How European adolescents get engaged with films?: Psychometric properties of the narrative engagement scale

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Abstract

Narrative engagement is a fundamental factor in understanding the enjoyment of narratives and their effects. This study seeks to develop a measure of engagement for youngsters and to gather evidence of validity and reliability for a sample of European adolescents. After watching a dramatic film, 310 European high school students (68.71% Italian, 17.74% Spanish and 13.55% German) responded to the proposed narrative engagement scale. The results confirmed the existence of a common factorial model of four factors for Germans and Italians and invariance measurement between samples. The mean score comparison shows that German adolescents have a greater understanding of the narrative than Italians. Also, Germans demonstrated greater emotional understanding than Spaniards. These results contribute to the comprehension of the narrative engagement and illuminate the conceptualization of the psychological phenomena related to the reception of dramatic narratives by youngsters of different cultures across Europe.

Keywords

Narrative engagement; Cross-cultural reception; Media entertainment; Audience responses; Adolescents; Film reception; Perceived realism; Engagement.

1. Introduction

One of the key factors in understanding the effects of fiction narratives is the engagement. Feeling engaged with a story, immersed in it or transported into its narrative world predicts not only its enjoyment (**Green**; **Brock**; **Kaufman**, 2004; **Krakowiak**; **Oliver**, 2012; **Oh**; **Chung**; **Han**, 2014; **Tsay-Vogel**; **Oliver**, 2014; **Van-Leeuwen**, 2015), but the degree of its impact on the attitudes of the receivers (**Busselle**; **Bilandzic**, 2008; 2009; **Green**; **Brock**, 2000). The greater the engage-

ment with a story, the greater the consistency of attitudes and thoughts derived from it (**Green**; **Brock**, 2000). The greater the engagement with the narrative, the less resistance to the arguments presented by it (**Green**; **Brock**, 2002). The higher the engagement, the greater the favorable thoughts about the story (**Banerjee**; **Greene**, 2012; **McQueen** *et al.*, 2011). The greater the engagement, the greater elaboration of the information that the narrative entails (**Slater**, 2002). Engagement affects the experience of using fiction for persuasion (**Igartua-Perosanz**, 2007) and the social construction of reality (**Busselle**; **Bilandzic**, 2009).

> " This work seeks to contribute to the understanding of narrative engagement of adolescents "

The importance of the engagement in the processes related to the reception of fiction led **Busselle** and **Bilandzic** (2009) to undertake the task of producing a scale to measure it. To that end, they began with a comprehensive theoretical review of the notion of mental models in narrative processing. The perspective of mental models presupposes that, in order to understand narratives, which is a fundamental aspect of their processing, receivers mentally construct coherent, dynamic and cyclical models of meaning. They do so by combining their experiences and knowledge with the representation of the characters, situations and settings of the story (**Johnson-Laird**, 1983; **Kintsch**, 1988). The mental models are temporary representations of the characters who seek to achieve their goals, the obstacles that prevent them, the conflicts they experience, and their emotional reactions. They may also be spatial configurations of the story (**Graesser**; **Singer**; **Trabasso**, 1994) that are updated whenever a new significant data appears on the representation (**Zwaan**; **Magliano**; **Graesser**, 1995).

Apart from the notion of mental models, in the formulation of their scale, Busselle and Bilandzic also considered knowledge about what they called *sensations* linked to the processing of the narrative and related to the influential relationship that receivers establish with the characters. In particular, they focused on the identification, a fundamental process for engagement and enjoyment (**Busselle**; **Bilandzic**, 2008; **Cohen**, 2001; **Igartua-Perosanz**, 2007; **Igartua-Perosanz**; **Muñiz**, 2008; **Soto-Sanfiel**, 2015). Following **Cohen** (2001), they chose to rely on three of the psychological processes related to identification: understanding the story as if the receivers are within it (cognitive perspective taking), experiencing the emotions of the characters as if they were their own (empathy) and feeling emotions for the characters (sympathy).

On the other hand, Busselle and Bilandzic also based on the literature related to what they called the *sentimental experience of the narrative worlds*, which are the processes of transportation or the perception of being inside the mediated reality and the perception of flow (**Csikszentmihalyi**, 1997). In fact, they considered that their scale should measure the degree to which the receiver remains focused on the understanding of the narrative, while creating and updating mental models, without being aware of himself or his immediate environment (**Busselle**; **Bilandzic**, 2008). In fact, the researchers started from the fact that the absence of consciousness about the rupture of the engagement was the relevant factor in this phenomenon.

