially in most contemporary narratives, the listener is surrounded by magic throughout the narrative (the fourth wall) because the atmosphere has surrounded the listener.. In a sense, this is the situation where the listener loses himself/herself / finds himself/herself in the story. It is identity: The listener's identification with the story, with the hero of the story. At this point, the best use of space is when the space bans itself and turns into something else (story).

In fact, the necessity of the place and other factors to serve the atmosphere of the story varies according to the roles the narrator takes during the narrative because the narrator often assumes three different identities/roles during the narrative. First, s/he is neither a narrator nor an actor. Narrator is only himself/herself. Especially in the sections where short conversations are made with the listeners at the beginning of the storytelling or during the breaks. Then s/he tells; s/he is the one who speaks, tells the story, and conveys the word orally. Then s/he becomes an actor; s/he plays the heroes in the story, and the person s/he plays becomes the portrayed hero. The storyteller, who can masterfully navigate between these three roles/identities, sometimes uses the space and other factors throughout the narrative to create an atmosphere that serves the listener to identify with the story (actor), sometimes as a speaking platform (narrator) that turns out of the emotion of the story and turns into a mere teaching platform, sometimes it is also used as a space with no definite function (Aydemir, 2021, p. 376).

The storyteller is the guest of the storyteller; even a story reader takes their place in this assembly. The novel reader, on the other hand, is the loneliest of readers. (Because even the poetry reader is prone to reading aloud for those who listen.) In this loneliness, s/he takes what s/he reads more jealously than any of them. S/he wants to make it his/her own, to read it as if s/he were swallowing it. Indeed, it swallows and destroys what it reads, just as the fire swallows the wood in the hearth. The tension that pervades the novel is just like the air current that enlivens the flame in the stove and enthuses it (Benjamin, p. 92). Undoubtedly, everything changes and transforms. Especially if it is something like storytelling, based on people, language and art, it will likely stay the same because humans, language, art, living and constantly moving, They are things that change and transform as they live and move - depending on the speed of time. According to Benjamin:

"Nothing is more effective in appropriating a story than that laconic, pristine narrative that avoids psychological analysis. The more natural the storyteller's renunciation of psychological nuances, the better the chance for the story to stick in the listener's memory, the more the story will cost him, and the greater the listener's tendency to pass it on to others sooner or later. This cascading process of assimilation requires less and less relaxation. If sleep is the pinnacle of bodily relaxation, boredom is the pinnacle of mental relaxation. Boredom is a dream bird that hatches an egg of experience. A little rustle in the leaves is enough to drive him away. Its nesting sites—activities closely related to boredom—are already gone in the city and on the verge of extinction in the countryside. With it, the ability to listen is lost, and the audience disintegrates. Because narration has always been the art of repeating stories, And when the stories are not kept in mind, this art disappears. Disappears; because while the stories are being listened to, there is no one who spins and weaves them anymore. The more the listener forgets himself while listening to the story, the more they listen to it in his memory. When he immerses himself in the rhythm of the narrative, he listens to the stories so earnestly that he finds himself retelling them effortlessly. This is how the web that cradles the ability to tell stories is woven. After being woven in the same place with the oldest forms of craftsmanship thousands of years ago, it is being ripped apart today." (Benjamin, 1992, p. 84).

On the whole, a storyteller is a person who has devoted his/her life to this work, which is surrounded by people with enthusiasm and confronts him/her with the words that will come out of his/her mouth, and who transfers the experiences of ancient times from generation to generation as a carrier of culture. However, the storyteller, who made concessions from his/her traditional power and features in the face of the transformative power of time, could not prevent change and transformation (or even turn it into something else entirely). Before this transformation we will look at the most remarkable narrators, meddahs, in the adventure of Turkish folk literature from the depths of history to the present.

## **CHAPTER 2. TRADITIONAL STORYTELLERS: MEDDAHS**

While folk tales are told in a traditional structure, they show a structure as follows: Narrator, text (narrative), the listener. The narrator always occupies an important position here. The author, who is also said to be the narrator in modern stories and novels, can no longer intervene after putting the text out and writing it. Except for the changes made by the author, there are no changes in modern stories and texts.

On the other hand in folk tales, due to the narrative structure, it changes and can become variable. In a way, the narrative can change and differ according to the narrator's request and situation. While expressing this change here, a fictional situation arises from the narrator.

The narrator, who does the narration with great skills, plays his/her role like a master actor/actress, dramatises and tells his/her story by considering the audience, and makes the changes skilfully. It almost freely tells and reshapes its narrative. It is seen that s/he uses different ways to impress and please the audience. Here we can say the influence of the oral tradition.

Oral tradition affects the transfer of stories from generation to generation, from language to language. The narrative (story) can change with the influence of the narrator (storyteller, minstrel, meddah), time and environment, taking into account the listener.

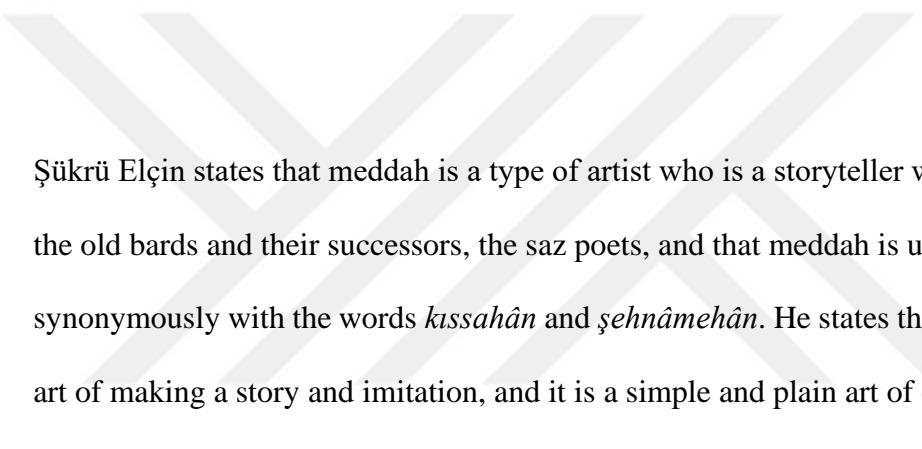
In light of this information, in this part of the thesis, I will talk about the meddahs, one of the most important narrators of traditional Turkish theatre and perhaps Turkish literature, and examine the concept of meddah through the elements of storytelling.

## **2.1. Meddahism and The Art of Storytelling**

Meddahism is an ancient art of storytelling that is still relevant today. Originating in Turkey and other Ottoman territories, this form of entertainment has remained highly influential and has been embraced in many cultures around the world. Traditionally practiced by Meddah (storytellers), this art form embodies the use of vivid language, improvisation, and exaggerated gestures and props to create a captivating story. It has frequently been used to entertain, educate, and deliver moral messages, making it an essential component of many cultures for centuries. Furthermore, it has even been identified as a possible source of modern-day theatrical and literary trends. Through

this unique form of communication, Meddahism has furthered public understanding of history, morality, and cultures.

Meddah has an important place in the Turkish theatre tradition with the stories he tells, his imitations, the materials it uses, its long history, and its audience. Since meddah stories are a narrative, this narrative is told by meddahs as narrators. The way of narration, the time of narration, the place and the setting are the elements of this tradition.



Şükrü Elçin states that meddah is a type of artist who is a storyteller who reminds of the old bards and their successors, the saz poets, and that meddah is used synonymously with the words *kissahâh* and *şehnâmehâh*. He states that meddah is the art of making a story and imitation, and it is a simple and plain art of contemplation, whose curtain, stage, decor, clothes and people are gathered around a single artist (İto, 2012, p. 6).



Figure 1: Miniature depicting Lâlin Kaba, the famous scholar of the reign of Sultan Murad III (Museum of Fine Arts - Boston/United States), [islamansiklopedisi.org.tr](http://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr), Accessed 30.11.2022.

According to Özdemir Nutku (1997:150), the meddah is an actual creator. A story that everyone knows gains new dimensions, new colours and different meanings in its narration. He is a master of voice narration; he revives it from where he sits with his gestures and voice. He makes a story he tells live, up-to-date and liveable.

As it can be understood from these definitions, meddah emerges as a concept that includes differences in terms of both dictionary and conceptual expression. This concept, which means praise in Arabic, has a very old historical background. The tradition of meddah, which is based initially on Islamic and Persian literature, has taken a unique form in Turkish literature and Turkish folk literature and has survived until today. The meddahs, who were known as the people who praised certain religious leaders and statesmen in the beginning, appeared as storytellers as a requirement of the historical process and environment, social structure and changes of the narrative tradition dating back many years in Turkish literature (Arioğlu, 2011, p. 42).

