



Transmediation for Digital Literacy Learning

by [Israa Osman](#)

When students are asked to read a story, teachers often check their understanding either through traditional Q&A or writing a summary, which can be boring and time consuming, especially in an online class. Transmediation eliminates boredom and allows the teacher to spot the parts that students may have misunderstood or skipped while reading.

In this article, we'll learn about the benefits of transmediation in literacy and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) learning and how to implement it in online classes with a variety of apps and websites to unleash learners' creativity while learning.

What Is Transmediation?

Transmediation is the process of bringing meaning from one semiotic system to another; there are five semiotic systems: the linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial systems. In the case of this article, transmediation refers to the process of taking what one knows in language and representing it in other modalities—specifically, art—or vice versa.

When using multimodalities, everything from the placement of images to the organization of the content to the method of delivery creates meaning. This is the result of a shift from isolated text being relied on as the primary source of communication to the image being utilized more frequently in the digital age (Lutkewitte, 2013). In her article, McCormick (2011) describes how children move from one modality to another (e.g., linguistic to choreographic) and, because there is no prescriptive way for the students to do this, this act itself encourages inquiry, critical thinking, and the generation of new knowledge. This practice of creatively shifting between modalities can be applied in online learning using the digital storytelling technique, where students create and share their digital stories.

Why Transmediation?

Reducing Verbo-centrism

Verbo-centrism is the privileging of language and meaning over other types of media. However, 21st-century students need to express their understanding in more engaging and creative ways than by using words only. Incorporating digital visual literacy in the curricula and teaching

practices of English language teaching to develop learners' capacity to critically engage with and produce images, or to assist reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, ought to be systematically and explicitly integrated as an essential element of 21st-century education (Villamizar, 2018).

Encouraging Active Learning

Students will be in control of their learning as they use different media to express what they have learned (drawing, video making, etc.). Because students must choose the right media and the best technology to convert simple words into another form, transmediation can help develop students' critical thinking skills and decision-making processes.

A Tool for Assessment of Learning

Teachers can use the students' productions to measure their literacy learning against [standards](#) (quantitatively and qualitatively) by comparing what students included in their projects to what's been explained in the lesson. Finding gaps reflects the students' gaps in understanding the lesson.

Strategies for Implementing Transmediation in Online Classes

Gamification

The incorporation of components of gaming into a course/lesson restructures learning to be more challenging, engaging, and rewarding for learners. Using Minecraft in coding or storytelling is an example.

Flipped Learning

In flipped learning, students get to learn about the lesson before the teacher explains it in class. Transmediation can be used in this strategy when the teacher shows the students a set of pictures/drawings and the students try to guess the story behind them. Once guessed, they express it in writing and the teacher can discuss their work in the following class.

Story Conversion

Students learn best when they're engaged in their learning process. So, after reading a text, the students get to express and reflect upon their understanding by using multimedia, such as movie making, drawing, or podcasting to convert the word format of a story to another. [Book Creator](#) is a great tool for converting stories to comics.

Sketch-to-Stretch

The idea behind this activity is simple. Learners draw quick sketches to stretch their thinking and understanding of concepts. (Harste et al., 1988). The teacher can check the students' work during online classes or using photos of their work. See some examples on [Erin Nalley's Clark MAT Program page](#).

Discussions and Peer Review

Teachers can make a gallery of students' work, which allows students a place to discuss their work among each other. They can view each other's projects and review them together in a productive manner. This wall on [Padlet](#) is a great example for that.

Transmediation Across Different Subjects

Transmediation can be applied in language learning as well as STEM subjects, such as math and science. For example:

- [Friction Song](#)
Explaining the concept of friction in physics for elementary students. (This worked really well with my high school students, too!)
- [Math Comics](#)
These comic books, called Beast Academy, are a great combination of math and language learning, where students express their understanding to math concepts through comics using simple language. (See Figure 1.)
- [Minecraft](#)
A great example of applying gamification in learning coding as a part of technology education (see Figure 2). Here's a full [lesson plan](#) that shows how to create a coding sequence to save a village from fire.

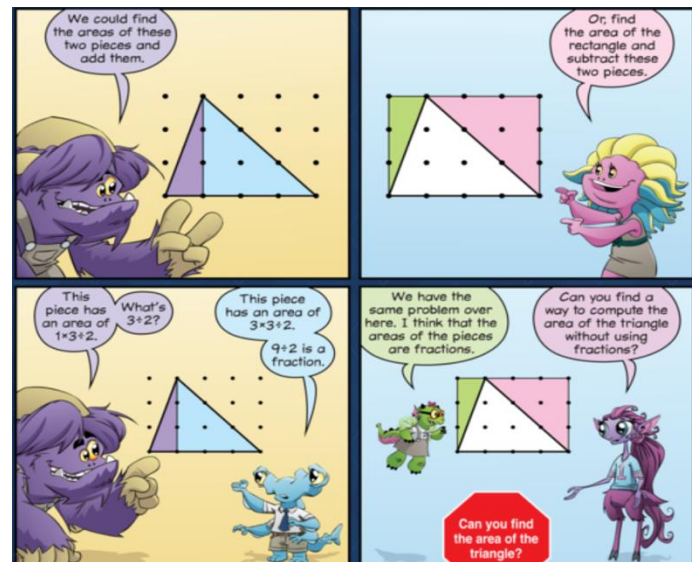


Figure 1. Sample pages from a Beast Academy illustrated guide book. From beastacademy.com/books



Figure 2. Minecraft Education: Minecraft Hour of Code. From <https://education.minecraft.net/lessons/minecraft-hour-of-code>

Apps for Transmediation

These apps work well for allowing students flexibility and creativity in how they present their learning:

- [Powerpointify](#): To present a story in pictures as a slideshow with amazing slides and creative themes.
- [PowToon](#): For creating animated videos.
- [Songify](#): A free app to create songs.
- [Pixton](#): For making comic books and graphic novels.
- [Google Classroom](#) and [Padlet](#): For the teachers to use in discussions and sharing students' projects.

Conclusion

Digital literacy is often presented as a set of autonomous skills involving knowing how to express meaning through printed text. However, calling for students to learn about the different ways in which knowledge and opinion are represented and developed in texts, and about how levels of complexity can be shown through language and through multimodal representations is a key element that adds new dimensions to an innovative class environment. As such, transmediation appears particularly promising in supporting students' digital literacy as it not only utilizes their understanding of the different media involved, but also correlates between content and representation and reconceptualizes and recasts a semiotic object in an enhanced form (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2014).

References

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