Moreover, in their proposal, they considered it important to take into account the knowledge about aspects of narratives that avoid the rupture of engagement during the reception and that are linked to its realism: the coherence of the story, its plausibility and its feasibility (**Green**, 2004; **Hall**, 2003). Consider that the importance of the perception of realism in narrative engagement has not only been predicted prior to the formulation of the instrument but has also been endorsed by later studies (**Bilandzic**; **Busselle**, 2011; **Cho**; **Shen**; **Wilson**, 2014; **Krakowiak**; **Oliver**, 2012).

Finally, **Busselle** and **Bilandzic** also drew on other research exploring the consequences of engagement, notably enjoyment (**Nabi** *et al.*, 2006; **Oliver**, 2003) and the consistency of attitudes created by stories (**Green**; **Brock**, 2000; **Slater**, 2002; **Slater**; **Rouner**; **Long**, 2006).

2. Narrative engagement scale

From the previous theoretical notions, researchers considered that the experience of narrative engagement was underlined by four distinct but interrelated processes:

- Narrative understanding (NU), which implies the comprehension of the narrative and the ease of receivers to subconsciously construct models of meaning from it;
- Attentional focus (AF), which describes the non-conscious focusing of the viewer in the narrative from its opposite, the distraction. According to the authors, the AF moderates the sensations derived from consumption, which are measured by the following two processes;
- Emotional engagement (EE), which explains the emotions that viewers have about the characters, in terms of empathy and sympathy, as well as explaining the emotional arousal provoked by the narrative, and
- Narrative presence (NP), which implies the loss of awareness of the self and the space produced by the intense focus of the viewer on the mental construction of an alternative world from which he/she perceives the story.

Following this theoretical model, **Busselle** and **Bilandzic** (2009) designed a scale whose initial proposal was developed and validated with three studies involving young adults from Germany and the United States. The final version, obtained through the successive application of principal components analysis (PCA), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), consists of 12 items (three in each factor).

According to the authors, this work considers that a first advantage of this scale over other related measures is that its length facilitates its application, even in conjunction with other measuring instruments. However, its greatest advantage is theoretical: it allows discrimination, at the same time, and clearly, the different aspects that produce the engagement with a narrative, the attitudes related to the reception of narratives and, also, their enjoyment. Despite this, its authors recommended replicating it with successive studies that considered diverse audiences, genres and narrative consumption platforms (**Busselle**; **Bilandzic**, 2009).

Our review of the scientific literature reveals that the scale has recently been used to evaluate the narrative engagement in reading fiction on screen and paper (**Mangen**; **Kuiken**, 2014), as a construct associated with the enjoyment of fiction for the deaf or hard of hearing (**Tsaousi**, 2016), and to determine the persuasive power of narrative video games in attitudes towards people with mental illness (**Najarian**, 2016). It has also been observed in relation to psychophysiological responses (**Sukalla** *et al.*, 2016). In all these works, the participants were adults. It is unknown, the existence of research that validates the instrument for the population of interest.

This work seeks to contribute to the understanding of narrative engagement of adolescents. Consistent with the above, this work has two aims:

- to adapt the aforementioned scale for teenagers, and
- to gather validity evidence (i.e., based on content, internal structure and relations with other variables) of the developed scale in a sample of adolescents from three European countries.

Explicitly, through a multi-group CFA, this research first analyses the invariance of the questionnaires with German, Italian and Spanish adolescents. Moreover, in order to examine the relationship with other variables (i.e., concurrent validity), this study observes the relationship of engagement with perceived realism, which is fundamental for narrative reception. Audiences process narratives according to their conceptions of reality (**Cho**; **Shen**; **Wilson**, 2014; **Hall**, 2003). Perceived realism is the degree to which the narrative world reflects the real world (**Gerbner**; **Gross**, 1976). It is a narrative characteristic that stimulates the emotional engagement (**Busselle**; **Bilandzic**, 2008). Thus, in this study it is expectable that perceived realism correlates to the narrative engagement and, particularly, to its emotional dimension.

Apart from the aforementioned theoretical necessity, and as will be seen below, there is also another pragmatic reason for justifying the relevance of this study: in the context of research aimed at understanding the relationship between young people and audiovisual products, an effective, economical, valid, reliable and verifiable instrument in different languages is required. This would allow for the recognition of essential aspects of the cross-cultural reception of narratives, which is particularly necessary in a world that tends towards transnationalization and globalization of media messages (**Brink**, 1999; **Castells**, 1996) and their consumption.

