TRANSMEDIA JOURNALISM AND MEDIA LITERACY: YOUTH PROTAGONISM AND PARTICIPATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MISINFORMATION

EDUARDO FARIA

Master's Student in Communication Sciences at the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

eduardofaria202@gmail.com

JOSÉ GABRIEL ANDRADE

Portuguese Catholic University. Assistant Professor at the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

jgandrade@ics.uminho.pt

*Eduardo Faria, José Gabriel Andrade.*Transmedia journalism and media literacy: youth protagonism and participation in the fight against misinformation

*Abstract:*Young people play an important role in combating misinformation, especially in Brazil, where the population under 30 represents more than 42% of the population. Considering the reality established between convergence, the relationship between young people and the media demand new forms of teaching pedagogy that promote different forms of literacy, such as transmedia reading of information. In this sense, school education can be the way to awaken in young people new knowledge about the media, helping them in the processes that affect journalistic information and the fight against misinformation. This research presents some data considered relevant, extracted from the Master's research in development, in Communication Sciences at the University of Minho, in Braga, Portugal.

Keywords: Disinformation; young; transmedia narrative, journalism; media literacy

Introduction

The convergence between journalism and education is necessary in times when misinformation takes over the media. Encouraging young people in the search for quality information is not enough on the part of the school. It is necessary, above all, to

promote forms of media, digital and civic literacy that insert young people in a world that develops and establishes itself on narratives[1] and where narratives are transmediatized.

In the Information Society[2], disinformation and information form an immense hypertext in which it becomes necessary to propose discussions about the media in order to raise critical awareness around the narratives consumed by young people.

Thus, the learning process must start from education-action. In this perspective, education is not limited to teaching only programmed and static content described in books, but also uses the narratives of a dynamic and moving world as a learning method[3]. With this, communication, media, journalism, information and, above all, misinformation are not just guidelines that integrate the world outside the school walls.

Convergence operates in transmedia narratives, from journalistic information to disinformation. Therefore, it demands that school education encourage new forms of media literacy that also include the transmedia reading of information. This is relevant since, the more young people are able to converge between the media and platforms that enable contact with different forms of narratives, the more they will have the opportunity to be part of the culture of knowledge[4].

The hypothesis that motivated the research is that teaching in Brazilian public schools does not offer an education that integrates the consequences of convergence between the media, making it impossible for students to develop skills in transmedia reading of information. Making them more susceptible to the risks of misinformation and less critical to the consumption of informative narratives. The results presented correspond to some of the data collected during the master's research in Communication Sciences at the University of Minho, which is still in the process of development.

Methodology and characteristics of the sample

The research uses a mixed approach through the application of surveys in two Brazilian public schools, supported by FLICK´s (2009)[5] aspirations and BAUER & GASKELL (2002)[6]. The sample is composed of two hundred teenagers, between 15 and 19 years old, all students from two public schools in São José dos Campos, in

---

[1] See CARDOSO, Gustavo et al. Fake News in a postmodern society: contextualization, potential solutions and analyses.
[2] See CASTELLS, Manuel. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. The Power of Identity Concept. The concept of "Information Society" described in the text draws on Castells' reflections, in which, according to the author, contemporary societies are established through informational flows.
[3] See FREIRE, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. The author highlights the relevance of making use of reality and the media as a pedagogical object for learning.
[4] JENKINS, Henry. Convergence Culture. For the author, the convergence between the media has a great influence on the way in which awareness and knowledge are built, which, with the advent of the network, is carried out collectively.
[5] See FLICK, Uwe An introduction to qualitative research. The author reinforces that the convergence of methods (quantitative and qualitative) contributes to the legitimacy of the results found, avoiding reductionism regarding the use of only one research method.
[6] See BAUER, W. Martin & GASKELL, George. Qualitative research with text, image and sound: A practical manual.

the interior of São Paulo, Brazil: **Escola Estadual Professora Dirce Elias**: located in a rural neighborhood, the unit does not offer computers, wi-fi internet and computer lab for students and **Escola Estadual Ilza Irma Moeller Coppio**: located close to the central region, the school offers students seven laptops and ten desktop computers, and equipment needs to be divided into pairs. The internet network is only available on the equipment and the wi-fi network is closed to students.

