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Re-reading traditional fairy tales: a transmedia approach to literary education in Higher Education

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Abstract

Traditional fairy tales is an essential component of the cultural and collective imagination because it plays a crucial role in understanding the origins of many traditions. Its incorporation in bachelor's degrees in Education is fundamental in promoting a literary education that reveals the principles of human behaviour, universal issues and the referents that shape later literature. In order to make this approach meaningful, it is proposed to integrate current technological trends into the academic sphere through audiovisual resources that revive and reinterpret traditional stories. From a qualitative and descriptive approach, we analyse the didactic potential of the video game as a transmedia resource applicable to literary education. The study combines Genette's (1989) transtextual perspective with Paz-Gago's (2004) semiotic-textual method to examine the video game *The Wolf Among Us* in relation to its classic hypotexts. Likewise, didactic guidelines are presented that integrate reading and gaming experience, and encourage reading among members of Generation Z. Based on this approach, the analysis reveals the contemporary re-reading and re-signification of archetypes and symbols from classic tales, as well as the possibility of generating critical and comparative readings between the text and the video game.

Keywords: Fairy tales; children's literature; video games; literary education; interdisciplinary approach; Higher Education.

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La relectura de la cuentística tradicional: un enfoque transmedia para la educación literaria en la Educación Superior

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Resumen

La cuentística tradicional constituye un componente esencial en el imaginario cultural y colectivo porque desempeña un papel crucial en la comprensión de los orígenes de muchas tradiciones. Su incorporación en los grados en Educación resulta fundamental para promover una educación literaria que revele los principios de la conducta humana, las problemáticas universales y los referentes que configuran la literatura posterior. Con el propósito de que esta aproximación sea significativa, se propone integrar en el ámbito académico las vertientes tecnológicas actuales, mediante recursos audiovisuales que recuperan y reinterpretan los relatos tradicionales. Desde un enfoque cualitativo y descriptivo, se analiza el potencial didáctico del videojuego como recurso transmedia aplicable a la educación literaria. El estudio combina la perspectiva transtextual de Genette (1989) con el método semiótico-textual de Paz-Gago (2004) para examinar el videojuego *The wolf among us* en relación con sus hipotextos clásicos. Asimismo, se presentan unas orientaciones didácticas que integran lectura y experiencia de juego, y fomentan la motivación lectora del alumnado de la generación *centennial*. A partir de este enfoque, el análisis revela la relectura y resignificación contemporáneas de arquetipos y símbolos de los cuentos clásicos, así como la posibilidad de generar lecturas críticas y comparativas entre texto y videojuego.

Palabras clave: Cuentos tradicionales; literatura infantil; educación literaria; videojuegos; Educación Superior.

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INTRODUCTION

Several studies on the reading habits of university students following the introduction of the European Higher Education Area (García-Delgado, 2011; Yubero & Larrañaga, 2015; Pérez-Parejo et al., 2018; Escalante-Varona et al., 2023) agree that this group does not have stable reading habits. Instead, rather than responding to personal motivation, reading tends to be driven by teachers' demands, a key conclusion in all of this research as Andrade-González and Utria-Machado (2021) and Santos-Díaz et al. (2021) point out, this lack of motivation to read leads to difficulties in reading comprehension and consequently reduced enjoyment of literary texts.

Given this situation, it is necessary to explore new strategies to stimulate reading literacy, adapted to the textual and visual needs of Generation Z (González-Battle, 2013), and to stimulate their taste for literature. To achieve this, digital audiovisual resources, which students use in their leisure time, can be a valuable tool for connecting with their interests, and enhancing their motivation to read (Zúñiga-Lacruz, 2024).