3. Specific background

This study is produced in the European Union (EU)[1], where audiovisual is a strategic element (*European Commission*, 2014a) which is credited with the objectives of forming identities, projecting values, becoming the factor integrating common identity and being a driver of economic innovation and employment growth (*European Commission*, 2012). In order to achieve these objectives, the EU needs to attract young audiences and know them in depth (*European Commission*, 2014b).

However, the current processes of globalization and transnationalisation of audiovisual media introduce variables that make it difficult to characterize all audiences (not just adolescents) in the terms defined so far. Hence, cross-cultural studies are necessary to establish general and specific response models. Furthermore, in the EU context, great debates about the common and particular identities of their nations are still present, which, in turn, have also undermined research on film reception (**Bergfelder**, 2005). In fact, the EU claims specific knowledge to identify responses attributable to national, regional or universal schemes. Today it is accepted that the region comprises a plurality of cultures (**Barbato**, 2008; **De-Vinck**, 2011), but there is little data on the reception of the films in the different nations. Much of this shortfall, for example, is due to the variety of languages in Europe (**Bergfelder**, 2005).

Additionally, scarce data on cross-cultural reception of films offer conflicting information regarding reception processes. Recent studies have argued that globalization and transnationalisation of audiovisual media produce a homogenization of tastes and modes of processing (**Esser** *et al.*, 2015; **Fu**, 2013). On the other hand, it has been traditionally considered that audiences consume audiovisual products in an idiosyncratic way (**Morley**, 1992; **Fu**, 2013), according to their cultural peculiarities (**Morley**, 1992) and through location processes. According to these investigations, the receivers are related to

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the contents applying indigenous cultural patterns (**Cantor**; **Cantor**, 1986). The cultural distance from the country of origin of audiovisual and the idiomatic competence, then, seem to interact with the psychology of individuals in the reception of narratives (**Katz**; **Liebes**, 1984; **Hofstede**; **McCrae**, 2004; **Straubhaar**, 2003; **Trepte**, 2008). The results, as has been said, are inconclusive. For that reason, research has been requested that abounds the psychological processes to explain the narrative experience of all audiences (**Moyer-Gusé**, 2010; **Van-Leeuwen**, 2015). Hence, observing narrative engagement through a valid and reliable instrument in different nations and languages, and for the population of interest, is fundamental.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

A convenience sample was assumed. A total of 310 European students (68.71% Italian, 17.74% Spanish and 13.55% German) from urban middle class high schools participated in the study. Of the total, 58.09% were female (54.46% of Italian, 67.27% of Spanish and 52% of German). The students were part of a voluntary extra-curricular complementary course on film literacy which was conducted on the schools of eight European countries under the support of the European Union. The age ranged between 14 and 18 years (Mage =15.98; SDage = 1.16). Italy (Mage = 16.31; SDage = 0.99) and Germany (Mage = 15.98; SDage = 1.24) had the same age range as the global sample, while Spain had ages between 14 and 16 years (Mage = 14.69; SDage = 0.79).

4.2. Materials

4.2.1. Questionnaires

- Narrative engagement. We proposed an adapted version for youngsters of a previously formulated existent narrative engagement questionnaire (**Busselle**; **Bilandzic**, 2009), which explains the processing of fiction from the mental models that occur in the receivers. The questionnaire has four factors, of three items each, to determine the experiential engagement with fiction: (a) Narrative understanding; (b) Attentional focus; (c) Narrative presence, and (d) Emotional engagement.
- Realism. We used two realism items to examine concurrent validity. Both measured the plausibility, a fundamental requirement of perceived realism (**Cho**; **Shen**; **Wilson**, 2014). Plausibility indicates the degree to which narrative portrayals could possible occur in the real world (**Hall**, 2003): "The story of the film can happen in real life" (real1) and "The events portrayed in the film could have been inspired by real-life situations" (real2).

Both questionnaires were administered in a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Totally disagree to 5 = Totally agree) to facilitate response process to participants. Preliminary literature advises on the reduction of the number of options for adolescents and children (**Mellor**; **Moore**, 2014), in addition to authors suggesting that more than five points on the response scales offers little extra utility (**Lissitz**; **Green**, 1975).

Psychometric properties of mean scores can be found in results as they are an objective of this research.

