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About University Students' Transmedia Profile

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Abstract

Around the media movement of participatory culture there are already many educational approaches that begin to speak of a transmedia literacy. Indeed, since Jenkins (2009) included transmedia navigation as one of the new media literacies, the term *transmedia* has begun to be used in the media and also in the educational sphere. With transmedia, multimedia acquires a narrative element that unfolds through different ways, media and languages. With a systematic review of the literature, we conclude that this concept has not yet been defined in the educational field, although there is consensus on some of its main components: transmediality, collaboration, prosumption and critical thinking. But what interests us is not only to know what we mean by transmedia literacy when we talk about our students at the university, but also to know which the transmedia profile of university students is when they learn. Students may correspond to a transmedia profile in their personal life, in their leisure, or in their informal learning; but that does not necessarily have to be the same at the university, when they learn in the formal context. To measure the transmedia profile of university students, however, there is no instrument as such, which leads us to two instruments that try to know the transmedia profile of citizens; besides, we complement them with a small adaptation focused on the educational component. This complete questionnaire will allow us to know how transmedia our students are, in this phase of the research; and see how the university can offer them better learning opportunities. In this presentation we will explain, therefore, fundamentally three results of the research we have been doing so far:

- What do we understand by transmedia literacy in education?
- What instruments do we have to measure the transmedia profile of university students?
- Which transmedia profile do our university students have?

Keywords: transmedia, transmedia literacy, new media literacies.

Introduction

In recent decades, a large number of papers have been devoted to examining the impact that new digital cultures have on teaching and learning processes (Gee, 2009; Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009). And, in all that field of thought, one of the emerging lines is the so-called transmedia learning processes, which Raybourn (2012, p. 471) conceptualizes as “the scalable system of messages representing a narrative or core experience that unfolds from the use of multiple media, emotionally engaging learners by involving them personally in the story”.

This concept, as many others such as transmedia play (Alper, 2013b) or transmedia literacies (Anderson, 2014), is related, in one way or another, to the works of Jenkins (1991, 2006) about the concepts of media convergence and processes of participatory culture.

In this conceptual framework we should situate the conception of transmedia. In Jenkins' work, we can identify two uses of the term *transmedia*, which, although related, appear for different purposes. One, perhaps the most widespread, links transmedia to an emerging form of discourse, history, narrative (transmedia storytelling). Another is linked to a capacity, skill, competence (transmedia navigation). Is in this case that authors like Thomas et al. (2007) and Frau-Meigs (2012) have talked about a transmedia literacy or transliteracy, which is going to be developed in this paper, not only in a general and personal sense (Elwell, 2014), but in a educational one.

The educational implications presented by these new concepts are quite evident. If we speak of a new culture, it must penetrate within the educational system; If we speak of a necessary competence for the exercise of citizenship in the 21st century, it is also undeniable that education as a whole must guarantee that new citizens acquire it. However, as far as we know, attention has been focused more on the essence of that competence or on the nature of that participatory culture, and not so much on the educational implications that are derived from it, so important. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to review the concepts of transmedia and transmedia literacy and, from there, to analyze the transmedia profile of university students. This is the first necessary step if we want to design learning strategies that allow us to take advantage of these new characteristics of young students.

Literature Review

One of the first questions that we must clarify is the very concept of transmedia from the educational point of view. In this sense, the revision of the literature leads us to consider three complementary perspectives, centered on the subject (and his necessary skills), focused on the process (learning) or focused on the result.

As we said, in the first place we find approximations whose approach to the transmedia question focuses specially on that individual who interacts with them rather than on the very essence of the object or on its educational possibilities, although these questions are quite implicit as well. In this regard, it is common to address a question linked to the competence of the individual to handle transmedia resources, which is made explicit through concepts such as literacy or navigation. These are approaches that consider transmedia as literacy (either a literacy that has not been necessarily acquired and that must be, either as a literacy that new citizens frequently show and that can be taken advantage of from an educational point of view). In any

