A Transmedia Turn in Educational Strategies: Storytelling in Teaching Literature to School Students

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Abstract   The article presents theoretical and methodological approaches to using modern media technology in teaching humanities at school. Mediatization of a broad range of cultural practices has altered the mechanisms of cultural memory formation, so school students' online communication skills should become the foundation of literary education to achieve a balance between tradition and modernization.

Transmedia educational strategies proposed in the article allow implementing the principles of humanistic education in teaching humanities subjects. Narration, in its turn — as a method associated with the Russian tradition of teaching literary arts — allows applying the findings of modern semiotic, narratological, and media studies to promote the development of pedagogical practices. In narrative-based learning, the literary text becomes the core of a transmedia project, in which the teacher and students act as directors using various media formats to construct their own narratives on the basis of the writer's script. Transmedia adaptation of literary classics helps students reconceptualize characters' ambitions and values, develop creative and critical thinking skills, and get a better understanding of historical and everyday contexts. Cross-platform engagement invokes multiple layers of meaning and artistry, immersing all project participants — students as well as teachers — into a common space of communication, aesthetic experience, and mutual learning, if necessary.

Examples illustrating the strategy proposed include educational projects developed with our immediate participation, from our own literature textbook to multimedia projects, in particular the one based on Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov* for the Live Pages project and the one based on Leo Tolstoy's works as part of the Digital Tolstoy initiative.

Humanities subjects, literary studies in the first place, seek to achieve divergent goals in modern school education: teach a certain indispensable body of knowledge while at the same time instilling a love of reading, and evince the idea of cultural tradition while at the same time engaging students in modern reading practices.

Reading just anything out of interest alone means sacrificing cultural memory; even the most audacious curriculum designers only suggest changing the proportions by reducing the share of classic literary works and increasing that of modern literature.[1] At the same time, it is hard to develop a love for literature by studying the classic books, which were mostly written for adults and require life experience and a good sense of aesthetic distance. Meanwhile, any attempts to redistribute the knowledge component in a more balanced manner by increasing curriculum differentiation face resistance from some educational leaders, teachers, and parents.[2] They argue that cultural memory requires effort: if students are not acquainted with a certain body of literature — even if they cannot understand the plots and problems raised — they will never come back to it in adult life.

However, at least part of the problem resides in something else, notably in that cultural memory is perceived by its bearers as something predetermined, fixed, and rigid. Such an attitude has been quite a tradition. One of the pioneers of culture memory studies describes the past as "convolving into symbolic figures" [Assmann 2004:54]. At a certain moment, this past is canonized, "stopping the flow of the tradition" and freezing the memories [Ibid:100]. The metaphor of *transmitting* the idea of cultural tradition also implies that the idea is solid, complete, and "recorded". Another metaphor that is even more accurate in this sense is that of the literary "canon" [Bloom 2017; Vdovin, Leibov 2013; Sukhikh 2016; Pavlovets 2016], which is formed by the entire corpus of school classics and must be passed on like a baton from one generation to another.[3]

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[1] See the debate over the Literature Model Curriculum for Grades 10–11, in particular: Asonova E., Pavlovets M. (2016) Primernaya programma po literature. Dorozhnaya karta peremen [Literature Model Curriculum: A Roadmap for Change]. *Uchitelskaya Gazeta / Teacher's Newspaper*, March 2. http://www.ug.ru/article/908

[2] Such resistance was encountered by an attempt to distribute the whole corpus of texts among grades and reduce drastically the number of modern books in the new (third) version of the Federal State Education Standard (the adoption of which was eventually postponed), the Federal Institute of Pedagogical Measurements' project for measuring subject-specific learning outcomes by grades, and other initiatives.

[3] The debate on this topic embraces the whole spectrum of opinions from extreme left to extreme right, from Ivan Solonevich (Solonevich I. (1991) *Narodnaya monarkhiya* [People's Monarchy], Moscow: Feniks. Reprinted from: Solonevich I. (1973) Narodnaya monarkhiya [People's Monarchy], Buenos Aires: Nasha Strana) to Elif Batuman (Batuman E. (2018) *Besy. Priklyucheniya russkoy literatury i lyudey, kotorye ee chitayut* [The Possessed: Adventures with Russian Books and the People Who Read Them], Moscow: AST).