4.2.2. Stimulus

- *Illègal* (Dir. Olivier Masset-Depasse, 90 mins., Drama, Belgium, 2010) was used, which deals with the drama of illegal immigration in Europe. It tells the story of Tania, a Russian woman who has lived together with her son Ivan for eight years in Belgium illegally, thanks to a trafficker who provides them with false documentation and lodging. The day that Ivan turns thirteen, Tania is arrested, while Ivan escapes. Tania is taken to a deportation center where she lives with other women of different nationalities in similar conditions. Following the advice of some of them, Tania does not reveal her identity, nor the existence of Ivan. Her greatest fear during confinement is that the trafficker harms her son. The film explores the difficulties of immigration and the dramas that the undocumented people face in their desire to have a better future. It was showed dubbed into the language of the students.

4.3. Procedure

First of all, it was necessary to translate the original questionnaire to Italian and Spanish. Later, all the questionnaires were adapted for German, Italian and Spanish youngsters.

In the selection of the film that would act as audiovisual stimulus, it was considered that its plot was suitable for the students in the terms described by the concept of narrative engagement and its dimensions. Also, it should be available in the languages of the study. A viewing license was obtained from the rights holders.

All participants signed a consent form before the participation of the study. They were part of an extracurricular film literacy course offered free of charge in their schools, which were located in urban middle-class neighborhoods. The film was viewed in classrooms equipped with a large-format television screen, surround sound system and computers. Immediately after viewing, students completed an online questionnaire that included, in addition to the narrative engagement scale, sociodemographic questions (i.e., age, school, country, and city). The questionnaires were answered voluntarily and confidentially.

4.4. Data analysis

The software *Lisrel 8.8* (**Jöreskog**; **Sörbom**, 2006) was used to perform the multi-group analysis. Due to the moderate size of the final available sample, decision-making regarding estimators and internal consistency reliability coefficients followed the flow chart of **Viladrich**, **Angulo-Brunet** and **Doval** (2017). Comparative fit index (*CFI*) and Tucker-Lewis Index (*TLI*) values higher than .95 together with root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA*) lower than .06 were considered as indicators of excellent fit (**Hu**; **Bentler**, 1999). The *CFI* and *TLI* higher than .90 and *RMSEA* lower than .08 were considered as indicators of acceptable fit (**Marsh**; **Hau**; **Wen**, 2004). It was considered that change of ≥.01 in *CFI* or ≥ .015 in *RMSEA* between nested models would indicate non invariance (**Chen**, 2007). Take into account that *CFI* is independent from the sample size (**Chen**, 2007; **Cheung**; **Rensvold**, 2002) and, as shown, the *CFI* is constant between the three tested nested models. The *CFI* is a good indicator for reduced samples (**Hu**; **Bentler**, 1999).

Cronbach's alpha (α) and omega (ω; **McDonald**, 1999) was obtained following **Viladrich**, **Angulo-Brunet** and **Doval** (2017) recommendations. Software *R* was used for analysis of variance (anova) and concurrent validity, which was specifically assessed through examining correlations between engagement dimensions and realism items.

5. Results

5.1. Validity evidence based on content test

We departed from the **Bilandzic** and **Busselle** (2009) questionnaire for developing the questionnaires for adolescents. This questionnaire has a good domain and representation of items.

A private company of professional film translators followed the forward method (**Hambleton**, 1996) for translating the questionnaires to Italian and Spanish. Subsequently, expert judges (i.e., high school teachers and linguists) assessed the properties of the questionnaires for the sample of young people and three languages. The process followed the recommendations of **Muñiz**, **Elosua** and **Hambleton** (2013) for adaptation and translation of instruments. The final questionnaires are available to the interested researchers upon request.

5.2. Validity evidence based on internal structure

First of all, we adjusted the four first order factor model with all the participants, and obtained acceptable goodness fit indexes (χ^2 = 76.99, *p* < 0.001. *df* = 49, *CFI* = 0.99, *TLI* = 0.99 and *RMSEA* = 0.05 [CI90 = .02-.06]). Figure 1 shows that the factor loadings of D2 (AF) and those of D4 (EE) are high and homogeneous, but not those of the other factors.

Figure 1 also includes the correlations between the factors of Italy and Spain. As expected, D1 (NU) and D2 (AF) are highly correlated. Also, D3 (NP) with D4 (EE). D2 (AF) with D3 (NP) are negatively correlated.

