MATRIZes

Journalism, convergence and reader training

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Abstract: This article discusses the literacy in the convergence process between printed and digital support. Required reader's skills provided by the magazine for digital resources exploring were analyzed. The "Guia da Copa 2010 Veja" was used as an empirical object, showing how digital content is associated to printed material, and, what kind of readers journalism wants to train and retain, also. We consider the concepts of imaginary reader and literacy.

Keywords: Journalism, convergence, magazine, reader, literacy.

Introduction

This article[3] approaches the problematic related to literacy in journalism. We favor here the relation between reader – as a discursive strategy present in text – and the movement toward the instauration of literacy, having as a backdrop the process of convergence between printed and online supports.

The effort of print journalism to ally its routines to the (content and form, periodicity and circulation) dynamics of internet demonstrates a convergence tendency of media that also organizes itself drawing from the need to retain readership and, in some degree, from the competition to conquer new spaces in a different support. The adaptation of journalistic vehicles to this new dynamic goes beyond the professional routines, the need for specific contents, the narrative changes imposed by multimediality and hypertext – though they are essential to the endeavor. There is still the need to intertwine both supports, print and online, in a way that readers comprehend them as the same vehicle or as complementary spaces. For that, print magazines start to find the need not only to invite its habitual reader to become familiar to digital content, but also to help in the attainment of certain abilities, demanded to his insertion in the online support.

The imagined literacy in journalism

There are different ways of approaching literacy and the reader: from individual interpreting manners that are external to text, in which the studies of the so called

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"reception aesthetics" are highlighted, as in Iser (1996; 1999), Jauss (1994), Lima (2000) and Zilberman (2009); from biological cognitive and linguistic relations, as in Olson (1995), Olson and Torrance (1997), Byrnes (2001), Pinker (2004; 2008); or even from the internal structure of text. Regardless, we concur with Chartier when he points out that, "Guided or trapped, the reader invariably finds himself inscribed in the text, but in turn the text is itself inscribed variously in its different readers" (1992: 215)[4].

In the game of negotiating with text, each reading corresponds to an interaction with the proposed content, so that writing is never an isolated phenomenon. On the contrary, the text is a result of a dialogue between writer and other texts, knowledge and ideas which he encountered previously (Orlandi, 2004). Similarly, reading is not a procedure, it is not stable or literal, but it is a dialogue *practice* both with the text (and with that shared variety that it contains) and with other texts that constitute a personal collection of reading. Writing and reading occur in coexistence. In its essence, the writing process presupposes reading and, with reading, what discourse theory refers to as the imaginary reader[5], "the one that the author imagines (destines) its text for and to whom he addresses" (Orlandi, 2008: 9).

As part of this perspective, a relational conceptualization is integral to discourse:

> The possibility of changing roles between the one that enunciates and the one that interprets […] is a requirement for the existence of discourse. It is not necessary for the inversion of roles to be carried out or to be feasible, but it is necessary that it can be imagined. Better yet, it is necessary that both subjects involved in the process can understand the subject position of the other, besides understanding its own (Benetti, 2008, *online*).

Journalism, from a discursive perspective, organizes itself from an enunciation that considers the relation with others. Though journalists, in general, don't have contact with the public and are not subject to its direct influence, the movements of discourse construction are intrinsically connected to what journalists imagine to be the expectations of readers[6]. Thus, questions such as *what does the public want to see?* and *is the reader going to understand?* are part of the construction process of an idea of reader.

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[4] N.T.: All citations in this article are translated to English from books edited in Portuguese.

[5] Developed from Pêcheux's concept of imaginary formations (1990).

[6] It is important to point out that the journalist does not write only to readers that seek information and that are, generally, unknown to him. The journalist also writes for his own sources, his editor and for other journalists. All these subjects are virtual readers inscribed in text, what transforms this intersubjective relation in an intricate web.