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Meanwhile, in our view, cultural memory these days is constantly transforming. Transmission is only possible in the form of live broadcast, where any scenario can go wrong and any small contingency will alter the system—this is how the Sochi Olympic ring fail has become a live broadcast meme.

The cultural tradition is constantly enriched with new cultural values, some of which arise "from nowhere", out of the blue, but become crucial factors of development over time. At the same time, it is affected by people's changing attitudes towards values of the past. Socially prevalent interpretations of familiar, "eternal" images, plots, and meanings are interrelated with the whole range of cultural practices, from politics and economics to new technologies and new daily habits. To pretend that this is not so means to set oneself up to inadequate decisions and the romantic yet archaic self-deceptive belief that nothing changes—so we can keep using the old methods and formats of schooling. This results in rejection and misunderstanding on the part of students, making it more and more challenging for them to understand the past.

Paradoxically, the main gravediggers of the school literary canon are those who support the rigid model where it is preserved and transmitted endlessly exactly as it is. By failing to consider the curvature of historical space and the effect of unstoppable transformation, they repeat the mistake of pre-revolutionary teachers of the Law of God, which was reduced to a catechism; as we know, the conflict between the objective at hand (transmission of a boring rigid set of doctrinal dogmas) and the mission (initiation in the deep and mysterious world of faith as such) was eventually resolved in favor of dogmatic teaching. The outcome of this experiment is well-known: dry rote learning for exams and a massive exodus from the church immediately after the revolution. There are, indeed, only two ways out of dogmatic teaching that has lost touch with the changing reality: sabotage or rebellion. Sabotage works as long as there are instruments of coercion—but as soon as they disappear, a change of social formation occurs through rebellion and revolution.

Problem Statement

We proceed from the assumption that, rather than sacrificing one of the two goals of teaching literature at school, a more complex model based on the presumption of reality should be constructed. The reality is that teachers *always*—regardless of whether curriculum differentiation is maintained or reduced or whether material is distributed among grades in compliance with national instructions and regulations or this right is retained by the teacher and textbook author—face the dilemma of "*ex post* modernization". They either sacrifice modern practices[4] and thus repel students from their subject [Borusyak 2018;

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[4] Not to be confused with modern content; modern teaching practices can be ap-

2019], including the canon that they transmit, or become mediators between the participants in the cultural process, "old" (authors and experts who have become established figures in the public sphere) and "new" (schoolchildren who are only entering the public scene, even if their role is reduced to speaking in the classroom so far). The primary focus of this study is on the school subject of literature, but the above is likely to be true for the entire school curriculum. If teaching humanities subjects is approached from this perspective, then teachers as mediators should take into consideration a few distinctive features of modern culture that have a significant impact on the teaching process and on how school students perceive information.

Challenges of Modern Culture: The Scientific Premise

The increasing mediatization of culture is becoming a key factor of change. This refers not only to the digitization of cultural heritage. Indeed, facilitation of access to works of art, literature in particular, is extremely important. What is of no less importance, however, is that digitized cultural heritage goes online and becomes part of the "culture of flow" [Flichy 1991; Groys 2018]. As a result, both teacher and student find themselves in front of a giant "database" [Manovich 2018:270], which inevitably equalizes all the artifacts. On the Web, Leo Tolstoy's works can coexist on a virtually equal footing with contemporary literary fiction, such as video game novelizations — recognized by niche communities (and sometimes winning relevant literary awards) as well as blatantly amateurish or even illiterate.

In part, it has always been this way: in the late Soviet Union, a school student would read the conventional Sergei Yesenin alongside the unconventional Eduard Asadov, just as today's poetry lover can read Akh Astakhova, the most popular poetess on the Web, alongside not only Sola Monova, another star of Runet poetry, but also Anna Akhmatova herself. However, today's situation is essentially different in that the flow of "the unconventional" has grown so much that quantity has turned into quality and we have no effective ranking instruments left. In the Soviet era, propaganda and suggestion techniques were used, and a hierarchical view of the world was maintained. Today, we are dealing with an endless stream, denial of access to which would be technically impossible and ideologically wrong.