Therefore, this paper seeks to explore the didactic reading function of transmedia media that recycle traditional fairy tales and are found in the world of video games, with the aim of providing a literary education adapted to the interests of Gen Z university students. As a paradigm of this fact, several scenes from the five episodes that make up the video game *The Wolf Among Us* (Shorette, 2013) are analysed in order to examine the transtextual and semiotic-textual relationships, as well as the plot and the symbolic reimagining of the characters from different traditional stories. In this way, the aim is on the one hand to demonstrate the reading opportunities offered by video games inspired by the storytelling tradition, and on the other the connections that are generated with the reading of the original stories in order to boost reading literacy and the literary education of university students from a transmedia perspective.

Modes and practices of reading among Generation Z university students

The reading habits of Generation Z, the generational cohort born between 1995 and 2010 that currently predominates in universities (Cerezo, 2016), is characterised by the adoption of a format that is personalised to the interests of Gen Z readers. This reading model is schematic in nature, supported by hyperlinks and driven by the integration of multiple codes, such as text, image and sound (González-Battle, 2013). Barrios-Andrade defines reading in Higher Education as: “[...] medio de inculcación, esto es, como un mecanismo a través del cual acceder y participar de las producciones culturales de una sociedad. Pero también funciona como una alternativa eficaz de aprendizaje o acercamiento al conocimiento” (2023, p. 5). Consequently, students recognise the instrumental value of reading as a way of ensuring the learning of content, which favours functional rather than recreational use. This reality demands the incorporation of accessible, interactive fully digital media that satisfy the tastes and needs of Gen Z, in order to build coherent, personalised and reinterpreted readings that are close to their lived experience (Viveros-Lorenzo, 2023).

This aspect is supported by the *Lectura infinita. Plan de Fomento de la Lectura 2021-2024*. (Ministerio de Educacion y Deporte, 2021), which establishes that the habit of reading must be consolidated in innovative spaces that make it an enjoyable and routine activity. This is a goal yet to be achieved, with a target completion date of 2030. It is also evident that current narrative proposals are based on an intertextuality and transmediality that allow them to spread through both analogue and technological media, such as sound albums, apps, comics, board games, manga, films, streaming series and video games (Ballester-Roca & Méndez-Cabrera, 2021; Clavijo-Corcher, 2025). Generation Z is familiar with this transmedia consumption of multiple franchises, such as *DC*, *Harry Potter* and *Marvel*, and as Scolari (2013) points out, “los jóvenes consumidores se han vuelto cazadores y recolectores de información, les gusta sumergirse en las historias, reconstruir el pasado de los personajes y conectarlos con otros textos” (2013, p. 24).

Thus, the Gen Z learner group accesses the literary imaginary through different audiovisual formats, although not always consciously. This underlines the need to teach cultural heritage using media that are not purely literary and are adapted to their interests (Ballester-Roca & Méndez-Cabrera, 2021). Currently, the proliferation of transmedia content is influencing the academic context and is notable for its educational benefits, as students adopt an interactive role during the reading process in a variety of media (García-Pedreira, 2024). This dynamic enriches the improvement of both productive and receptive communication skills (Andrade-Velásquez & Fonseca-Mora, 2021).

Transmedia storytelling and the re-reading of traditional tales in video games

The study of the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling is relatively recent, as the concept was established in 2003 with the contributions of Henry Jenkins. This researcher defines the term as the set of stories that unfold in different media and semiotic systems, whether linguistic, interactive, multimedia or visual, in which each contributes specific elements that enhance the hypertext and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the narrative universe (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2013). Consequently, transmedia storytelling is not merely a film or literary adaptation; rather, it is a “una estrategia que va mucho más allá y desarrolla un mundo narrativo que abarca diferentes medios y lenguajes” (Scolari, 2013, p. 25).

Pratten (2015) distinguishes between two narrative modalities: multiplatform narrative (adaptation) and transmedia narrative (expansion). This author argues that transmedia storytelling is more complete, because it allows the story to unfold not only through the brand itself, but also with the participation of the public through fan fiction. Transmedia storytelling enhances the hypertext in two ways: through transmedia worlds, or through transmedia characters (Rosendo-Sánchez, 2016). Character-based narrative expansion is the most widespread among brands because, as García-Pedreira (2024) explains, it allows for greater independence from the hypertext, whether at a structural or space-time level. In this way, the narrative universe of the franchise adapts to the tastes of the audience and ensures their continued engagement through different physical and digital media.