Adherence of young students to media and technologies

Almost all students (98%) stated that the internet is "always or many times" present in their daily lives; 91% responded that they always use smartphones and only 7% said they rarely or never use smartphones. The survey identified that traditional information media occupy little space in the consumption habits of young people. Most students (97%) responded that they do not usually read magazines and 98% said they never or rarely use newspapers. Television proved to be resistant as the most used medium in the home of 50% of respondents[7]. In line with the traditional media, 8% answered that they always or very often listen to the radio and 72% said they never or rarely listen to radio content.

Access to the internet and to communication and information media is essential for the participation of young people in social debates. This is because access to the internet and the media contribute to the apprehension of new forms of literacy that emerge in multimedia societies as a resource for the construction of new forms of knowledge[8]. With this in mind, the survey revealed that 87% of young students from public schools evaluated have internet access at home, however 13% responded that they do not have internet and 11% indicated that they do not have a Wi-Fi connection.

Structure of schools and policy to encourage the use of technologies and media

Knowing the deficit of Brazilian public schools regarding the use of technologies, we were interested in knowing about the habits of students regarding the individual use of technologies in the school environment[9]. The survey identified that 89% of respondents claim to take some technological device to school, similar to the number of students

---

[7] For decades, television occupies a significant space as the main means of obtaining information and entertainment in Brazilian homes. This is probably due to the fact that television still contemplates socioeconomic and cultural conditions compared to other technological devices..

[8] See PERUZZO, Cicilia. Community Communication and Citizenship Education. V Communication Research Symposium.

[9] For JENKINS, Henry, in "Culture of Convergence", It is the people who have the greatest access to new media technologies who have mastered the skills necessary to fully participate in the culture of knowledge (2019, l. 772).

who take it into the classroom, 88%[10]. However, 40% claimed that school policy does not allow the use of devices within the school. Regarding teachers' motivation, 57% feel motivated to use them during classes. On the other hand, 43% said they are not motivated to use technology during classes.

Means used by young people to obtain information

Currently, disinformation reaches everyone mainly through the internet, and the convergence between digital and technological media, together with social networks, are responsible for the mass dissemination[11]. In Brazil, internet penetration is higher and can match traditional media such as television. Networked information stands out in relation to the decentralized potential for distributing information. Knowing this, the way students use to acquire information directly impacts the quantity and quality of information received. It was identified with the survey that half of young people (50%) get information through social networks. Journalism productions available on the internet are consumed by 46% of the sample and blogs are present in the daily lives of 28% of students.

Journalism literacy and journalistic information

For decades, the information media and school education were on opposite sides, each working in its own way, but the dynamics of today's society demand new proposals to promote knowledge[12]. In these times, information is a basic right, as it indicates the possibility of participation [13]. With this in mind, it was intended to verify how Brazilian public school students assimilate the profession of journalism and the role that journalism and information play in the imagination of young people. First, for the majority of students (81%) "journalism contributes to the critical development of society on various issues". Then, for 68%, „sometimes journalism contributes to the education and dissemination of culture in general." However, for 64% of young people „journalism is only to spread publicity in the media", similar to those who believe that „journalism is only to inform." The difficulty in accurately identifying the performance

---

[10] It was considered in this question that the student who takes a device to school is not always free to use it in the classroom.

[11] See FONTCUBERTA, Mar. The News Track to Understand the World. By making a deep analysis of the concept of news, information and events, the author criticizes the informational excesses present in contemporaneity. For her, not always a greater amount of information is synonymous with being well informed.

[12] See BRITES, Maria. Young people and civic cultures: Between forms of news consumption and participation.

[13] See COUNCIL OF EUROPE. Recommendation 1466 - Media education. Available from: http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/xref/xref-xml2html-en.asp?fileid=16811&lang=en

of journalism in society may be linked to the distance between school education and the information media[14].