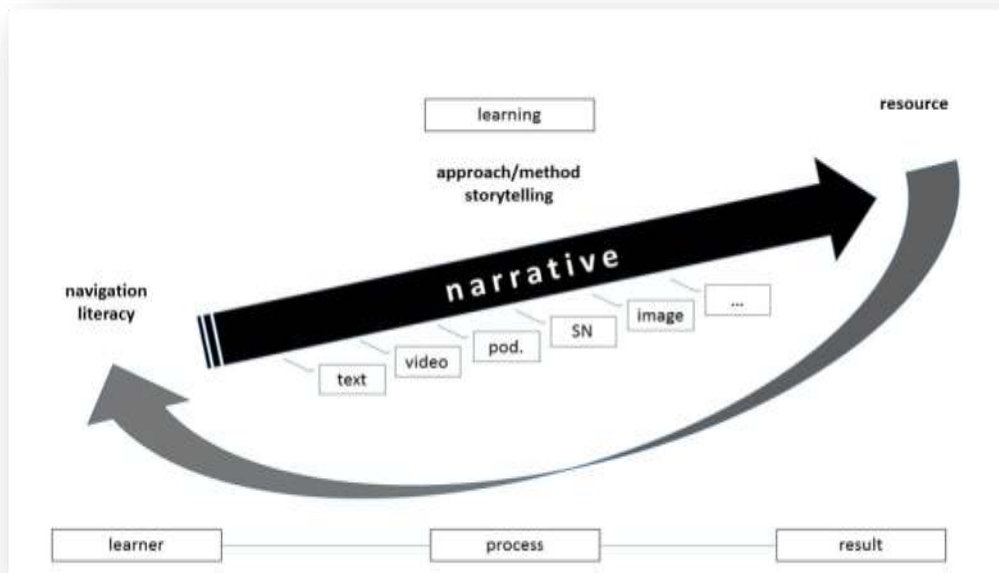
case, the coexistence and the concurrence of the different media requires in the individual "the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities" (Alper, 2013a). Indirectly, this is what Pence (2012) is also pointing out when he indicates that, from the point of view of the educator, we should focus on the need for students to interact with the implicit narrative to the transmedia, so that we can affirm that we are talking about an instrumental type competition.

On the other hand, as we said, we can find conceptualizations that focus especially on the nature of the transmedia object or resource. And that's when we talk about transmedia magazines (Conner-Zachocki, 2015), transmedia books (Stansell, Quintanilla, Zimmerman, & Tyler-Wood, 2015; Tillman, An, Boren, & Slykhuis, 2014) or transmedia educational resources (Llorente et al., 2013). Undoubtedly, in any case, these educational resources, or resources are conceived from the beginning to serve as a basis for learning. However, sometimes the analysis of the resource is previous to the educational use itself, which occurs once the resource already exists.

Finally, we can find the third of the blocks or perspectives, in which we no longer speak of the individual who uses the transmedia or the transmedia products themselves, but of his deliberate and planned educational purpose (or, to put it another way, documents in what is this the element on which the discourse is articulated).

However, these concepts are not watertight, and so we should talk about an interrelated continuum in which there is a round trip from the individual who uses the transmedia products to these products themselves. This trip, in fact produces learning (or what can be exploited for educational purposes if wanted). However, at the same time, the very existence of transmedia products takes us back to the beginning, to that individual who should be competent to make the most of the possibilities of a digital transmedia culture transmedia. This is what we try to represent in the following image:

Figure 1. *Transmedia Concept*



Source: Author's

Transmedia Literacy

From here, if we want to analyze the transmedia profile of university students, we must focus on the concept of transmedia literacy (or transliteracy). In that sense, it is not usual that, when mentioning transmedia literacy, a strict definition is offered. On the contrary, it is common to assume that the concept is quite clear to and to go directly to focus on those aspects that make it up, and that we want to highlight. However, we can find some conceptual approaches that we could highlight as definitions of transmedia literacy or that we could interpret in that sense.

