Identity building and language learning opportunities in a brony fandom

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"It's not just about pushing ourselves. It's about pushing ourselves in the right direction." – Spitfire, *My little Pony:Friendship is Magic.*

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Abstract

Second language use online has become a regular practice for many Internet users reflecting the emergence of new participatory cultures in the virtual world. However, little is yet known about the processes of language use in the fandom and how these create opportunities for identity building and language learning. This thesis reports on fan practices among an international fandom of bronies, adult fans of the animated cartoon My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic (MLP:FiM). With the use of digital ethnography, it is explored how two groups of bronies—one in Russia and the other in Spain—carry out these fan practices and what language learning opportunities these provide.

This thesis is built on the collection of articles including four different papers about the bronies' language fan practices. The first paper presents our initial approximation to the brony fandom. The findings showed that bronies used their L2, English, while both consuming and creating products such as fan translations, fanfiction, fan art and fandubbing in different contexts. The second paper is a case study focused on the discourse of a Russian brony crafter who was writing in English on the platform Deviant Art. Drawing on a one-year period of data collection, it was found that he gained online fame as a crafter and at the same time developed his writing by appropriating new linguistic, technological, and multimodal resources. He achieved these results due to his participation in the affinity space of Deviant Art and the support of this space. Moreover, the third paper is focused on another fan practice—collaborative fan translation of a fanfiction novel from Russian to English. Based on one-year observation, this paper is mainly focused on the collaborative writing processes in fan translation with its connection to identity building and learning. The findings made visible how the participants, by sharing common values, creativity constructed one dialogic space, in which they were encouraged to negotiate their expert identities. The last paper of this thesis is based on the same community of fan translators, however, focused on the cultural aspect of language learning. It was found that the fan translators engaged in transcultural discussions while adapting a fanfiction novel for a global readership. During these discussions, they creatively mixed different

linguistic and cultural resources as they reflected on literary and philosophical traditions of the Russian and English-speaking cultures.

Altogether the results demonstrate the variety of language learning opportunities and identity work in the brony fandom. Fans collaboratively used English and other languages to construct meaning during the practices of writing and translation. Meanwhile, brony fandom demonstrated to be a safe space which provided opportunities for language learning and identity building.

Resumen

El uso de segundas lenguas en línea se ha convertido en una práctica habitual para muchos usuarios de la red, reflejando el surgimiento de culturas participativas nuevas en el mundo virtual. Sin embargo, aún faltan estudios sobre los procesos de uso de segundas lenguas en el fandom y cómo éstos crean oportunidades para la construcción de la identidad y el aprendizaje del idioma. Esta tesis informa sobre las prácticas de los bronies, fans adultos de los dibujos animados *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (MLP: FiM). Con etnografía digital se explora cómo dos grupos de bronies, uno en Rusia y el otro en España, desarrollan diversas oportunidades para aprender lenguas con el fandom de los bronies.

La tesis se basa en una colección de cuatro artículos sobre las prácticas de los fans y su uso de segundas lenguas. El primer artículo presenta nuestra aproximación inicial al brony fandom. Los resultados demuestran que los bronies usan una L2 (inglés) mientras consumen y crean los productos fan como traducciones, fanfiction, fanart y fandubbing. El segundo artículo es un estudio de caso centrado en el discurso de un artesano brony ruso que escribía en inglés en la plataforma Deviant Art. Basándonos en un año de observación, descubrimos que el participante ganó popularidad como un artesano en Deviant Art y al mismo tiempo desarrolló su escritura al apropiarse de diversos recursos lingüísticos, tecnológicos y multimodales. Los datos muestran que este logro se debe a su participación en el espacio de afinidad de Deviant Art y al apoyo de la comunidad. El tercer artículo se centra en otra práctica de los fans: la traducción colaborativa de una novela de fanfiction del ruso al inglés. Basado en la observación de un año, este artículo se centra en los procesos de escritura colaborativa en la traducción fan con su conexión con la construcción de identidad y el aprendizaje. Los resultados demuestran cómo los participantes construyen un espacio dialógico al compartir un conjunto de valores. En este espacio los fans pueden negociar sus identidades expertas, que fomentan sus discusiones sobre la escritura y la traducción. El último artículo se basa en la misma comunidad de bronies; sin embargo, se centra en el aspecto cultural del aprendizaje de idiomas. Se describe como los traductores fan participan en debates transculturales al adaptar la novela de fanfiction para un público global. Durante estas discusiones, se

mezclan creativamente varios recursos lingüísticos y culturales al reflexionar sobre las tradiciones literarias y filosóficas de las culturas de habla rusa e inglesa.

En conjunto, los resultados demuestran la variedad de oportunidades de aprendizaje de idiomas y de construcción de la identidad en el brony fandom. Los fans utilizan el inglés y otros idiomas de manera colaborativa y participativa para construir el significado durante las prácticas de elaboración y traducción. Además, el brony fandom demuestra ser un espacio propicio para el aprendizaje de idiomas y la construcción de nuevas identidades.

Resum

L'ús de segones llengües s'ha convertit en una pràctica habitual per a molts usuaris a la xarxa, fet que reflecteix el sorgiment de cultures participatives noves en el món virtual. No obstant això, encara falten estudis sobre els processos d'ús de segones llengües en el fandom i com aquests processos suposen noves oportunitats per a la construcció de la identitat i l'aprenentatge de llengües. Aquesta tesi descriu les pràctiques dels bronies, fans adults d'una sèrie de dibuixos animats, My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic (MLP: FiM). Amb l'ús de l'etnografia digital, s'explora com dos grups de bronies, un a Rússia i l'altre a Espanya, desenvolupen diverses oportunitats en l'aprenentatge de llengües en el fandom dels bronies.

La tesi es basa en un conjunt de quatre articles sobre les pràctiques dels fans i el seu ús de segones llengües. El primer article presenta la nostra aproximació inicial al fandom brony. Els resultats demostren que els bronies usen una L2 (anglès), mentre consumeixen i creen productes fan com ara traduccions, fanfiction, fanart i fandubbing, en diferents contextos. El segon article és un estudi de cas centrat en el discurs d'un artesà brony rus que escrivia en anglès a la plataforma Deviant Art. Després d'un any d'observació, vam descobrir que el participant guanya popularitat com a artesà a Deviant Art i, al mateix temps, desenvolupa l'escriptura en apropiar-se de recursos lingüístics, tecnològics i multimodals nous. Les dades mostren que aquesta fita depèn de la seva participació en l'espai d'afinitat de Deviant Art i del suport de la comunitat. El tercer article se centra en una altra pràctica dels fans: la traducció col·laborativa d'una novel·la de fanfiction del rus a l'anglès. Després d'un any d'observació, aquest article se centra en els processos d'escriptura col·laborativa en la traducció fan i la seva connexió amb la construcció d'identitats i l'aprenentatge. Els resultats demostren com els participants construeixen un espai dialògic en compartir un conjunt de valors. En aquest espai els fans negocien les seves identitats expertes, que fomenten les seves discussions sobre l'escriptura i la traducció. L'últim article es basa en la mateixa comunitat de traductors fan, però se centra en l'aspecte cultural de l'aprenentatge d'idiomes. Descobreix que els traductors fan participen en debats transculturals mentre adapten una novel·la de fanfiction a un públic global. Durant aquestes discussions, es

barregen creativament diferents recursos lingüístics i culturals a l'hora de reflexionar sobre les tradicions literàries i filosòfiques de les cultures de parla russa i anglesa.

En conjunt, els resultats demostren la varietat d'oportunitats per a l'aprenentatge d'idiomes i la construcció d'identitats en el fandom brony. Els fans utilitzen l'anglès i altres idiomes de manera col·laborativa i participativa per construir el significat durant les pràctiques d'elaboració i traducció. A més, el fandom brony mostra ser un espai propici per a l'aprenentatge d'idiomes i la construcció de noves identitats.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Topic and motivation of the study

Much of the leisure activity nowadays takes place on the Internet. While communicating online, people frequently organize themselves into communities of interest, for example, frequent travelers can enter the community of Couchsurfer, or people who want to practice a foreign language, search for platforms with virtual language exchange, i.e. Tandem. In this study, a particular type of community of interest will be analysed, which is called a fandom. To introduce this phenomenon, we will look at a prominent example of how a fandom can be created.

Imagine that a popular TV show starts broadcasting this month. Some people have been enjoying it and started to talk about it online, i.e. on Reddit or Twitter. Until one of the users decides to build a web platform entirely dedicated to the show including news and information about the actors. More and more people start to visit this platform and discuss the pertinent topics of the favourite show. This shared interest in the TV show motivates other users to create and share such products as drawings, alternative plot writings and so on. This phenomenon of people self-organization and creativity based on the shared interest or passion is called a fandom (Jenkins, 2006; Duffett, 2013). Fandom inspires young people to convert from consumers to prosumers (consumers who produce creative products) by engaging in creative practices together with other members of the fandom. These practices include fanfiction writing (writing alternative stories based on a popular culture product), fansubbing (translation and creation of the subtitles), scanlation (translation of manga), and fanart, between others.

Previous research indicates that these fan communities open opportunities for informal learning when engaging in creative practices, collaborating online and producing products for a real audience (Jenkins, 2006). Hence, fandom, for already 20 years, is of interest for second language teachers and literacy educators (Black, 2005; Curwood, 2013; Lam, 2000); and there are several reasons why fandom is such a relevant object of research.