In light of the above, this transmedia narrative deployment finds particularly fertile ground in traditional stories (García-Rivera and Bravo-Gaviro, 2019; Hilario Silva, 2023). These stories, as Regueiro-Salgado (2022) asserts, possess “[...] la capacidad de adaptarse a los tiempos, de reciclarse de manera permanente para permanecer vivos” (2022, p. 132). This process of recycling shows how these narratives are reinterpreted to reflect the values of each social generation. As Falcón-Díaz-Aguado (2013) points out, this updating implies “[...] nuevos planteamientos para adaptar los contenidos de los cuentos clásicos a las necesidades contemporáneas” (2013, p. 75) such as their expansion in digital and audiovisual media. From an educational perspective, the importance of its revival in the classroom lies in the fact that traditional fairy tales constitute a valuable literary heritage (Varela-Tembra, 2007), whose re-reading allows students to identify archetypes, narrative structures and socio-cultural values that survive in the cross-cultural collective imagination (García-Carcedo, 2018).

This intertextuality, a concept that explores the relationship between “[...] los textos (por ejemplo, cómo el contenido específicamente narrativo de un libro –la historia que cuenta– influye en el desarrollo del guion –historia también de un videojuego–)” (Martínez-Fabre, 2013, p. 12), is particularly relevant in the field of video games. As Albarrán-Ligero warns, “los mundos ficcionales encuentran en el videojuego un prototipo de la experiencia para expandir, absorber y reconducir universos que provienen de otras modalidades narrativas dominantes –cómic, cine y literatura–” (2019, p. 153). Clear examples of this intertextual potential are titles such as *007 First Light* (IO Interactive), *Dante's Inferno* (Electronic Arts) or *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Frogwares). Indeed, right from the beginning, many video games have been inspired by literary sources and, for this reason, some of these media have opted for literary recycling (Lozano, 2017), that is, the revival of literary tradition from an updated perspective to adapt it to contemporary culture (Regueiro-Salgado, 2022).

Nowadays video games are an undeniable form of entertainment, especially for Generation Z, 86 % of whom in Spain reported playing video games in 2023 (AEVI, 2023). However, play, in its multiple forms, has historically been used as a pedagogical resource to reinforce different types of knowledge and skills (López-Raventós, 2016). Along these lines, Gros argues that the incorporation of video games into the academic context “no se trata solo de aprender competencias relativas al uso de la tecnología y a unos contenidos concretos, sino que el juego también permite el trabajo de competencias como la negociación, la toma de decisiones, la comunicación y la reflexión” (2008, p. 20). Consequently, and in light of the results obtained from various studies (Capell-Masip et al., 2017; Galindo-Domínguez, 2019; Sotomayor-González et al., 2020), it is possible to affirm that gaming can be conceived as a Learning and Knowledge Technology (LKT), as it promotes the acquisition of knowledge and offers a multitude of learning experiences. It is also an interactive approach to the real or fictional world, and for this reason can influence not only individual but also social behaviour. In particular, when the video game is played cooperatively, it enables public participation and enriches learning through a plurality of experiences and perspectives (Cabañes & Jaimen, 2021), which brings it closer to Empowerment and Participation Technologies (EPT).

In line with its educational potential, the video game is presented as an innovative medium capable of transforming traditional reading habits by offering an immersive and interactive narrative experience that places the player-student at the centre of both the narrative construction and the reading process. In the words of Torres-Toukoumidis et al. (2016), “los videojuegos son alternativas de promoción que en este contexto, facilitan la aproximación del entretenimiento a la lectura a través de una narrativa atractiva y diferente, potenciando el hábito de lectura en los jóvenes” (2016, p. 43).

