



Articles

Transmedia Storytelling: from Convergence to Transliteracy

Narrativas Transmídia: da Convergência ao Transletramento

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ABSTRACT

Stories and narrative represent meaningful communicative events, typical of human beings' nature since everybody loves reading, telling, and listening to them. They may also constitute digital events, conveyed through virtual resources, and inserted in the convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006). Within this culture and responding to media expansion, there is transmedia, disseminating diverse but related contents, spread out through multiple media platforms, allowing meaning to converge from one to another. This context supports the transmedia storytelling concept: A transversal narrative process investigated by many researchers, but particularly by Jenkins (2006, 2011), Scolari (2013), and Gosciola (2014). This concept motivates the debate about transliteracy: a synchronized movement across, through and beyond contents and multiple media platforms. Considering this scenario, this article aims at presenting transmedia storytelling conceptually to exploit its potential to promote transliteracy. To reach this goal, transmedia storytelling concepts and features are discussed. After that, considerations are directed towards the transliteracy concept and

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implications. To conclude, remarks on the target relationship pointed out as the objective of the paper are addressed together with reflections upon the perception of transmedia storytelling and transliteracy as a concept and an area that are transdisciplinary, respectively.

Keywords: *Transmedia storytelling; Transliteracy; Convergence; Transmedia; Transdisciplinarity.*

RESUMO

Histórias e narrativas representam eventos comunicativos significativos, típicos dos seres humanos, pois todos gostam de ler, contar e ouvi-las. Elas também podem se constituir em eventos digitais, veiculados por recursos virtuais, inseridos na cultura de convergência (Jenkins, 2006). Nessa cultura e respondendo à expansão de mídias, encontra-se a transmídia, disseminando conteúdos diversos, mas relacionados, dispersos em múltiplas plataformas de mídia, de modo que o significado converge de uma a outra. Esse contexto comporta o conceito de narrativa transmídia: um processo de narrativa transversal, investigado por muitos pesquisadores mas, particularmente, por Jenkins (2006, 2011), Scolari (2013) e Gosciola (2014). Esse conceito motiva o debate sobre transletramento: um movimento sincronizado entre, através e além conteúdos e múltiplas plataformas de mídia. Considerando tal cenário, este artigo visa apresentar a narrativa transmídia conceitualmente, para explorar seu potencial para promover o transletramento. Para atingir esse objetivo, conceitos e características das narrativas transmídia são discutidos. Em seguida, a argumentação é dirigida ao conceito e implicações do transletramento. Para finalizar, a relação-alvo apontada no objetivo do artigo é abordada, assim como reflexões sobre a percepção da narrativa transmídia e do transletramento como um conceito e uma área transdisciplinar, respectivamente.

Palavras-chave: *Narrativa transmídia; Transletramento; Convergência; Transmídia; Transdisciplinaridade.*

1. Introduction

“What is a story? What is a narrative? What is it like telling a story?” These are questions we have already asked or been asked at least once in our professional lives as language teachers. Possibly we have already promptly asserted that a narrative is a story, or contrariwise.

However, by researching on them, not literarily, we may distinguish that a narrative is a detailed story, written, read, or told by someone. More explicitly, a narrative is a kind of event, a representation or specific manifestation of a story, not a story itself. The difference between a story and a narrative remains in the organization of its events. Despite such a naïve distinction, narratives and stories may be contemplated as meaningful genres because they denote expressive communicative events, quite common in everyday practices, belonging to human beings' nature, since everybody loves reading, telling, and listening to them. In contrast, they constitute distinct textual events that have been differently produced throughout time, particularly lately when there have been all types of digital resources available (software, interfaces, platforms) and when we feel ourselves inserted in the *convergence culture* (Jenkins, 2006).

Jenkins (2006, p.3), the architect of convergence, conceives of it “to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes”, depending on who speaks and on this person's frame of reference. Convergence regards the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation among various media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who search anywhere for desired entertainment experiences. Commenting on convergence and on contemporary media consequences, Jenkins (2001, p.93) stresses

Media convergence is an ongoing *process*, occurring at various intersections of media technologies, industries, content and audiences; it's not an end state. There will *never* be one black box controlling all media. Rather, thanks to the proliferation of channels and the increasingly ubiquitous nature of computing and communications, we are entering an era where media will be everywhere, and we will use all kinds of media in relation to one another. We will develop new skills for managing information, new structures for transmitting information across channels, and new creative genres that exploit the potentials of those emerging information structures (*the author's highlight*).