First of all, it is connected to the fact that in the 80s, the notion of literacy development was reinvented, from being described as simply acquiring linguistic resources (grammar

o vocabulary) to the process of socializing to a community where the language (or languages) is used in a certain way (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984). This social shift in literacy perception also drifted to the area of second language learning opening the questions of learner's identity building, socialization in a community and so on (Knobel & Lankshear, 2015; Fukunaga, 2006). In this context, such a new phenomenon as online fandom became a perfect space to study literacies and social situated language learning.

Moreover, fandom shows new ways of interacting, reading, and writing online. When communicating online, written language becomes one of the other semiotic *modes* of communication; users talk with each other equally using text, emojis, memes, colors or audios (Kress, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Hence, it became of literacy research interest the questions on how fans interact (Zhang & Cassany, 2019a) and learn to interact in such environments using their L2 together with other modes of communication (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2015; Vazquez-Calvo et al, 2019).

Also, online spaces tend to display linguistic and cultural mix in practices of writing or interacting online (Androutsopoulos, 2013a, 2016; Androutsopoulos & Juffermans, 2014; Blommaert, 2010; Dovchin, Sultana & Pennycook, 2015; Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015). As a global phenomenon, fandom unites people from different parts of the world which creates particular ways of linguistic and cultural language use (Lee 2012, 2014; Leppänen 2007, 2009, 2012). The users acquire these new ways of *languaging* when entering to specific fan communities (Knobel & Lankshear, 2015); they also develop fluid transcultural ways of identification which is rarely present in the language classroom (Black, 2008; Kim, 2016; Rothoni, 2017). With all of these peculiarities, fandom became a relevant object of studies focusing on the dynamics of cultural flows.

Finally, there is a strong research interest in investigating how informal and formal language practices could be connected. Mostly this research was focused on fanfiction writing by showing what lessons could be learned from successful informal writing practices and how these practices could be adapted inside the classroom (Comas-Quinn & Gutiérrez, 2019; Curwood, Magnifico & Lammers, 2013; Sauro, 2014, 2017; Sauro & Sundmark, 2016, 2019).

In this project, we ethnographically explore how Russian and Spanish fans of the show *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* participate in the fandom, collaborate, use different languages and build identities. In short, this thesis is focused on language learning opportunities that fandom provides. In the introduction section, I will start with a close look at the nature of brony fandom and previous studies on the matter (section 1.2). Then my motivation and journey to find this topic will be explained (section 1.3), after that, I will look at the previous studies on informal language learning (section 1.4.) and identity building in a fandom (section 1.5). Afterwards, my main methodological decisions will be explained (1.6). I will finish the section with the main research questions and explain their connection to the result section (1.7).

1.2. Brony fandom

Bronies ("bro [brother]" + "ponies") are adult male fans of the animated cartoon *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (MLP: FiM). The cartoon was produced by Hasbro franchise in 2010 in order to promote the sales of the toys for little girls. It was not the first animated cartoon of Hasbro production about ponies; they made different shows in 1992, 1994 and 2002, and all of them were popular amongst the target audience of little girls. Nevertheless, the 2010 version of the show became extremely popular amongst men aged 18 to 30. In 2012, according to a fan conducted study Herd Census[1], there were between 7 and 12, 4 million bronies in the United States, and more than 80% of the fans were men (Herdcensus report, 2014).

The main characters of the show are female bright-colored ponies: six best friends who live in Ponyville and occasionally fight evil forces of the kingdom with the magic of Friendship. Each of the ponies represents one of the elements of friendship including honesty, generosity, loyalty, kindness, and laughter (Fig 1).

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[1] Herd Census—is a survey study about brony demographics. It was initiated by fans but in 2014 it became supported by Salem State University, Drs. Judi Cook and Rebecca Haines. Information from: http://herdcensus.com/2014%20STATE%20OF%20THE%20HERD%20REPORT.pdf

Figure 1. Official poster image distributed at 2011 Comic-Con in San Diego. Source: Wikipedia.

The screenwriter, Lauren Faust, intended to create a show which would teach young girls the power of cooperation, in other words, the power to achieve their dreams together through friendship. All of the main characters and the characters in power are female; hence, some studies reveal that the show stands on feminist grounds (Gilbert, 2015). That is why even Lauren Faust did not expect it to become so popular amongst men (Watercutter, 2011, June 9). As Gilbert (2015, 2.3) describes it:

FiM makes strides toward complex humor, multidimensional characters, and insightful stories in order to engage viewers at multiple levels, and is still overwhelmingly girly. This alone makes bronies a subject of interest, because grown men who create pastel pony art and passionately discuss characters with names like Fluttershy and Pinkie Pie are amusing, baffling, or worrying.

This fandom was born on the digital social platform *4chan* where some of the users started to comment on the MLP: FiM, while it was transmitted on the North-American TV. The positive comments on the show about ponies were ridiculed by other users getting to the point when all of the pony supporters were banned from the platform. This pushed the bronies to build their website for online gathering, Ponychan, which became a starting point of a brony fandom. Fan art also started to appear on different social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook or Deviant Art (a major platform for sharing fan-art from different fandoms). Inspired by the show, bronies started to produce a significant amount of fan content, ranging from fanfiction to fan-animation,

music videos and fan-art (i.e. Fig. 2.).

Figure 2. Example of brony fan-art. Retrieved from https://www.deviantart.com/v-korneev/art/Welcome-to-real-world-622251623

This vast output became the object of considerable ridicule, mockery, and hostility from other internet users (Jones, 2015). For instance, the fan art about ponies, sometimes with rather sexual content (as in many other fandoms), started to circulate the Internet, which made some of the users strongly reject the movement. That is how the anti-fandom of the bronies started to develop, which included users (in other words, *haters*) calling out bronies with such insults as "pedophiles", "pathetic" or "embarrassment" (Jones, 2015). Such attacks made the fandom even more united as bronies started to create their philosophy or ideology of non-violent response to bullying which includes tolerance, friendship and harmony (Kosnác, 2016).

In 2011, the phenomenon caught the public attention and started to appear on the news all over the world: in the US news (Peters, 2013, March 19; Fallon, 2014, May 1; Watercutter, 2011, June 9), similarly, in Spanish news (Gómez, 2014, May 11), and in Russian news (Shevelova, 2013, October 3). The majority of the articles looked at the phenomenon rather positively, however, frequently questioned the adult affection of the kids' show, describing it as something outside the norm (Gilbert, 2015). In other articles, the difficult cases of severe bullying of bronies at school were showed; i.e., the case of 11-year-old Michael Morones who attempted suicide because of bullying for being a brony (Gander, 2014, February 5). Meanwhile, more conservative media

directly produced rather hateful articles calling bronies "an embarrassment" (Gilbert, 2015). Also, some of the media were condemning the fandom as dangerous for kids and almost pedophilic (BrazyDay, 2019, June 22). Such news stories show the problem of reluctance to accept the fact that men can enjoy a show for girls (Gander, 2014, February 5). In all of the cases, the fandom was not viewed as something normal, but rather something peculiar, weird or horrifying. To address this problem, the documentaries about the fandom appeared, showing the fandom from the insiders' perspective with the aim to explain the affection and normalize it for the general public (Hodge et al & Hodge, 2014).

Logically, the question that puzzled the public of *why men are interested in a cartoon for little girls* also dominated research on bronies. Hence, the current body of research on brony fandom has been largely centered on gender and masculinity (Hautakangas, 2015; Lehtonen, 2017; Schimpf, 2015; Valiente & Rasmusson, 2015) including the phenomenon of anti-fandom (Jones, 2015) and identity building (Robertson, 2014). These studies showed how bronies can challenge stereotypes about hegemonic masculinity. For instance, in the Finnish brony fandom, it was found that bronies "incorporate new elements" into the traditional masculinity (Hautakangas, 2015, p. 115), and even challenge it while working on gender identities (Lehtonen, 2017). Moreover, some studies found that bronies' devotion to the fandom can vary from just a hobby to a life-changing decision to integrate into a "bronyhood" (Lehtonen, 2017; Kosnác, 2016). Kosnác (2016) proposed that these devoted fans had developed a kind of ideology, based on friendship, harmony, and tolerance, in which bronies follow religiously the values of friendship.

Figure 3. Dusty Katt brony. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/user/dustykatt

In psychology, the brony fandom was explored by one group of researchers over the last 6 years (2013-2019). They created a project, *Brony Study* which consisted of a series of questionnaires about the profiles of the North-American brony fans. Apart from the data about general psychological traits of the fans (i.e., the number of extraverts or introverts in the fandom), the study obtained data on how bronies were evaluating the influence of the fandom on their lives, which included the improvement in happiness and social behaviour in more of the 50% of the 1600 participants (Edwards, Chadborn & Plante, 2019). From the one hand, these results challenge the vast critique of the fandom by the media, who frequently described bronies as unsociable geeks (Gilbert, 2015). Though, from the other hand, the results also support the previous findings in fan studies by showing how fandom can open opportunities for people to communicate, collaborate and participate in different projects (Jenkins, 2006).