What is to be done? The answer to this classic question from the Soviet literary canon is not as simple as it seems to the supporters of rigidly top-down school education. Referring to Vissarion Belinsky's articles on the development of literary taste will not be enough, at least because Belinsky is not perceived as an unassailable authority by the new generations of readers. In this situation, it is equally useless and dangerous both to accept the unconditional refusal from aesthet-

plied to classics, just as dogmatic teaching practices can be applied to contemporary literature.

ic ranking and to bury one's head in the sand, pretending that nothing is going on.

Furthermore, not only does the Internet "flow" equalize works of art aesthetically, but it also eliminates any chronological boundaries. Oeuvres of the past and present are "temporally equalized", i. e. they exist in the human mind simultaneously. They live now and always, and they have little to do with the cultural contexts of their era. Homer may easily find himself competing against online fiction for the reader's attention. Furthermore, there is a phenomenon of *simulated cultural memory*, constructed by search engine settings that can be manipulated by search engine optimization (SEO) experts.

All of this might look awful to a bearer of a high cultural tradition, but this context should be taken into consideration — not accepted by putting oneself at the mercy of the "new logic", but *taken into consideration* — in order to ensure reasonable decision-making in education. However, today's school mostly prefers to ignore this context, being convinced that it retains the expert right to select and label literary works as "worthy" and "unworthy" of reading and studying [Bourdieu 2000], but also that the results of such selection and labelling will be accepted by students automatically as persuasive and even inherently sacrosanct. However, schoolchildren are acutely aware of the discrepancy between their aesthetic experiences and needs and the works and interpretations offered by the school [Asonova, Borusyak, Romanicheva 2020:169–170]. They are used to receiving information in small portions, with an essential audiovisual component. A large novel "locked" in a cover needs special ways of presentation: students should be provided with a climate that will boost their motivation to read it [Romanicheva 2020]. There is often a wide gap between the values and associated behavioral patterns of modern school students and those of protagonists from the school literature curriculum (modern readers with gaming experience tend to identify themselves much more with the protagonist than with the author). In this situation, teacher as mediator has to make much more effort and use advanced teaching techniques to adapt cultural heritage objects to the new cultural landscape and make them part of the next generation's cultural memory.

Another factor shaping the modern practices of cultural memory formation is the uneasy relationship of modern society with cultural hierarchy, artistic taste, and expert authority [Shapinskaya, Kagarlitskaya 2003]. Back in the earlier days, the teaching profession automatically placed teachers at a fairly high level in cultural hierarchy, obliging them to transmit the established ideas about the aesthetic value and at the same time allowing them to make value judgments about new cultural phenomena and readers' opinions. Today, the obligations remain — but the rights have been restricted dramatically. That is, they do exist formally, but they are not recognized "automatically" by a significant proportion of students and their parents. An example to illustrate this is the case of the classic big novels: we all agree that they

need to be read, but this need has to be proven to students to engage them, every time.

This situation is typical not only of schools but also of most official cultural institutions such as libraries, museums, and mass media. All of them, being part of the public sphere, find themselves on the boundary between the co-existing formal and informal zones [Novikova 2020]. For users switching randomly between the two, the opinion of an art critic has no more weight than that of a blogger, and the expertise of a museum curator with a history degree has no more value than amateurs' guesswork. There are opinion leaders in the informal zones of the public sphere whose expert judgments have a higher status. The more actively the formal public sphere refuses to recognize the informal one, the more likely the attitudes transmitted by such opinion leaders are to take root in personal and, in the long term, cultural memory. Unwillingness to discuss those attitudes and opinions with students and to engage in a dialogue with the informal reduces students' chances of meeting the tradition, not just modernity.

It can be said even today that the informal part of the public sphere (this role was played, for example, by rock culture, comics, and video games in the 20th century) has formed its own cultural memory, which cannot be evaluated only as subcultural [Fiske 1987; Jenkins 2019]. Its penetration into popular culture, and through it into the creative canon means that today it largely determines the cultural memory of the globalized world, coexisting with local cultural memories of different regions [Nora 1999].

Transmediality as a Learning Strategy

The growing level of schoolchildren's media literacy, manifested in their ability to search for necessary information on the Internet, promptly check the information offered by the teacher, and master new technologies and platforms even more promptly can also be considered a challenge for the modern education system. This is not only about plagiarism or the easiness of finding answers to teacher's questions online, although the problem does exist (it was exposed most dramatically in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic), or the fact that students can always find information on the Web that differs from the teacher's point of view and casts doubt on his/her competence, although it is a major challenge of modern culture—but also about understanding that we have long entered the age of transmedia, which shapes specific patterns of thinking and perception, imposing specific obligations on all participants in the process.