Jenkins also asserts that the center of convergence does not reside in the multiple media platforms that constitute it, but in contents, in the encounter of ideas, approaches, and touch points. Convergence is not an outward phenomenon that occurs in media routines; it happens in the consumers' brains, through interpersonal interactions, i.e., each

individual builds up his/her own personal background from fragments of information extracted from the media flow transformed into resources, through which he/she makes sense of his/her life (Jenkins, 2006, p.3). From these routinized actions emerges the *convergence culture* that, according to Jenkins (2006, p.2) is:

(...) where old and new collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways.

Jenkins' definition is actually convincing due to the impact his lexical choices cause, particularly when he asserts that the convergence culture is "where old and new collide". It seems to be the precise sensation we feel when facing the encounter of old and new media, because of the rhythm digital novelty reaches and the way it affects us, either positively or negatively. Perhaps it is appropriate to affirm we live in a collision *tempo*, trying to cope with the pulse it imposes.

Understanding the convergence culture implies exploiting the relationship among three integrated constructs: *convergence of communication media*, *participatory culture*, and *collective intelligence*. The first one regards the spreading of the same content (story or narrative, for instance) through distinct media platforms, so that meaning converges from one to another. This process creates a cultural shift for consumers when looking for information make connections among dispersed media content. The second construct, participatory culture, involves the idea of media producers and consumers as participants who interact with each other, according to rules they do not fully understand. Indeed, they may share distinct levels of comprehension of these rules and of some actions. For this reason, collaboration associated to the exchange of resources and abilities become alternative sources of media power and a way of building collective intelligence, the third construct previously named. Convergence culture regards, therefore, a non-linear world in which any story, narrative, sound, sign, image, and relationship unfold through a large number of media channels.

By examining the convergent movement described so far and scrutinizing the role it plays in the fields of Communication and

Publicity, we come up with *transmedia*, a conception that emerges as a response to media convergence. Transmedia implies the dissemination of diverse but related content (story or narrative, for instance), spread out through multiple media platforms, so that meaning converges from one to another. Yet, although converging, the content conveyed is not disperse; it makes sense on its own, not demanding consumers to go through several media channels to grasp the message, to get the whole information. Convergence and transmedia share at least two fundamental features – *expansion* and *multiple media connections* – that become valuable references to provide essential boundaries to the *transmedia storytelling* comprehension, especially relevant for the purpose of this paper.

The purpose of this article is to present the origin and discuss some transmedia storytelling assumptions and features in order to exploit its potential to promote and develop transliteracy. To reach such an objective, the notion of transmedia storytelling is addressed, and its approaches are examined. These considerations are then directed towards the conception of transliteracy: A facet of Literacy as an umbrella term that emphasizes the capacity to deal with narrative expansion and multiple media connections within the culture of convergence. To conclude the discussion, remarks on associations between transmedia storytelling and transliteracy are addressed together with reflections upon the perception of transmedia storytelling and transliteracy as transdisciplinary concept and area, respectively.

2. *Transmedia Storytelling: origin, meanings, and features*

According to the retrospective investigation undertaken by Gosciola (2014), a Brazilian well-known professor and researcher on this topic, the expression *transmedia storytelling* first appears as *trans-media composition*, as quoted by Welsh (1995, p.97). Actually, Stuart Saunders Smith coins this notion in 1975, while composing *Return and Recall*. Smith conceives of the term as if the composition of different melodies, harmonies, and rhythms for each instrument and musician were a composer who complement the song in a coherent harmony and synchrony with other musicians and composers (Sauer, 2009).

The concept, originated in the field of Music, is only applied to the realm of Communication in 1991, with the publication of the book *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, by Marsha Kinder, a professor at the University of Southern California. Kinder reports the spontaneous actions of her son who, on Saturday mornings, used to watch *Ninja Turtles* on TV; in the afternoons, used to play *Ninja Turtles* with a friend with whom creating original stories; and in the evenings, used to go to the movies to see other *Ninja Turtles* stories. She realizes that when he created new stories, he was expanding the *Ninja Turtles* narrative through the operation of different means and forms of expression. She labels his procedure as *transmedia intertextuality* and interprets it as a “supersystem of entertainment” (Kinder, 1993, p.39-86). Her perception of her son’s intertextuality as a system is revealing and will be retrieved forward in this paper.