Moreover, the popular topics amongst media researchers included the nature of brony fandom as a media construct and its relationship with the Hasbro industry. The studies showed that the fandom could be characterized as "transgressive" as the brony fandom heavily influenced the show, i.e., bronies even got to create their own pony character which was included into the show (Bell, 2013). This brought the media researchers to compare the nature of the brony fandom with the video gaming industry due to the similarity between the industries' high levels of engagement with the fandom (Veale, 2013). One of the reasons of why the production was so eager to please the brony

fandom was the fact that adults fans became the target market to buy the toys and other pony merchandise (Heljakka, 2015). Furthermore, the devotion of the brony fans and their peaceful ideology caught the attention of culture and religion scholars. Hence, some research underlined the similarities between the bronies ideology and religion or cult (Kosnac, 2016), and the exploration of the religious bronies and their contributions to the fandom (Crome, 2014).

Nevertheless, relatively little work has been devoted to the more "traditional" fandom topics of research, such as participatory culture research, informal learning or new literacies research, which primarily described anime or otaku fandoms (Black 2005, 2006; Valero-Porras, 2018; Fukunaga, 2006; Lam, 2000; Williams, 2006). In such research, there is only one brief review of the fandom on an educational forum (Literat, 2017), and brief analysis of the interaction between readers and writers in the fanfiction community of MLP: FiM (Evans et al, 2017). This shows an interest in the topic from the part of educators, however, lack of the actual research. This project aims to explore the under-researched topic of the brony fandom from the new literacies perspective in two contexts of Russian and Spanish brony fandoms.

1.2.1. Russian and Spanish brony fandoms

As the majority of the previous studies have been focused on the US fandom, it is relevant to describe the local contexts of both Spanish and Russian speaking brony fandoms. Many countries have their own versions of the brony fandom meaning that bronies gather on specific "local" platforms and use respective languages as *linguas francas* on these platforms (Spanish and Russian, in our case). In Spain, the main brony platform is called Sponish Herd (Fig. 4) with 1021 members in the forum (checked in April 2020).

Figure 4. The platform Sponish Herd, screenshot made in February 2017.

The main part of the platform is a forum on which the participants get to know each other, discuss different topics about the show, etc. Apart from the forum, there is a private messaging system while every user has his/her own profile. Moreover, editors of the platforms create the news feed about the show which could be seen on the main page (Fig. 4). The platform is also linked to the Deviant Art account where the Spanish bronies artwork is presented. In addition, there is a collection of fanfictions posted on the platform Spanish Herd.

The Russian language space, Everypony.ru, is significantly bigger; with 45,370 members on the main forum (checked on April 2020), this platform unites all the bronies from Post Soviet space who speaks Russian (Fig. 5). The structure of the platform is similar to the previous one consisting of the forum, private messaging and the news feed. Though, this platform is more sophisticated than SpanishHerd as it offers diversified resources including the big variety of fanfiction, specific space for blogs, amplified forum (tabun.everypony), audiobooks and a Minecraft Server.
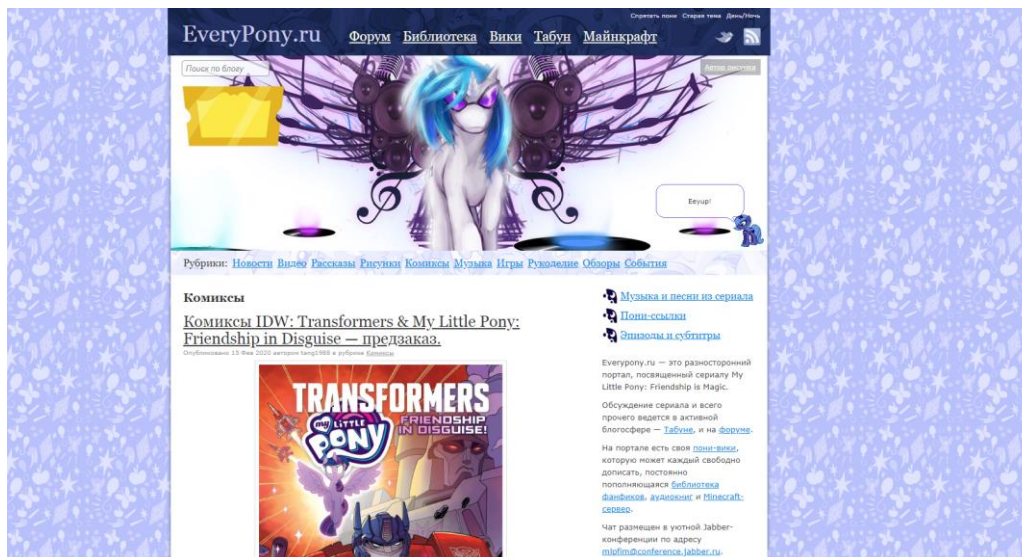
Figure 5. The platform EveryPony.ru, screenshot made in February 2020.

Moreover, in both Spain and Russia, bronies used to gather on fan conventions[2] or bronycons. In Spain, the last event was in 2016 in Madrid, SWUFEST, which consisted of the gathering of the Iberbronies of Spain and Portugal. After that, no more big conventions were made due to the lack of financial resources and the lowering interest of the fans. In Russian speaking context, the biggest conventions were made in Moscow (i.e., Derpfest 2017; RubronyCon 2014, 2016, 2018) with thousands of attendees featuring different merchandise stands, musical and cosplay shows and so on.

Figure 6. Photo with a cosplayer from @czequestria. Permission for publication acquired.

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[2] Fan convention—is 2-3 days offline gathering of fans which frequently includes selling of the merchandise, cosplay shows, panels with famous fan creators or actors of the show (voice actors, in our case), autograph sessions, musical concerts and so on.

I was able to participate in one of the last big conventions in Russia, in RubronyCon 2018, where I volunteered as a translator (English-Russian) in order to help the foreign guests (i.e. a voice actress from the show) of this convention (Fig. 6). My general aim was to contribute to the fandom and to meet my key participants with whom beforehand I had only online contact. I was impressed that the convention was aimed to be bilingual with a consecutive translation of the main panels from English to Russian. Also, it was interesting to see the willingness of the fans of a North American show to come to Moscow from all over the world. All of this helped me to get more of the *insider* perspective on the fandom.

1.3. Why I chose this topic and my access to the brony fandom

When presenting this research, one of the most frequent questions I received was how I stumbled upon this fandom. To answer this question, I have to confess that I am not an aca-fan (academic who is a fan) of MLP: FiM or a pegasister (female MLP: FiM fan), and my interest in this topic developed due to the previous studies that were conducted by the members of the research group Grael (i.e., Zhang & Cassany, 2016, Jose Valero, 2018) and by myself.

The journey to this thesis started with a master dissertation in which I researched the Spanish students who were learning Russian outside the classroom. I was generally interested in the dictionaries they were using, mobile applications, and other possible uses of Russian outside the classroom. Unexpectedly, it appeared that the Russian language learners were mostly watching cartoons in order to practice the language outside the classroom (Shafirova, 2016; Shafirova & Cassany, 2017a, 2017b). The learners were eager to hear conversational Russian with a low level of difficulty which many of them encountered in such cartoons as *Masha and the Bear* or *The Simpsons*. That was the start point of my interest in how animated cartoons are connected to language learning.

During the first year of my PhD programme, my topic of research was "Informal learning of Russian and English with the use of animated cartoons" including different

cartoons such as *Masha and the Bear*, *The Simpsons* and *MLP: FiM*. The research was mostly planned to be focused on the viewing routines of the participants and the aspects of audiovisual comprehension. However, while entering the brony fandom, I found the variety of different novel language practices, including different forms of cooperation and collaboration in the fandom, which were fascinating to research from the ethnographic perspective. Hence, the brony fandom became my main topic of research.

I found the brony fandom during the project DeFandom (3rd call, Queen Sophia Center for Youth and Adolescence, Spain) which explored how Spanish youth was participating in different fandoms considering the learning opportunities these fandoms were providing (Shafirova, 2019). At this time, searching for participants for the project, I stumbled upon a meme from the brony fandom and started searching for its base in Spain. That is how I found the platform Sponish Herd where I approached the most active bronies according to the website statistics and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. During the first interview with one of my main Spanish informants, Derpy, he described what he had learnt from the fandom. Interestingly, apart from learning the craft of digital art, Derpy (April 2017) claimed:

> *Cuando quiero buscar algo en google lo hago en inglés. Si leo manga, igual, en inglés. Sigo también muchos canales en youtube que son angloparlantes. Tengo infinidad de ejemplos xD [...] Es casi como una segunda lengua y todo gracias a una serie de ponies xD*

> When I want to search for something on Google, I do it in English. If I read manga, the same, in English. I follow a lot of channels on youtube which are in English. I have plenty of examples xD[...] This is almost a second language for me, and everything thanks to this show about ponies xD (my translation from Spanish).

According to Derpy, the show generally helped him to improve his English with its use in the fandom and beyond. This particular interview showed me that the topic of language learning in the brony fandom could be pertinent and then it was reinforced with further interviews and observations. In sum, this topic grew from being a part of the project to the general topic of this thesis. This is how I found the general topic of

this thesis, the brony fandom and its language learning opportunities.