According to Professor Henry Jenkins, "a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" [Jenkins 2019:153]. Recent decades have seen a growing popularity of transmedia storytelling, the technique of telling a single complex story across multiple platforms and formats, e.g. by releasing a book, a movie, and a video game al-

most simultaneously. Meanwhile, the narrative is not reproduced literally across platforms: it evolves, allowing the audience to learn more about the transmedia "universe" such as Star Wars. To make it easier and more fun for the audience to dig into all the details of the narrative, storytellers combine different genres and use a wide range of techniques for emotional impact. Transmediality implies readiness of the audience for game modes of communication. Otherwise speaking, narrators provide their audience with diverse and personalized content adapted to different platforms and types of perception, create a high-quality multi-channel space for interaction, provide integrative links among different versions of the narrative, and update the information on a regular basis. Furthermore, they expect that the audience will not just consume passively the texts and audiovisual materials but will actively engage with those, communicate with one another and the storyteller [Ibid:153], and be willing to become co-creators.

As a result of the perceiver's participation and involvement in rethinking the characters' ambitions and values, a semantically and artistically "multilayer text" is formed, allowing all participants to be immersed in a common space of communication, aesthetics and, if necessary, mutual learning. According to Carlos Alberto Scolari, who analyzed transmedia storytelling from the perspectives of semiotics and narratology, a person needs not only to be able to read texts and interpret images but also to have a wide and diverse range of online communication skills to perceive transmedia narratives [Scolari 2009].

Transmediality, in its new technological incarnation, brings us back to the key principle of teaching literature in secondary school that was once formulated by Mariya Rybnikova [1929]: "From a little author to a big reader". A number of Soviet and later Russian teachers regarded regular creative tasks as a way out of the insoluble contradiction between transmission of the "canon" and involvement in reading, which was acknowledged at the beginning of this article.[5] By engaging school students in the process of creation and assigning them the role of "little authors", not only will we make it easier for them to understand the classic heritage and encourage their personality development, but we will also turn external into internal, thereby providing them with the opportunity to literally *internalize* classic literary works. This is exactly what can be achieved by means of transmedia storytelling using digital technology. However, technology remains only an instrumen-

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[5] See the following guidance papers: Melik-Pashaev A., Novlyanskaya Z. Adaskina A., Nikitina A., Chubuk N. (2010) *Khudozhestvennaya odarennost' i ee razvitie v shkol'nye gody. Metodicheskoe posobie* [Artistic Giftedness and Its Development During the School Years: Teaching Guide], available at: https://www.pirao.ru/upload/iblock/9b0/hudozhestvennaya_odarennost.pdf; Troitskaya T., Petukhova O. (2012–2020) *Literaturnoe chtenie. (Uchebnik 1–4-go klassa)* [Literary Reading (Textbook for Grades 1–4)], Moscow: Moscow Center for Continuous Mathematical Education, Institute of New Technologies, available at: https://www.int-edu.ru/content/deti-chitateli-umk-po-literaturnomu-chteniyu-1–4; and others.

tal prerequisite, while the goal is to engage students in the narrative and promote their literary thinking.

Therefore, taking cue from Scolari, we consider it important to invest a lot of effort in developing transmedia literacy skills in modern school teachers and students. International research has identified media platforms that students from around the world use actively in their learning process, both for education and self-education purposes [Universitat Pompeu Fabra 2020]. However, reliance on these — as well as any other — findings should not be taken as a guarantee of success. Technologies and user practices are changing all the time. What is popular among today's adolescents will be perceived as obsolete by the youngsters of tomorrow. Teachers' unawareness or rejection of currently popular platforms and communication practices impairs mutual understanding between teachers and students and is sometimes perceived by the latter as disrespect for contemporary culture, with which they associate themselves. When teachers use exclusively platforms that they are used to, it is sometimes interpreted as orientation towards "friend or foe" modes of interaction.