Following these initial references and also related to what is recently known as transmedia storytelling, it comes Brenda Laurel, a teacher, writer, and designer who, after creating and managing a transmedia communication company, *Purple Moon*, in the late 90’s, writes *Creating Core Content in a Post-Convergence World*. In this article, she defines and stresses the concept “*to think transmedia*” that means leaving the old model of exclusive property creation in one medium (a film, for example) after directing it towards the creation of secondary properties in other media. According to Laurel (2000), one must think transmedia from the very beginning.

In his article *Convergence? I Diverge*, Henry Jenkins (2001) moves forward, theoretically speaking, by defining *transmedia behavior of big corporations* and mainly *transmedia storytelling* (media convergence as the promoter of narrative in the development of contents through multiple media platforms). An extensive definition of the second notion is provided in 2003, in the article named *Transmedia Storytelling* in which Jenkins asserts that, in the ideal form, each medium must do what it does better, with no redundancy, but providing complementary information. Jenkins (2003) illustrates it by stating that, for instance, a story may be launched as a film, expanded as a TV show, book or comic book, and delivered as a game. As he says, each medium or franchise

must be self sufficient to allow autonomous flow, so that it will not be necessary to watch the film to enjoy the game and *vice-versa*.

Although Jenkins has already started addressing the conceptual issue, it is in his 2006 book, *Convergence Culture: Where the old and new media collide*, that this topic is more thoroughly addressed. From his viewpoint, transmedia storytelling comprises the report of stories conveyed through multiple media platforms, each text contributing in a distinct and relevant way to the complete story. Jenkins concerns the expansion of a story divided into parts that are distributed to multiple media – the ones that have the most suitable potential to exploit each particular segment. Therefore, all parts and media will be integrated somehow. In this case, we can notice the idea of transmedia storytelling as a system, similarly to the one suggested by Kinder (1993). An inclusive definition of transmedia storytelling is provided in the 2011 publication, *Transmedia 202: Further Reflections*, in which Jenkins explains:

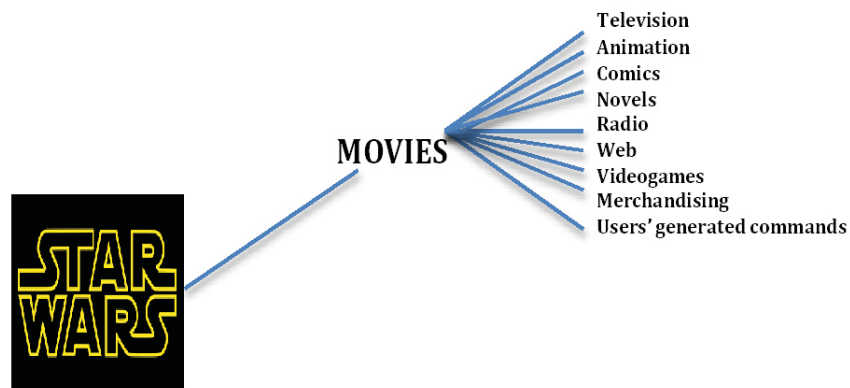
Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purposes of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.

The above definition clarifies that transmedia storytelling is the outcome of a convergence process through which dispersed fictional elements are systematically conveyed through multiple media delivery channels. Each resulting narrative – or transmedia storytelling – presents complete meaning but in many ways refers to the original fiction, so that it is not necessary to go back to it to understand its expansions.

Illustrations of transmedia storytelling become classical since many researchers have been recurrently quoted the same examples – *Star Wars* (1977), *The Matrix* (1999), and *Harry Potter* (2004) – in their publications. Yet, instances dated from the first half of last century, like *Tintin* (1929) and *Superman* (1930), are still relevant to be mentioned for they convey features that have been also noticed in more recent samples. Figure 1, an infographic about *Star Wars*, illustrates Jenkins'

definition, and displays how transmedia storytelling unfolds and the relationship among the multiple convergent media:

Infographic 1: Star Wars



Source: Adapted by the author from Scolari (2013, p.37)