Behavior in sharing information

The relationship between young Brazilians and misinformation goes back a long way. The 2013 Journeys[15], the last presidential elections in 2018[16] and the anti-vaccine and anti-science movement exposed with the COVID-19 pandemic[17] reinforce the relevance of thinking about the role of young people in social debates and its importance in combating misinformation. When considering the sharing behavior, students were asked if they usually share information on networks. Overall, more than half of students (59%) responded that they do not usually share information on WhatsApp. On the other hand, 42% indicated that the platform is used as a means to share news. Regarding sharing on other social networks, 63% answered that they are not in the habit of sharing information and 38% said yes, they usually share information on social networks.

Identification of information and misinformation present in the Brazilian media

In order to identify the level of literacy young people have in relation to the news circulating in the media and networks in Brazil, a test was applied with twelve headlines that had the most impact in recent years. Among the headlines, eight correspond to misinformation that appeared more frequently in Brazil in the last presidential elections. Another four are information on more recent issues, from the end of 2019.

In general, the young students had difficulties in accurately identifying the misinformation, and most of them opted for the option "I don't know how to inform". To cite two examples, the headline with the best performance, with 64% accuracy was *"1 in 4 young people are addicted to cell phones, according to a British study"[18]* However, for 7% of respondents this information was identified as misinformation.

---

[14] See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia. What is media literacy? The author states that it is necessary to think of ways to strengthen the relationship between education and the media.
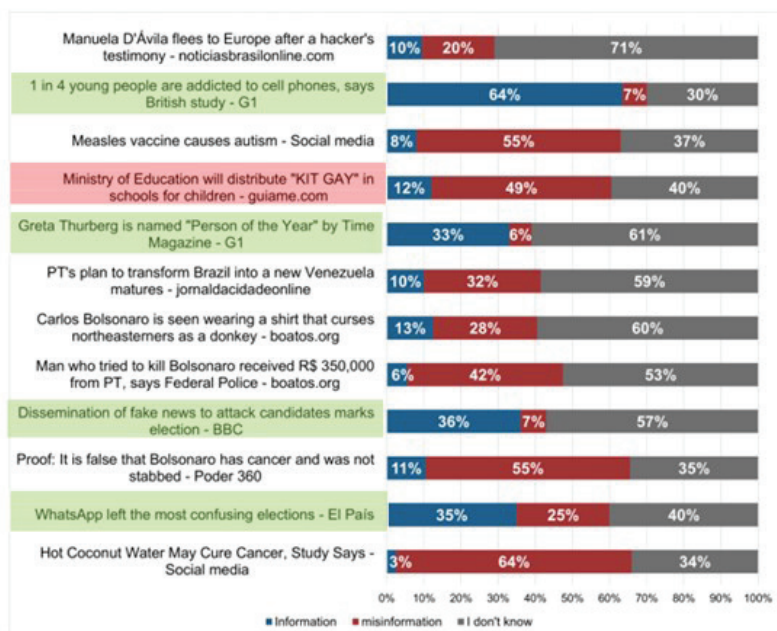
[15] The popular demonstrations that took place in June 2013 rewritten the participation of the public and young people in the social and political debate in the country. Using the networks, the protest became one of the biggest street demonstrations in the contemporary history of Brazil.

[16] Social networks, mainly WhatsApp, were responsible for the dissemination of misinformation in the presidential elections in Brazil. As the presidential campaign drew to a close, misinformation grew with the aim of targeting opposition candidate Fernando Haddad.

[17] The pandemic brought with it an overload of information and misinformation never seen before. Surfing the waves of information, and taking advantage of the unrestrained consumption of news about the pandemic, the dissemination of misinformation became part of the daily life of Brazilians.