Mastery of a wide range of transmedia literacy skills by teachers and students — audiovisual (including aural), digital etiquette, participatory competencies (including gamification), digital technology (in particular cross-platform capabilities), narrative (knowledge of popular culture narratives that are produced as films, TV series, video games, etc. as well as iconic characters and currently developing conflicts), etc. — can significantly facilitate the process of communication as such (both face-to-face and distance, synchronous and asynchronous), material internalization, and the formation of a cultural memory shared by different generations.

Today, the principles of transmedia storytelling are used in a variety of industries: politics, marketing, psychology, arts, etc. [Freeman, Gambarato 2019]. They have been used in education, too [Tarcia 2019]. However, recent Russian studies assessing teachers' readiness to effectively use new platforms and media technology opportunities in distance learning showed that, although Russian teachers exhibit a fairly high level of digital literacy, their skills and techniques are pretty straightforward. Normally, they prefer using learning platforms with pre-made content [Laboratory for Media Communications in Education of the Higher School of Economics 2020], failing to utilize the entire range of media and formats available to modern students and to promote the entire set of modern transmedia literacy skills listed above. Moreover, they are often strongly recommended to do so by school administrators. That is to say, the emergency transition to distance learning did not become the next step on the school's way towards a "participatory culture" [Jenkins 2019:29], where users are invited to contribute to the production and distribution of new content. In case of the learning process, one can also speak of new knowledge, using the term of Pierre Lévy, who understood approximately the same by his "knowledge cul-

ture" [Lévy:237] as Jenkins meant by his "participatory culture". According to Lévy, the knowledge that participants acquire as a result of interactions within self-organized groups of individuals sharing a common goal forms the so-called collective intelligence, which is crucial for the development of collective and cultural memory.

Narrative Method in Teaching Literature

So, the balance of tradition and modernization can be achieved or at least essentially facilitated by using transmedia learning strategies. Such a solution is equally opposite to "preservation" and "destruction" and is equally far from idealizing the current state of culture and from ignoring it. It allows working with cultural memory not as a solidified object but as an ever-changing subject by using digital skills to expand the experience of cultural inheritance. When approached properly, it does not divide generations but brings them together.

Above, we analyzed the transmedia storytelling strategy and the set of new digital skills and cultural practices required to interpret transmedia stories. In this section, we will focus on narrative literacy as one of the most important components of transmedia literacy in literary studies.

Learning to use a variety of platforms alone is not a response to the challenges of modernity and modern education. Technology helps those who understand clearly how to use the new opportunities to solve new problems or old problems in new contexts. In this case, since the subject of this study is literature education, we will take cue from Scolari and go by the concept of narrative, i.e. stories about people and life situations in which they find themselves.

To make it easier to understand the proposed transmedia learning strategy, let us define its place among other teaching approaches. We consider the transmedia learning strategy to be a variation of constructivism. The latter is quite popular in both traditional education and e-learning and serves as a building block in activity and active learning theories [Mayes, de Freitas 2005; Andrews 2011; Pange, Pange 2011].

The narrative method as part of the transmedia learning strategy is regarded here as a tool that can help modern school students bridge the gap between literary classics and modern life with its problems.

Narratives and archetypal plots have already been used in teaching for quite a while. They allow the reader to see in literary works the eternal problems that have worried people across eras and the different motivations of characters in the face of similar dilemmas. For instance, the narrative of travel — both as a literary genre and as a metaphor of life journey — became a fundamental principle of selecting texts and reading assignments for the 7th-grade literature textbook edited by one of the authors of this article.[6] Inside the book, the *Odys-*

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[6] Arhangelsky A., Smirnova T. (2020) *Literatura: 7 kl. V 2 ch. Uchebnik* [Literature: 7th Grade Textbook, in Two Volumes], Moscow: Drofa.

sey is rhymed with *Christmas Eve* by Nikolai Gogol, *Gulliver's Travels*, Afanasy Nikitin, *The Hobbit, or There and Back* by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, and *Homesickness* by Marina Tsvetaeva.

Searching for analogies and associations is possible not only on the basis of genre or plot similarities. For example, when developing creative assignments based on Ivan Goncharov's novel *Oblomov* for the Live Pages project[7] and preparing video lectures,[8] teachers were advised to rely on a wide range of cultural and historical connections in their conversations with students. Comparison of *Oblomov* characters with those of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, old-world landowners, and ancient mythological figures allows emphasizing their archetypal and timeless nature.