The discussion presented by Carlos A. Scolari (2013), a professor, researcher, and expert in communication and digital media, interfaces and communication ecology, has Jenkins’ arguments as a starting point; nevertheless, his studies deserve to be emphasized when transmedia storytelling is the issue on focus. He states that transmedia storytelling is “a kind of report in which a story is implemented through multiple communication media and platforms, and in which one part of the consumers plays an active role in this process of expansion” (Scolari, 2013, p.46). His definition, although reinforcing aspects already mentioned by other researchers, points out some consumers as active participants in the communication and expansion processes, i.e., he highlights participation and engagement as relevant defining factors, as well as focusing the agency possibly performed by consumers. Scolari (2013, p.25) also alerts that transmedia storytelling, as a concept, is not alone for:

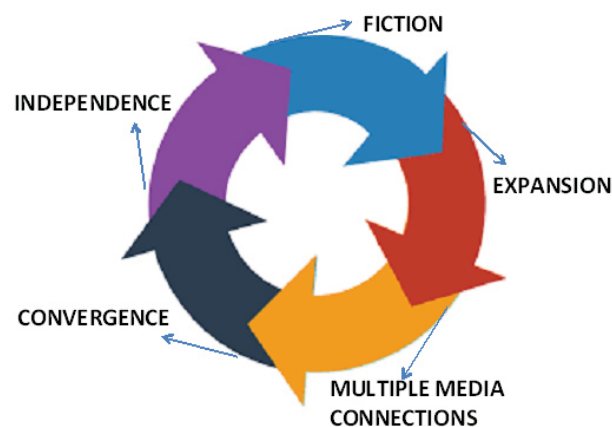
[...] concepts like *cross-media*, *multiple platforms*, *hybrid media*, *intertextual commodity*, *transmedial worlds*, *transmedial interactions*, *multimodality*, or *intermedia* constitute part of the same semantic galaxy. Each one of these concepts sheds light to some dimension of the transmedia storytelling: if *intertextual commodity* makes us think about the end of a political economy

of the textual – a text that is produced, distributed, and consumed – the concept of *transmedia world* leads us to a theory of narrative worlds. Broadly speaking, each one of these concepts seems to label the same experience: a practice of meaning production and interpretation based on stories that express themselves through a combination of languages, media, and platforms (*the author's highlight*).

Reflecting on the expressions highlighted by Scolari in the excerpt presented, it seems to be evident that an *increasing semantic galaxy* has been generated because the transmedia storytelling phenomenon regards a continuous articulation of languages, media, and delivery platforms aiming at recurrent meaning making, production, and interpretation processes. This articulation and these processes open up new possibilities for original semantic connections with the adjective *transmedia* as a result of context features, media utilization, and its development throughout time.

By interpreting the historical overview, concepts and considerations addressed so far, two paths may be suitable to be followed. The first leads to a synthesis of the features, of the distinctive aspects that provide the concept of transmedia storytelling with an undeniable identity, as shown by the following figure:

Figure 1 – Features of transmedia storytelling



Source: The author.

By stating that *fiction* is a fundamental characteristic of transmedia storytelling, it is implicit that it comprises *adventure*, *fantasy*, *mystery*, and *science fiction*, among other similar fictional genres. As stated by Scolari et al. (2004, p.4), they constitute “transversal fiction that covers any kind of narrative”. Thus, real life stories may be inserted in this grouping since addressed in a fictional way. *Expansion* is another essential characteristic indicating that the narrative is expanded through *media*, generating *multiple connections* that, although independent, are somehow associated to the original narrative. The perceived connections are due to the *convergence* that congregates communication media, culture of participation, and collective intelligence (as explained in the introduction of this article). As previously detailed, each transmedia storytelling is *independent* because it symbolizes a part, a narrative that has complete meaning. However, considering *convergence*, each part is concurrently kind of dependent on other parts and on the whole story thus forming a transversal connection that links all parts, giving rise to a *narrative world*, which has a systemic organization. The five features displayed in Figure 1 and commented subsequently are therefore related by a sense of interconnection and continuity, despite any additions that may be made to expand the narrative world.