[18] News published on the G1 journalistic website. Available from: https://g1.globo.com/ciencia-e-saude/noticia/2019/11/29/1-em-cada-4-jovens-esta-viciado-em-celular-aponta-estudo-britanico.ghtml

Graph identifying information and misinformation

	Information	misinformation	I don't know
Manuela D'Ávila flees to Europe after a hacker's testimony - noticiasbrasilonline.com	10%	20%	71%
1 in 4 young people are addicted to cell phones, says British study - G1	64%	7%	30%
Measles vaccine causes autism - Social media	8%	55%	37%
Ministry of Education will distribute "KIT GAY" in schools for children - guiame.com	12%	49%	40%
Greta Thurberg is named "Person of the Year" by Time Magazine - G1	33%	6%	61%
PT's plan to transform Brazil into a new Venezuela matures - jornaldacidadeonline	10%	32%	59%
Carlos Bolsonaro is seen wearing a shirt that curses northeasterners as a donkey - boatos.org	13%	28%	60%
Man who tried to kill Bolsonaro received R$ 350,000 from PT, says Federal Police - boatos.org	6%	42%	53%
Dissemination of fake news to attack candidates marks election - BBC	36%	7%	57%
Proof: It is false that Bolsonaro has cancer and was not stabbed - Poder 360	11%	55%	35%
WhatsApp left the most confusing elections - El País	35%	25%	40%
Hot Coconut Water May Cure Cancer, Study Says - Social media	3%	64%	34%

Source: created by the author (2020)

Regarding misinformation, the machete *"MEC* will distribute ‚KIT GAY' in schools for children stands out"*[19]. The survey shows that 12% of high school students still believe that this misinformation is actually misinformation. Although 49% of young people have identified that the headline is misinformation, 40% are unable to classify and in the sum of those who do not know how to classify the headline and those who believe it is information, the number of young people reaches half of the sample.

School responsibility in promoting new forms of literacy

The current scenario, with the domain of technological communication and information media, requires the development of new skills that can contribute to learning new ways of thinking, consuming, producing and sharing information[20]. The

---

[19] *MEC (Ministry of Education) of Brazil. This misinformation gained national repercussions in Brazil in 2018, being a watershed in the election results, benefiting the conservative discourse of radical groups. Later, the disinformation of the "KIT GAY" in schools still generates discussions and, although it has already been characterized as disinformation, the "fake news" still generates doubts.

[20] See SCOLARI, Carlos. Narrativas Transmedia. Cuando todos los medios cuentan.

apprehension of new forms of literacy emerges in multimedia societies as a resource for the construction of „new forms of knowledge"[21].

The concept of literacy emerged from the 70s onwards, based on three key elements: reading, writing and calculating competence. Mastering these three skills, considered essential for good performance in daily life, were responsible for structuring school education for decades. However, the concept is broad and transversal, as it is not just the technical domain of what is received, but the critical and reflective domain of the contents received by the media[22].

ROSA (2016)[23] makes an effort to categorize all forms of literacies and thus separates the ideals of digital literacies from information literacies. However, it considers that digital literacies are close to the meaning of information literacies. That said, knowing the multiplicities of literacies present in the universe of communication, the term media literacy, adopted in the research, comprises all forms of media literacy, based on digital, communication and information media.

According to MORA & SILVA (2019)[24], the hyperconnectivity and convergence between the media are a reality with direct impacts on the educational system. Given this scenario, the authors consider that the guidelines and educational documents that address forms of literacy for young people around the world arise from the concern brought about by digital media. For them, there needs to be an adaptation of the pedagogical processes for formal education that includes aspects of convergence.

Convergence – from school to media: civic-informational education for young people in the fight against misinformation

Digital media have been facilitating for some years the multiplication of alternative discourses and unprecedented information, materializing in a large discursive arena between the media and the public. In this movement, two major problems arise: First, the greater the exposure to the internet and the smaller the media education domain, the greater the chances of consuming and sharing misinformation. Next, the smaller the possibilities of young people to converge between the media – networks, platforms and narratives – linked to the lack of literacy, the risks in social participation increase exponentially[25].

---

[21] See LOPES, Paula. Literacy(s) and media literacy and PERUZZO, Cicilia. Community Communication and Citizenship Education. V Communication Research Symposium.