The transmedia learning strategy uses the same principle by which very different works complement and continue one another, but it also proceeds from the principles of co-participation and joint digital creative efforts of students and teachers. We believe that the use of transmedia storytelling in teaching the humanities allows implementing the principles of humanistic education, which are gaining even more relevance in the 21st century [Adamsky et al. 2015].

Not only does the narrative method, which underlies creative tasks, allow offering students a set of "canonical stories" from fictional biographies, but it also turns learning assignments into a "laboratory of life" described by the authors of the Humanistic Education Manifesto [Adamsky et al. 2015].

Reproduced from century to century, from one literary work to another, dramatic collisions and their changing interpretations and perceptions teach the reader to see the past as well as the uncertainty typical of modern societies not as a threat, but as a driver of curiosity. By allowing students to choose media platforms that they find convenient or suitable for their specific research or creative inquiry needs, the transmedia learning strategy encourages their self-determination and makes it possible for the teacher or tutor to actualize the idea of individual learning trajectories.

To illustrate, let us consider the assignment for Goncharov's *Oblomov*, where students are asked to find present-day equivalents of outdated cultural practices described in the novel. It may be not only mechanical replacement of such practices, e. g. Olga Ilyinskaya's traditional album vs. a VKontakte profile, but also various manifestations of the important cultural need of an individual to express their feelings (often the same across different eras) and their inner world through

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[7] A joint initiative of Rosuchebnik (Russian Textbook) Corporation, Live Pages Project, and Samsung Electronics: https://www.samsung.com/ru/livepages/

[8] Alexander Arkhangelsky. *Live Pages: The Novel 'Oblomov' in Literature Textbooks*. Five lectures: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPCZa4DrmImjchnf-GY8oSBzIyN-mdw9h1&fbclid=IwAR0p-7lraYZZ2a6slEBQLCWEW9JqnJREtUWovV_cjMK3n8U9oA7zzBdurXw&app=desktop

their own or someone else's artwork: a set of texts (poems), images (paintings or photos), musical works, etc.

Reflecting on a topic, students can create their own "albums" on open media platforms, capturing the sentiment of a particular era or the mood of a certain character.[9] The teacher, when discussing such albums with the class, can draw students' attention to how different writers use album descriptions to give the reader clues about characters' personality and ulterior motives. Hopefully, the teacher will be able to engage students in the interpretation of creative devices used by the writer — or artist/director, in case not only the text but also its illustrations or film adaptations are discussed. This way, a creative task becomes sort of an essay on the topic, a digital continuation of the narrative, the discussion of which began in video lectures and has been sustained by the teacher.

Another way of using the narrative method in teaching is immersion in a literary work as in the "universe" of a TV series or video game. Of course, a classic novel by itself does not offer opportunities for interaction. However, it can be perceived as the core of a transmedia narrative, where the teacher and students play the role of directors, filming certain parts of the novel with the use of various storytelling formats such as Instagram stories, Screenlife,[10] etc.

We used this approach in working with Higher School of Economics Master's degree students, which resulted in the Students to Tolstoy project.[11] In this case, studying the literary work in the way that it is required in school was not our objective. Yet, we certainly expected this project to become a tool for the formation of cultural memory in students and other young visitors of the website. Technological platforms gave students the opportunity to "comment" on *War and Peace*, *Resurrection*, and *Sevastopol Sketches* using interactive maps, a recipe e-book, an audio guide, and other means. All of these multimedia tools are easy to use and accessible to schoolchildren. Thanks to them, students can "follow the trail" of characters, internalize their thoughts and emotions better by overcoming the cultural gap, and approach the writer's complex philosophical ideas through such internalized experiences. In this regard, tasks that could be offered to Master's degree students and schoolchildren differ only in the degree of com-

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[9] See, for example, "Onegin's Albums" on Instagram, created by a student of Poliforum, Yekaterinburg Lyceum no. 180 (teacher Alexander Moiseev), with the use of the already existing "profiles" of Olga and Tatyana: https://www.instagram.com/evgeniy.onegin.official/?igshid=ohuss81grjb4&fbclid=IwAR30GPm-HU18TV78S5xqVP2tEA4O299iPBKjBh5A__eEPHAoLunPEh254lAs

[10] Videos or movies in which everything the viewer sees happens on the computer, tablet, or smartphone screen.