For Özdemir Nutku, Meddahism is the art of telling a story by making use of the elements of animation and analogy. Meddah imitates people from various ethnic groups, people of different ages and types, animals, machines and natural events in relation to the subject of the story he tells (Nutku, 1997, p. 13). Meddah is a poet, historian, storyteller, a writer of legends; it touches on all the issues that enter the human imagination. He is a realistic storyteller who portrays the life he lives in. While doing this, he is adept at expressing the humour, feelings, aspirations and thoughts of his own people (Nutku, cited in Aydemir, 2021, p. 378).

## 2.2. Meddah Narratives

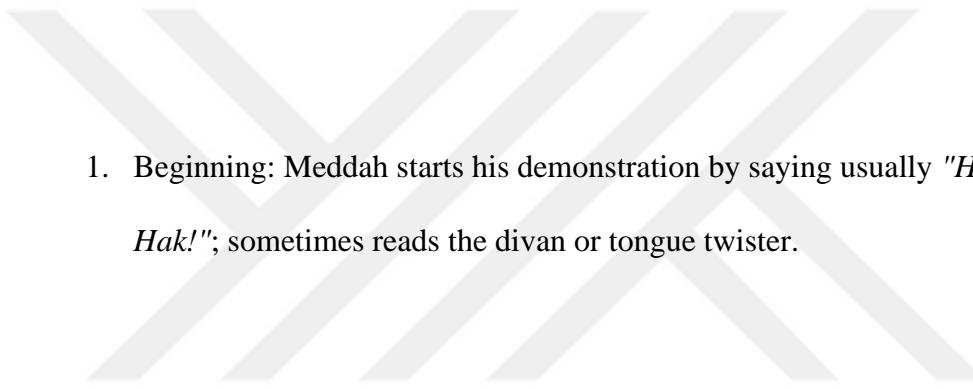
In Meddah narratives, some stories have been widely lived, transferred from previous generations, have words, essence and troubles, have common (anonymous) emotional values, as well as educational, instructive, exemplary features, permanence in memory and are considered as products of oral culture. Patterns are essential in Meddah narratives. Stories usually consist of four parts. The first part is the introductory part, where rhyme-poetic expression patterns, tongue twisters are used. While the narrator prepares for his narrative, he also warms the audience to the story. Then, he explains the characters and sometimes the socio-economic status of the society in the story. Immediately after, there is the part where the story takes place / is told. The last part is the part that announces the end of the story with poetic-ornate expression patterns and includes farewell sentences (Aydemir, 2021, 379).

Boratav gathered in two articles that meddah stories should be seen as realistic folk tales:

1. Although the stories are free of extraordinary beings such as giants, fairies, dragons, and heroes with supernatural powers, that is, situations that exceed the limits of human power are not included in the meddah stories.

2. At the end of this, the meddah is explained not only in the poet's language but also in the language of plain speech. It tries to add reality by making imitations in the right places (Boratav, 1970, p. 72).

Özdemir Nutku argues that the meddah story segmentation is different. However, it resembles the primary segmentation of the minstrels' stories and states that the meddah stories, which include a more straightforward segmentation compared to the folk tales, develop as follows:



1. Beginning: Meddah starts his demonstration by saying usually "*Hak Dostum, Hak!*"; sometimes reads the divan or tongue twister.
2. Explanation: This part is similar to flooring in folk tales. Here, the period in which the rhymed or non-rhymed story takes place, the people and their social and economic situations are exhibited. Sometimes there is a tribute to a Sultan.
3. Plot: This is the part of a loosely textured storyline that sometimes includes manis, proverbs, idioms and folk songs. In this section, sometimes - as in folk tales - representatives of various ethnic groups or types are made to speak with a folk song of their region.

4. Ending: There is often a feature of the story in this episode. Here, the meddah explains what needs to be learned along with the result. Sometimes, information is given at the end of the story about some real people mentioned in the story (Nutku, 1997, pp. 99-100).

The performances of meddahs are one-person show. He is not just an art of saying something; instead, he is a stage person who transforms the expression of something into a show by supporting it with imitation, typing, mimics, gestures and the use of mouth. The meddah, who brings together the anonymous stories and experiences of the public in his fictional world with enthusiastic and colourful expressions, usually in places such as coffee houses or in village rooms and courtyards, also has the following characteristics of the art of acting.

In addition to the fact that the meddah's ability to imitate is at the centre of the performance, it is known that they recite or sing directly, with or without rhyme, in everyday or non-rhymed spoken language. Here, there is a combination of measured, musical speaking, singing or even playing musical instruments (mainly instrumental and rhythm instruments) or having musicians, and direct expression and imitation. Of course, the meddah should have a good command of his speech as well as rhetoric (rhetoric) as well as speaking well, and he should be skilled in this matter. In addition to situations where rhyming and musically measured sound work is added to plain speech, prayer, ghazal, folk song, or tongue twisters can be accompanied. In the animations of the Meddah, objects and animals can also sing, and people, living and inanimate beings from different cultures, can reflect with their rhythmic movements or

dances. In this sense, his mastery of speech, singing, playing an instrument and dancing make him a versatile actor. This feature shows the quality of a total player (Lytko, 1977, p. 198. Cited in Aydemir, 2021, p. 379).

### **2.3. Meddah Story and Performance: *Conversation between Jew and Persian* (Yahudi ile Acem Muhaveresi)**

The subjects of meddah stories are varied. In these narratives, the events that the heroes go through are analyzed from a realistic point of view. The main theme of the story, in general, is the situation of young people who have no life experience, wealth, entertainment, love, and upbringing of young people. In the narration of the stories that always end happily, besides entertaining, the aim is to share the story, and this moral result is expressed many times through the mouth of the meddah.

The name of the meddah whose work I will include in this section is Meddah Süruri. Meddah Süruri lived between 1870-1934. He is considered as the last of the successful meddahs in the copy of *Türk Nüktecileri* in Istanbul Sehir University Repository. He created many imitation stories. He used to tell stories to the people in Istanbul, Izmir and Bursa during Ramadan. He died of heart failure in Bursa (Istanbul Sehir University Repository, 2016, p. 169).

Despite its roots in tradition, Meddah Süruri adapted his performances over the years to remain relevant and engaging to modern audiences. At the heart of a meddah

performance is storytelling, involving both narrative and dialogue. Taking inspiration from the many tales and fables available in Turkish folklore, Meddah Süruri used these stories as the basis for his performances. He used to begin with a preface, followed by a succession of scenes, often switching narrators and featuring different voices and characters. He added to these stories with jokes, an ability to improvise, and a major emphasis on rhythm and rhyming.

Due to their oral tradition, recordings of meddah performances were really less made and therefore there are very few written records of their performances. Those that do exist are primarily folkloric in nature, from storytellers relating the acts and performances.

One of the meddah performances told Meddah Süruri titled *Conversation between Jew and Persian*, which I will talk about in this section, was recorded on a phonograph record and uploaded to the Youtube channel<sup>3</sup>. Although meddah performances are generally much longer, the fact that the video is about two and a half minutes tells us only a part of the story. The story is a captivating tale depicting the cultural divide between a Jewish character and a Persian character. Through their dialogue, the two characters share moments of sincere understanding, as well as moments of conflict, slowly uncovering a story of a troubled relationship between cultures that is both thought-provoking and entertaining.

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<sup>3</sup> “Meddah Sururi Efendi - Yahudi İle Acem Muhaveresi” YouTube, YouTube, 27 Apr. 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVt7cc7n-Bc&ab\\_channel=LEVENTBABAY%C4%B0%C4%9E%C4%B0TKOLEKS%C4%B0YON](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVt7cc7n-Bc&ab_channel=LEVENTBABAY%C4%B0%C4%9E%C4%B0TKOLEKS%C4%B0YON).

Meddah Süruri's performance in this video is a comedic dialogue between Jewish and Persian characters. Both characters speak in Turkish with a distinct accent, which can be outstanding with Meddah Süruri's theatrical skills. The two characters banter back and forth about each of their respective cultures, in an attempt to outsmart the other. The tableau is an exploration of intercultural dialogue.

Thematic tension also underlies the video. In it, Süruri highlights the complicated relationship between these two cultures, as well as the general impression that the Jewish-Persian dialogue has tension. Throughout, there is a palpable energy, which captures the dynamic and the push-pull between the two cultures. Meddah Süruri's performance is a humorous look at the relationship between Jewish and Persian culture. He opens up a dialogue, which allows the audience to explore the nuances of intercultural relations.

Süruri's performance also allows an exploration of the tensions between the two cultures, which intersect in complex and interesting ways. In the video, it is obvious that with intricate rhyme and rhythm, and a humorous or joyous tone of Meddah Süruri, the skill of the meddah is not only just in their ability to captivate an audience but in their ability to interpret the story and bring it to life through captivating storytelling. Süruri uses a range of dramatic elements that help to bring the stories to life, such as vocal mimicry, exaggerated expressions, and comedic timing. He also manipulates his voice to create dialogues between characters in a story, which adds a layer of drama and brings the characters to life. The story may have a moral lesson, but the real art of

the meddah is the ability to captivate and entertain the audience with the art of storytelling.