Second, we fitted three separated models, one for each sample. The four-factor model proposed presented adequate global goodness of fit indices: in Germany, it has χ^2 = 62.24 (*p* = 0.08, *df* = 48), *CFI* = 0.95 and *RMSEA* = 0.08 (CI90 = 0.00-0.14); in Italy, it has a value of χ^2 = 62.92 (*p* = 0.07, *df* = 48), *CFI* = 0.99, and *RMSEA* = 0.04 (CI90 = 0.00-0.06); and in Spain, it has a value of χ^2 = 71.03 (*p* = 0.02, *df* = 48), *CFI* = 0.95 and *RMSEA* = 0.09 (CI90 = 0.04-0.10). Standardized factor loadings are presented in Table 1. The correlations between the factors for Italy and Spain are included in Table 2, while those for Germany are found in Table 3. As shown in Table 2 and Table 3, the values are very similar to those of the base model. The marginal adjustment of the model in Spain could be explained by the low factor loadings of D3 (NP) as well as the negative loading of NP2.
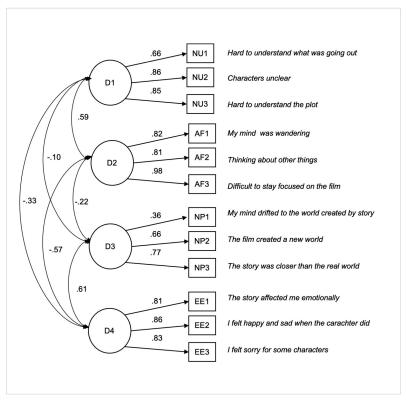

Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis with standardized factor loadings and correlations between factors

Table 1. Standardized factor loadings for multi-group analysis

	D1			D2			D3			D4		
	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE
NU1	0.64	0.73	0.80									
NU2	0.86	0.93	0.84									
NU3	0.89	0.62	0.80									
AF1				0.85	0.67	0.70						
AF2				0.85	0.86	0.90						
AF3				0.98	0.85	0.94						
NP1							0.36	0.41	1.00			
NP2							**0.71**	-0.20	**0.80**			
NP3							0.80	-0.40	1.00			
EF1										0.86	0.68	1.00
EF2										0.87	1.00	0.71
EF3										0.89	0.57	0.63

Note. Factor loadings >.40 in bold; IT = Italy; SP = Spain; GE = Germany; D1/NU = Narrative understanding; D2/AF = Attentional focus; D3/NP = Narrative presence; D4/EE = Emotional engagement.

5.3. The configural model

In order to estimate all the parameters at the same time, a multi-group CFA is performed without equivalence restrictions in the matrix Λx, nor in the matrix Φ (matrix of factorial loadings and matrix of variances-covariances in the *Lisrel* syntax). The purpose of these analyses is to support a common first order four-factor model across countries. In other words, it seeks to simultaneously explore the four factors in the three countries.

As shown in Table 4, the adjustment indices are: χ^2 = 202.16 ($p < 0.01$; df =147), with *CFI* = 0.98, *TLI* = 0.98, and *RMSEA* = 0.06. Considering goodness of fit indicators, the invariance between the responses of the subjects for a four-factor structure among all countries (model 1) is supported. Although the evidence suggests a common structure, it is necessary to test invariance between factor loadings before comparing scores between the different countries.

5.4. Invariance of factor loadings (metric invariance)

First, following the recommendations of **Van-de-Schoot**, **Lugtig** and **Hox** (2012), a model is made by restricting the coefficients of the Λx. To begin with, all factor loadings are restricted to be invariant between groups. Then, the equivalence of the scores of the items between the groups is examined.

The results support the hypothesis that there are invariant factor loadings (Table 4). Following the test of χ^2, the increasing of χ^2 in comparison to the base model is not significant between the groups (model 2, $\Lambda \chi^2$ = 18.4; Λdf =14; p = 0.19). The null hypothesis is accepted and therefore there is invariance of the factor loadings.

5.5. Invariance of variances-covariances

The following analyses focus on the correlations among factors. The objective is to determine the equivalence of theoretical constructs between groups (**Byrne**, 1998; **Vanderberg**; **Lance**, 2000). A multi-group CFA is conducted by restricting the coefficients Φ of the variance of the factor / covariance on the groups.

The increase in the test is statistically non-significant ($\Lambda \chi^2$ = 27.11; Λdf = 20; p = 0.13). According to these results, and to the values of the adjustment indexes (Table 4), we cannot reject the hypothesis that there is invariance in the structural coefficients. As **Van-de-Schoot**, **Lugtig** and **Hox** (2012) indicate, it is necessary for the model to be invariant in order to interpret means and correlations between groups.