Mouillaud (1997) reminds us that this *aimed reader* is the one that Eco calls *implied*, *virtual* or *model reader*, while Iser addresses as *ideal reader* and Riffaterre as arch-reader[7]. All of them are what literary theory names the *receiver*[8] in the communication field: "a figure inscribed in filigree in the core of the newspaper" (Mouillaud, 1997: 174). In the same direction, Charaudeau (2007) calls it *ideal target public*, traveling through news' productive routines:

> The instance of reception carries an 'imprecise group' of social-ethic values and, we add, of social-affective ones, which must be taken into account by the media instance, so that it can present an information somewhat in accordance with its expectations (Charaudeau, 2007: 79-80).

This complex organization of expectations would be developed in a subjective process, a communication contract that occurs in all media movements and takes into account the professional routines of journalism, the history of literacy and the supposed readers' interests (the ones imagined by journalists), besides the vehicle's editorial references and, more complexly, advertisers, sources and other institutions.

Journalism is built in the interior of this process of negotiation with the reader, which recognizes and legitimates it discursively through the communication contract. Thus, since we are affiliated with a perspective that sees the reader from the internal structures of the text, we understand that when the empirical or real reader approaches the text "it is already there a constituted reader with whom he necessarily has to relate" (Orlandi, 2008, p. 9). This abstract reader, also seen as a discursive strategy of the text, is the implied reader with whom the empirical reader makes contact, negotiating conventions and meanings. It is always, therefore, a relation between subjects.

Such an abstract relation faces a pragmatic interpretation: the meanings, the means and the supports of stating are constituted in a historicity, demand certain linguistic competences, are heterogeneous (Orlandi, 2007) regarding the nature of symbolic materials (image, writing style, sound) and languages (oral, written, scientific, literary).

As pointed out by Eco, "to predict the Model Reader itself does not mean only to 'expect' that it exists, but also means to guide the text in order to construe it" (2008:

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[7] There are conceptual differences between these authors, as pointed out by Eco (1994). Yet, all of them correspond to a discussion of the implied reader in the fictional text.
[8] The studies above represent different perspectives of research on receivers. These differences are marked, in Portuguese, by distinctions in terminology between receiver, addressee and interactant – depending on the affiliation of the proposed discussion.

40). Technical demands ally itself to the most abstract reading contract, requiring journalism to be capable of recognizing if the group of skills which it refers to in the production of the text is the same to which the reader will refer to. Considering its externality, the text *explores* certain skills as well as *produces* them.

Journalism in convergence times

Our proposal in this section is not to discuss the implications of the insertion of print magazine in a new support. Rather, we seek to highlight the repercussions of this movement in print magazine itself, especially what concerns the reader.

Since its beginning, internet has imposed meaningful changes to journalistic practices related to the productive process, the narrative structure and media convergence, among others. This movement, combined to the prior context of digitalization of *online* newsrooms and to the increasing interest of readers in new forms or news[9], in rapid access to contents and in customization of reading, has led companies to bet in strategies of insertion of their vehicles in the internet[10], in the attempt to maintain readers' fidelity to the printed material (offering alternatives in customized and multimedia content) and, evidently, to attract new readers.

This insertion does not come about only through transposition of contents, it is effective. Regarding magazines, such effective insertion presupposes the instauration of permanent publication routines, altering magazine journalists' traditional quotidian (and the periodicity horizon), as well as it presupposes the creation of print and *online* convergent contents, that demand specific production, possibly expensive in financial and temporal terms.

Therein, it is important for journalism to associate these initiatives and that, in doing so, it considers the insertion of his traditional reader in the dynamics of digital content. Thus, we should consider that one of the characteristics implied by the journalistic production to this imagined reader is imposed by the support: the capacity to navigate through the vehicle, to find the desired information, to establish relations between text, page location, graphic and image elements. What we have here is the

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[9] Context in which the constant increase in the number of internet users must be considered, according to Brazilian data provided by the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee, in its last research – released in 2009.

[10] Many ethnographic studies point to different business models tested by journalistic organizations. A collection of studies organized by Paterson and Domingo (2008) is one of the richest and most current examples and demonstrates the uncertainties of companies in face of impositions of the web.

repositioning of historically construed traits that have helped forming rituals or practices of reading.