Since Meddah is created to tell stories in an oral environment, the language and style in the stories are also suitable for this quality, as it can be followed in the *Conversation between Jew and Persian* as well, for Süruri uses the dialect of a certain region while telling his stories.

When it comes to the most important material of the meddahs, there comes the space. The meddah goes in front of the public and tells his story in a high place, with the cane in his hand and the handkerchief on his shoulder. These are the elements that we cannot observe in the video, yet below an illustration of meddah describing the setting of the meddah and his audience can be viewed:



Figure 2: Engraving by Thomas Allom in the 19th century, depicting the critic and his audience (R. Walsh, Constantinople and the Scenery of The Seven Churches of Asia Minor, London 1840, p. 73), [islamansiklopedisi.org.tr](http://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr), Accessed 30.11.2022.

The meddahs, who tell a complete story with its beginning and end, impress the audience by making use of rhymes, mastery of words, imitation and humour, and

successfully perform a multi-person play alone with their one-person show. For centuries, these great masters of the Turkish art of expression and representation have masterfully met the sensitivities and expectations of society, the need to listen and share, to tell stories and to take lessons.

Every meddah must find his own way of crafting their stories, balancing and blending the forces of history and personality to bring an audience. Therefore, it is the meddah's personal artistry, as well as his deep respect and knowledge of his culture's storytelling tradition, that makes him a unique storyteller.

Meddahs often display a high degree of skill in their performances, using multiple strategies to captivate the listener. Through the effective use of vivid imagery and word play, the meddah engages with his audience, weaving an intricate tapestry of evocative language while conjuring an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. Most meddahs emphasize the moral of their stories, thereby rendering them timeless. The art of storytelling with meddahs is an effective way of conveying not only stories, but also ethical and moral instructions or lessons. Through the meddah's movements and intonation, stories can define societal norms and taboos. Educational lessons are also often imparted through their storytelling, allowing them to pass on important knowledge that helps to shape their culture.

Ultimately, the art of storytelling is an impressive part of the culture of the Middle East, and a testament to the meddah as a unique storyteller. Through this art form, the

meddah brings to life figures and creatures from the past, while simultaneously speaking a language of the present – one of the values and experiences that matter to the present generation.

Yet, who tells the stories now?



## **CHAPTER 3. FROM STAGE TO TEXT; FROM TEXT TO TECH: TRADITIONAL STORYTELLING IS NOW DIGITAL STORYTELLING**

Meddahs and storytellers are an important part of many cultures especially in our culture and literature. They have traditionally been used to pass down stories verbally, but in this digital age, they have found a new face in digital storytelling. Digital media such as video, audio and image files have given new life to the art of the meddah and have opened the doors for people to share stories across borders and cultures in powerful and innovative ways.

Storytelling has undergone various transformations with the social change experienced from the caves until today. This situation made it necessary to divide the culture, which has an important place in social life, into different periods. As I stated in earlier chapters, prior cultural periods in social life are evaluated in five different periods. These are classified as oral narrative, written narrative, printed narrative, and electrical and electronic narrative. Finally, digital storytelling has been added to these periods by introducing different communication tools that shape social communication (Baldini, 2000, p. 6).

In front of an audience, meddah tells stories that are frequently accompanied by humorous and enjoyable dialogue usually in coffee houses and places. This close

environment enabled the audience to observe the emotional interplay between the storyteller, the characters, and the story. Yet, with the technology and the creation of multimedia stories using digital tools and platforms, on the other hand, we now have a different setting and space that enable artists to employ non-linear media, including text, audio, video, photos, and animation.

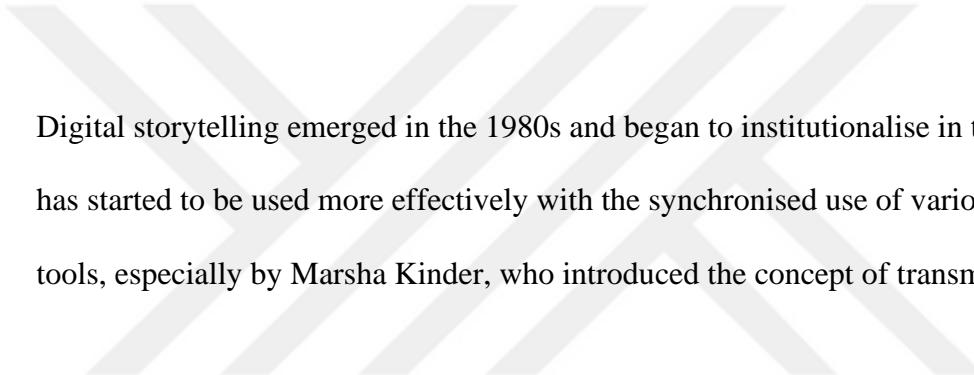
Technological innovations in these narrative periods, which have distinctive features, shaped the dominant form of communication. At this point, the stories told orally in the oral culture period have been moved to a different dimension with the applications of the new media in the digital culture period. Remember that we manage to listen Meddah Süruri's *Conversation between Jew and Persian* thanks to the technology itself.

With digital storytelling, the storytelling method has come to challenge limits. At this point, an essential tool is information and communication technologies. In this process, digital storytelling, which has become a cultural tool in a world where it is easy to produce content without time and space limits, allows individuals to express themselves (Topuz, 2020, p. 38).

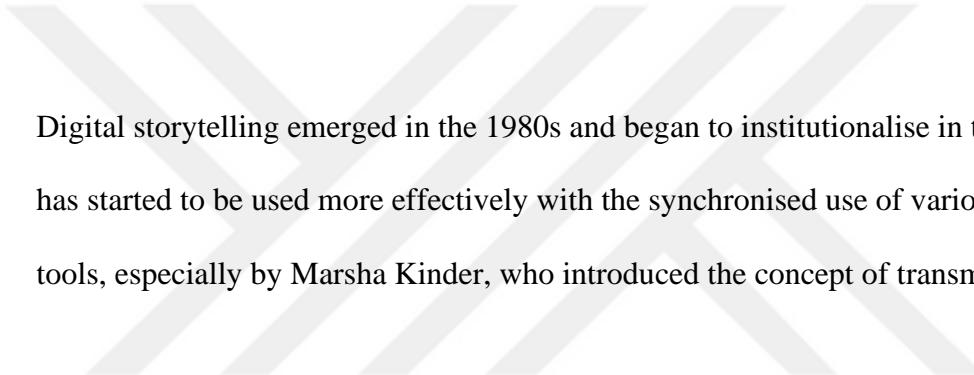
According to Burcu Şimşek, the priority of digital storytelling is sound because words consist of sounds. At the same time, it is the purpose of digital storytelling to enable ordinary people to circulate micro-narratives, called digital stories, who tell their own stories in their own words (Şimşek, 2018, p. 25).

The production phase of digital storytelling can be defined as an amateur form created with the visuals chosen or produced by the narrator, accompanying the audio recording of the story told by the narrator with his/her voice, depending on the duration of the workshop where it is produced (Şimşek, 2018, p. 26).

### **3.1. What is Digital Storytelling?**



Digital storytelling emerged in the 1980s and began to institutionalise in the 1990s. It has started to be used more effectively with the synchronised use of various media tools, especially by Marsha Kinder, who introduced the concept of transmedia.



It is known that Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley started digital storytelling studies with the spread of digitalisation (Ökmen, 2021, pp. 106-107). Digital technologies are at the heart of digital storytelling. In this sense, it was not even sincere that technology was the most general area within the digitalisation framework to turn to storytelling, which covers most of the oral narrative works, for the stories that individualised people can tell more than at any other time have emerged, which was a good enough reason for technology to turn towards telling stories through digitalisation (Mcwilliam & Hartley, 2009, p. 33).

In 1994, Nina Mullen joined Lambert and Atchley, creating the San Francisco Digital Media Center. In 1998, they moved their Digital Media Center from San Francisco to Berkeley and changed its name to "Digital Storytelling Center" (Arizona State University, 2022). The Center worked with 1000 organisations worldwide and trained more than 15,000 people in the art of digital storytelling in 1993 (Lambert, 2010).

Digital storytelling, in general, is the sharing of information through multimedia tools. The concept is also used in the form of digital storytelling. The only difference arises from the view that there are some differences between the story and the story. The story is not a written literary product that requires any expertise, and some experts see the story as a genre that progresses with specific techniques that require expertise (B. Şimşek, 2019, pp. 4-5). In digital storytelling, there are many stories that ordinary people acquire without overthinking; it is generally referred to as a story conceptualisation.