All of these conceptualisations apply to *The Wolf Among Us* (Shorette, 2013), distributed by LCG Entertainment (Telltale Games) and based on the comic book *Fables* (2002-2024) by Bill Willingham. It is available on multiple platforms: from past and current generation game consoles to handheld devices. The interesting thing about this videoludic medium is that it deploys a transmedia narrative articulated through the use of intermedial characters from classic fairy tales (*Beauty and the Beast*, *Snow White*, *Bluebeard* and *The Three Little Pigs*) and from cultural and literary folklore (*Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, *Beowulf* and the urban legend *Bloody Mary*). Hence, its intertextuality makes it a genuinely transmedia resource, and like other media such as comics, series or films, it becomes an educational tool with which to promote reading animation and mediation in the university setting (González-Ramírez et al., 2022; Zúñiga-Lacruz, 2024).

METHOD

The analysis of *The Wolf Among Us* was carried out using a qualitative descriptive methodology, based mainly on content analysis. To this end, two approaches particularly suited to the study of transmedia were incorporated.

Firstly, the transtextual approach proposed by Genette (1989) was used, which allows for the examination of the different forms of relationship between texts. These include:

- intertextuality: the explicit or implicit presence of one or more texts in another;
- paratextuality: refers to the elements that accompany a work, such as the title or illustrations;
- metatextuality: understood as the critical relationship of one text to another;
- hypertextuality: which refers to the transformations and rewritings of a previous text; and
- architextuality: understood as the system of abstract categories that determine generic properties, such as genre, discursive typology or enunciation.

Secondly, Paz-Gago's (2004) comparative semiotic-textual method was used, which, although developed to analyse the relationships between literature and film, is equally valid for this medium. This is because both films and video games share a structural affinity, as they articulate an audiovisual

narrative (Delgado-Ponce & Granados-García, 2012). Thus, the characteristics of the story and those of the corresponding scene in the video game that draws on certain spaces, plot elements or characters were studied first, and then the convergences, divergences, and interferences between the two media were examined comparatively.

Scenes were selected after a complete gaming experience, based on several criteria: the appearance of recognisable characters, the presence of plot elements linked to the storytelling universe, and attention to the short story genre. To ensure a rigorous contrastive analysis, the fragments were cross-checked with reference text versions, such as the compilation produced by Lynch et al. (2014) and the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm (2018).

The didactic experience was implemented with a total population of 97 students studying for the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education who were taking the subject Didactics of Languages during the 2023-2024 academic year. Overall, 60.82 % were women and 39.18 % men, aged between 20 and 26. The project was carried out in person, using participatory methods to encourage reading and critical reflection on traditional fairy tales and its transmedia reinterpretation.

The teaching guidelines for comparing classic stories and the video game were organised into four phases. First, an individual reading of the story or a significant fragment of the story that revealed key feature of the plot or of the main characters was carried out. The recommended length of the texts was not to be more than ten pages to prevent the act of reading from becoming an excessive burden and to maintain student motivation. Furthermore, to stimulate the curiosity of the class, we suggested offering versions that were not aimed at children, as this would subvert student expectations based on childhood memories.

Next, a discussion on the story was held in the classroom. Through dialogue, students began to identify semiotic-textual information to recognise the characteristic features of the traditional fairy tale.

The gaming experience was then approached in two ways: through cooperative or individual play of selected chapters, and through collective viewing of scenes in the classroom. In both cases, the students were asked to observe the correspondences between the literary text and its representation in the video game.

Finally, a discussion was held in which the two analytical methods described above were applied. The aim was for the group of students to reflect on the scenes in the video game and to examine the transtextual elements and similarities, and the divergences and interferences identified with respect to the original text.

RESULTS

*Literary and transmedia analysis of scenes from *The Wolf Among Us**

The Wolf Among Us (Shorette, 2013) is a single-player adventure game, intended for audiences aged 16+ according to the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) age rating. The video game features Bigby Wolf, the Big Bad Wolf of traditional fairy tales. The plot, divided into five episodes, is set in New York City during the 1980s, following the invasion of the fairytale characters' homelands by a tyrant called The Adversary, an identity that corresponds to Geppetto, the creator of Pinocchio. This invasion forced many characters into exile in the human world, specifically in the United States.