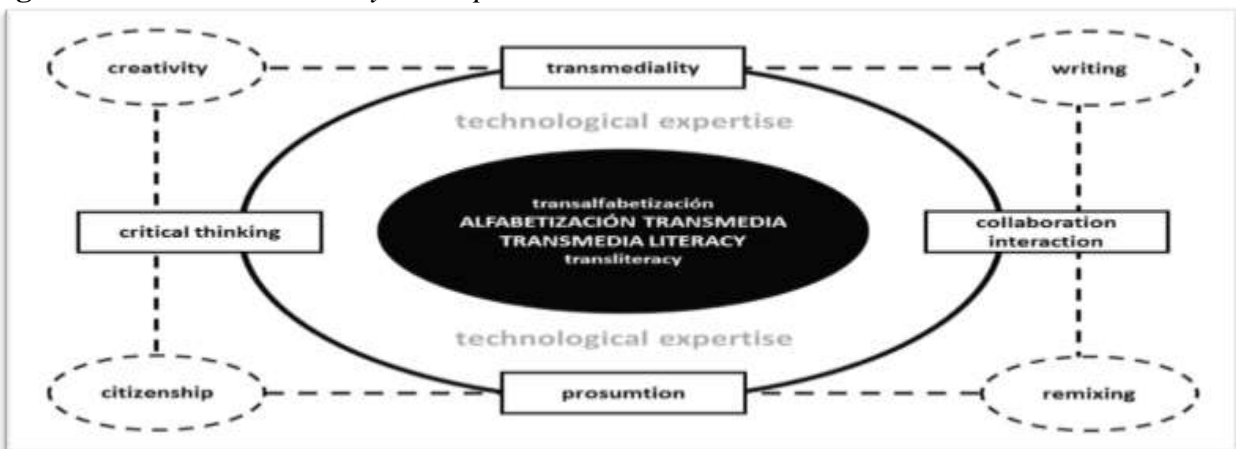
The oldest of these is Kline (2010), who refers the birth of the concept to Jenkins, and assumes that talking about transmedia literacy implies understanding that students must simultaneously learn to navigate, create and evaluate different media.

The idea of navigation, in fact, guides the ideas of Jenkins (2006; Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel, 2009), to the extent that transmedia navigation is considered one of the relevant elements of what he calls new media literacies (hereinafter, NML). However, as far as we know, Jenkins does not speak properly of transmedia literacy (or, at least, he had not done so in his written works until 2010, which is when Kline assumes this definition.) Anyway, this idea of transmedia navigation, together with The other elements of the NML, is present in many authors who, yes, refer to them with the name of Jenkin (Miočić & Perinić, 2014; Rhoades, 2016).

Others offer definitions of transliteracy or *transalfabetización* that could be quite similar. Thus, for example, one can point out the ability to read, write and interact within and across different genders, languages, media and contexts (Fraiberg, 2017), which adds the complexity of the multiplicity of national languages and identities. Or you can focus, in addition to everything already mentioned, on the idea that this capacity can be highly productive from the point of view of learning, especially if it focuses not so much on the technological element, but on the contextual (Del Mar Grandío-Pérez, 2016).

Beyond these definitions, what always underlies all the documents is the emphasis on those elements that characterize the literacy of the individuals that develop in the transmedia versus the digitally competent and that should be considered from the educational perspective. We have them represented in Figure 2, in which the nuclear and secondary elements present in the transmedia literacy concept have been represented throughout the literature:

Figure 2. *Transmedia Literacy Concept*



Source: Author's.

As we see, we have tried to distinguish those that gather more consensus and that, therefore, we consider nuclear; in opposition to those that, although they are highlighted by the literature, by their lower agreement could be more marginal. In any case, there are four elements of this media literacy that are commonly accepted: transmediality, prosume, critical spirit and collaboration or interaction. Regarding the first one, we can highlight that it is the element that most directly links with the NML of Jenkins (Jenkins, Purushotma, et al., 2009) and, specifically, with its notion of transmedia navigation. Indeed, within this new literacy, the ability to jump from middle to middle following a narrative that develops sequentially or multimodally in different media is required (Alper, 2013a; Alvarez, Salavati, Nussbaum, & Milrad, 2013; Del Mar Grandío-Pérez, 2016; Fleming, 2013; Fraiberg, 2017; Gambarato & Dabagian, 2016; Jover, González Martín, & Fuentes, 2015; Kline, 2010; Munaro, Dudeque, & Vieira, 2016; Pence, 2012), and which can adopt analog and digital media, on-line and off-line ones (Scolari, 2016).