### **3.2. Some Important Variables and Methods of Digital Storytelling**

The conceptualization of stories has changed drastically throughout the years. Where traditional storytelling methods relied on physical methods, like oral storytelling and printed publications, digital storytelling methodologies take advantage of technology to capture and share a story in an effective and interactive way. Both formats have their advantages, but they also differ in many ways. By comparing and contrasting traditional and digital storytelling methods, the strengths in each area can be highlighted. As we have seen in the previous chapters, traditional storytelling

typically involves a protagonist, a setting, a plot, rising action, and a resolution; meddah narratives often feature allegory, metaphor, grandiose stories, and skillful improvisation and these narratives have four segments. In digital storytelling, the elements are more and it consists the use of technology at the core.

Joe Lambert is a significant name as he is one of the first to train in the sense of education Digital Storytelling. In his training, he identifies the following seven features that are effective in digital storytelling:

1. The narrator is making an insight or discovery with the story s/he shared while creating his/her story.
2. Stories are always created with a first-person subject understanding.
3. There should be a description that conveys a memory or experiences that the storyteller has experienced.
4. It is important to use a small number of fixed images that prioritise the narrative instead of a constantly fluid image.
5. The ability to use sounds covering a different musical tone or concept can increase the story's emotional impact.
6. It has been stated that it is essential to be able to tell the story in a minimum of ideal 2-3 minutes and not exceeding 5 minutes at the most and to capture an easy visual form. The main thing is to add raw emphasis, correct feel, reflective emphasis, and soften the transitions of solid lines.

7. While the story is being told, it is essential to develop awareness rather than to catch an audience. The process was more important than the story, and it has been considered essential that the control in the story belongs to the person telling it. This approach will determine participation and ethics in the process and distribution (Lambert, 2010, pp. 37-38).

It is the story that is lived in the warmth of digital stories, for people are inclined to build their lives on the stories they have heard and told in the past (Şimşek, 2018, p. 27). These warm stories also contribute to forming identity to the extent that they affect people's lives. Each identity contains information, feelings, and self-expression (Hartley, 2017, pp. 205-207). Therefore, the spread of digital storytelling is also crucial in terms of revealing the experienced hidden knowledge of identities.

In addition, there are comments about some principles of digital storytelling. The scope of these principles differs from Lambert's principles in terms of the external appearance rather than the construction stage, that is, in line with the evaluation of the product after it is revealed. These principles are;

1. After the story is completed, the narrator's point of view about what s/he is telling is certain.
2. A dramatic question that makes the audience wait for the end of the story.

3. The story's ability to affect listeners/viewers, to connect them to the story, and to have content that will contribute to the audience's identification with the story.
4. Presenting the content concisely as soon as possible without tiring the listeners/viewers.
5. The storyteller's personalisation of the narrative.
6. Having music or other sound elements that support the story.
7. The speed of the story is chosen in accordance with the content of the story (Topuz, 2020, p. 42).

In line with these methods, the limits and scope of digital storytelling can also be understood. Digital storytelling is emotional and strictly individual. In addition to the necessity of being attractive, the narrator must be a listener at the same time as an analyser and must also be intertwined with the experience. Digital stories, which should not be for a very long time, should instantly lead the individual to an emotional orientation. Music and sound elements have a place in this new narration in a way that will support emotion and thought.

A single side story, in common with traditional storytelling, needs to be interesting; the narrator can identify with the listener while s/he is on the subject. We can argue there is no story at this point, relatively academic content that is very rational, not actionable, and only informative. However, not giving information is not a limit; as I have stated, every story contains experienced and hidden information. In addition,

creating separate digital platforms for visual and auditory factors is gradually making digital storytelling a sector.

### **3.3. Spread of Digital Storytelling Through Social Media**

The Internet is a huge global network of communication that links millions of individuals and enables data transfer between two or more computers. As a result, the internet facilitates the transmission of messages using chat, video, and audio conferencing.

As part of the ARPANET project, the internet was created in 1969 (Advanced Research). Projects Agency Network got to work connecting computers at several institutions and the US military. Soon, individuals from various backgrounds—including engineers, scientists, students, and researchers—began utilising the network to share data and messages (0 Level, 2020) . The World Wide Web, sometimes referred to as the Web, is a network of websites. Making the infrastructure for the sites kept on web servers and connected to local computers via the internet, as well as spreading awareness of the internet, were two of its earliest contributions and missions. The World Wide Web's widespread use ushered in the Web 1.0 era and was a revolutionary development (Berghel, 1999, p. 4).

Digital Storytelling tends to spread over the years as the Internet has been active and spread. The biggest reason for this is that this new type of storytelling, which tends to

be widespread, can be stated to find the best ground for reaching the masses with the internet. The internet and its purposes are compatible to a point. The point where digital storytelling has the most relationship with the internet is with the understanding of digital media because digital storytelling, by its very nature, wants to be heard and shared. At this point, digital media is very suitable for this and also shows compliance with its qualities. In particular, the decentralisation of digital media and traditional media understanding, the possibility of simultaneous broadcasting in many parts of the world, the ability to archive the work done and the ability to view the archive multiple times are compatible with the understanding of sharing the digital story. In addition, the versatility of digital media, its fluid format, cost-effective production and concise content carry options parallel to digital storytelling. On the other hand, in an uncensored environment, digital media offers unlimited access.

Apart from technological limitations, people can access digital stories via the internet without any problems or even for free (Küngör, 2016, pp. 33-34). Finally, digital security is important in ensuring digital citizens' security. Individuals may face the problem of circulating their private information on the internet.

Our understanding of reality is becoming more and more shaped by narrative in a society where electronic and print media predominate. Films and documentaries share tales about people and the environments in which they live. Television reaches out to viewers and presents reality while exaggerating and mocking it. Daily existence is transformed into stories by the print media. Advertising narrates fantasies and desires. Since the media has great control over the production and consumption of storytelling

in the West, the stories that come most naturally to people are the ones the media shows them (Fulton, 2005, p. 3). This increases the importance of storytelling and ensures that the struggle for this manipulative side of the media is only through storytelling because people understand the timeliness and impact of telling their own stories thanks to heavily invested media productions, they can create stories that attract much more attention with much less cost.

Thus, storytellers, who can sometimes reach the popularity desired by prominent media organisations with uncomplicated production, can be in the lens of these media organisations, or they can produce content that is contrary to what is presented, so the strategies of the projects that have been invested for years can be disrupted. Here, digital media and digital storytelling have shifted traditional media's influence, investment and strategy to projects that can be done over the internet.

As I stated above, Web 1.0, which started with the definition of the World Wide Web, is today Web 3.0, which is a Web environment in which user interaction is now intelligent thanks to software solutions like Artificial Intelligence approaches and methodologies. Smart features are now included into websites and applications, offering users various user experiences. Indicators of the Web 3.0 generation include, for instance, recommendation systems that operate in image-processing-based Web applications, structures like the ability to recognise faces in uploaded photographs and tag them, and integrated assistant programmes that aim to improve user experiences (Tushinksy, 2021, p. 911).

At this point, Digital storytelling is also developing. It is known that the focus of Web 3.0 is on artificial intelligence that will determine the average search concept we prefer on the internet and direct it to the appropriate content.

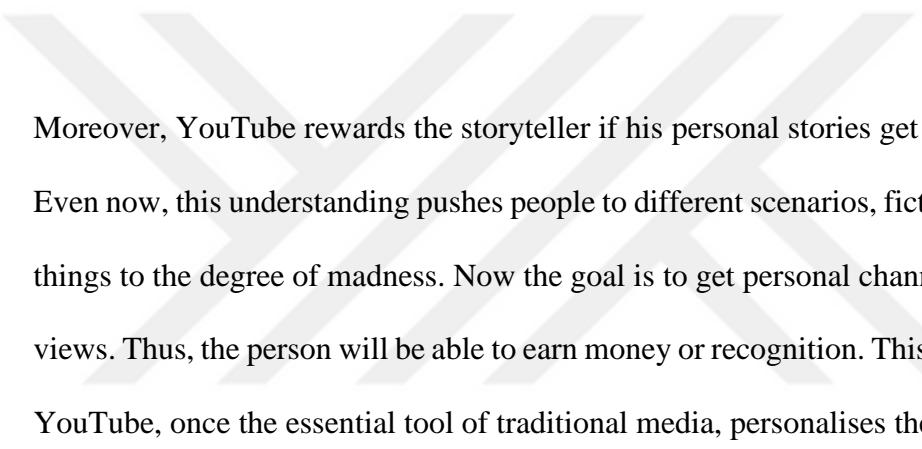
As digital stories are shared on social media platforms, they can be more easily accessible to their listeners, thus increasing the expected interactivity, interest in the subject, and alternatives to the necessary materials related to the story.