Table 2. Correlations between factors: Italy and Spain

	D1	D2	D3	D4
D1	-	0.64	0.89	-0.10
D2	0.52	.	0.83	-0.34
D3	0.10	-0.23	-	-0.13
D4	-0.41	-0.62	0.64	-

Note. Italy (n = 213) below the diagonal; Spain (n = 55) above the diagonal. D1/NU = Narrative understanding; D2/AF = Attentional focus; D3/NP = Narrative presence; D4/EE = Emotional engagement.

Table 3. Correlations between factors: Germany

	D1	D2	D3	D4
D1	-			
D2	0.63	-		
D3	0.10	-0.19	-	
D4	0.13	-0.55	0.38	-

Note. D1/NU = Narrative understanding; D2/AF = Attentional focus; D3/NP = Narrative presence; D4/EE = Emotional engagement.

5.6. Descriptive statistics and reliability of the narrative engagement scale

The descriptive statistics for the items and factors as well as internal consistency reliability coefficients are provided in Table 5. The values of asymmetry and kurtosis are similar for all three countries: they are always between -2 and 2. With these values of asymmetry and kurtosis it can be considered that there is an approximately normal distribution. In Italy, scales have reliable coefficients for diagnosis and classification (**Nunnally**; **Bernstein**, 1994), while in Germany at least they are adequate for research. In Spain, we find an inadmissible coefficient of reliability for D3 (NP). This is due to the fact that D3 has negative factor loadings in NP2. After the analysis, a translator revised the items and found that they have the same content in the three countries, so this circumstance could be attributed to the sample characteristics.

The means denote that the participants when viewing the film *Illègal* have average scores below three points in all dimensions except emotional engagement (D4). In general, participants understood the film and were not distracted. However, although they attributed, on average, scores higher than three points in emotional engagement, they were not transported within the story, showing on average scores lower than three in narrative presence.

> The availability of a validated scale for similar samples in different languages and cultures is a first step in the characterization of audiences in these times of transnationalization and globalization of cultural products

5.7. Narrative engagement scale means contrast

As Table 6 shows, there are significant differences in NU, NP and EE. As we see in the descriptive statistics (Table 5), in the case of NU, the multiple comparisons in pairs through the Bonferroni test show differences between Spain (*M* = 2.41, *SD* = 0.86) and Italy (*M* = 2.18, *SD* = 0.95, *p* < 0.001, Cohen's *d* = -0.23), and differences between Italy and Germany (*M* = 1.77, *SD* = 0.68, *p* = 0.02, Cohen's *d* = -0.43).

On average, Spaniards score higher in narrative Comprehension, followed by the Italians and, lastly, the Germans. However, due to the wording of the items, a low score on this scale is a sign of understanding the film. Consequently, it is concluded that the Germans show greater narrative understanding of the film *Illègal* than the Italians. In turn, the Italians show more than the Spanish.

Table 4. Goodness of fit of multi-group CFA

Model	χ^2 ($\Lambda \chi^2$)		d.f(Λg.l)	ECVI	RMSEA [IC%90]	GFI	CFI	NFI	TLI
Model 1	202.16	0.01	147	1.22	0.06 [.04-.08]	0.92	0.98	0.94	0.98
Model 2	(18.40)	0.19	(14)	1.19	0.06 [.04-.07]	0.91	0.98	0.94	0.98
Model 3	(27.11)	0.13	(20)	1.18	0.06 [.04-.08]	0.86	0.98	0.98	0.98

Note. Model 1 = configural invariance; Model 2 = metric invariance; Model 3 = variance-covariance invariance.

In narrative presence, there are differences between Italy (*M* = 2.43, *SD* = 0.85) and Germany (*M* = 2.9, *SD* = 0.81, *p* < 0.001, Cohen's *d = 0.55*). The German students score higher than the Italians.

Finally, in emotional engagement, there are differences between Spain (M = 3.5, SD = 0.94) and Germany (*M* = 3.89, *SD* = 0.79, *p* = 0.018, Cohen's *d* = 0.41). Germans show greater emotional engagement than Spaniards.