1.4. Language use and language learning in a fandom

To start this section, I think it is relevant to explain how language learning will be defined though out the thesis. I follow the definition of language learning as a situated social practice of acquiring knowledge about how to use language and other semiotic modes in specific sociocultural coordinates (Gee, 1999; Knobel & Lankshear, 2015). Following the new literacies tradition, I will refer to this social process by using two terms: language learning and foreign language literacy development (Fukunaga, 2006). Moreover, in this thesis, the term *language learning opportunities* would also be used when a learner could notice and describe his or her improvement in a specific practice (reading, writing and so on), or when we can observe the participants engage in language practices which we determine as an opportunity for language learning. I will frequently use the term *language learning opportunities* instead of language learning as it is not always possible to have the pieces of evidence of informal language learning, and it is not our main goal to provide them.

For the last 20 years, several studies were produced on the topic of language use and learning in the fandom. Most of them were longitudinal case studies which explored the new realities of digital fan practices. The first studies on this topic explored the context of migration and identity empowerment of the adolescents who struggled in the school system. Lam (2000) opened this topic by making an ethnographic case-study and following an adolescent, Almon, who had migrated from Hong Kong to the United States five years ahead. He was frustrated with his level of English as he felt it was impossible to reach a level of a native-speaker, while also he felt that he did not belong to the classroom. In high school, he created a website dedicated to a famous Japanese singer. This fan page drew attention to other fans, with whom Almon began chatting in English. Through these conversations, Almon was able to renegotiate his English language identity from a learner to an expert in a particular area which empowered him to develop his English writing. Lam (2000) showed that the interconnections between identity building and language learning are built on the sense of belonging to a community. In further research, Lam (2006) explored two more cases of the

empowerment of the diasporic fans on the web. For instance, an adolescent web-developer, Lee, constructed an extremely popular website about Japanese popular culture, on which the anime community "*provided him with a different social and cultural environment in which to define himself as a learner, designer, and English user*" (p. 185).

Meanwhile, Black (2005) was the first literacy researcher to pay specific attention to fanfiction writing. According to Black (2005), fanfiction is a particular form of creative writing with a collaborative and participative core including positive feedback, constructive criticism, and encouraging comments by voluntary proofreaders from within the fan community. The members of the fandom create a safe scaffolding environment for novice authors, thus, fostering the development of language literacies. Black (2006) described the journey of English learning and identity building of an adolescent Nanako who moved from China to Canada. Only two years after moving, Nanako started to write fanfiction in English. Meanwhile, after several years of writing fanfiction, Nanako achieved a "powerful and transcultural" identity of a popular, multiliterate writer. If in the beginning, she was shy of her English asking the proofreaders to help her with grammar issues, within several years, she started to implement Mandarin and Japanese in the writing, empowered by the community. Black (2005, 2006, and 2008) described the fanfiction writing platform as a safe space in which soft comments about writing can encourage user's multilingual writing and identity building as a multilingual speaker.

In further, fanfiction writing was majorly analysed from the literacy perspective exploring how adolescents or young adults write in their first language, English (Curwood, 2013, Lammers, 2011, 2013, Evans et al, 2017, Vazquez-Calvo, Garcia-Roca & Báez, 2020). Similarly to the studies discussed above, the methodological enquiry of these studies included longitudinal case studies with ethnographic observations and interviews. Summarising the main results which are of value for this project, such data were found: 1) The feedback in the comment section on fanfiction websites was majorly positive (Evans et al, 2017), however, it rarely indicated specific problems in writing and how to solve them (Magnifico, Curwood & Lammers, 2015); 2) Fandom motivated users to write as it offered a multimodal, creative space to participate

in (Curwood, Magnifico & Lammers, 2013; Roozen, 2009; Vazquez-Calvo, Garcia-Roca & Báez, 2020); 3) Young writers could build and shift identities writing for different audiences (Lammers & Marsh, 2018). This research on fanfiction writing advanced the knowledge on identity building, motivation, creativity, literacy development, and the creation of community sense in affinity spaces. However, it was mostly centered on English speakers and did not include the topics of second language learning or foreign language literacy development.

Another popular topic of research in the fandom concerns gamers. This area is very peculiar; being explored in the context of massively multiplayer online games; it implied virtual "active" environment, role-taking, and interaction with other players within the games (Peterson, 2010; Rama et al, 2012; Thorne, 2012; Thorne, Fischer & Lu, 2012). Mostly, these studies were focused on the opportunities of interaction with different people from all over the world including topics of intercultural communication, multimodal environment, technological affordances, and motivation. Due to the specifics of the immersive virtual environment, I will not enter into this area, though we will talk about the research connected to gaming in the next section related to identity building.

In further, the topic of second language learning in the fandom was explored by several university teachers of Japanese as a foreign language (Fukunaga, 2006; Williams, 2006). These researchers noticed that the majority of their students were Japanese anime and manga fans. In this context, Fukunaga (2006) observed that her "anime students" had some advantages in comparison with the other students in the language classroom. Fukunaga analysed the experience of these fan students describing how they have improved their "*word recognition, listening and pronunciation, and awareness of various Japanese linguistic features*" (p. 213) by watching anime with English subtitles. Apart from that, the author discovered that the "anime students" got accustomed to hearing different kinds of slang and everyday talk in anime which made them more confident while interacting in the classroom. Furthermore, Fukunaga (2006) claimed that there is a lack of cultural context in the classroom while "anime students" had the chance to obtain this cultural context in anime and manga. Within this cultural context or cultural code that "anime students" learned, Fukunaga featured: settings, gestures,

different types of food and traditions in the Japanese school. To sum up, Fukunaga showed that anime, as a pop-cultural Japanese product, could enhance the learning process of the students from both linguistic and sociocultural sides.

Moreover, during the same year that Fukunaga (2006) published her paper; Williams defended her thesis (2006) also about "anime students". With her study she reinforced the argument made by Fukunaga (2006) finding that Japanese students, who watched anime, had experienced: 1) positive influence on language learning motivation, 2) development of the students' autonomy, 3) development of listening comprehension skills, and 4) introduction of the students to the Japanese culture (Fukunaga, 2006; Williams, 2006). Both Williams (2006) and Fukunaga (2006) provided evidence that this informal language learning in the fandom could be profitable inside the classroom. They were also the first researchers who paid attention to the viewing routines of the "anime students" and its relation to in-class oral comprehension development. Nevertheless, these studies were conducted mainly by interviewing the students, hence, the data on the actual out-of-classroom second language use was unattainable (i.e., in the study of Fukunaga (2006), we do not know how exactly the fansubbers used the Japanese language). This leads us to ask further questions such as: how exactly do students use a second language in the fandom?

To answer this question, various studies were conducted by my current university research group, Grael. During the projects of ICUDEL[3] (Digital Identities and Cultures in Language Education) and Defandom, several case studies on language learning in fandom were conducted, including rap music and identity building in and out of school (Aliagas, Garrido & Moore, 2016; Aliagas, 2017), identity building of fans of One Direction (Aligas, 2015), multimodal and intercultural practices of danmaku[4] (Zhang & Cassany, 2019a,b,c), Korean language learning as a fan of K-pop[5] (Moya Ruiz et al, 2020) and various studies on fan translation which will be explained in detail.

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[3] ICUDEL (EDU2014-57677-C2-1-R, Ministry of Economy, Spain).
[4] Danmaku—fan practice of multimodal communication placed above the actual video screening of young Japanese and Chinese users.
[5] K-pop—an abbreviation of Korean pop music made by fans.

Several researchers investigated fan translation from the literacy and language learning perspective. Valero-Porras and Cassany (2016) analysed the practices of a scanlator (manga translator), Shiro, who with the elementary level of English was translating manga from English to Spanish while heavily relying on multimodal modes of images, font styles, etc. In further, Valero-Porras (2018) analysed how Shiro was building her identity of a fan of manga and Japanese culture during the manga translation. Shiro's fan identity was manifested through her choices in translation including her choosing the cultural richness over possible comprehension, i.e. keeping honorific titles in romaji (such as -san or -chan) in Fig.5 or keeping the onomatopoeic phrases in Japanese (see also in Aragão (2016) with similar results in Brazilian context).

Figure 5. Shiro keeps the honorific *-kun* in "¡KENSHI-KUN!"(Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016, p. 4).

Moreover, Zhang and Cassany (2016) analysed a Chinese-speaking fansubbing[6] community *The Burrow* and found that the fansubbers organize themselves similarly to the professional subtitling companies. The participants had to pass a language test to enter the community and, depending on the results of this test, he or she was assigned to a role in the community (i.e, transcriber, proofreader, translator or editor). Meanwhile, the community was hierarchically organized by "managers" who assigned the roles and controlled the working process (Similarly, in Liu & De Seta, 2014). In this sophisticated collaboration, the members were motivated not only to translate but to learn Spanish. The most daunting task for these translators was to comprehend Spanish and transcribe

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[6] Fansubbing—fan practice of translation and creation of the subtitles for audiovisual products.

it, hence, they used different technologies (Wikipedia, online dictionaries, Google) and other languages (such as Portuguese subtitles) in order to comprehend the audio (Zhang & Cassany, 2019b). Similarly, in Vazquez-Calvo et al (2019) a fansubber Nino made subtitles in Catalan for anime in Japanese. He used Spanish translation as a reference, however, when in doubt, he used Google Translate to decipher the meaning in Japanese and provide a more accurate translation.