Secondly, we find the jump from the individual consumer of media products to the individual who not only consumes them, but also produces them, the so-called *prosumer*. On the one hand, we cannot imagine, as we said before, that an individual is competent (*literate*) if he cannot produce media content in a context of participatory culture (where the media becomes transmedia without exception) (Weaver, 2015); and, on the other, this idea not only affects adult individuals, but also children and adolescents, who must grow up in an environment in which they are expected not to be passive in the face of knowledge, but to create new tailored content also for learning (formal or informal) purposes. In short, we cannot separate the ideas of transmediality and prosumption, because the transition between media not only involves changing them, but in many cases also changing the role between consumer and producer and vice versa (Gordon & Lim, 2016; Guerrero-Pico, 2015; Gürsimsek, 2016; Jover et al., 2015; Lugo Rodríguez, 2016; Roccanti & Garland, 2015; Scolari, 2016).

The alternation between consumption and production takes us to the context in which this occurs, a social context; and, therefore, it is essential to assess the importance of the skills that have to do with collaboration and interaction. It is what has been called collective intelligence or distributed cognition (Alvarez et al., 2013), or community-oriented creation (Ramasubramanian, 2016); and that, in some ways, necessarily implies an interaction with the rest of the *transmediators* that exceeds the simple communication with them. Indeed, it is not enough to communicate or interact, but to collaborate in the service of the shared transmedia project (Anderson, 2014; Barber, 2016; Fraiberg, 2017; Gürsimsek, 2016; Lugo Rodríguez, 2016; Miočić & Perinić, 2014; Richardson, 2013; Roccanti & Garland, 2015). And this, without doubt, is very attractive from the point of view of the educational approach of the transmedia.

Finally, there is a continuous impact on an aspect that seems to have more to do with information literacy strictly, but that acquires relevance in this context of convergent and participative culture and is the development of a critical spirit that allows to discern, to weigh, to assess and to improve not only others' products but also their own (Alper, 2013b; Barber, 2016; Checa-Romero, 2016; Gambarato & Dabagian, 2016; Kline, 2010; López Yepes, 2016; Moon, 2016).

As we saw at the beginning of this section, the list of components of media literacy is not limited to these four core elements, but goes further and reaches some more elements, such as the exercise of citizenship through transmediality (Miočić & Perinić, 2014; Soep, 2012; Soriano, 2016).

In relation to presumption, we find a new vision of writing processes that take up the usual linear and finalist vision (consider the texts as something that is finalized) and move us to a new

conception in which the texts are revisited and every text is redone again and again. This brings us to the idea of remix (Anderson, 2014; Barber, 2016; Del Mar Grandío-Pérez, 2016; Fraiberg, 2017; Pietschmann, Völkel, & Ohler, 2014).

Finally, it is necessary to close this review of the elements that make up the concept with an important point on the importance of technologies in transmedia literacy. There is no doubt that transmedia has developed profusely especially from Web 2.0 and, above all, thanks to Web 3.0. However, the explicit omissions to the importance of technological literacy are evident, and this technological expertise is understood (it pervades everything); but it is not explicit in a general way. Technology must be used efficiently, but transmedia literacy transcends the purely technological and serves more to the use, the user and the context than to the technical (Del Mar Grandío-Pérez, 2016; Roccanti & Garland, 2015).

Perhaps because of all these reasons it is fundamental to analyze what the transmedia profile of university students is. The new subjects can be transmedia in their personal life, in their relationship with learning in informal contexts. However, are they also transmedia subjects in formal learning contexts? Or, can they be?

Methodology

This research is situated within the rationalist paradigm and has used a quantitative methodology based on the survey technique. In addition to the review and conceptualization, the main objective was to analyze the transmedia profile of university students.

For this, the set of available instruments was analyzed, and two self-perception questionnaires were found within the conceptual framework of the New Media Literacies. The first of them (Literat, 2014) is an instrument to know the NML profile of the general public and the second of them (Koc & Barut, 2016) is specifically aimed at university students. After analyzing pros and cons of each of them, it was decided to apply them both; and, in addition, it was determined to add 7 more questions (validated by experts) specifically oriented to transmedia learning, according to what has been explained in the literature review.

If we consider the 12 new media literacies taken into account by Literat (2014), we are focusing on visualization, gaming, simulation, performance, appropriation, distributed cognition, multitasking, collective intelligence, judgement, transmedia navigation, networking and negotiation; and, according to Kok & Barut (2016), we will focus on functional consumption, critical consumption, functional presumption and critical presumption.