### **3.4. Some Social Media Formations and Their Effects on Digital Storytelling**

Today, the top five social media formations by popularity come in terms of users: Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and WeChat (Lua, 2022). These social media platforms become attractive by offering users a very comfortable registration opportunity. While still in Web 1.0, it is known that people keep up to date with current information and developments, maybe follow their relatives, or make much effort to communicate. These easy-to-use and easy-to-register social media platforms enable people to use the Internet in line with their basic needs and create huge incomes for people because of these social media platforms, only YouTube creates an area where a billion hours of videos are watched daily, digital stories are shared, and people continue their education. A quarter of these one billion hours of videos is composed of videos published in the short videos tab as an add-on of YouTube (Lua, 2022).

In line with its additional tabs and shares, YouTube can be considered as a formation that, in principle, fully supports Digital storytelling. After creating a membership on

YouTube, the person creates their own channel where they can share their videos. Just like the channels broadcasting on television from traditional media tools, even the possibility of creating a personal channel can be interpreted as YouTube's actually challenging traditional media, especially with the understanding of digital storytelling. In the channels that people create for themselves, there are opportunities to attract people's attention or to have the chance to be heard by billions of people by telling videos that fit the concept in line with the broadcast stream or by telling any simple story.



Moreover, YouTube rewards the storyteller if his personal stories get many views. Even now, this understanding pushes people to different scenarios, fiction and exciting things to the degree of madness. Now the goal is to get personal channels to get many views. Thus, the person will be able to earn money or recognition. This also means that YouTube, once the essential tool of traditional media, personalises the efforts of TV channels to be watched. Manipulative stories or storytelling aimed at the masses in traditional media created with huge budgets can be considered a significant blow.

All these developments will make YouTube the ideal platform for digital storytelling in social media. Today, apart from academic or special digital story projects, it is possible to watch sample studies for digital storytelling for free on YouTube. At this point, the study, which focuses on Digital Storytelling as the thesis topic, will deal with the shares of specific channels on YouTube within the scope of digital storytelling methods. In particular, I will articulate the channel named “+90” as a channel for digital storytelling.

### **3.5. Excluded Stories and Tellers: +90**

The art of the meddahs (traditional storytellers) and digital storytellers is a powerful and captivating means of communication that has been used to educate and entertain audiences for centuries. The combinations of visual, audio, and interactive digital elements create compelling stories that draw viewers in and reach them on an emotional level. Through the use of digital elements, storytellers are now able to reach a much larger audience and bring the art of storytelling to new and exciting heights. Traditional meddahs may use physical props, hand gestures, and other techniques to add to the live experience, thus creating an immersive atmosphere, while digital storytellers benefit from the advantages of technology, such as video and sound animations, to bring their stories to life.

As I highlighted before meddahs are professional joke tellers who use language and witty tales to deliver subtle and clever punchlines, while digital storytellers use technology and visual media to come up with new and innovative approaches to the storytelling. Both art forms have the potential to liven up a room and bring smiles to faces, although they are nuanced, with Meddahs often relying on the observational and anecdotal while digital storytellers often lean into surreal, abstract visuals. Even if both art forms have potential of humour, digital storytelling can be quite striking. These digital stories may focus on deep moral and ethical issues which has a more serious approach. As an example I will analyse videos selected from +90. This German-based channel introduces itself as a brand new neutral channel for those who want to follow the latest issues and developments in Turkey. It has also been reported that it provides content from the world's leading public broadcasters, such as BBC,

F24, and VOA (+90, 2019). I chose this channel because the stories shared on the channel are the creation of content by marginalized or excluded segments of the society in accordance with the Digital Storytelling rules and because the channel includes people who would like to be heard. Likewise, I anticipate that some unique points can be followed to understand the difference between traditional media and digital storytelling in the analysis of doing business with brands such as BBC, F24, and VOA, which are traditional media organisations.

The first story we can take as an example on the +90 channel, which is constantly involved in the digital storytelling of people who have been excluded and marginalised, will be the post titled *Being Jewish in Turkey: Istanbul Is my Home, but It is Over*.  
(+90, 2020)

In this video, the story of many Jewish youths who planned to immigrate from Turkey and those who gave their names, such as Betsi Penso and Dani Baran, was told through the element of immigration. The main focus is on why Jewish youth immigrated from the country, and our focus, both in content and technique, will be the stories told for digital storytelling. The main question of the narrators is whether they are happy to live in Turkey as Jews. Here, the fact that young people especially share their social traumas, concerns about the collective consciousness or other emotions while responding can be interpreted as the narrators making a mental journey. In addition, the narrators mentioned their ideas and perspectives on social problems and expressed their personal views on the difficulties of living in Turkey. Likewise, although more than one subject contributes to the story, each subject presents its point of view.

Known for their Jewish identity, it is important for these young people to share the problems they have experienced because of this identity and to be evaluated within the scope of digital storytelling.

While the story generally extends from the subjects to the experts, some visual transitivity is high. However, from the moment the subjects are included in the story, the background and visuals become stagnant or some events, arguments, and animations are made related to the story. In this case, it has ensured clear and easy-to-focus elements in the narrative.

In addition, the number of speaking subjects in the shared video is four people, and the video minute is 12, thus the storytelling time per person can be calculated as 3 minutes. According to the flow of the story, the speaking of the subjects at different times when the subject came up made the fluency more active. However, an ideal time was given as mentioned when it was calculated in line with the minimum time. In the scene transitions, in order to soften the story, some snapshots from Istanbul were shared since the city mentioned in the story is Istanbul. In addition, the subjects told the story while expressing their problems in critical places while emphasising emotion strikingly. Several fast rhythms complemented the sounds to support them. In the story, since it is essential to give some information, the narrator has faced both his memories and social problems in terms of identity. However, while doing this, they can also reflect on the audience. In other words, it can be said that they emphasise in order to impress the listener. Likewise, it is possible to deal with the story in a process rather than a complementarity or a definite approach.

The course of the story is essential in emphasising some problems experienced in the concept of the video's subject (Migration). It should be noted that this concept did not present an objective course to the story; it is observed that it develops within the framework of the subjects' emotions. The storytellers explain the migration element with unique ideas rather than a problem during the stories where they can remain subjective.

At the end of the story, each narrator's point of view is clear; stories can differ. The striking or dramatic question that leads the audience to the end of the story is the emphasis on what stage the Jewish population will be at 15 years from now, from 80,000 at the beginning of the Republic to 15,000 today. The points of the story that the listener can identify with are general economic problems in Turkey and some social traumas towards violence (For example, a subject told about the trauma he experienced on July 15th). There may be implications for the general Turkish society. Without going into too much detail in their stories, the narrator's subjects stated their problems with some examples and the results with some inferences from their own lives, making the stories short and precise. In the video, the transition speed to storytellers is also average; as mentioned, some frames from Istanbul or photographs of the Jewish segment from the past were shared during the transitions. However, it is not possible to talk about a transition time that did not take a long time to share these images or frames, and that would leave the audience impatient or distracted from the subject. This video, which is a perfect example of storytelling, has been analysed in this way, especially from a technical point of view.

The second video we will discuss will be titled "*Self-defense with Krav Maga: Our aim is to Survive*," on the same channel (+90, 2021). Krav Maga is a defence technique sport of Israeli origin. This sport aims to teach several moves in which the person can defend himself/herself against harassment or physical harm, which may occur through specific bad scenarios. This video contains stories about how and why people who learned and taught the Krav Maga technique needed this sport. First, the storytelling of women who received this technique's training on why they needed it pushed them to the social problems they experienced through a set of female identities. These women switched to a general narrative in the direction of an inner journey through their collective consciousness.

Later, the other subject, one of the first teachers of this sport technique in Turkey, told the story of how he started to teach this sport to women; in other words, he experienced an inner journey in a state of regression. Likewise, while telling their stories, the subjects formed sentences in a subjective narrative and in the first person singular; that is, everyone tried to emphasise their own opinion and thought. In particular, when people described why they turned to Krav Maga, an aggressive sporting art, they described some memories of harassment or physical violence they experienced. In this post, which has plenty of visuals or different frames, as in other videos, it can be interpreted that some sharing is based on the stories people share, as well as a narrative that disrupts the flow of the story or jumps from topic to topic. No music or sound was used in the transitions or the stage where the stories were told. However, one reason could be interpreted as the storytellers simultaneously learning practice and methods in Krav Maga martial art. Therefore, taking the visuals of the storytellers while practising the martial art, which is at the core of the story, instead of the music or the

voice, also allowed to add a different interpretation. In this way, digital storytelling has found a place in this video with its ability to revive the results of the events described. The video duration was ideally 11 minutes and 12 seconds. Considering that the number of narrators is four, we can talk about a time of 3 minutes per narrator.

It should be noted that, rather than a single narrator taking part in a single part of the video, they continued their storytelling at different moments to avoid dividing the video concept. In this case, he ensured that the flow of the overall story was smooth. It can also be commented that when storytellers tell their memories or what they want to tell, they emphasise the right places and make the events more striking. The transitions in general storytelling without any disconnection are provided by including some video frames of the narrators according to their order. In this case, it can be positive in terms of increasing the storyteller's interest. The general story, rather than a certain objectivity, is not an objective emphasis, as the storyteller is complimentary about her memories and what she wants to tell, and what the narrator wants to tell in her own way is kept in the foreground. When she listens to these stories again, it can undoubtedly be interpreted that a project is formed that can improve her awareness in this digital story section, which consists of effective montages in the edit section regarding how the narrator started a sport or lived for his collective consciousness.