5.8. Evidence based on its relation with other variables

The descriptive statistics of perceived realism are included in Table 7. As can be seen in Table 8, the perceived realism items have high correlations with Emotional engagement mean scores while the correlation of the realism items with other dimensions was low to moderate.
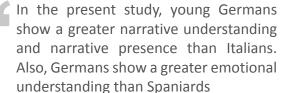
> In the present study, young Germans show a greater narrative understanding and narrative presence than Italians. Also, Germans show a greater emotional understanding than Spaniards

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and reliability indexes

	M (SD)			s			k			ω			α		
var	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE
Items															
NU1	2.54 (1.16)	2.84 (1.24)	2.14 (1.00)	0.36	-0.04	0.86	-0.90	-1.38	0.22						
NU2	1.96 (1.11)	2.20 (1.01)	1.74 (0.80)	1.26	0.99	1.04	0.93	0.59	0.84						
NU3	2.02 (1.14)	2.18 (0.96)	1.43 (0.63)	1.15	0.74	1.12	0.53	0.11	0.09						
AF1	2.21 (1.21)	2.29 (1.12)	2.71 (1.09)	0.72	0.60	0.01	-0.53	-0.52	-0.68						
AF2	2.40 (1.31)	1.89 (0.85)	2.24 (1.01)	0.56	0.73	0.92	-0.93	-0.12	0.69						
AF3	2.15 (1.26)	1.98 (0.97)	1.93 (0.92)	0.88	0.75	1.23	-0.31	-0.44	1.68						
NP1	2.57 (1.21)	2.33 (1.11)	3.07 (0.96)	0.07	0.63	-0.49	-1.16	-0.49	-0.07						
NP2	2.44 (1.07)	2.60 (1.15)	2.86 (1.09)	0.23	0.59	-0.16	-0.63	-0.44	-0.76						
NP3	2.29 (1.10)	2.76 (1.19)	2.67 (1.00)	0.36	0.13	-0.17	-0.95	-0.97	-1.12						
EE1	3.31 (1.28)	2.82 (1.28)	3.83 (1.01)	-0.50	0.02	-0.37	-0.89	-1.18	-1.05						
EE2	3.25 (1.23)	3.65 (1.08)	3.64 (0.98)	-0.28	-0.61	-0.47	-0.92	-0.04	-0.27						
EE3	3.67 (1.15)	4.02 (1.05)	4.19 (0.86)	-0.78	-1.37	-1.48	-0.22	1.65	3.01						
Mean score															
NU	2.18 (0.95)	2.41 (0.86)	1.77 (0.68)	0.46	1.01	1.19	0.29	0.94	1.47	.93	.89	.89	.78	.72	.78
AF	2.26 (1.14)	2.05 (0.80)	2.29 (0.87)	0.75	0.20	0.56	-0.41	-0.94	-0.04	.94	.92	.94	.89	75	.83
NP	2.43 (0.85)	2.56 (0.72)	2.90 (0.81)	0.07	0.97	-0.24	-0.48	0.63	-0.84	.94	.08	.86	.60	.22	.72
EE	3.41 (1.09)	3.50 (0.94)	3.89 (0.79)	-0.57	-0.71	-0.46	-0.42	0.19	-0.16	.93	.91	.84	.88	.77	.77

Note. var = variable; IT = Italy; SP = Spain; GE = Germany; D1/NU = Narrative understanding; D2/AF = Attentional focus; D3/NP = Narrative presence; D4/EE = Emotional engagement; s = skew; k = kurtosis; ω= omega total; α = Cronbach's alpha.

Table 6. Anova table for narrative engagement by country

Variable		d.f	SS	MS	F	p
Narrative understanding	Between	2	9.77	4.89	5.98	<0.001
	Within	307	250.83	0.82		
Attentional focus	Between	2	2	0.99	0.89	0.41
	Within	307	340.90	1.11		
Narrative presence	Between	2	7.66	3.83	5.69	0.003
	Within	307	206.83	0.67		
Emotional engagement	Between	2	8	4.02	3.81	0.02
	Within	307	323.90		1.05	

Note. MS = Mean square; SS = Sum of squares.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics perceived realism

	M(SD)			s			k		
var	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE	IT	SP	GE
Items									
Real1	4.42 (0.79)	4.27 (1.01)	4.57 (0.63)	-1.96	-1.21	-1.12	5.23	2.30	0.09
Real2	4.52 (0.70)	4.36 (0.85)	5.57 (0.67)	-1.85	-1.28	-1.69	4.99	0.98	3.24

Table 8. Correlations among engagement mean score and perceived realism and descriptive statistics of perceived realism items

Correlations												
	Italy				Spain				Germany			
Variable	NU	AF	NP	EE	NU	AF	NP	EE	NU	AF	NP	EE
Real1	-.31	-.19	.27	.80	.11	-.04	.51	.91	-.18	-.21	.4	.89
Real2	-.42	-.31	.32	.84	.06	.06	.51	.90	-.39	-.47	.31	.93

6. Discussion

We have developed a new tool in three languages for measuring Narrative engagement in adolescents. The instrument provides positive evidence of validity and reliability for Italian and German teenagers. It also provides mixed evidence of validity for Spanish youngsters because the dimension narrative presence does not work for the sample.