> To read a newspaper presupposes learning discontinuous and selective gestures. With practice, the reader acquires an ability that other supports exempt: scan the front page, observe numbering, learn what is central and what is secondary to news diagramming, relate the text read today to a previous one (Ribeiro, 2009a: 79).

Ribeiro supports the existence of a "visual alphabet of the printed page" (2009b) that intervenes in the constitution of meanings. The idea of a support that imposes reading practices is not restricted to the print newspaper and was already considered by other authors in regard to books, for instance:

> Reading is always appropriation, invention, constructing of meaning […]. Every history of reading supposes, in its principle, this freedom of the reader in dislocating and subverting what the book intends to impose. But this reading freedom is never absolute. It is restricted by limitations derived from skills, conventions and habits that characterize, in their differences, the reading practices. The gestures change according to times and places, to reading objects and to the reasons to read. New attitudes are invented, others extinguish. (Chartier, 1999: 77).

The act of reading is now understood as an interpretation gesture (Orlandi, 2004) located between technical conditions and specific discursive rituals, historically organized and dependent of language activities, exchanges, appropriations and subversions performed by readers – ergo, mutable. More, different reading practices are outlined by the implications of support that exert adaptations and might demand of readers different abilities.

That is what happens in the digital support. The textual reorganization, because of hypertext and multimediality, demand distinct aptitudes and commands when reading printed materials. Xavier helps us to think about this phenomenon suggesting that hypertext is "a hybrid, dynamic and flexible form of language that dialogues with other semiotic interfaces, adds and stows in the surface other shapes of textuality" (2005: 171).

The notion of an encoded language leads us to a sense that, above all, the support and the information model of transmission have required a change in language that, when associated to its organization in screen and to specific requirements demanded to its reading, constitute the basis for a text and literacy revolution that, according to Chartier (2002), could not have happened before.

These new requirements exercise the possibility of other practices, leading us to the possibility of identifying certain literacy trainings that aim at readers' convergence,

who are instituted from the notion of vehicle reader. In other words, while investing in the constitution of referents in the online support in the search of new public, based on its imaginary reader, printed press also aims at associating its traditional reader to the new reading logics of the online support.

Literacy training in Veja magazine

In order to observe these processes in journalistic practice, we have chosen *Veja* magazine's 2.167 issue, published in June 2nd 2010[11]. It is a particularly abounding case to ponder literacy development of readers of journalism. The justification presents itself in the front page headline, where it reads *A cup for you to play* [*Uma copa para você jogar*] and where many training mechanisms that *Veja* lists as essential to their readers are already registered.

The cover story of the issue at hand is a feature article on FIFA's Football World Cup (from now on, simply Cup or World Cup). The special report is organized in the form of a *guide*, detached in the interior of the magazine by a special cover, where it is verified certain initial instructions about digital contents – that are *complementary to print*. *VEJA 2010 Cup Guide – interactive issue* [*Guia da Copa 2010 Veja – edição interativa*] has 72 pages (14 of them featuring advertisement) with sections such as index, letter from the editor, graphics (on stadiums, competition tables, statistics and records) and news, in addition to highlights of each soccer team of the competition. In the guide's specific space, elements that refer to headlines for alternative contents in the magazine website are found in 16 pages.

As we have mentioned before, it is already registered in the front page (Picture 1) some of the elements that are going to be used inside the magazine in order to link its contents to the digital support. In addition to the headline, the flag of the magazine is accompanied by a subhead that reads *interactive*, indicating that it is an unusual issue that intends to involve the reader and depends on his participation. Another entry is the

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[11] *Veja* is the leading weekly magazine in Brazil. According to ANER – Associação Nacional de Editores de Revistas (National Association of Magazine Publishers), *Veja*'s average circulation between January and June 2009 was of 1.099.078 copies per week. Ranked in second is *Época* magazine, published by Editora Globo, with a weekly average of 416.744 copies. Source: <www.aner.org.br>.

presence in the cover of the first *QR code*[12] (Picture 2) followed by the didactical inscription *Go to veja.com and this label will open the doors of the digital attractions* [*Entre em veja.com e este selo vai abrir as portas das atrações digitais*]. This is essential for the readers' adaptation process to the technologies offered by the magazine, especially considering that "explicit indicators by which texts are designated and classified create expectations of the reading and perspectives of the understanding" (Chartier, 1992: 288). The orange highlight of the magazine's link points out the medium that the two-dimensional code refers to.