After the story is completed, we realise that the narrator's point of view is certain. Because it can be interpreted that the narrators aim to prevent some social violence they experience due to their female identities towards Krav Maga. At the beginning of the general story, it can be stated that in the story told by the Krav Maga trainer, there

is a discourse that she emphasises, a statement that guides the video. This discourse is that the purpose of Krav Maga is not a display of violence but a survival technique. Because afterwards, the women who received this training continued to tell the story of their struggles against some threats, suppression or harassment they experienced with this training. Understandably, Krav Maga set the tone of the overall story, where it was a defence against violence, not directly creating violence. In the narrative of general stories, content can be identified in the context of social violence (psychological, physiological, discursive, sexual, and economic). It is also important within the scope of the digital storytelling feature that the narrators give time to tell some plots rather than to tell long details within the scope of the general plot. In general stories, it can be interpreted that the storytellers who are given promises very easily personalise some social traumas both through their own problems and their identities. According to the content of the general stories, it can be interpreted that the speed is ideal according to the content since the transition speeds do not distract the listener or the other narrator from the plot.

Overall, meddahs and digital storytellers share many similarities in their craft of storytelling. Both meddah and digital storytellers use narrative to draw their audience into the world of the story. They make use of gestures, movement and a vivid way of speaking to add drama to the story and engage their audience. However, a fundamental difference between meddahs and digital storytellers lies in the manner both crafts are delivered. Meddahs typically perform their stories in person, reciting the tale and creating vivid imagery through their words and physicality. Whereas digital storytellers utilize technology such as audio, video, and multimedia tools to tell their stories online. In this respect, digital storytelling can offer a unique ability to reach a

much wider audience and create a more immersive experience due to its interactive nature.



## CONCLUSION

Walter Benjamin introduces the storyteller as follows:

“The storyteller: he is the man who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story. This is the basis of the incomparable aura about the storyteller... The storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man encounters himself” (Cited by Ay, 2014, p. 8). In reality, a storyteller is a person who has dedicated their entire life to telling stories, who is surrounded by enthusiastic listeners who challenge him or her with the words that will come out of their mouths, and who serves as a cultural transmitter by passing down experiences from the past from one generation to the next. The storyteller, who gave up some of his/her traditional authority and traits in response to time's transforming force, was unable to stop change and transition.

Many centuries ago, the earliest forms of literature were passed down orally rather than in written form. Legends and tales were shared through word of mouth, often embellished and changed to fit the storyteller. Over time, as civilizations became more advanced, the stories became more complex, and methods of written record keeping expanded. Eventually, these tales of oral literature made their way into written form, with authors taking on the challenge of distilling the stories so that the important details would not be lost. This marked the beginning of what we now recognize as the great works of literature, allowing these timeless tales to be preserved and shared with future generations.

Without a doubt, everything transforms and changes. It is improbable that something like storytelling, which is dependent on people, language, and art, will remain unchanged. As people, language, and art are living, constantly moving things, they alter and transform as people, language, and art do, according to the speed of time. Storytelling, which is entwined with people, language, and art, will not be consistent with historical-scientific reality if it does not adapt or is constrained to specific norms and definitions. The perception of the age, or the way in which the universe and existence were perceived, as well as the language, rhythm, and pace of life, and the degree of appreciation held by the populace at the time, serve as the deciding factors at this stage. What perception is, it is the reality of that age. In other words, whatever the perception of that age is, the style of artistic and linguistic productions related to that age is in parallel (Aydemir, 2020, pp. 87-89).

On the one hand, the need to listen to stories has begun to be met through different genres of art and literature as well as storytelling, on the other hand, storytelling has undergone transformations within itself; There have been changes in the narrative techniques and methods used to keep up with the requirements of the age. This is undoubtedly the necessity of the laws of historical change; It is a result of the necessity of redesigning itself according to the perception of the age of storytelling.

There was the word first. The storytelling in the traditional sense has three components: The story, the listener, and the story. In traditional storytelling, the narrator is always in the spotlight. Additionally, that story can be verbally expressed in a way that is

dramatic, emotive, occasionally logical, but always keeps its vitality within its own genre. The narrative's flow, existence, and channel are all determined by the story's structure. In this sense, it is a verbal activity with dynamic integrity that communicates the storyteller to the listener or viewer.

In traditional storytelling, the narrative is influenced by a legend, myth, folk ballad, or religious narrative, but it is also fashioned by the narrator's initiative, occasionally progresses in response to the listener's reaction, and has a clear conclusion. The audience should be highlighted as the third component since they have the power to influence the story's direction at some point through their immediate responses. Storytelling is fashioned by the audience, and the conclusion is or is judged by their reactions. The story's quality, the storyteller's emotions, and the story's conclusion are all determined by the listener.

Tradition uses the past to construct the future. Expression/demonstration context, a tradition that has lost its natural genesis, still exists in new contexts with new forms and meanings. Mass media, which is regarded as "modern, contemporary, and new," has the ability to alter or transform the conventional. In the modern world, it is evident that various innovations are communicated by media tools and occasionally generated or produced by them. Media tools rely on the old and feed off it to generate the new. No innovation can be produced without drawing on tradition or the established, despite the widespread notion in the society that the old will be destroyed and the new will be established. Social media, one of the most effective media tools, has also played an important role in bringing the new, contemporary/modern to the society.

With the new media, new cultural contexts have been created and one of the main dynamics of cultural changes has been created.

With the help of a new kind of storyteller, the society, which still retains remnants of oral and written cultural surroundings in its memory, is being rebuilt in the electronic cultural environment. In other words, the primary oral culture environment is changed or transformed in the secondary oral culture environment in order to maintain its viability. With forms based on long-standing customs and re-enacted in the digital world, it seeks to calm a population that struggles with the congestion of urban areas and the intricate issues of the post-modern era, and whose memory is damaged. The contemporary meddah/minstrels of the virtual world serve as a reminder of and a celebration of oral culture.

Meddah and digital storytellers may operate within the same literary landscape, but their theatrical settings could not contrast more dramatically. Meddah performs stories and poetry, often accompanied by humorous and entertaining dialogue, in front of an audience, an intimate setting allowing the audience to witness the emotional interaction between the storyteller, the characters, and the story. On the other hand, digital storytelling often refers to the production of multimedia stories told through the use of digital tools and platforms, allowing creators to make use of non-linear media such as text, audio, video, images, and animation. Often performed via the internet, digital stories can be seen by large audiences across the world. While both forms of storytelling may have much in common in terms of their subject matter and their overall purpose, the differences in their settings provides audiences with the

opportunity to experience the different aesthetics and sensations associated with both theatrical and virtual storytelling.

Digital storytelling is a relatively new concept that has recently gained traction in Turkey and the global literary world. Digital storytelling is a form of narrative media in which stories and images are used to create interactive stories, usually through digital media such as videos, podcasts, immersive virtual reality, computer graphics, and other forms. Digital storytelling is often seen as a form of storytelling that encourages creativity and imagination by allowing the creator to create a story in a new and different way that is more engaging for audiences and offers them new perspectives.

Especially in Turkey, digital storytelling has become increasingly popular among both established literary circles and more broadly, among individuals looking to express themselves in a new and engaging way. Digital storytelling as a form of narrative media has particularly gained traction in the Turkish literary community, as well as on a wider scale among young people who use digital storytelling to make their stories more engaging and less difficult to understand. For example, Turkish youths have been taking to digital storytelling platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram in order to communicate their stories as they would in traditional forms of literary narration such as poems and plays. Another example would be the application of *Storytel*, which is a popular online e-book platform for personal and professional that is widely used in Turkey. It allows users to listen, read, share, and discuss stories, which makes it easier to gain visibility and reach out to potential audience. This platform enables people to

engage with stories from all over the world, learn from professionals, and discover potential opportunities.

In terms of Turkish literature, digital storytelling has made a significant impact, as it has allowed for more expression and creativity to be seen in the stories being written and transmitted. This can be seen in the work of many people from social media, who have incorporated elements of digital storytelling into their more traditional forms of writing. More and more people use digital storytelling to create short stories about current events in Turkey, which not only serves to inform the public, but also promotes creativity and narrative expression. Overall, digital storytelling has seen notable success in both the Turkish literary world and among the general public in Turkey. It has allowed for more creative narratives to be told and has encouraged more personal expression among its users. As digital storytelling continues to grow in popularity in Turkey, it is likely to have an even greater impact on the nation's literature, allowing for more creative and engaging stories to be told.