In further, the topic of fan translation of games was opened by the study of a Catalan gamer, Selo, who translated vintage games from English into Spanish (Vazquez-Calvo, 2018). Interestingly, feedback from the fandom was very different from earlier studies on fanfiction websites. If on fanfiction platforms, the feedback was lacking criticism and attention to the problems in writing, in the case of gaming fandom, the critique on translation was much more direct. These findings illustrate how different contexts provide us with different forms of organization, interaction and language use.

In all of the discussed cases of fan translation, the fans were conscious about the target audience of production, and the fandom they were engaging with. Fan translation showed to be a rich context for implicit informal language learning characterized by the use of multiple languages, transcultural connections and identity building while connecting with a foreign cultural product. This led the participants to develop plurilingual competence while engaging in intercultural communication (Vazquez-Calvo et al, 2019a).

In this section, we have seen that there is no universal formula for language learning in a fandom; it could differ from one area to another. Nevertheless, there are some general findings, which can situate our research, such as:

- Language learning in a fandom is a social practice. It is often connected with the user's status in the fandom and integration to the social space (Black, 2006; Gee & Hayes, 2012; Marone, 2015);
- Language learning in fandom is multimodal and highly technological; fans master a variety of different technological resources (Zhang & Cassany, 2016,

2019a,b);

- Fans are very motivated to produce fan products as they create a product for a real audience in collaboration with others (Curwood, Magnifico & Lammers, 2013);
- Fandom is a rich space for intercultural and plurilingual communication which unites people from all over the world and leads to intercultural learning (Fukunaga, 2006; Kim, 2016);
- Learning in the fandom is mostly incidental, so it is very difficult to track (Vazquez-Calvo et al, 2020); though, there is data on the connection between out-of-class fan practices and a further improvement in the language classroom (Fukunaga, 2006; Roozen, 2009).

After this analysis of the previous research in the area, I want to emphasize that there are still many open questions about language learning in fandom. For instance, the exact processes that lead fans to language learning are still debated. Presumably, the part of the problem is consists of difficulties in tracking informal language learning, which frequently leaves us with just the description of the practice and language-in-use. Moreover, the researchers frequently investigate the practices through the lens of educators, literacy scholars or teachers, but not as the *insiders* of the fandom.

I suggest that an ethnographic perspective and immersiveness of the researchers to these practices can shed light on some of the open questions about language learning in a fandom. For instance, as previously mentioned, the previous studies are majorly centered on the fan practices, such as fanfiction writing, fansubbing or scanlation, but less so on the fandom per se, i.e., Japanese manga and anime fandoms, Harry Potter fandom or a Sherlock fandom. The likely reason for that consists of the fact that for educators it is more relevant to look directly at the fan practices that could be linked to the language classroom, and ultimately recreated inside the classroom (Sauro & Sanmark, 2016, 2019). Being very useful data and a valid perspective, though, it creates a certain lack of a profound perspective on different language learning opportunities in the fandom. This is why I chose to address the area from an immersive ethnographic perspective, researching one brony fandom and aiming to show the range of different language fan practices and different language learning opportunities fans can encounter.

1.5. Identity building in a fandom

In the present study, I aim to explore what language learning opportunities the brony fandom can provide for the fans. Previous research suggests that learning is connected to identity building and identity work (Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Similarly, from the literacy perspective, identity building occurs when fans are entering a specific community and appropriate specific discourse which leads to language learning (Lam, 2000; Black, 2006; Marone, 2015). The most problematic part of studying identity is the ambiguity of the term due to its wide use in different areas from anthropology to political science. My take on identity comes from discourse studies. In general terms, I follow Bakhtin (1981) who describes identity through its connection to language use, in which the process of positioning oneself in an intertextual relationship with other discourses marks a negotiation of one's identity. Hence, ontologically identity is a way to present ourselves in the world in relation to others, and also in relation to the response of the other (Blommaert, 2005; Gee, 1999). Epistemologically, we use the term *identity negotiation* when we analyse the points of *intertextuality*, the connection of this discourse to other previous discourses and appropriation of those. The terms *identity work* and *identity construction* are used in relation to the development in self-positioning to other discourses.

The research on identity, constructed in the fandom, was vastly developed from the sociolinguistic perspective. These studies focus on the movement of different cultural flows in the fandom, and on how fans exactly appropriate these flows and construct their identities. The studies showed that fandom is a space of "remix" of different cultural flows and user productions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Pennycook, 2007). In various studies on the Finnish fandom, it was observed that fans *decontextualize (*take from the context) some of the cultural flows and then *recontextualize* (reuse of semiotic and linguistic modes in a different context) those in their fan products; this process leads the fans to negotiate their fan identities (Leppänen, 2012; Leppänen et al, 2014; Leppänen & Perounen, 2012; Leppänen & Kytölä, 2015). During this process, the users frequently use English as lingua franca, in order to communicate with other fans from all over the world or to produce fan practices (Leppänen, 2009). For instance, Leppänen

et al. (2014) described the case of a fan who wrote *otaku*[7] fanfiction using different languages and cultural references such as Japanese phrases written in Latin alphabet or English phrases when referring to sports and cooking competitions. Similarly, as we described in the previous section, in the case of scanlation community, the fan translator Shiro was using different Japanese references, choosing them over comprehension, in order to negotiate her identity of a manga fan. These studies show how fans negotiate their identities during fan practices by using different multimodal, linguistic and cultural resources.

As mentioned above, sociolinguists explored fans' communication and final products of creative expression. However, the process of in-group communication or the dynamics of communities were mostly documented from educational or literacy perspective. These studies show how fans enter the community, acquire knowledge and develop their identities as groups' insiders (Gee, 2004; Black, 2006; Korobkova & Black, 2014; Thorne, Black & Sykes, 2009; Thorne, Sauro & Smith, 2015; Sauro, 2017).

The topic of community dynamics and identity building was opened by Lave and Wenger (1991) who invented the term *communities of practice*. The community of practice is formed by a group of people who interact with each other on a regular basis united by a shared interest. The authors suggest that inside of the community, participants develop common knowledge, shared values, shared perspective and shared discourse (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). The person enters the community identifying as a "newbie", though, after acquiring the shared knowledge of the community, this "newbie" can become an "expert" representing the shared identity of the community. There are several studies that use the notion of *communities of practice* in the analysis of the collaborative practices in the fandom (Fiesler et al, 2017; Liu & De Seta, 2014). These studies used an ethnographic approach to describe and analyse in detail the dynamics of the group. Inside these group dynamics, the identities were divided into: "role identities" (i.e, translator, transcriber); novice-expert identities and shared community identities, which could be fostered through shared practices and inclusivity of the members (Fiesler et al, 2017; Liu & De Seta, 2014). The learning in

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[7] Devoted fans of Japanese anime and manga.

these communities occurs when the fans participate in the community and shift the identity in the participation.

Moreover, Gee (2004), drawing on the notion of the *community of practice,* proposed the term *affinity space*. Gee claimed that with the term *community* it was difficult to analyse fan spaces. Using the example of the fandom of RTS (Real-Time Strategy) games, Gee explained that fans used specific platforms where they could obtain: news, games reviews, strategy guides, maps and plots from it. These people "gathered" in a special area because they had a shared affinity for a goal, endeavor or interest in common. Hence, it is more useful to analyse this social construct through the fans' relation to this specific online space and not through the fungible idea of a *community*. The idea of the identity building and knowledge transfer in an affinity space appears similar to the *communities of practice* with the division on the *newbies* and *experts* and the knowledge transfer between them: a new person that enters this space will bring some specific knowledge to the community (intensive knowledge), then share this knowledge with the others (extensive knowledge) and also acquire it from the members with more expertise.

In further, several studies confirmed that literacy development and language learning are connected to learner's integration into the affinity space and identity building (Chick, 2014; Gee & Hayes, 2012; Lee, 2016; Marlatt, 2019). For instance, Marone (2015) described how several gamers appropriated specific terminology and vocabulary while integrating into the affinity space of gaming design. With this acquired vocabulary, the users could build their identities as insiders (also in Gee & Hayes, 2012; Knobel & Lankshear, 2014). Identity, in this case, was built through the literacy development and integration to the affinity space. As we have seen in the previous section, in the studies of Black (2006) and Lam (2000), the fans were also building their identities after entering the affinity space, i.e., in case of a fanfiction writer, Nanako, she built the identity of a competent, multilingual writer in the affinity space of fanfiction.

As we discussed above, from various perspectives, including sociolinguistic, educational or literacy ones, identity is related to the idea of *belonging,* while depending on the focus, this belonging could be to the community, affinity place, nation-state or ethnicity. Language in these constraints works as an instrument to *enter* a specific

community, or as an instrument of presenting this *belonging*. Users learn languages when *entering* a community as they have to appropriate specific discourse of the community, while they also learn to express their other valuable identities (such as cultural or nation-state identities). All in all, based on the findings discussed above, I hold that identity building is one of the key topics of researching language learning in a fandom.