[11] The Students to Tolstoy project was created by HSE Master's Degree students in Multimedia Journalism as part of the Digital Tolstoy Initiative. Project managers: Alexander Arkhangelsky, Fyokla Tolstaya. http://tolstoy.ru/projects/students/

plexity and the popularity of specific formats in a certain age group. By asking students to create and deliver a virtual museum story (museum storytelling) around a classic or local author, teachers engage them and enhance their motivation for reading.

Naturally, to engage in such gamelike transmedia interactions with a literary text, both the teacher and students must be able, according to Scolari [Scolari 2009], to interpret discourses and use narrative devices across different media platforms. This is exactly what the University of Tartu's Department of Semiotics researchers are guided by in their teaching methods [Ojamaa et al. 2019; Milyakina 2018] within the framework of similar approaches.[12]

Of course, transmedia adaptations of a novel will not be equivalent to the novel itself, and will hardly even have the same cultural value as a good film adaptation — the practice that has already been used in teaching. Yet, they help school students focus on the book and think about the characters' behavior with less detachment, imagining them as storytellers on some media platform. A story based on a literary work and translated into the language of modern media may increase the level of student involvement and immersion in the problems raised in the book.

And again, this is not self-sufficient progressivism but development of the tradition of creative tasks and their translation into the language of modern practices. Fanfiction (fictional writing created by fans based on existing iconic works of fiction) is no worse than conventional school theater at drawing students into the literary and historical materials and feeding their willingness and motivation to dig into literary scholars' works so as to enrich their stories with geographical and lifestyle details that were not disclosed by the original writer, whose target audience was his/her contemporaries. Most importantly, the outcome is exactly "from a little author to a big reader". School students are invited to enter the world of literature via the familiar doors of multimedia, visualization, audio culture, gamification, and fandoms, but they are led towards the most essential: the text and the narrative.

Results and Conclusions

Of course, a one-time use of such transmedia adaptations in teaching can be perceived by students as entertainment. However, the larger and the more diverse the array of narratives and forms that students come up with, the stronger those narratives will connect with one another into a single transmedia story, the more opportunities for interaction students will have, and the deeper they will be able to immerse

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[12] Online course 'Literature on the Screen: Three Lessons about the Amazing Transformation of Andrus Kivirähk's Book *Old Barny aka November* into Rainer Sarnet's Movie *November*. Theory, Games, and Assignments: http://november.haridusekraanil.ee/?fbclid=IwAR3vKgJGi7Il1Za9aqSXRIXkwRbxJQCsOGaDnJeC-adzKw3SYJyR3zGs5vno

into the universe of a large and complex literary work (such as *War and Peace*) or that of a specific writer, in which a series of works make up a single narrative (such as Ivan Turgenev's novels).

The narrative method and transmedia learning strategy allow school students not only to make use of the cultural and technological skills that they are currently especially good at, but also to learn new skills and competencies from one another within their project teams as well as to teach those to their teachers, which will also have a positive impact on the educational process.

The transmedia learning strategy will make it possible to organize work with students of different levels by allowing everyone to do their individual jobs within a common assignment and taking into consideration students' personal characteristics, i. e. not slowing down the fast and active learners and not speeding up the slow ones.

Of course, the constructivist approach that this study investigates has its peculiarities, in particular labor-intensive instructional design and challenges in assessment. In case of using transmedia storytelling, however, these problems are partly mitigated by the fact that students create most of the learning content themselves. This content remains on multimedia platforms, allowing teachers to develop the project further with the next cohort of students as well as to involve high school students in teaching elementary school pupils, which provides mutual benefits and an opportunity to create a large-scale project accessible to external users, aimed at not only education but also literature popularization. In this case, the teacher switches between the roles of mediator and tutor/facilitator, which requires adopting a curator perspective on contemporary culture [Bhaskar 2017].

Publicness and continuity of such projects create additional motivation for students, becoming an important part of their digital portfolio and allowing them to enter the public sphere and connect with adult researchers and producers of online educational projects even before they graduate.

To summarize, the ideas of this study make it possible to use digital media theory in educational sciences without focusing too much on hardware, software, and access to information but rather using media theory and practices in instructional design.

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