The inside cover that precedes *Veja*'s guide of the Cup repeats the instructions highlighted in the front page. The headline resumes the proposal of dependency on reader's action to look for the digital support in order to validate convergent technical initiatives of the issue through the subhead *Interactive Issue* [*Edição Interativa*]. The same QR code of the front page is printed once more (Picture 3) with the cutline *What is this label? Go to VEJA.com and get to know a fascinating (and inedited) universe of images, information and virtual games* [*O que é este selo? Acesse VEJA.com e conheça um fascinante (e inédito) universo de imagens, informações e jogos virtuais*].

When stating that the use of the two-dimensional code is *inedited*, Veja establishes for the reader that QR code technology is being applied, or being tested, by the magazine[13]. Two-dimensional code technology is used in the magazine in the guide's news article that remembers the history of Brazil's victories in World Cups (1958, 1962, 1970, 1994 and 2002). Devoting a page to each victory, *Veja* inserts five new QR codes placed in strategic locations of the pages, in the bottom left of even pages and in the bottom right of odd pages. With each code there is a cutline (Picture 4) that reads *VEJA.com in the cup: Go to www.veja.com/conquistas and point the label above to the webcam* [*VEJA.com na copa: Vá a www.veja.com/conquistas e aponte a marca acima para a webcam*]. Each of these symbols, when *read* by the magazine's website from a webcam or from the cell phone camera, identifies and releases contents

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[12] *QR code* or two-dimensional code is a technology similar to conventional barcodes. Its advantage is that codes in this format are read faster even with low resolution images (enabled cell phones' digital cameras, for instance). The technology allows access to online content in computer or cell phone and can be printed in pamphlets, magazines and even outdoors.

[13] For a user less familiar with the digital universe it can even be implied that *Veja* is the first printed vehicle to explore QR code potential, even if this interpretation is mistaken, since many Brazilian newspapers, such as the pioneer of Bahia *A Tarde*, had already made use of the technology. The insertion of these codes is also becoming more and more frequent in advertisement.

related to the corresponding text of the printed material (in this case, interviews with athletes of different periods and specific information on each winning team).

The presence of a second section entitled Letter from the Editor, referring specifically to the Cup Guide, is an indication of how the magazine plans to adapt the reader to a new structure of reading. It is in this section that the magazine decides to explore the didactics of using the technologies added to print.

Still considering the QR codes, the Letter from the Editor present in the Cup Guide introduces a brief tutorial with instructions on how to access contents with the webcam. As we can see in picture 5, the magazine offers a step-by-step that assumes a series of specific knowledge on the part of the reader: the editorial is not concerned with access to *Veja*'s website or with the need to adapt (install plug-ins[14]) the browser to the technology being offered, much less considers if the reader has experience with tools such as the webcam. The instructions are related only to the QR code, technology being inserted in the reading dynamic of the magazine's reader.

In the text that precedes the tutorial, identified by the headline *Interactivity Show* [*Show de interatividade*], *Veja* stresses that the guide must be understood as an issue that goes *much beyond paper* [*muito além do papel*] and that includes *a series of new technological resources applied to the internet* [*uma série de novos recursos tecnológicos aplicados à internet*]: augmented reality, mouse controlled video, movement and face detection. In the words of the representatives of the agency that produced the material, *Veja* states that *it is not just about making fun resources* [*não se trata apenas de produzir recursos divertidos*], but that *what is fascinating is that we were able to marry ludic with news […] without abandoning traditional readers* [*o fascinante é termos conseguido casar o lúdico com a notícia [...] sem abandonar os leitores tradicionais*].