This survey was administered during the months of March and April 2018 to a representative sample ($n = 441$) of students of the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the University of Girona ($N = 2027$), both in digital format and on paper (depending on the convenience of the recruitment), and having guaranteed voluntary participation and informed consent according to ethical principles.

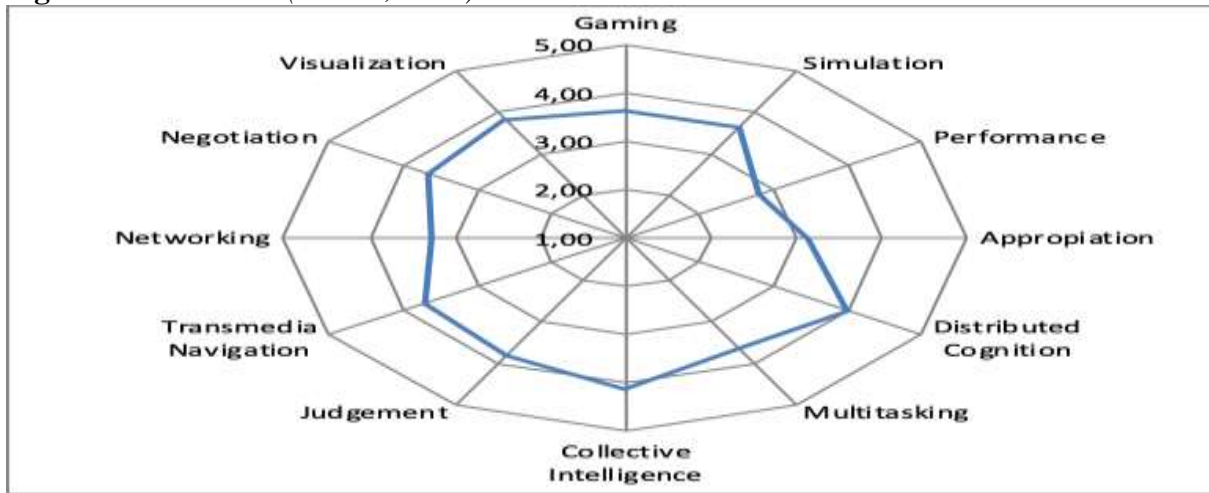
As regards the characteristics of the sample, 89.1% will be women and 10.9% will be men (according to our Faculty's population). Regarding age, 46.7% of the sample was between 18 and 20 years old; 44.2% were between 21 and 25 years old; 5% were between 26 and 30 years old; 2.5% were between 31 and 35 years old; 0.9% were between 36 and 40 years old; and 0.7% exceeds 40 years.

Finally, regarding the studies that the informants study, 27% study the Primary Education; 28.3% are studying Infant Education; 19% study Psychology; 1.8% study Pedagogy; 18.4% study Social Pedagogy; and 5.4% study Social Work.

Findings/Results

Firstly, we can show our results regarding our first instrument (Literat, 2014), what is shown in the Figure 3:

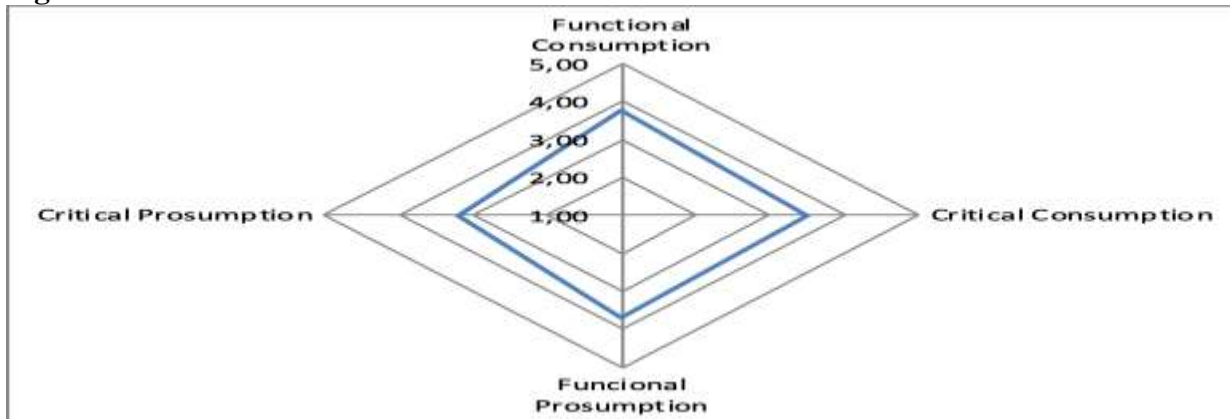
Figure 3. *NML Scale (Literat, 2014).*



As we can see, our university students have a general high level of NML. The results in the elements that have more to do with the participatory culture (collective intelligence and distributed cognition) are especially high; however, the lowest values of the profile have to do with performance and with the use of networks. In the rest of the values, we find average scores, but positive in general, since they exceed the central value of the scale.

In second place, we can attend the results coming from our second instrument (Koc & Barut, 2016), what can be seen in the Figure 4:

Figure 4. *NMLS*

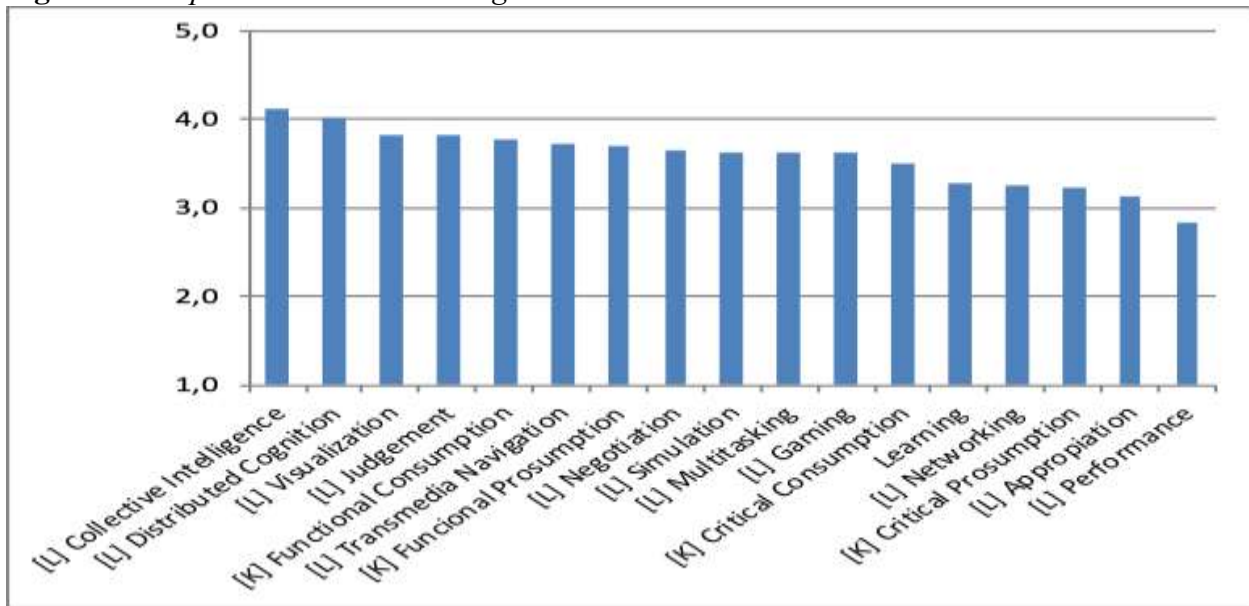


Source: Koc & Barut, 2016

In this case, we can see that our students seem especially competent in the dimensions of consumption (functional and critical) and functional prosumption. The fourth of the elements of this scale, the critical prosumption, is a little below the others. To a certain extent, this is to be expected at a scale where critical prosumption is the most complex level of the four areas. In any case, the values are also positive and higher than half the scale.

Thirdly, we can order all together and showing it at the same time that our learning category.

Figure 5. *Sample's NML and Learning NML.*



In this case, as we said, we can see all the elements of the three scales ordered from higher to lower value. It can be seen that transmedia learning is not one of the elements with the best values; and this leads us to think that, in general terms, individuals are more transmedia in their personal uses than in their uses in terms of learning.

