TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING AS A NEW TECHNOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

It is impossible to imagine contemporary information society without innovations. One of the new paradigms for more effective education can be called transmedia storytelling. The term ‘transmedia storytelling’ has many definitions, ranging from telling a story across multiple platforms, taking the audience on an emotional journey, as far as to a design philosophy and a way of creative thinking. The key elements of storytelling are the plot, characters and the point of view of the narrator. The matter is that development of new information and communication technologies, which nowadays determine the process of digitalization, media convergence, the wide use of the Internet and such features of online media texts as interactivity, hypertext, non-linearity, intertextuality, and others made it possible to apply the technology of transmedia storytelling not only in journalism but in education as well.

Methods. To provide the deep exploration of the issues mentioned above in our study we attempted to use different methodological approaches, including both general scientific methods such as analysis, synthesis, generalization and special methods of the comparative analysis and categorization. Besides, the theoretical and methodological base of the research were the theories of modern education, student-centered theory, particularly. In order to know students’ attitude towards the incorporation of transmedia storytelling in teaching and learning practice, and the degree of their engagement in the learning process, we used such a research tool as a survey including open ended and closed questions. This paper describes the theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling and the ways of its incorporation into the practice of teaching and learning university students. Besides, the results obtained from the survey conducted are presented.

Results: A summary of the findings shows that transmedia storytelling as a new educational technology can be applied in various disciplines including journalism and gives an example of combining theoretical and practical knowledge. In order to find the most efficient application of transmedia storytelling in education we used so called ‘a learning-by-doing’ method demanding from students to develop the set of skills for searching, selecting, analyzing, and organizing information and creating a final product in the form of transmedia storytelling project. As the result of the study, we came to the conclusion, that the integrated approach in learning and teaching process when practical work follows getting theoretical knowledge, can be effectively used in higher education. The results of the survey confirmed that transmedia storytelling technology can be used both as a new method of teaching different subjects and a way of learning and gaining professional skills on creating by students of journalism transmedia storytelling projects in practice.

Keywords: transmedia storytelling, transmedia, media convergence, education.

1 INTRODUCTION

Development of new information and communication technologies, which nowadays determine the process of digitalization, media convergence, the wide use of the Internet, determined the transformation processes in Higher education. ‘The 21st century has brought great challenges for all fields of knowledge, especially for the field of Education’ [11]. One of the new paradigms for more effective education is transmedia storytelling.

Transmedia storytelling is a special form of information presentation, the essence of which is that the narration is revealed through using various media (verbal text, video, photos, images, pictures, infographics, etc.). Some scholars consider transmedia storytelling a new discipline [4].

Transmedia storytelling technologies are considered effective for educational purposes and are applied now in different disciplines (foreign languages study, marketing, management, literature, journalism, media studies and others) and different countries.
Today ‘science, technology and media are becoming – more manifestly, more complexly – connected’ [5].

The aim of the paper is to study and describe theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling and the ways of its incorporation into the practice of teaching and learning university students. Besides, the results obtained from the survey conducted are presented.

2 METHODOLOGY

To provide the deep exploration of the issues mentioned above in our study we attempted to use different methodological approaches, including both general scientific methods such as analysis, synthesis, generalization and special methods of the comparative analysis and categorization.

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In order to know students’ attitude towards the incorporation of transmedia storytelling in teaching and learning practice, and the degree of their engagement in the learning process, we used such a research tool as a survey including open-ended and closed questions.

3 RESULTS

3.1 The concept of ‘transmedia storytelling’

3.1.1 ‘Transmedia’ in the formation of new terms

The collocation ‘transmedia storytelling’ is composed of two words: ‘transmedia’ and ‘storytelling’. It is known, that storytelling is the most ancient form of teaching. But nowadays the new forms of storytelling based on multiple media platforms are emerging. Moreover, the new terms and concepts, appeared, such as ‘transmedia learning’, ‘transmedia pedagogy’, ‘transmedia education’, ‘transmedia literacy’, connected with the term ‘transmedia storytelling’.

Transmedia is rather a new phenomenon, which is interpreted by scholars from different viewpoints. Kevin Maloney suggests the following formula: ‘Transmedia = One story world, many stories, many forms, many channels’ [7].

Most of scholars connect the term ‘transmedia’ with the concept ‘transmedia storytelling’, speaking first of all about entertainment. Professor Henry Jenkins evolves transmedia into the concept of transmedia storytelling, defining it as ‘a process in which integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience’ [3]. The term ‘transmedia pedagogy’ is determined by using new technology and different media platforms in the process of education [9].

3.1.2 Transmedia learning as a new phenomenon

Elaine M. Raybourn considers transmedia learning a new paradigm for more effective training and education [8]. The scholar defines transmedia learning 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’ [8].