1.6. Methodological decisions

In this section, the main methodological decision will be discussed (Fig. 6) together with some of the difficulties I encountered during the process of data gathering..
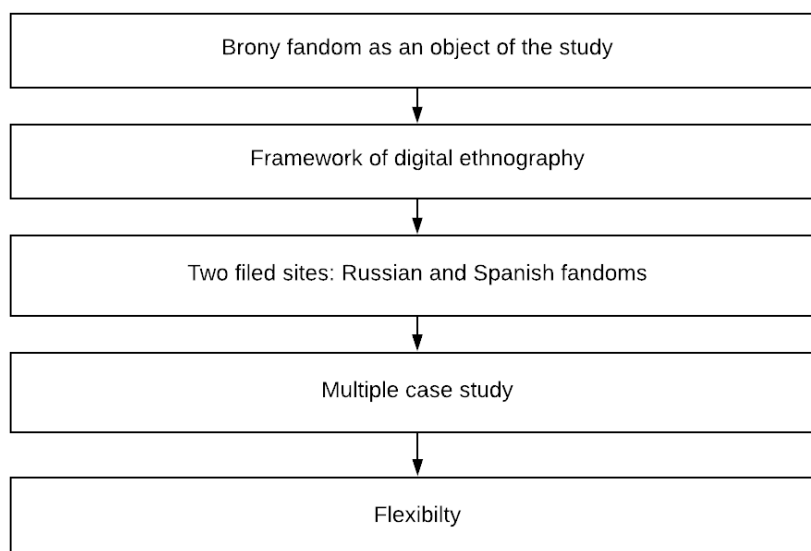
Figure 6. Methodological decisions.

My first methodological decision was to approach the brony fandom as an object of the study, without intentionally choosing specific fan practices. It gave me the freedom to approach the fandom, to get to know different fans and to observe different fan practices. This was made to deeply engage with the fandom and explore it from the *insider* perspective.

The second decision was to choose the framework of digital ethnography as it was a frequent choice in the previous studies (Lam, 2000; Black, 2005; Curwood, Magnifico & Lammers, 2013; Zhang & Cassany, 2016, 2019b). By digital ethnography, I mean the use of traditional ethnographic methods, such as interviews and observations, but

adapting them to the digital terrain. The third decision was to pick the different network of field sites of the brony fandom: the Spanish one (three participants) and the Russian one (three participants) in order to show different contexts of the global fandom.

The fourth decision was to make a general observation of the fandom and then concentrate on the specific fan practices. I made several exploratory interviews with active members of the fandom, asking general questions about their fan practices, viewing routines and the use of English (more detail in chapter 2). After that, I wanted to make more specific observations of the fan practices of all six participants. At this point, with the help of my supervisors, I realized that with six participants it would be impossible to make profound observations of all the cases. Hence, I decided further to choose only two-three fan practices and make a more profound exploration of those. The idea was to have a general exploration of the fandom on the first phase, and more specific and profound analysis (case studies) of both Spanish and Russian fan practices on the second phase of research.

The fifth decision was to be flexible during the data gathering which came out due to the difficulties I encountered. On the second phase of research, I could not observe and describe in detail the specific practices of the Spanish bronies, as they were gradually stopping being active in the fandom at the time. Hence, it was impossible to gather more data on the specific practices of these participants. I did not take into account how rapidly the hobbies of the participants can change, and how rapidly the fandom can lose its followers. Luckily, the Russian bronies were still very active in the fandom; hence, I was able to construct the trustworthy relationship with these participants, which allowed me to enter the fan practices and gather a lot of data. The lesson I learned during these difficulties is to be flexible and to work on the relationship with informants. Also, it showed me that in the field of fan studies one has to be very aware of the short life of the fandoms and changes in the informants' preferences. In the end, based on the gathered data, this thesis contributes with a profound exploration mainly of the Russian brony fandom and fan practices of the Russian-speaking participants.

1.7. Research Questions

The Research Questions (RQs) of this study follow the notions of situated language learning and new literacy practices. The main focus of the dissertation is on the fan practices in the brony fandom and bronies' language uses, featuring these RQs:

RQ1 How do Russian and Spanish speaking MLP:FiM fans use English in their fan practices and viewing routines?

RQ2 What language learning opportunities does the brony fandom provide?

RQ3 How do bronies use different linguistic, cultural and technological resources in order to build their identities?

All of the RQs are developed in specific papers written during the predoctoral research, which corresponds to a specific chapter of the thesis.

RQ1 is a general question that was formulated in my first approximation to the community. Hence, it mainly corresponds to the first paper written on the topic. This first paper was written generally describing the first interviews and observations of English language use in the Spanish speaking and Russian speaking brony fandom by six participants. It includes a broad perspective on different fan practices and viewing routines of the participants. This question mainly corresponds to the chapter 2 of the results.

RQ2 is centered on the language learning opportunities of the brony fandom. It is centered on opportunities and not directly learning as, according to the gathered data, it was impossible to provide evidence of actual language learning in every case that have been described in the thesis. To answer the question, the two case studies of different fan practices will be discussed: fan translating and crafting. Here I aim to explore the online ecology of fan practices: how users collaborate and participate in these practices while using Russian or English and what learning opportunities these practices provide. Chapter 3 describes in depth the case study of one brony crafter from Siberia who used English in order to advertise his figurines and interact with the clients. This longitudinal case study answers the question about language learning opportunities during this specific fan practice of crafting. Chapters 4 and 5 describe another case study—a collaborative fanfiction translation from Russian into English by four participants from different countries of post Soviet space. Chapter 4 explores the opportunities for

learning in collaboration and dialogue focusing on how the participants constructed their *community of practice* and how the knowledge had been passed from one member to another. Chapter 5 sheds the light on the cultural side of the language learning during translation, which consists of knowledge of cultural differences, transcultural meaning-making and overall transcultural literacies.

RQ3 is focused on how the bronies in these two case studies were negotiating and building their identities. In both case studies, it was found that the participants built knowledge by constructing their identities. Hence, we analysed the appropriation of different resources used to construct these identities. In chapter 3, it is analysed how the participant, a brony crafter, appropriated different resources in order to build his professional identity o on a specific social media platform. Chapter 4 describes how other participants, fan translators, were building their identities of experts in certain areas of the writing process. In chapter 5, we explored how the fan translators self-positioned themselves to different cultural flows while discussing the process of translation.

Finally, I would like to mention that all of the papers that are presented in the study have either been published or are under review in peer-reviewed scientific journals. The author of this thesis was always the first author of the papers, who had the most workload between the co-authors. The co-authors were the supervisors of the predoctoral researcher, mostly responsible for revision, text correction, and advising on different text/content/research changes during the whole process of the papers' revision. Each chapter provides a paper with only slight changes in style including introduction and conclusion in all of them. Hence, there is an expected overlap between the different chapters and some stylistic differences.

Chapter 2. Bronies learning English in the digital wild

This chapter is based on the paper:

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2.1. Introduction

Much of the leisure activity that was once labeled "a hobby" now takes place on the Internet. A considerable portion of online hobbying is centered around fan practices, activities which involve not simply the consumption of popular culture products but also participation in a larger community that shares the similar degree of emotional engagement with those products (Jenkins, 2006). Fan practices can vary from receptive activities like watching videos, gaming, and following social media to creative activities such as fanfiction writing, fandubbing, and so on. According to Gee (2004), these practices are not only ludic in function but may also involve the production and exchange of tacit, practical knowledge quite unlike knowledge of a purely academic nature. Taken together, the wide variety of fan practices observable today might most aptly be labeled "the digital wild", as indicated by the name of this special issue.

In this study we propose to explore how members of a fandom execute fan practices using a foreign language in their daily routines. Our study is based on two communities of adult fans of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (MLP), who denominate themselves as bronies ("bro [brother]" + "ponies"). Though when it first appeared in 2010 the cartoon was targeted at young girls, it has since become extremely popular amongst young men aged 18 to 30, who have developed a kind of ideology based on friendship, harmony, and tolerance (Kosnác, 2016). This community is famous for the intense productivity of its fan practices, which, according to some users, have "invaded the Internet" (Jones, 2015). Although the bulk of brony fandom is located in the USA, some European countries have their own well-developed communities, who communicate in their respective languages but also use English as a lingua franca.

The current body of research on brony fandom has largely centered around gender and masculinity (Gilbert, 2015; Jones, 2015; Hautakangas, 2015; Valiente & Rasmusson, 2015), identity (Robertson, 2014), or ideology (Kosnác, 2016). Relatively little work has been devoted to the topics of language use or language learning. Based on the vast productivity of the fandom, its ideology, and the context, we suggest that it would be a relevant field of research to assess second language learning from a new literacies

perspective, the perspective that views learning as embodied into social practices. In this paper we therefore explore how two different groups of bronies, in Spain and Russia, execute fan practices in English.

2.2. Literature review
2.2.1. New digital literacies in a fandom space

According to various scholars, the use of digital technologies in an informal surrounding, and specifically in fan communities, can generate a new source of learning (Gee, 2004; Jenkins, 2006; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). By fans we mean those individuals who are emotionally attached to a pop-cultural product who use these technologies to consume and discuss the original products or create their fan variations of them (Sauro, 2014, 2017; Duffet, 2013).

We propose to analyse language use in a fan community within the framework of new literacies. This framework draws from sociocultural approaches to literacy as a social phenomenon embedded within communities, values, norms, and social identities, and regards literacy as an everyday practice situated within a specific context, timeframe, and space (Black, 2008; Gee, 1997; Lankshear, 1997).