In addition, by giving regular people the chance to explain and defend themselves, with the language of "I" at the forefront, it has arisen as a historical and cultural phenomena that comprises both individual and collective memories. I believe globalisation has transformed into a tool for gaining an intercultural viewpoint as a strategy that fosters understanding and dismantles barriers between ethnic origins or other distinctions, as well as a tool to support the formation of social groups and integration.

Digital information is starting to take over every part of our lives at this point. We are currently experiencing the phenomena of "digitalization of culture," which is one of the most defining characteristics of this time period. Digital storytelling, a form of storytelling that incorporates digital media, has become a part of computerised culture. Stories and storytelling are one of these cultural elements. Interaction between people is made possible by digital storytelling, which also allow for far-off audience connections. It provides an opportunity to boost their effectiveness by incorporating visual and audio aspects into the narrative, and it establishes a foundation for how others perceive us among those with whom we have no prior contact. Undoubtedly, the new media and the interactive communication capabilities it offers are the foundation of this phenomena, which can be considered as a carrier of a new culture.

Yet, one thing does not change at all: Stories are built on another discourse. Other discourses, whether spoken or written, form the basis of the story, says Fatih Altug in his "Letaif-i Rivayat'ın Hayali Cemiyeti" (2014, p. 44). The bare ground of the discourse outside turns into a paved ground processed by its action. the story is first processed and laid out on a two-dimensional plane; third dimension of the text, gaining volume and transforming the floor into a building. In this way, the literary structure is established (Altug, 2014, p.44). Experiences, problems, the need of being heard, other people stories, loss and more; videos, images, technological tools and more, these are becomes becomes a discourses that form the basis of the story of the storytellers who would like to speak up.

The art of narration does not stand still and develops itself day by day, goes to new searches, blends old and new texts and tends to seek for alternative spaces. After all, why should narration restrain itself in a world where the possibilities are endless?



## APPENDIX

### **The Role of Digital Storytelling in Learning Environment: An Erasmus Project**

To find our roots, we have to return to our origin. With a new understanding of the past, we can apply a whole new approach to constructing the future. Each story is a stepping-stone on our journey as we embark on the E-Sharazad Project.

I could only finish my thesis by remarking on our Erasmus project, in which I took an active role.

In the first and the second parts of my thesis, I tried to convey the traditional stance of storytelling from ancient times, and in the third part, I tried to convey what form storytelling has taken today with technology. In this section, I will emphasise how important storytelling is for society and education, along with the idea of intergenerational, which serves as a bridge between the past and the present.

***E-Shahrazad "Innovative Approach in Adult Education": Digital Storytelling in Intergenerational Learning*** ([www.e-shahrazad.eu](http://www.e-shahrazad.eu)) with a project number **2020-1-FR01-KA227-ADU-095449** and co-financed by the Erasmus+ Programme has been developed as a part of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership for Adult Education programme with a consortium of partners from France, Turkey, England, Italy and Portugal and the support of the French National Agency. Inspired by *A Thousand and One Nights*, the project aims to bring the sharing of cultures to life in the

digital environment through the use of digital storytelling to support intergenerational learning in the area of adult education and preserve the oral storytelling tradition.

The combination of technological applications with the conventions of traditional narrative to portray the subjective emotional experience of the storyteller in a rich and collaborative way is known as digital storytelling, which is a successful technique for the current digital age. Through its use, the narrator establishes the parameters of a story to be communicated in the digital domain while also reinterpreting the reality of what they have experienced. This is done by utilising story, sound, music, photography, and video to tell a story.

Digital storytelling may be used not just as a way to share individual narratives but also as a way to create meaning that permits discussion and interpretation of issues in various sectors, including social and cultural ones, using a participatory and collaborative approach.

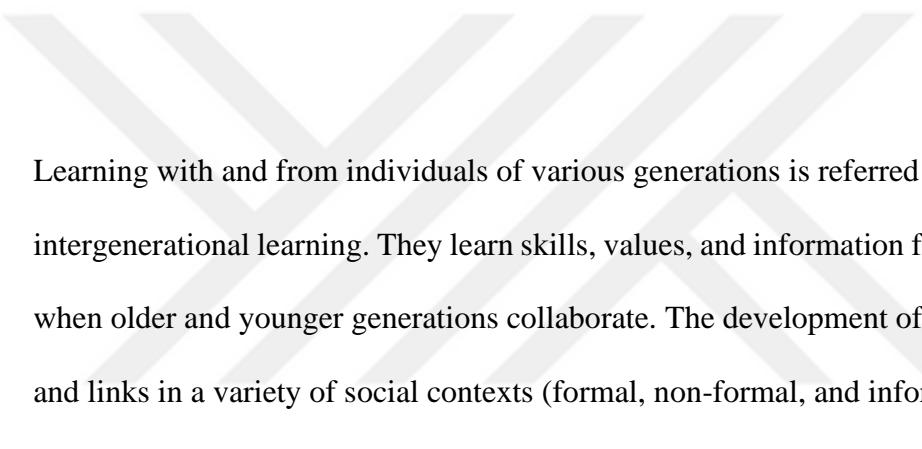
Before expressing the importance and connection of intergenerational learning and digital storytelling, let us look at intergenerational learning first.

#### **4.1. The Concept of Intergenerational Learning**

Education and learning opportunities for all generations are crucial to the quality of life in the era of lifelong learning, which makes sense. It is essential to determine the

conditions required to promote a continuous exchange of knowledge, skills, wisdom, values, and real intergenerational learning between generations in order to face the challenges set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations.

Intergenerational learning initiatives have also been acknowledged by UNESCO as social tools that promote an active and ongoing exchange of information and knowledge between the older and younger generations.



Learning with and from individuals of various generations is referred to as intergenerational learning. They learn skills, values, and information from one another when older and younger generations collaborate. The development of social capital and links in a variety of social contexts (formal, non-formal, and informal) as well as the promotion of social cohesiveness in our communities can all contribute to intergenerational learning.

The following definition of intergenerational education is put forth by Greg Mannion (University of Stirling, Scotland):

a) It involves participants from two or more generations who are taking part in a local custom.

- b) It embraces various interests from generation to generation and can be applied to address certain "issues" or difficulties and enhance ecological, social, and individual well-being.
- c) In order to create and share new intergenerational meanings, practises, and locations that share some common ground, it is necessary to be willing to communicate across generational divides (via consensus, dispute, or cooperative activities).
- d) Requires a continuing willingness to be sensitive to one another and the surroundings. Pedagogically, the main goal of intergenerational education is to foster interactions across generations in a way that promotes community and place development both locally and globally (Mannion, 2012).

Three components make up the phrase "intergenerational learning," each of which has a clear pedagogical meaning:

First, "inter" emphasises the exchange, relationships, and reciprocity dimensions; second, "generational" is a perspective that considers the various areas of experience and mentality that have evolved over time among representatives of different ages; and third, "learning" refers to the outcome of the experience exchange.

All ages can learn with and from one another through intergenerational learning.

Intergenerational learning activities increase collaboration, interaction or exchange between two or more generations. In addition, it promotes understanding, respect and trust by breaking stereotypes and sharing ideas, skills, knowledge and experiences, which pave the way for learning outcomes, coexistence, promoting citizenship and developing approaches to learning together.

We can summarise some pedagogical aspects involved in intergenerational learning:

**a) Productivity of educational relations:** Intergenerational learning promotes recognising the importance of all age groups, creating valuable educational relations between people of different ages. The value in these relationships is produced by sharing and learning from past and present experiences. Moreover, It also provides a historical and cultural memory. Empathy and validation are also provided between generations, as everyone has something to communicate and exchange.

**b) Relational generation of social capital:** Children, youth and adults can reflect on the meanings of all age groups during intergenerational learning activities; Being with members of the "other" age group becomes an opportunity for a meaningful learning experience related to socialisation. The strong relationship between intergenerational education and the formation of social capital was highlighted by Gillian Granville in the study "A Study of Intergenerational Practice in England" (2002). Values and beliefs shared by a community help its members overcome problems and difficulties.

**c) Transformational learning:** Jack Mezirow created the transformational learning theory in the late 1900s. The development and use of critical self-reflection by individuals to reflect on their experiences and views as well as how their world-view evolves over time have all been explained by this theory. In this respect, intergenerational learning is transformational. During our learning process, the meanings and values of our experiences are transformed and take on a new "burden" of meaning; new learning and perspectives can be developed, as Mezirow explains:

"As students [...] is a kind of "freedom" of adults who are captives of our personal history. As much as we can make sense of our experiences, we must all start from what is given to us and within the horizons determined by seeing and understanding our previous learning. We have to act." ( Mezirow, 1997).

After the learning experience, reflection and narration are very important. After sharing knowledge in an intergenerational context, the adult educator reconsiders his life experience, understands it better and sees himself in the other role.