In New York they found Fabletown, a secret community in the borough of Manhattan, where they live together incognito. To fit in without being discovered, the characters that do not look human must repeatedly resort to the expensive 'glamour spell', which allows them to take on human form; otherwise, they are sent to the Farm, an isolated place where they are kept in captivity.

Bigby Wolf, in his human guise, serves as the sheriff of Fabletown under the supervision of Snow White and Acting Mayor Ichabod Crane, in the absence of King Cole. His main function is to maintain order and ensure the secrecy of his community. The story begins with the discovery of the decapitated

body of the Donkey Skin Princess. Following this, the investigation undertaken by Bigby and Snow White reveals a web of corruption, inequality and violence that threatens to destroy coexistence between the inhabitants of traditional folk tales.

Thus, through interactive choices that shape Bigby's behaviour and influence the development of the plot, the player must prevent further deaths among the various characters and discover the identity of the person responsible. In this sense, *The Wolf Among Us* is a narrative expansion that brings the classic tales into a video game format. This is possible because the characterisation of each character incorporates, as part of their diegetic past, the events present in their respective hypotexts, reinforcing transmedia coherence. This aspect not only encourages a new re-reading of traditional stories, but also the active participation of the audience through interaction.

We now present the analysis of three representative scenes and their corresponding correlates. First, a brief contextual description of the video game and the reference hypotext is provided for each of them. Subsequently, two tables are developed in order to facilitate a clear and concise reading. The first focuses on the transtextual analysis proposed by Genette (1989) and the second on Paz-Gago's (2004) semiotic-textual approach. Finally, some teaching guidelines for classroom use are included.

The first scene chosen corresponds to the prologue of the first episode of the video game (Shorette, 2013). In it, Bigby Wolf intervenes in an altercation in a flat, after being alerted by Mr. Toad, the protagonist of Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). On arrival, Bigby finds the Woodsman assaulting the Donkey Skin Princess. The argument between the two men culminates in a violent fight. This scene refers to the final passage of *Little Red Riding Hood* (Brothers Grimm, 2018), when the Wolf, after devouring the grandmother and the girl, is surprised by a hunter/woodsman, who, in the version used, cuts open its belly in order to rescue them.

Table 1

Transtextual analysis of the first scene

	Video game (Episode 1. <i>Faith</i>)	Story: <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> (Grimm, 2018)
Paratext	Foreword by <i>Faith</i> . Introductory and tutorial function.	No explicit paratexts. In this case, illustrations are used to emphasise the conflict.
Architext	Interactive episodic video game.	European folk tale.
Intertext	Explicit references to <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> , <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> and <i>The Donkey Skin Princess</i> . Fusion of characters and role reversal.	Autonomous text without external references.
Hypertext	Contemporary rewriting of the motif. Updates the conflict moving towards gender-based violence.	Original hypotext in which the victims are rescued.
Metatext	Implicit criticism of male violence and abuse of power. Social condemnation.	Traditional moral dichotomy: good (Woodsman) versus evil (Wolf) to restore balance.

Table 2

Semiotic-textual analysis of the first scene

	Video game (Episode 1. <i>Faith</i>)	Story: <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> (Grimm, 2018)
Convergences	Preservation of the archetypes of the story: the Wolf, the Woodsman and a woman in a vulnerable situation. Intervention of the hero to save the victim from the antagonist. Symbolic presence of the knife or axe.	

	Video game (Episode 1. <i>Faith</i>)	Story: <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> (Grimm, 2018)
Divergences	Role reversal (Wolf protector and Woodsman aggressor). The home is redefined as a space of risk. Non-lethal resolution.	Tragic outcome: death of the Wolf. Fixed roles within a moral framework.
Interferences	Contemporary conventions (alcoholism, marginalisation and gender-based violence) interfere with the original moral framework.	Classical framework with no thematic contamination.