Once here, if we explore the relation between this learning indicator and the other NML sections, we find that transmedia learning is related to all those categories, as can be seen in the Table 1.

Table 1. *Correlations between Transmedia Learning and NML elements.*

		Learning
Functional Consumption	Pearson correlation	,523^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Critical consumption	Pearson correlation	,621^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Functional Prosumption	Pearson correlation	,529^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Critical Prosumption	Pearson correlation	,680^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Gaming	Pearson correlation	,428 ^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Simulation	Pearson correlation	,422 ^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Performance	Pearson correlation	,352 ^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Appropriation	Pearson correlation	,561^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Distributed Cognition	Pearson correlation	,342 ^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Multitasking	Pearson correlation	,353 ^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Collective Intelligence	Pearson correlation	,416 ^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Judgement	Pearson correlation	,442 ^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Transmedia Navigation	Pearson correlation	,518^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Networking	Pearson correlation	,522^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Negotiation	Pearson correlation	,507^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000
Visualization	Pearson correlation	,411 ^{**}
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000

With the intention of facilitating reading, we have highlighted those categories that we consider most relevant (Pearson correlation > 0.5). As you can see, the four categories of Koc & Barut (2016) are the most productive. Those informants who have obtained higher scores in consumption (functional and critical) and prosumption (functional and critical) are the ones who seem to apply these strategies also in their learning patterns. And, if we look at the categories of the NMLS of Literat (2014), we see that some specific informant have a more transmedia learning profile, those informants are able to better appropriate the technology, to better navigate between media, and to work better in the network and negotiate in digital environments.

Another step would be to try to construct a regression model based on these eight elements that allow us to predict the transmedia learning profile of our students. In that sense, if we apply the corresponding tests, we will see that these eight elements (negotiation, functionan, appropriation, transmedia navigation, networking, functional production, critical and critical

production) the predictive model is significant (<0.05) and allows us to explain 94,007 of the 156,870 points of the set.

Discussion and Conclusions

Throughout this article we have traveled an interesting journey. We started with Jenkins' reflections on participatory culture and media convergence (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009), until we reached the concept of transmedia. Transmedia, although it is a very common term nowadays, has not been clearly defined. Indeed, although there is always a narrative that gives meaning to the sequential jump between different media, there is no single definition. And, for that reason, we can find three types of approximations. In the first place, it is a process in which learning is pursued (it is the experiences of storytelling, for example) (Alvarez, Salavati, Nussbaum, & Milrad, 2013; Pence, 2012); on the other, it is also a resource or product, in which the reader must navigate through different languages, expressed in different media (Anderson, 2014; Rhoades, 2016). Finally, both the subject who learns in this type of transmedia experiences, and the transmedia product, demand certain competence in the subject, which is called transmedia literacy or transliteracy (Alper, 2013a, 2013b).

Regarding this transliteracy concept, we also do not find a conceptual unity. Transliteracy has not been clearly defined, even though it starts with the concepts of Jenkins we have talked about. However, we find common elements, such as the change of role (from consumer to producer), the sequential change of media, critical thinking and collaboration, among others (Del Mar Grandío-Pérez, 2016; Guerrero-Pico, 2015; Miočić & Perinić, 2014; Scolari, 2016).

As we have seen, the educational implications of these two concepts are undeniable. But the analysis of both is not usually carried out from the pedagogical perspective. And this is exactly what we propose: are transmedia young people also transmedia from the point of view of formal and informal learning?

That has been the starting point of the second part of this research, in which we have used two instruments (Koc & Barut, 2016; Literat, 2014) and an addend of our own creation to analyze the transmedia profile of the university students of our Faculty. This has led us to see some remarkable conclusions, taken from our data:

- Our college students have a medium transmedia profile.
- They present elements of the participatory culture; but they are not markedly transmedia in many aspects such as group work, networking or multitasking.
- On the other hand, they are more consumers (not only functional but also critical) than producers, another of the main characteristics of the NML and the concept of transliteracy.
- Finally, they have a more discrete transmedia profile in terms of learning. However, it seems that enhancing those aspects in which they are less transmedia would allow us to help them take more advantage of the NML in terms of learning (also in formal contexts like their university studies).

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