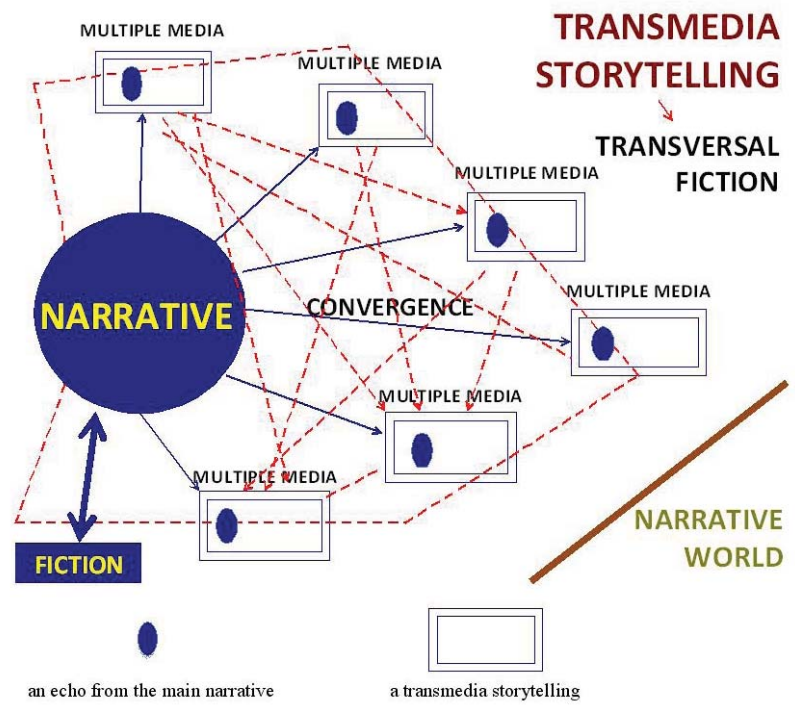
The second path possibly followed is the one that leads to a more comprehensive definition of transmedia storytelling as an attempt to gather significant aspects stressed by researchers on the field as well as comprising our own view on the concept. In so doing, transmedia storytelling seems to be

a work of transversal fiction, expanded systematically across multiple media delivery platforms, with which maintains stable convergent connections, while revealing itself somehow content-independent, and with which creates a unified and coordinated experience that appeals for the audience participation.

An attempt to graphically represent our concept of transmedia storytelling may be seen in Figure 2, which stresses that the initial narrative (fiction) converges and generates distinct expansions, conveyed through multiple media delivery platforms. Each expansion or convergence point produces a transmedia storytelling, which has connections with the original fiction. Each transmedia storytelling

is independent, but somehow connected to the initial narrative and to the others, thus generating a transversal fiction. In other words, each transmedia storytelling “echoes other narratives”²; however, it is not required to read/watch/listen to everything to grasp meaning. By contemplating the crossing lines indicating the interconnections among all elements, the shared systemic links emerge, making then possible to assert that the narrative world originates an open system, a complex system³, therefore.

Figure 2 – Transmedia Storytelling



Source: The author

2. Reference to Manguel (2001, p.28) who said: “We construct our narratives through the echoes of other narratives”.

3. Complex systems are sets of organized parts. It is due to this organization several new qualities emerge, qualities that were not seen in the separate parts of the system. So, this organization allows the connection and reconnection of the parts to the whole and *vice-versa* and avoids segmented knowledge. Complex systems are always open; they are always on the process of being (Morin, 2015, p.109-111).

After conceptualizing transmedia storytelling, summarizing aspects one should be aware of, and revealing the notion composed by the arguments here displayed, inquiries regarding transmedia and literacy practices starting to emerge. Unquestionably, such doubts deserve accurate attention if the purpose is to research on the transmedia storytelling potential to give rise to a certain type of Literacy, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper. This is the topic addressed in the following section.

3. The transliteracy ecology

The conceptual discussion provided in the previous sections of this article allows the recognition of *convergence*, *expansion*, *participation*, *transversal connection*, and *multiple media platforms* as fundamental constructs in a transmedia ecosystem. To properly participate in the communication and in the interaction processes within this transmedia ecosystem, it is required to have some knowledge on multiple media platforms and to understand how content converges and is connected across multiple media. Reading and writing “as only orthographic symbols and numeric coding/decoding processes are not enough anymore” (Aranda & Freire, 2020) in a world extremely interconnected by digital devices and hybrid media applications, in a world characterized by an increasing “platformization of our societies” (van Dijck et al., 2018). Reflecting on such a context, *Literacy* is then a critical subject, particularly if teaching, learning, communicating, and interacting in this ecosystem are concerned.