Lankshear and Knobel (2006; 2015) claim that, with the appearance of participatory digital communication media, and Web 2.0 technology in particular, not only the research approach to literacies but also literacy practices have changed. Specific platforms and digital communities (Wikipedia, for instance) enhance the notion of "social" in the reading and writing processes. They have not only a different appearance and interface, involving screens, pixels, codes, and so on, but also a new core "ethos" that is more "collaborative", "participatory", and "distributed" than in conventional literacies. These characteristics are conducive to a different mindset, which produces different types of social practices and relationships (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The concept of these "new literacies" can be clearly observed in online fandoms, where fan communities produce some unique types of practices and relationships driven by their shared affinity for specific pop culture genres or products.

Black (2005) describes the social character of fanfiction writing, which is organized along participative and collaborative lines, with positive feedback, constructive criticism, and encouraging comments by voluntary proofreaders from within the fan community. They work together to create a safe scaffolding environment for novice authors, thus fostering the development of foreign language literacies.

More recently, Zhang and Cassany (2016) explored the fansubbing into Chinese of Spanish TV shows and revealed it to also be a highly collaborative, participative, and multimodal new literacy practice. However, compared to fanfiction, where the text is written by one person and then reviewed and discussed, the fansubbing process is a team undertaking from the start and involves the creation of a hierarchical structure in which each member is assigned a specific role (transcriber, translator, corrector, or editor). Such fansubbing teams are eager to achieve the best and closest to "professional" translation, which leads to their constructing social norms according to strict quality standards and the values of the community. Similarly, the process is organized in a scanlators' community (Valero-Porras, 2018).

These examples describe different forms of collaboration and knowledge construction in online fandom, which vary from more flexible organizations to highly hierarchical structures. Nonetheless, these systems are always grounded in the specific practices, norms, and values of the particular community, and participation in them can develop new literacies.

2.2.2. Transcultural flows and identity development

Another widely debated issue is the bounded connections between digital identities and cultural flows of communities and learning (Black, 2006; Lam, 2006; Lee & Barton, 2011; Pearson, 2009). From a sociolinguistic perspective, Pennycook (2007) coined the term "transcultural flows" in order "to address the ways in which cultural forms move, change, and are reused to fashion new identities in diverse contexts" (p. 6). He analysed how the English language and the popular culture of hip hop are appropriated and localized in different countries and how this can reshape the performative identities of

the users.

Studies on fandom and new literacies have also been concerned with cultural flows and identity development (Fukunaga, 2006; Valero-Porras, 2018). Lam (2006) was the first to address this issue in describing the case of a Chinese immigrant in the US who constructed his plurilingual and global identity in an anime fandom. She claims that we cannot analyse migration processes in a monolingual and unicultured way given how digital technology facilitates the "socialisation to multiple modes of belonging and participation across national boundaries" (p. 173). This goes beyond the term "acculturation" and is better defined as "transculturation". Black (2008, p. 602) goes further and suggests that the notion of "transculturation" should be extended beyond migration studies. Applying it to formal education settings, she argues that transculturation can help students to develop "soft skills" to operate in a "transnational society".

Several studies (Blommaert, 2005; Thorne, Sauro & Smith, 2015) have pointed to the fluidity, multiplicity, and performativity of digital identity. It also found support in the work of scholars in the fields of both fandom and language learning. For instance, Valero-Porras and Cassany (2015, 2016) described how a scanlation community which was translating manga from English to Spanish considered it important to preserve Japanese or Asian connotations in the text and avoid any cultural reference to English culture or language, even though they were using English as a mediation language. They argue that the identity of a fan, in this case a "fan of manga" and "fan of Japanese culture", is actually performed through language use. Along similar lines, Sauro (2017) claims that fanfiction writing can empower "multilingual youth" to "use their second language as a resource for indexing a global and multilingual identity" and reaching "wider international readership" (p. 138).

In our case, the brony identity can be represented as a group affiliation identity which is "performed and negotiated in collaborative creative spaces" (Thorne, Sauro & Smith, 2015, p. 226). At the same time, the choice of identifying oneself as a brony could be described as a performative act, which underlines the "otherness" of adult men who

choose to watch MLP.

All in all, we have seen how research on fan practices and language learning is situated within such themes as new literacies, identity development, and transcultural flows. Within this theoretical context, we will formulate two research questions:

1. How do bronies use English in their daily online routines?

2. How do bronies articulate their English language use?

2.3. Methodology

We use digital ethnography as it is the methodology most commonly used in the fan studies discussed above (Valero-Porras, 2018; Zhang & Cassany, 2016). In epistemological terms, this approach is suitable to work with the notion of the new literacies spawned by the Internet and the new technologies interconnected with social practices and meanings (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). In addition, Hine (2015) underlines the importance of going to the digital field directly and not confining the gathering of data to interviews. Therefore, for our data collection we combined semi-structured interviews (henceforth SI) with participant observation over a six-month period, from March to August of 2017.

The number of interviews and observations varied due to the availability of the participants and the complexity of their practices. Observations can be divided into "active participation" (in the case of fandubbing routines and reverse translation), where the first author actually took part in the translating team, and more "passive participation" which involved merely monitoring fan output and web spaces (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). In both cases, the first author documented the process by keeping field notes and making screenshots.

This work forms part of a larger research project including exploration of the field site and data interpretation, undertaken as partial completion of the requirements for a PhD at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra.

2.3.1. Data collection

In the course of researching the topic of language learning through animated online cartoons, the first author carried out an exhaustive search of different cartoon-based fandoms. The brony fandom was chosen over other options (e.g., the fandom devoted to The Simpsons) due to its high level of activity, the large scale of the community, and its particularities.

Both researchers did not identify themselves as fans of the show before conducting the research. Nevertheless, the first author became familiarized with the show through watching every episode and reading the most important fanfiction, and grew to greatly enjoy it. Being an active consumer and genuinely liking the show helped her to access the participants, interpret observations, and ask relevant questions during the interviews.

For their part, the bronies became interested in the researcher as a language specialist. When declaring that we were researching language learning, the bronies perceived it as something positive that fandom provided them and were eager to explain and illustrate their fan practices. Also, her proficient command of English helped the researcher to be accepted by the translators' team because she could participate in the process fully.

Our participants are the members of two communities, each based on a MLP fandom space, the Russian-language space with 41,247 members, and the Spanish-language space with 937 members. Both include profile-driven forums with uploaded content, forums, and private chats, and both are linked to other spaces such as DeviantArt and Fimfiction.net where the participants, who create fanfiction or fan-art, post their content seeking broader audiences. We approached these sites because they enabled us to recruit participants knowing their age, gender, geographic region, and fan-practices, as this data was displayed in open profiles.

Name	Age	Occupation	Interests and fan practices	English learning
Derpy	19	Student of an illustration course, Galicia	He watches MLP and YouTube, reads Reddit threads, plays role games, and draws and publishes	He started to learn English in elementary school; however, he claims that MLP is a major

Name	Age	Occupation	Interests and fan practices	English learning
			fan-art.	influence on his English level.
Gork	20	Student of mechanical engineering, Barcelona	He watches MLP, reads fanfiction, reads and writes posts on Reddit, draws and publishes fan-art.	He joined the community with a high level of English; however, he admits that it helped him to acquire new vocabulary.
Zlos	30	Pharmacist, Madrid	He watches MLP, reads and writes fanfiction, moderates the MLP forum, manages a Spanish podcast about MLP.	He joined the community with a high level of English; however, he admitted that reading and writing fanfiction helped him to acquire new vocabulary.

Table 1. Spanish-speaking online brony community.

The first author registered on the Spanish forum and sent private messages in Spanish to the most active participants. For the Russian forum, she approached the active bronies in Russian using the VK social network—an extremely popular social media platform in Russia—as it was linked to many of the forum members' profiles. We selected the users who were active in the forum, admitted that MLP had helped them to learn English, and were open to collaborating. Prior to data collection, the research goals were explained and informed consent obtained from all six participants. The number of participants was limited to six because of the potentially huge amount of data to be gathered. Both communities were observed for a month before data was systematically collected, to get a preliminary idea of the different discussions, activities, and communities linked to the forum (e.g., DeviantArt).

Name	Age	Occupation	Interests and fan practices	English learning
Shor	25	Figurine crafter, Omsk, Russia	He watches MLP, crafts figurines of characters from the show, and then posts images of the figurines online.	He started to learn English in elementary school; however, he claims that MLP is a major influence on his English level.

Bolk	24	Employee of an IT company, Minsk, Belarus	He watches MLP, does fandubbing, and translates foreign guests at conventions. He is also part of a team that is translating the fanfiction novel The B.T.	He joined the community with a high level of English; but he admits that it helped him to acquire new vocabulary.
Nork	35	Designer, a small city in Ukraine	He does not identify himself as a big fan of MLP; however, he is the leader of the translation project *The B. T.* He produces illustrations and an audiobook for the project.	He joined the community with a high level of English. He admits that working in a team has greatly helped him to improve his English

Table 2. Russian-speaking online brony community.

It will be seen that the fan practices of the Russian-speaking participants are more diverse and recent than those of the Spanish-speaking participants, probably due to differences between the two communities as a whole in terms of size and level of activity. All six participants were men due to the overall imbalance in the international community.