Laura Fleming defines transmedia learning as ‘the application of storytelling techniques combined with the use of multiple platforms to create an immersive learning landscape… for learning and teaching’ [1].

So, transmedia learning can be regarded as incorporation transmedia storytelling elements into training and education.

Laura Fleming formulated the concept of the Transmedia Learning World (TLW) concerning teaching and learning processes. The scholar defines the TLW in the following way: A TLW is a paradigm for learning that combines the capabilities of ubiquitous technologies, real-life experiences, and learner-focused pedagogies, making for profoundly productive and powerful learning experiences [1].
3.1.3 Transmedia storytelling: definitions and interpretations

The term ‘transmedia storytelling’ has many definitions: ‘For some commentators it’s a new phenomenon: one that’s particular to the digital age, its creation and dissemination rendered possible by the Internet, mobile technologies and social media. For other commentators, it’s a continuation of the existing mode of storytelling: the logical extension of the licensed media that long been derived from other media forms, such as comic books, videogames and novels’ [2].

According to Pamela Rutledge, ‘Transmedia storytelling is the design and distribution of a story that is coordinated across multiple media channels’ [10].

Elaine M. Raybourn calls the following transmedia storytelling elements: Internet, serious games, video, social media, graphic novels, machinima, blogs, and others [8].

Education with applying transmedia storytelling technologies is called interactive, multimedia learning. ‘As technology progresses, students will become experienced in reading and consuming multimodal texts’, the meaning of which ‘can be derived from the different modes and media combined’ [4].

3.1.4 Transmedia storytelling as a source of learning and teaching

Recognizing that ‘there is still no consensus concerning the transmedia storytelling definition’, the scholars from Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation consider the concept of transmedia storytelling ‘a propitiating source of learning’, because it is a powerful approach when it comes to using it to create knowledge, share information and experiences, develop rationalities and new knowledges [11]. Some of the scholars explain the incorporation of transmedia storytelling into the practice of teaching and learning by different semiotic resources used in the process of creation of transmedia stories. ‘Transmedia storytelling is a type of textual storytelling structure which is expanded in a way to accommodate the development of one same story in different languages (visual, verbal, and sound), and in distinct media (web, mobile devices, audio, video, image, film, hypertext, CD-ROMs, games, videogames etc.) [11]. One of the dominated of them, as many scholars claim, is an image. ‘In this ‘new media age’, the screen has replaced the book as the dominant medium of communication. This dramatic change has made image, rather than writing, the centre of communication’ [6]. Stavroula Kalogeras uses the term ‘screen education’, considering that ‘in the future, the affordance of the screen will align more closely with students’ needs’. The scholar argues, that ‘a screenplay may have pictorial superiority over a textbook because of its picture-inducing capability and refers to the phenomenon, named ‘the pictorial superiority effect, or PSE’ [4]. The scholar introduces the term ‘Transmedia Storytelling Edutainment (TmSE)’ understanding under it ‘a critical-creative pedagogy that is derived from an overarching narrative concept that uses multiple platforms, formats, and story extensions, whether they be fiction or non-fiction’ [4].

We agree completely with Stavroula Kalogeras that the first purpose of TmSE is to educate.

So, we can see, that digital technologies are of vital importance for the education. In our practice of teaching foreign master’s degree students at the mass communication department at Peoples Friendship University of Russia, we tried to apply a learning-by-doing method combining theoretical knowledge and practical skills. It allowed our students to develop the set of skills for searching, selecting, analyzing, and organizing information and embody them in creating in transmedia storytelling project.

3.1.5 Survey: Questions and results

In order to explore the attitude towards the using of transmedia storytelling technology in the education process, the survey among the students studying journalism at the philology faculty of the RUDN University was conducted in which 87 people took part. The students were to answer 10 open-ended and closed questions. The results showed that the future journalists appreciated the transmedia technology as a new method of teaching and learning in higher school. Moreover, the majority of the students (52 people) expressed the desire to apply this technology in their own professional and educational practice.

4 CONCLUSIONS

As the result of the study, we came to the conclusion that in the context of education, transmedia storytelling as a new educational technology can be applied in various disciplines including journalism and gives an example of great opportunity to combine theoretical and practical knowledge.
Implementation of transmedia storytelling in higher education based on applying digital technologies and using different media platforms make students more engaged into subjects of learning. Transmedia storytelling is a teaching and learning tool that allow not only to entertain but to educate.

The results of the survey confirmed that transmedia storytelling technology can be used both as a new method of teaching different subjects and a way of learning and gaining professional skills on creating by students of journalism transmedia storytelling projects in practice.

REFERENCES