As recognized in the *White Paper “Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century”*, published by the *New Media Literacies Project* (Jenkins, 2009), educational issues that underline the necessary skills (problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, and communication) for the students to become the 21st century workers and citizens are similar to the ones required by multiliteracies.

Multiliteracies correspond to a proposal launched in 1996, in the USA, by a group of ten educators from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, named *The New London Group*.

They emphasize that the connection between the multiplicity of communication channels and the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world require a broader view on literacy than the one depicted by the traditional language-based approaches. From their perspective, multiliteracies overcome the limitations perceived and therefore they argue for a unique type of Pedagogy whose focus is on this innovative view. Rojo & Moura (2019, p.20) also address multiliteracies, but they perceive them as embodying a two-faced concept that associates *cultural diversity of populations* and simultaneously *language diversity of contemporary texts*, causing a “multiplicative explosion of literacies that become multiliteracies, i.e., literacies in multiple cultures and in multiple languages”. Therefore, multiliteracies are attentive to multicultural issues and multimodal subjects.

Considering multiliteracies and transmedia ecology and therefore confronting digital technologies and social practices, a commentary by Scolari (2018, p.12) deserves to be mentioned and reflected upon:

The vast diffusion of digital technologies and new social practices around them has led to the emergence of new concepts in the academic and professional conversations about media literacy. In the last two decades the semantic galaxy around ‘literacy’ has expanded, from ‘digital literacy’ to ‘new media literacy’ or ‘multimedia literacy’. Although each new concept has its own specificities, they all deal with a new set of interactive contents, production skills, and technosocial practices that have resulted from the emergence of the World Wide Web (*the author’s highlight*).

Among other arguments, Scolari stresses the specificities each new concept has as well as a set of interactive contents, production skills, and technosocial practices. His remark makes us confront multiliteracies and transmedia storytelling, pondering that the first is focused on *social practices, regarding cultures, conveyed in diverse languages and modes through various media*, while the latter emphasizes *transversal narrative practices, expanded across multiple converging media platforms, which remain independently connected*. More explicitly, the first develops a *more straightforward movement from the user to each medium and culture at a time through which a specific content is conveyed through certain languages and modes*; while the second develops a *convergent*

movement across narratives, multiple media delivery platforms, and languages, connected by the expansions of the original narrative, and possibly including the consumers' participation. Thus multiliteracies, as a concept, is appropriate to a context that is different from the one transmedia is related to. Such a perception clarifies the need to establish an innovative frame of reference to understand transmedia and transmedia storytelling. In this regard, transliteracy seems to be the conception that provides a suitable foundation for the concept under discussion.

As explained by Sukovic (2017, p.6), transliteracy is a concept originated in the work of academics whose essence “is not only an abstract idea but also an embodied practice and sensory experience, [...] it is neither an idea or a practice: it is both”. Thomas et al. (2007), by reviewing the history of the concept, report that, although it appears during the discussions of the *Production and Research in Transliteracy Group* (PART), it had actually come out throughout the debates of *The Transliteracies Project*, developed by Professor Alan Liu who investigated online reading practices at the University of California at Santa Barbara, in 2005. Before that, in 2001, the term *convergence* was inserted in the terminological debate, followed by *transliteracy*, as mentioned by Thomas et al. (2007) who also comment:

It is important to note that transliteracy is not just about computer-based materials, but [*also*] about all communication types across time and culture. It does not privilege one above the other but treats all as of equal value and moves between and across them.

It is intriguing to note how broad the understanding of transliteracy conveyed in the excerpt above is for it equally connects computer-based materials and communication types across time and culture. This overgeneralization implies losing the specifics of each element, giving them the same connotation, and placing computers-based materials, communication, and transliteracy on the same position across time and culture. The authors' opinion may generate a misunderstanding leading to the interpretation that, for instance, the skills and procedures needed to watch a *documentary* about lakes in Greece on computer, to answer some comprehension questions are the same required to produce a

*manga*⁴ about the TV sitcom *Friends*⁵. In such an example, the first situation exposes the individual to a multimodal context that requires multiliteracies because it is a juxtaposition of multicultural issues and multimodal subjects in order to more linearly *read* the documentary and *answer* comprehension questions in the *written* or *oral* modes. The second, on the contrary, leads the individual to use creativity to expand the sitcom to produce a narrative with the same, similar, or more/less characters, demanding convergence, developing a transversal movement across multiple media platforms and narratives, as well as possibly an exercise of transnational culture. The second situation requires the individual to move towards expansions and convergent directions that imply a movement *across*, *through*, and *beyond* tackled settings. Then, this situation involves transliteracy.