Working on the first scene, key elements can be analysed, such as:

- The reversal of traditional roles, as both male characters swap their roles. Bigby becomes the hero, while the Woodsman takes on the antagonistic role.
- Onomastic symbolism, such as the derivation of Big Bad Wolf into Bigby, which re-defines the archetype of the traditional villain.
- The professions of each of the characters, as Bigby plays the role of sheriff, in charge of protecting the inhabitants of Fabletown, while the Woodsman is an aggressive figure.
- The interrelationship with characters from other stories, such as the Donkey Skin Princess, which broadens the intertextual universe.
- The reinterpretation of spaces, given that the grandmother's house in *Little Red Riding Hood* is reinterpreted as a hostile flat in *The Wolf Among Us*.
- The symbolic object, represented by the Woodsman's axe, is used to resolve the conflict.
- The divergence in the final resolution of the confrontation, as the story ends with a moral message (even if mistakes are made, rescue is possible), while the video game adopts a contemporary conclusion with no moral.

The second scene selected takes place in the third episode of the video game (Shorette, 2013). In it, Bigby visits the office of Tarari and Tarara, characters from Carroll's novel *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871). There he meets Flycatcher, who is in charge of the clean-up. His biography reveals that he was once a prince but was turned into a toad by a witch, and after the death of his wife and children during the invasion of the fairytale lands, he performs maintenance work in the human world to get over this traumatic event (Shorette, 2013). This character alludes to the protagonist of the fairy tale *The Frog King or Iron Henry*, by the Brothers Grimm (2018).

Table 3

Transtextual analysis of the second scene

	Video game (Episode 3. <i>My Kingdom</i>)	Story: <i>The Toad King</i> (Grimm, 2018)
Paratext	<i>My Kingdom</i>	No explicit paratexts. In this case, illustrations are used to emphasise the conflict.
Architext	Interactive episodic video game.	European folk tale.
Intertext	Incorporation of classic characters: <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> , <i>The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids</i> , <i>The Three Little Pigs</i> (via Bigby) and <i>The Frog King</i> . Resignification of roles.	Autonomous text without external references.
Hypertext	Contemporary rewriting of the metamorphic motif, displaced towards marginality, social precariousness and mental health.	Original hypertext, based on metamorphosis, promise and the restoration of order.
Metatext	Implicit critique of social inequality.	Implicit morality regarding commitment.

Table 4*Semiotic-textual analysis of the second scene*

	Video game (Episode 3. <i>My Kingdom</i>)	Story: <i>The Frog King</i> (Grimm, 2018)
Convergences	Few convergences, although the stigma associated with the frog as a socially despised figure remains, despite its royal origin.	
Divergences	The character remains marginalised and scarred by trauma. Metamorphosis does not occur.	Final transformation into a prince and restitution of original identity, upon fulfilment of a promise.
Interferences	Contemporary problems (evictions, social exclusion and loss of loved ones) interfere with the classical motif.	Classical framework with no thematic contamination.

When teaching the second scene, the following issues can be addressed:

- The onomastic symbolism of the name Flycatcher, a designation that alludes to the metamorphosis undergone by the character.
- The character's profession, linked to cleaning work and water, an element traditionally associated with amphibians.
- Psychologically, the character is defined by his kindness and loyalty, traits that are consistent with the classic tale.
- The biographical expansion, as in the video game he is presented as a widower and as stripped of his former royal power, which contrasts with the traditional representation.
- The symbolic element of the frog-shaped visor serves as a vestige of the spell cast on him in his youth and maintains the iconography of the hypotext.

The third scene chosen is from the fourth episode of the video game. Bigby interrogates Beauty and the Beast in their flat, due to their possible involvement in the events in Fabletown. here, he discovers that the home is luxuriously decorated, which is striking given the couple's precarious financial situation. Finally, it is revealed that the Beast has fallen into debt in an effort to maintain their previous lifestyle. the scene reflects a marked distrust between the spouses, in stark contrast to the romantic imagery of the most popular version of Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* (1756), where the bond of love is based on honesty and inner transformation rather than on material convenience as in the video game.

