

Micro-Paper 14: *Transmediality*

Raúl A. Mora

Assistant Professor, Education and Pedagogy Graduate Programs, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central
Medellín | SRG-L2/LSLP Chair

Defining the Term

Transmediality, a term stemming from the work of Henry Jenkins, refers to the construction of narratives woven through multiple media platforms. While traditional narratives either appear in one media or use others to adapt an original story (as is the case of movie adaptations of novels), transmedia narratives begin in one medium and move across other media to create more complex and convoluted stories. Instead of just transposing a story from, for instance, a movie to a comic format, the story actually begins in the movie and the comic either continues the story or complements blank spots that the movie version leaves out.

Transmediality, then, looks at storytelling as a communication phenomenon that spans across different forms of transmission and even time. The goal of transmediality is to show that today's narratives are not told through one single medium anymore. Movies, video games, cartoons, and graphic novels, to name a few, are now part of a narrative universe whose storylines are not finished once the movie itself is over. One of the most common examples of how transmediality operates is the *Matrix* universe: For instance, *The Animatrix*, a series of anime stories, seems to fill out missing information and details between the first two movies of the *Matrix* trilogy.

Other famous examples of transmediality across time include James Bond (a narrative that has moved from books to movies and, most recently, video games) and the *Star Wars* saga (a transmedia narrative that already spans seven movies, a number of novels, and several cartoon shows and video games). In these examples, all

the media platforms contribute to move the narrative forward within the same universe.

Connecting it to LSLP

Transmediality is a concept that shares a common bond with the notion of multimodality, one of our conceptual pillars for our studies. They both agree that today's messages appear in multiple semiotic dimensions and forms of design. In particular, LSLP researchers have begun to explore how to use transmedia narratives to explain elements of social theory. Their most recent work on transmediality has explored how to use the *Matrix* universe to explain Bourdieu's social theories.

Expanding Second Language Research

The idea of transmediality offers plenty of potential in the field of second languages. Today's language users are expanding their options for language practice beyond traditional media such as TV or movies, delving into comics and video games. In that sense, second language researchers must consider looking at the effects of transmedia narratives as a tool to enhance language practices in the classroom and how today's language learners are further appropriating second languages.

References

- Evans, E. (2011). *Transmedia television: Audiences, new media, and daily life*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. (2007, March 22). *Transmedia storytelling 101*. Retrieved from http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html
- Mora, R. A. & Golovâtina-Mora, P. (2014, May). *A transmedia analysis of the Matrix universe as a Bourdieusian framework*. Paper presented at the Tenth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.