When thinking about transliteracy, the prefix *trans-* plays a distinguished role in terms of meaning since it reveals a synchronized movement *across*, *through* and *beyond* literacies. In this regard, the course of this movement implies adaptability and flexibility, which designs particular skills, depending on the context. “The idea of transliteracy as a theory of fluid literacies has arisen at a time of ongoing discussions about creativity and innovation”, asserts Sukovic (2014, p.207). Providing a broader definition, Thomas et al. (2007) claim that

(...) transliteracy refers to being literate in the 21st century, comprising the skills to read, write and interact across multiple platforms, tools and media, from signing and orality through print, handwriting, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks.

Two years after the presentation of such a concept, Andretta (2009, p.3) asserts transliteracy is a kind of umbrella term that incorporates different literacies and multiple communication channels, which request active participation *in* and *across* multiple platforms, and embrace linear and non-linear messages. She shares her experience to write a paper on this subject by presenting a curious metaphor. For her,

4. *Manga* is the Japanese comics.

5. *Friends*, an American *sitcom*, created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman and presented by the NBC TV, from September 22, 1994 to May 6, 2004 (236 episodes).

(...) writing a paper on transliteracy is like depicting a three-dimensional reality using a two-dimensional medium. As a result, some of its meaning is inevitably 'lost in transliteration' (*the author's highlight*).

The definitions and comments presented guide the reflection on transliteracy as a singular phenomenon that provoke a non-linear movement not only *across, through* and *beyond* multiple media platforms, but also *across, through* and *beyond* literacies, giving rise to a unique type of literateness, distinct from any other one already known. It evokes convergence, expansion, transversal connection, participation, and multiple media delivery platforms as the key constructs that associated to languages follow the direction through which transmedia storytelling may be produced and consumed. By comprising languages, it provides the reader, the producer, the consumer – and the *prosumer*⁶ – to be within the *narrative world*, the *transmedia ecology*, and therefore within the *transliteracy territory*.

At this point of the discussion, the conceptual distinction between *multiliteracies* and *transliteracy* seems to be elucidated, as well as elucidating is the suitability of transliteracy to issues related to transmedia storytelling. Nevertheless, another concept may be introduced to the debate – *transmedia literacy* – to try to clarify to what extent it shares similarities or differences with the two conceptions previously addressed.

As stated by Scolari (2016, 2018), transmedia literacy is a concept that seems to be more adequate to the formal educational system. According to the mentioned author, it is an investigating field and evolving action that should not be restricted to an updated list of skills. Such as other literacy forms, transmedia literacy must go beyond cognitive and pragmatic dimensions, for the emotional dimension is the key element in any learning process (Ferrés-Prat, 2014). Scolari also reinforces that transmedia literacy should be considered an expansion to media literacy⁷, directed towards new territories, conceptions, and practices, which are less investigated. Aranda & Freire (2020), by

6. *Prosumer* indicates the consumer who also performs the role of a producer (González-Martínez et al., 2018, p.23).

7. *Media literacy* is defined as the ability to access, understand, and create communications in a variety of contexts (Ofcom, 2003).

discussing transmedia storytelling and focusing on the foreign language teaching-learning process, address a contrastive view on multiliteracies and transmedia literacies reaching to the awareness that the second is a relevant expansion to the first. However the outcomes detailed above provoke speculations on why transmedia literacy remains restricted to the educational field while transliteracy is used to refer to transversal narrative practices, to transmedia storytelling which may be frequently produced and consumed in any settings, including the educational one.

Reflecting upon the findings presented and upon their ensuing inquiry, two assumptions may be made which involve the need of a thorough investigation with distinct purposes. The first assumption implies doing a research to examine whether transmedia literacy is an expansion to media literacy and to multiliteracies. The second assumption – which reveals our standpoint so far – refers to a contrastive research on transliteracy and transmedia literacy to endorse the use of transliteracy in any situation and context since at large the conceptualization emphasizes skills and competences instead of contexts and settings. Despite investigations already conducted, which depict each literacy concept individually, a well-defined contrastive conceptual distinction still needs to be undertaken to provide a well-founded and more substantial argumentation, one that may clarify the remaining speculation and that may exploit such a relationship in depth.