Table 5*Transtextual analysis of the third scene*

	Video game (Episode 4. <i>Past Due</i>)	Story: <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> (Lynch et al., 2014)
Paratext	<i>Past Due</i>	No explicit paratexts. In this case, illustrations are used to emphasise the conflict.
Architext	Interactive episodic video game.	An 18th-century tale of French origin, characterised by its moral tone and criticism of the wedding customs of the time.

	Video game (Episode 4. <i>Past Due</i>)	Story: <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> (Lynch et al., 2014)
Intertext	Fusion of characters from different classic stories: <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> , <i>The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids</i> , <i>The Three Little Pigs</i> (through Bigby) and <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> .	Autonomous text without external references.
Hypertext	Contemporary rewriting that updates the love relationship: emphasis is placed on mistrust, economic tensions and the toxic couple model.	Original hypertext, based on the transformation of monstrosity through virtuous love.
Metatext	Implicit criticism of emotional dependency, materialism and toxic relationships.	Exaltation of true love as a cure for moral and personal monstrosity.

Table 6*Semiotic-textual analysis of the third scene*

	Video game (Episode 4. <i>Past due</i>)	Story: <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> (Lynch et al., 2014)
Convergences	Perpetuation of the couple as a stable but tense symbolic unit. Presence of a domestic space associated with intimate coexistence and the symbol of the relationship.	
Divergences	Decorative ostentation based on debt and lies; absence of the redemptive dimension of love; jealousy and possessiveness on the part of the Beast.	Emotional balance at the end of the story; moral transformation of the Beast; honesty and virtue as the cornerstones of the romantic relationship.
Interferences	Incorporation of contemporary problems (social image, consumerism and emotional dependence), which corrupt the classic love framework.	Idealised sentimental model.

Finally, to address the third scene, different aspects can be explored in greater depth, such as:

- The conversion of the archetype of princess and prince into commoners, which allows for reflection on social mobility with other stories where social advancement occurs: *Cinderella*, *The Brave Little Tailor* and *Rapunzel* (Grimm and Grimm, 2018) or downward social mobility: *Snow White*, *The Frog King* and *Rumpelstiltskin* (Grimm and Grimm, 2018).
- The contrasting of life experience - economic ambition and poverty predominate in the video game - with the humility and material modesty that are exalted as virtues in the story.
- The configuration of the love relationship, contrasting classic love, based on honesty and moral transformation, with a relationship built on appearances and material convenience.
- The reinterpretation of the domestic space, as the luxuriously decorated apartment acts as the backdrop to an economic and marital crisis, whereas the castle is a space for emotional resolution in the traditional story.
- The reversal of roles, as Beauty ceases to embody submission and rebels against male authority, while the Beast fails to achieve redemption in love and is portrayed as a jealous and controlling man.

Impact on teaching

In order to assess the educational relevance of the proposal, the programme was used with 97 students (n=97) studying for a Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education. Although the sample was limited to a single educational context and the results cannot therefore be generalised, an overall improvement in literary interpretation was observed as a result of combining both analogue and video game media.

During the classroom experience, an increase in motivation to read was noted in the first phase, especially after reading traditional stories, which generated interest when approached from an adult perspective. This initial reaction led to active participation in the discussions that structured the second and, later, the fourth phase.

In the initial discussions, the group of students, organised in small teams, began to identify the archetypes, narrative structures and themes of each hypotext. By the fourth phase of the teaching programme, during the analytical discussions, the students (who remained in the same groups) showed greater sensitivity to transtextuality and the semiotic-textual process, pointing out changes in the way the characters were portrayed, the setting and the symbolism. This comparison reflected a growing ability to recognise Genette's (1989) transtextual elements and Paz-Gago's (2004) convergences, divergences and interferences, demonstrating the development of more attentive and critical re-reading.