And it is the first Letter from the Editor, the one referring to the magazine as a whole and present in every printed issue, that indicates to us who is *Veja*'s traditional reader e for whom this *interactive* issue is addressed to. When stressing that the issue *offers the traditional printed content to read and to see* [*oferece o tradicional conteúdo impresso para ler e ver*] and that *even who does not have a webcam can use versions of*

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[14] *Software* used to add functions to bigger computer program, enabling a specific function, only on demand.

some of the interactive programs [*mesmo quem não dispuser de webcam poderá usar versões de alguns dos programas interativos*], *Veja* proposes fidelity to the traditional reader, used to the print magazine format, but highlights being after another reader, competent in new technologies. Graphic and textual indications that repeat themselves in different moments throughout the magazine aim at involving the traditional reader, promoting abilities to the digital reading – skills which will be acquired through repetition of suggested content of the digital magazine as well as through the development of special reports that allow the reader to have access to other mechanisms of online browsing and reading.

Familiarity of the reader with the headlines to the digital content of the magazine is verified in the insertion of the box *Veja.com* along with the index of the magazine[15]. It gets a special graphic feature during the World Cup coverage (Picture 6) that accompanies all the headlines to the website (Picture 7). Here it becomes clearer the editorial decision of the Cup Guide to assume, for instance, skills in the access of the website: these are constituted in a literacy history that *Veja* has been helping the reader to build.

The meanings of the new skills

We have observed that print magazine develops a training of abilities in order to favor the connection of readers with its online correspondent and to ensure literacy in the access of proposed contents in the online version.

When creating these convergence spheres, we have noticed that the magazine moves toward two central interests, both related to the audience: a) when inserting advanced technological resources, it aims at adapting itself to the operating logic of the internet and to *approach a potential reader*, used to and interested in this kind of reading; b) at the same time, and in order to *retain traditional readers*, the magazine builds training resources that favor the contact of the print reader with the digital contents – a process that takes place and consolidates itself over time.

These remarks demonstrate the importance of training to the convergence process in reading, created from the dynamic of the communication contract established between magazine and reader. The picture of the imaginary reader acquires in this

process an educational status: journalism advances on the role of providing information and reaches another discursive degree, telling the reader *how to act* to obtain new information in another support. When making these movements of instauration of new reading skills, journalism inscribes in text two meanings that deserve the observation in the field of research.

The first of these meanings concerns, in a more restricted manner, the skills themselves. In the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the reader must be able to wander through paths previously unknown. Technology demands certain abilities and journalism embraces a didactical position providing or teaching them to readers. It is important to emphasize that journalism operates with caution, frequently saying to the reader that such abilities *are desired*, but not imperative: for the reader that does not want to plunge into this new interactive universe, print magazine is always going to be there, with its regular content. It is expected, however, that the reader would gradually feel urged to use the new technology and the possibilities of interaction that it shelters. Noticing himself constantly invited to look for information in another environment, the reader would probably feel motivated to join this community of subjects with special aptitudes.

The second meaning relates to what journalism says about itself. When proposing the QR code resource, the magazine is not only providing the reader with the digital support, what has been done by many printed vehicles and is not a novelty. The magazine is also sending the reader to *the online through the printed*, because it demands the reader to obtain the printed material in order to access the new environment. When instituting this relation, Veja says to the reader that print magazine is indispensible: only the one who has it will have access to complementary information. The magazine then reinforces its identity condition in the contract of communication, as well as its institutional image (Benetti, Hagen, 2010). It shows itself to be relevant, current, dynamic and creative. This is relevant to the consolidation of a journalistic ethos, what is says about itself also speaks, evidently, to *what should be read* about itself. When teaching reading skills, journalism occupies a place of knowledge, of invention, and of relevance. This place, which is a place of knowledge and of power, inscribes the reader in an order of discourse and in a discursive practice (Foucault, 1995, 2001). It is in the interior of this practice that we should think about the processes of enunciation and literacy, as well as the placement modes of the imaginary or virtual reader.

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[15] Registered since the 1.740 issue, of February 27, 2002, the section leads to specific contents of *Veja*'s website and is conquering an important space in the magazine since its beginning.

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