4. From convergence to transliteracy: *final remarks*

The previous sections of this article unveiled the paths from convergence to transliteracy aiming at interpreting the concept of transmedia storytelling and picturing it within the narrative world as part of the comprehensive transliteracy territory. Along this route, specific features are highlighted – *fiction, expansion, convergence, participation, multiple media platforms, transversal connections*, among others – since they play a fundamental role in constituting the transmedia storytelling essence and identity. One of the principal connections, certainly a kind of conducting wire, should be explicitly mentioned here since its function is twofold: it is a common thread that

connects all features quoted previously while playing a singular part in the production, consumption or prosumption⁸ of any transmedia content and material. This connection concerns *languages* – any languages, expressed by words, sounds, music, pictures, images, colors, gestures, movements, and silence.

Interpreting transmedia products and materials means elucidating a mixture of languages that, combined or dissonant, reveal the producer's identity and ideology through the choices made in addition to the identity, ideology, and intentions of what is created and desired to express. As Scolari (2009, p.591) states, "texts are not necessarily linguistic (or visual) but narratively structured. In other words, narrative is the basic structure-creating device for meaning production". Transmedia storytelling may be then grasped as a *text holder*, which conveys meanings that are also unveiled to the consumers' meaning making process. Undeniably, transmedia storytelling comprises a thoughtful combination of languages, but the intended focus in the final section of this article is on verbal language, the one that emerges in any social practice, i.e., language in use, language that mediates contemporary social life.

In this respect, language in use in a transmedia storytelling faced as social practice may reveal information, interpersonal relationships, and textual functions⁹ of many sorts, which depict features of context of situation and context of culture. In this sense, a connection, a transversal convergence between transmedia and Applied Linguistics may be established since this field of knowledge regards "a way of creating intelligibility about social problems in which language has a central role" (Moita Lopes, 2006, p.14). As a transversal convergence, language used in transmedia also displays meaning *expansion* that helps creating the transmedia storytelling conception and connecting

8. As mentioned by González-Martínez (2018, p.25), "We speak of prosumption as a nuclear and unselectable aspect: the transmedia individual does not choose whether to jump into the production of transmedia content and materials, but is a creator by default, in parallel with their transmedia peers (Álvarez et al., 2013; Gordon & Lim, 2016; Guerrero-Pico, 2015; Gürsimsek, 2016; Jover et al., 2015; Lugo Rodríguez, 2016; Ramasubramanian, 2016; Roccanti & Garland, 2015; Scolari, 2016).

9. This is a reference to language metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual, respectively), according to M.A.M. Halliday (1994), originated in the Systemic Functional Linguistics.

it not only across multiple media platforms and transversal narratives, but also across some specific fields of study and research such as Communication, Publicity, Marketing, Semiotics, and Applied Linguistics, among others. In this sense, the function played by verbal language in the narrative world as a complex system also supports the understanding of transmedia as a transdisciplinary area and, therefore, transmedia storytelling as a transdisciplinary production that may be created, consumed, analyzed, appreciated, criticized, complemented, and accepted, for instance, by more than a field of knowledge.

To conclude this article, it is meaningful to highlight that a reflection upon transmedia storytelling and transliteracy indicates revealing directions that guarantee to their central agents – *language teachers, students, and applied linguists* - a kind of undeniable empowerment either in personal or professional terms. The first one refers to *language teachers* on all levels who will be able to include transmedia storytelling in their teaching practices and, in so doing, deal pedagogically with a material that may be much closer to the students' contexts and interests. Furthermore, they will have the chance to approach contemporary themes that cross over various disciplines in an extemporaneous way. The second direction touches the *students* who will be much more motivated to read and produce their own texts, their own narratives, having transmedia storytelling as a starting and as an arrival point. They may be also driven to exploit and manipulate media devices and alternative communication forms to convey their transdisciplinary narratives, i.e., their transmedia storytelling, and have them appraised from various angles, by teachers of distinct disciplines. Finally, the third direction, much broader, regards an innovative fieldwork that may be opened to *applied linguists* who, as language experts, may jointly develop transmedia storytelling projects with transmedia groups or companies, expanding the professional profile of specific teamwork by getting involved either in small ventures or in wide wingspan projects.

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