[22] Ibidem. LOPES, Paula.

[23] See ROSE, Beatrice. The transdisciplinarity of emerging literacies in the connected contemporary: a mapping of the documentary universe of media and information literacies (MIL).

[24] See MORA, Gabriela and SILVA, Natália. The new generations and the media literacy: possibilities to educate for citizenship.

[25] For ROSE, literacy "presents itself as a basic right of all citizens, as it concerns human development itself through the right to express oneself freely (2016, p. 49)"

LIVINGSTONE (2004, p. 02) considers the highest level of media literacy to be the "ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of contexts". Only from the mastery of these skills, the author considers that the full democratic participation of subjects in social debates is possible. According to CAETANO (2017)[26], the adversities inherent to the information society challenge schools and agents who work with education, in formal and non-formal spaces, to seek ways to expand the reading of the world to young people. Therefore, the idea of converging education with communication and information media is revealed to be a powerful socio-educational instrument capable of promoting the full exercise of citizenship and the participation of young people in social agendas.

Considerations

The data collected so far indicate that young students from public schools in Brazil have a low rate of behavior that prioritizes convergence between the media. Given this fact, young people may have a lower level of literacy for transmedia readings in the information and communication media. Although they make massive use of the internet, social networks and technologies, there is little commitment to the consumption of information produced by the journalism media. Because of this, it is considered that students may be more susceptible to the risks of misinformation and less able to distinguish information and misinformation.

The Brazilian schools analyzed show that the dynamics of public education do not contemplate the convergence of the media with education. This fact, coupled with the lack of computer infrastructure and access to networks – lack of computers, internet and Wi-Fi network – become an aggravating factor for young students to reflect on misinformation and on the new realities demanded by the media and through the networks.

REFERENCES

BRITES, J. Maria. Young people and civic cultures: Between forms of news consumption and participation. Covilhã: LabCom Books, 2015, 10-15. DOI: 10.13140/2.1.2141.0081

CAETANO, Lucia. Media Literacy: Practices Directed to Citizen Communication. In: Anais PENSACOM Brasil [online], 2017, available from: https://portalintercom.org.br/anais/pensacom2017/textos/17-lucia-helena-vieira-caetano.pdf

CARDOSO, Gustavo et al. Fake News in a post-truth society: contextualization, potential solutions and analysis. Lisbon: Obercom Report, 2018, 15-29.

FREIRE, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Paz e Terra. Rio de Janeiro, 1987/1970, 50-70.

FONTCUBERTA, Mar. The News Track to Understand the World. Alfragide: Casa das Letras/Oficina do Livro, 1999, 20-45

---

[26] See CAETANO, Lucia. Media Literacy: Practices Aimed at Citizen Communication.

HUDEC. Vladimir. What is journalism? Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1980, 40-50.

JENKINS, Henry. Convergence Culture. São Paulo: Aleph, 2019.

LIVINGSTONE, Sonia. What is media literacy? Intermedia, 32 (3). 2004, 18-20.

LOPES, Paula. Literacy(s) and media literacy. CIES e-Working Papers, CIES-IUL, 2011, nº 110, 5-20.

MORA, Gabriela G. and SILVA, Natália T.O. The new generations and the media literacy: possibilities to educate for citizenship. In: Brazilian Journal of Development [online]. June 2019, v. 5, no. 6, p. 7053-7071. DOI:10.34117/bjdv5n6-192.

PERUZZO, Cicilia M, K. Community Communication and Education for Citizenship. Goiânia: V Communication Research Symposium, 1999, 205-228.

ROSA, Beatrice, B. The transdisciplinarity of emerging literacies in the connected contemporary: a mapping of the documentary universe of media and information literacies (MIL). University of São Paulo: Doctoral Thesis in Communication Sciences, 2016, 24-50.

SCOLARI, Carlos. Transmedia Narratives. Cuando all cuentan averages. Barcelona: Deusto, 2013, 10-60.