In relation to the video game experience, covered in the third phase, there was some heterogeneity in accessing the video game. A significant number of students acquired the title and played it both individually and cooperatively outside the classroom, which contributed to a more in-depth exploration of the transmedia medium. However, part of the class group was unable to access the game due to financial constraints or issues of technical incompatibility with their devices. Therefore, to ensure equity among the learning group, it was decided to collectively view the different scenes in the classroom, using previously recorded gameplays. This solution facilitated guided observation and maintained attention, although for some of the students it meant a reduction in the interactive component of the video game itself. Nevertheless, viewing the game helped the learning group to establish connections between the verbal and visual codes and their knowledge of the story, which enabled them to identify the symbolic construction and characterisation of each character. Furthermore, during this phase, teaching support was necessary to maintain analytical focus, as a large part of the student body tended to focus on the video game, without noting the contrast with the literary text. This mediation allowed the rereading to be redirected towards a well-grounded comparison.

However, certain limitations were detected, linked to various factors. Firstly, interpretative difficulties were noted, for example, at the intertextual level. Some students correctly identified the character but did not recognise the hypotext from which it came. Lacking knowledge of the source, this group of students had problems identifying the hypertextual and metatextual relationship, as well as distinguishing convergences, divergences and interferences. Specifically, they did not recall the presence of the Big Bad Wolf in stories other than *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Secondly, problems were encountered in differentiating between adaptation and transmedia expansion, as a significant number of students did not consider the transformation and expansion of characters and spaces. To address this difficulty, a terminological reminder was needed to familiarise the class group with transtextual and semiotic-textual concepts.

Finally, difficulties were observed in relation to attention management during the video game experience. Systematic breaks were required to ensure the identification and interpretation of narrative transformations, transtextual references, and semiotic-visual resources. Without this support, part of the class group prioritised playful progression outside the classroom over comparison with the literary hypotext.

To evaluate the process and the limitations identified, systematic observation was carried out using checklists to record the degree of transtextual and semiotic-textual identification, as well as the quality and validity of the students' arguments. The analysis of this evidence revealed progressively more in-depth

reading, which enabled the students to recognise the nuances present in traditional stories, and understand their narrative expansion in *The Wolf Among Us*.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the field of literary education and transmedia storytelling, as yet no research has been identified that integrates a transtextual and semiotic-textual analysis of classic stories in the classroom with an audiovisual transmedia expansion, making it difficult to contrast the results obtained, which could be extended, if there were previous empirical evidence. Although some studies have addressed this transmedia relationship from analytical or theoretical perspectives (Ballester-Roca & Méndez-Cabrera, 2021; Clavijo-Corcheró, 2025), the most representative being the one by Zúñiga-Lacruz (2024), these studies do not report findings derived from real educational experiences.

The educational evidence obtained coincides with research that highlights the potential of video games to enhance reading education and encourage reading habits (Lozano, 2017; Albarrán-Ligero, 2019), as the strengthening of the interpretation of symbolic elements, the identification of narrative patterns, and reading identity were observed during the process of rereading traditional stories. This result favoured the students to undertake a deeper reading of each story, supported by an interactive audiovisual text that enhanced the semiotic-narrative re-signification, as Zúñiga-Lacruz (2024) predicts.

In this regard, by taking a transmedia literacy approach, the teaching programme enabled the class group to recognise the transformations and rewritings linked to both characterisation and the configuration of spaces, thanks to the transtextual focus, while the semiotic-textual method facilitated the comparison between different verbal and audiovisual codes. However, the difficulties encountered in interpretative, conceptual and attentional processes highlight the need to continue formulating training proposals that integrate transmedia resources, without neglecting teaching guidance.

In short, the aim of this study was to explore the educational use of transmedia texts to familiarise students with traditional fairy tales, and to strengthen their literary motivation and competence.

NOTE

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