The low factor loadings in narrative presence for the Spanish sample could be explained by two reasons. First, due to the fact that narrative presence is a concept that requires greater abstraction capacity and the sample of Spanish students was the youngest of the study (14-16 years). The literature suggests that age is a key factor in cognitive and emotional developmental processing (**Piaget**, 1954). During adolescence (11-16 years), humans gradually develop the ability to think in abstract terms. Our ability to make judgments, reason, develop working memory capacity, or perform basic arithmetic operations gradually increases from age 11 (**Barrouillet**; **Lepine**, 2005; **Haverty** *et al.*, 2000).

The presence of invariance in the variance-covariance matrix and configural and metric invariance allows us to assume that it is appropriate to compare the averages of the scores obtained, such as is done in this study. In the present study, this contrast revealed that, compared to the film analyzed, young Germans show a greater narrative understanding and narrative presence than Italians. Also, that Germans show a greater emotional understanding than Spaniards. This should be confirmed by future studies using different drama films.

Apart from the above, it should be considered that although the corresponding model was also invariant in Spain, the previous factorial analysis informs that the solution is not admissible for the controversial factor narrative presence. In Spain, then, young people clearly perceive this factor differently from Italians or Germans. This reinforces the need to explore not only other alternatives for the formulation of the factor, but also other conceptual formulations.

The validity evidence of the scale based on the relationship with an external variable for the observed samples is proposed by the fact that the perceived realism items are highly correlated to the emotional engagement dimension in the three samples. This is also in line with preliminary theory which proposes that realism perception is a narrative characteristic that stimulates the emotional engagement (**Busselle**; **Bilandzic**, 2008; **Green**, 2004). Likewise, the perceived realism items showed correlations (low to moderate) with the other dimensions of the narrative engagement.

On the other hand, the functioning of the scale in this study shows evidence of ecological validity in the fact that the genre of the film, a drama, is consistent with the general scores obtained. However, future studies should check how it works with other film genres (such as dramas or light entertainment) and confirm these assumptions and their variability, even in other consumption contexts. It would also be desirable for other studies to explore the functioning of the scale in longitudinal studies to understand the evolution of adolescent responses and, particularly, engagement with narratives. Moreover, it would be convenient to test the scale with teenagers from different socio-demographic background since the participants of this study were all from urban middle class high schools. Finally, future studies should also examine the narrative engagement of these audiences in conjunction with other external variables of interest to the theory of media entertainment (e.g., appreciation, realism). This way, evidence of criterion validity would be obtained for the sample and the relationship with external variables would be examined.

> The information offered by the results of this research allows advances in the comparison of the answers of Italian, German and Spanish adolescents to the narratives and, in particular, to the narrative engagement and its dimensions. This knowledge can, in turn, feed into the design of European institutional programmes, especially on media literacy, which will benefit European citizens, their works and their cultures

The results of this work could nurture future studies with audiences of different ages and other languages. However, for now, they shed light on the path of conceptualization of psychological phenomena linked to the reception of narratives by individual members of different cultures, and in particular, the narrative engagement. Thus, they follow the lines of the researchers who suggest the existence of differences in the psychological processing of the narratives according to the culture/country of the receivers (**Katz**; **Liebes**, 1984; **Oliver**; **Bartsch**, 2010; **Soto-Sanfiel**; **Igartua-Perosanz**, 2016). The availability of a validated scale for similar samples in different languages and cultures is a first step in the characterization of audiences in these times of transnationalisation and globalization of cultural products (**Brink**, 1999; **Castells**, 1996). On the other hand, in the European Union environment, where this study is produced, the information offered by the results of this research allows advances in the comparison of the answers of Italian, German and Spanish adolescents to the narratives and, in particular, to the narrative engagement and its dimensions. This knowledge can, in turn, feed into the design of institutional programmes, especially on media literacy, which will benefit European citizens, their works and their cultures.

To conclude, it is worth considering that this work is product of a wide investigation realized in eight European countries. Apart from the languages of this article, the translation and adaptation of the questionnaire for adolescents was also carried out in Croatian, English, Icelandic, French and Romanian. However, the small size of the sample in these countries prevented the study of its production. The questionnaires, however, are available to interested researchers.

7. Note

1. *Creative Europe* (2014-20) programme, *Media Sub-programme/Support for Audience Development (Film literacy)*. Reference number: 553981-CREA-1-2014-1-UK-MED-AUDEV.

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