**d) Intergenerational reciprocity and proximity:** Intergenerational learning was first centred on one-way interactions and results. For instance, it includes adult attempts to help young people learn or to provide them the skills they need to support, serve, or help senior citizens. The value of intergenerational learning programmes that involve two-way interactions and have mutual inputs and outputs for all ages is currently acknowledged in the majority of research (Kaplan, 2002). From this point of view, the

dimension of mutual participation in intergenerational education shows itself. It has become an essential pedagogical element and process that consciously allows the development of intergenerational relations. The intergenerational practice has become more dynamic (non-linear), recursive, constructive, socially located, and informed by postmodern empowerment theories.

**e) Agency:** This perspective is based on the theoretical aspect of the capabilities approach, which focuses on the development of relationships and well-being, takes into account an existential understanding of well-being and works for this understanding (Şen, 1999). The Capabilities Approach assumes that the human form of development is a combination of human resources and skills development "for" people, "through" people, and genuine participation in people's development or priorities. Therefore, Capabilities Approach; considers the possibility of taking action, participating, expressing and empowering as fundamental human rights, possible expression of citizenship, and extension of democratic processes. According to Şen, an agency is a person who takes action to bring about change (Şen, 1999). As a result, agency refers to the gains achieved by the person who reaches the goals and values s/he deems important (Şen, 1999). In this respect, we can assume that the intergenerational learning and Capabilities approaches are interrelated. While sharing their experiences and values, intergenerational learning educators become agents of agency in an interconnected society that enables shared change.

## **4.2. Use of Digital Storytelling in Education**

Adults in the community education field can learn about themselves, others, and their place in this world. Educators who have gained experience in Lambert's process believe it promotes transformational and insight-based learning in this context. It blurs the boundaries between one's experience of the world (inside view) and observing someone else experiencing it (outside view). Shared narratives and experiences enhance knowledge, and media forms are used to share this knowledge widely and more effectively than simply retelling the facts. By acting as a 'wise guide' rather than a 'wise on stage', the instructor facilitates a democratic learning environment that respects one's experience and allows all students to negotiate their learning. The 21st Century, where long-term storytelling projects are effective in increasing students' understanding of curriculum content and improving their memory skills, particularly communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. It has been shown to impact '21st Century skills positively' – the younger generation, in particular, is thought to need it if they want to cope with the complexity of today's digital world.

It is not easy to facilitate digital storytelling in educational environments. Using telling personal stories as a teaching strategy can confuse ideas with facts. Although students tell stories that share their "truths", these "truths" may be misguided or misguided. Discussions around these confusions stimulate critical thinking; however, it encourages knowledge sharing because they are challenged, leading to the telling of other stories that expand the partial narratives that education and other social contexts are often accused of promoting.

Digital storytelling can pose timeline problems for educators, especially since long-term storytelling projects are the most effective way to increase students' understanding of curriculum content and learned skills. Budgetary constraints on both human and technological resources may also exist for educational institutions and require some creativity to overcome. However, in the evaluations after the workshops held in educational settings, most participants stated that they supported using digital storytelling as a methodology, allowing them to reflect and develop their ideas and thoughts.

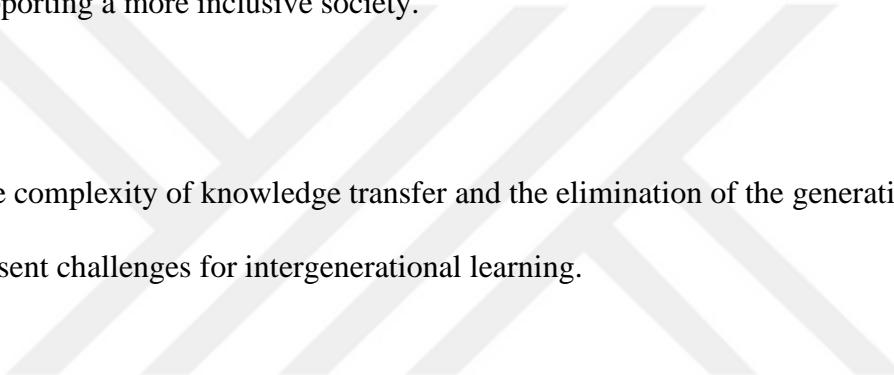
#### **4.3. The Potential of Digital Storytelling in Promoting Community Engagement**

The connection between personal stories and vested interest in an issue was brought up as an issue by the participants in a research project workshop, emphasising that "Unless it (climate change) affects it personally, nobody cares about it" (Liguori, 2020). The solution to this was found when the group was asked to examine potential scenarios for the region 50 years from now. The stories created were less personal and more community oriented than those created by people's past experiences. The shift to memory-based stories shaped around the common future transformed them from self-interest into social participation.

#### **4.4. Potential Impacts of Digital Storytelling in Education and Intergenerational Learning**

It is not easy to pass on the experiences of the older generation, which represent the origins of wisdom and memory in most cultures, to the younger generation. Therefore,

wisdom, which is quite complex and profound, is told through stories. Today, storytelling also encompasses digital technologies to overcome this complexity. There are several reasons why combining the digital space with storytelling makes this process easier and more effective. First, digital technologies are a powerful and practical expression for young people. The story process, supported by visual, video and audio, creates a shared space for the old and young and connects the generations. Second, digital storytelling encourages elders to create something fun and share it between generations (Botturi & Rega, 2014). Intergenerational learning is crucial to supporting a more inclusive society.



The complexity of knowledge transfer and the elimination of the generational gap present challenges for intergenerational learning.

Nevertheless, digital learning creates ways to overcome these challenges. The Italian word "Raconti" represents them in four different ways. Botturi and Rega (2014), the association Associazione Seed, a Swiss NGO based in Lugano, explain these paths with four projects. In the projects, intergenerational dialogue is animated with digital storytelling, which provides the perfect environment to bring children together with traditions. Thus, while intergenerational learning meets intercultural problems, a shared past is preserved and transferred. Associazione Seed's project "Primo racconto: Ancient legends" demonstrates the importance of digital storytelling for stimulating intergenerational dialogue.

Through "ancient legends", a class of fifth graders teamed up with a hundred-year-old man to learn the story of Val Colla, a medieval church. Later, the children wrote and illustrated the story and made clay models with the help of a local artist. The recording of the process was distributed on DVD (Botturi & Rega, 2014). Thus, transferring, one of the barriers to intergenerational learning has been overcome with digital storytelling.

Rossiter and Garcia stated that "digital storytelling is a method in narrative education that includes educational technology" in adult education (2010). They discussed three concepts from adult education that can be studied through digital storytelling – "lived experience, self-direction, voice" (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010, p. 424). Lived experience is essential in adult learning, and making sense of experience is part of the narrative process. Digital storytelling facilitates the learning process of adults as it improves meaning-making, big-picture thinking and pattern recognition.

Digital storytelling provides opportunities for adult learners for self-direction and self-knowledge while also providing opportunities for self-presentation. Students become part of a collective activity as digital storytelling allows audiences to express themselves using multimedia technologies.

On the other hand, the concept of 'sound' is part of identity. Recording and hearing your voice makes people more comfortable. Digital storytelling includes the

storyteller's voice, which becomes meaningful digital storytelling. The Internet can be seen as an amplifier for the voice of individuals and groups.

Mooney and Prins stated that digital storytelling allows parents to work with their children (2015). As the family designs their digital storytelling, they also learn about each other's experiences and thoughts. While parents transfer their experiences to children during this process, children also develop storytelling and literacy skills. Thus, parents talk about their experiences and teach children culture in a fun way. In addition, sharing the end products of digital storytelling activities in the classrooms ensures intergenerational knowledge exchange. In a project where five families with children worked with a museum and a school in England, digital stories were created jointly from the images of unique objects that families brought from home. The children interviewed family members; They created digital stories with photographs and videos. As a result, children accessed new learning areas, and parents transferred their knowledge (Mooney & Prins, 2015).

Overall, the project observes that digital storytelling is not just the process of creating something digital but is more about making sure that people listen to each other and learn from each other. Digital storytelling is when a group of people engage in a dialogue for the production of something that is digitally made.

In addition, through the project, we observed how digital storytelling as a teaching method is a significant opportunity for gaining transferable skills, being open and not

being afraid of saying you do not know something. In doing so, people learn from each other. It generates a different environment where creating a safe space for everyone to share whatever they want is possible. It is about ensuring that all the stories created represent what their makers feel is something they want to share at that moment.

From caves around a fire, people have been telling each other stories. The stories are perceived as both the carrier of the truth and a challenge to the meaning of the truth by appealing to the human's search for meaning. By making sense of human behaviour, stories trigger emotions in the narrator and listener, creating a shared sense of empathy and trust. It is, therefore, the ultimate art form of social interaction. The act of storytelling unlocks our creativity, learning to recognise the stories of the precious lives we each live, and lays the foundation for "health, peacebuilding and vision" (Metzger, 2010).

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