Participants	Research technique	Online chat interview word count	Other data
Derpy	2 SI, FPO	8, 385	10 scrolling screenshots from DA
Gork	1 SI, FPO	2, 968	10 scrolling screenshots from DA
Zlos	3 SI, FPO	5, 643	-
Shor	1 SI, FPO	6, 132	10 scrolling screenshots from DA
Bolk and Nork	1 SI, FPO, CC	7, 888	field notes (3, 624 words), 8 screenshots, translated chapters of *the B.T.* (12, 388), YouTube narrations (76 minutes), dubbing process recording (30 minutes)

Table 3. *Data collected from the participants. Note.* Abbreviations used: SI semi-structured interview; FPO fan product observation; PO participant observation; CC chat conversations; DA DeviantArt.

We analyzed the interviews and field notes using a bottom-up qualitative content analysis with Atlas.Ti software. In doing so, we followed Fukunaga (2006) and Cho and Lee (2014), who suggest that this type of analysis is the one best suited to thoroughly and systematically describing meaning. To analyze specific participants' fan practices we carried out a discourse analysis (DA) focusing on language use (Gee, 2011).

2.3.2. Data analysis

The first author open-coded interviews and field notes twice to ensure reliability. For each interview or filed note, she then created analytic memos to label all main observations and interpretations by means of a tool built into the Atlas.Ti application. This helped us to interrelate the codes and then construct categories while keeping our two research questions in mind. In order to induce the main categories, a schematic diagram of different levels of codes was made (Yin, 2016). Our main categories emerged (such as "the process of watching MLP"; "the fan practices"; "English improvement with MLP"; "the use of technologies") as we contrasted the gathered data.

Subsequently, the first author applied DA to the specific practices such as fandubbing and comment writing on DeviantArt. She coded how bronies used English in order to achieve their objectives, using the toolkit described in Gee (2011). In this fashion, she determined that the main themes of these two particular practices, for example, were "the sociocultural translation of idioms" in the case of fandubbing and "changes in the use of articles and connectors" in the case of DeviantArt comments. This helped us to triangulate them with such subcategories such as "cultural value in translation" and "the improvement of English with MLP". Finally, the second author revised the main categories and subcategories in order to facilitate the interpretation of results based on the logic of thick description (Yin, 2016).

2.4. Results

We divided the results into two parts following the two research questions.

2.4.1. How bronies use English

The viewing routines

Several conclusions could be drawn about participants' MLP viewing habits on the basis of their interviews. All six participants preferred to watch MLP streamed online in English. In both communities the original English voice track was more popular, while official dubbed foreign language tracks dubbings elicited derision. However, with different experiences in English use, our participants described diverse strategies in order to improve comprehension. For two of them (Shor and Derpy), MLP was the first show they had ever watched in English and they depended heavily on subtitles. Other participants mentioned having previously relied on subtitles to help understand MLP or other shows. Nork even called this "the subtitles phase" of the learning process.

Shor started to watch MLP in 2013 developing a specific viewing routine. He watched each episode twice, the first time with subtitles in Russian and socially (with his brother), and the second time, on the following day, without subtitles and by himself. During the second viewing, undistracted by subtitles, he paid close attention to every detail in the animation. He never used a dictionary or paused the video, always either remembering the meaning from the previous viewing with its subtitles or deriving understanding from the context. Although he labeled these cartoons "easy to comprehend", he admitted that this routine had helped him gain a large amount of new vocabulary.

Derpy started out watching MLP in 2013 in English with Spanish subtitles until 2014, when he chose to watch it raw. When watching without subtitles, doubts about meaning would occasionally arise, at which point he would pause the video and go through the transcript of the episode on the official MLP fan page on at wiki.com. There he was able to find the phrases he had not understood and decipher them. Furthermore, if he did not know the meaning of a word or a phrase, he used WordReference to translate it. Gork reported following a similar procedure.

All in all, for Shor and Derpy MLP had provided the crucial initial motivation to move from viewing audiovisual content in their respective mother tongues (Russian and Spanish) to viewing it in a foreign language.

English use in fan practices

The bronies' use of English was closely tied to the specific linguistic demands of the fan practices they were engaged in. Here we focus on fandubbing and inverse translation.

Fandubbing

Bolk had been producing the fandubbing project of the last season of MLP (season 7). This project has been constructed in the form of an "experiment" in which Bolk would translate an episode phrase by phrase after hearing it and then dub it into Russian almost simultaneously, in the process recording his output as a Russian language track for the cartoon sequence in question. He used Mumble software both to record it and to share it with his fandubbing partner Vic. For Bolk, it was a way to challenge himself to translate an audiovisual product extremely fast while also applying some acting skills. He followed four main steps:

Step one: watching an episode in English and writing notes. This was a useful technique for the more challenging English phrases, which could become difficult to translate spontaneously during the recording process, such as specific names from the pony world, puns, idioms, or inside jokes. See these examples:

Oh, my bustles and bows! (season 7/6). This was difficult to translate because of its specific relation to fashion, with which Bolk was unfamiliar. In this case he resorted to a dictionary and the Russian-language Wikipedia to find an acceptable translation (*турнюры и бантики*).

Eternal Elegance Empire Silhouette (name of a dress in season 7/6). This was difficult to translate literally because it did not sound right or natural in Russian from Bolk's point of view. He ruminated on a better translation for a while and even asked my opinion. Finally, he looked through the subtitles of a popular fansubbing MLP group and was pleased with their translation *Силуэт Империи Непроходящего Лоска* (roughly "The silhouette of Empire of Eternal Gloss"). However, he ultimately preferred to invent a new interpretation, *Имперский Силуэт Вечного Изящества* ("Empire Silhouette of Eternal Elegance").

Step two: recording translations directly into Russian. Bolk's technique consisted of playing the video in raw format and listening to an English phrase, then pausing the video, translating it into Russian, and within seconds, recording it. He tried to reproduce the same pacing as in the original episode and also act out the emotions of the character.

In addition, Bolk was eager to replicate the various accents heard on the show. For instance, Bolk transformed the Latin American accent (due to the MLP fandom page) of one of the characters (Zipporwhill, season 7/6) into the accent of an English-speaker talking in Russian, which he felt was most appropriate in a Russian-speaking context.

Step three: repetition of the process if initial attempts are unsatisfactory. The most frequent difficulties came from the acting or the tnslation chosen. See the examples:

According to Bolk, the first phrase in Figure 1 cannot be translated literally because it includes a pun. It means that the characters were beaten up at their party.

Figure 1. MLP movie trailer dubbing process; fan products and our translation.

Bolk wanted to save the wordplay with cupcakes, which is an important element of the ponies' world. He made five attempts to reproduce it. Firstly, he focused on the meaning: *нам только что надрала круп самая ужасная гостья* (roughly "we just got our croups beaten up by the worst guest"). Secondly, he replaced *croups* with *the cupcakes*. At his third attempt, he was able to reproduce the pun itself: *нам только что надрала по самые кексики самая ужасная кайфоломщица в мире!* ("we just got our cupcakes beaten up by the worst hype-crasher ever"). He then made two further attempts to slightly improve the phrase: *Нам только что надрала крупы по самые кексики самая ужасная кайфоломщица в мире*! ("we just got our croups beaten up to cupcakes by the worst hype-crasher ever") and to act out this phrase at a fast pace and in a high voice to mimic the character Pinkie. We can see how our participant is eager to

reproduce the meaning of the phrase, the wordplay, and accurate acting. Likewise, another phrase consisted of an idiom with a joke: *Easy as pie… Oh, I love pie!* Here, the challenge was to replace the English *easy as pie* idiom with a Russian idiom that could be similarly followed up, which Bolk managed to do by translating it as *как конфетку у ребенка. оо я обожаю конфетки!* ("As easy as taking candy from a child. I love candy!").

Step four: sharing results and publishing the translation. Whenever Bolk had finished the dubbed audio track, his collaborator Vic would listen to his work, eliminate faulty segments, synchronize the dubbed audio track with the original video, and then publish the result online.

Cultural mediation can be seen to play an important role in both the translation (idioms, jokes) and dubbing processes (voice acting, reproducing accents). The translator perceived his job to be not only showing the feelings and emotions of the characters but also transferring semantic nuances in order to convey the same meaning and/or effect in Russian. In many instances, Bolk admitted that he ended up learning the meaning of many unusual English lexical items like "bustles and bows".

Collaborative inverse translation practice

Bolk and Nork were also heavily involved in translating a work of brony fanfiction entitled *The B.T.* from Russian to English. They were assisted by two other members, V and D, who were living in other countries of the former Soviet Union. Each of the four had a specific role and function in this digital process, with Nork serving as the main translator and leader of the group, Bolk acting as the self-styled "grammar Nazi", responsible for checking the work of the others, Dan, as editor of the original Russian text, monitoring plot and character development in the English version, and Vic translating but also providing technological support, explaining to the other members how to use the Etherpad editing platform and customizing it for the group's purposes.

Their objective was not only to translate the text but also to adapt it for an English-speaking readership. The process consisted of five steps, which Nork and Bolk described as "the five stages of hell".

Preparing the Russian text.

First, the translators read the original Russian text and discussed what parts would have

to be changed or adapted for English readers. Special attention was paid to parts that might be culturally misunderstood, involved stylistic problems, or might not properly capture the development of a particular character. Collaboration was carried out by working simultaneously on a document uploaded in Google Docs (see Figure 2) and final changes were decided by majority vote.
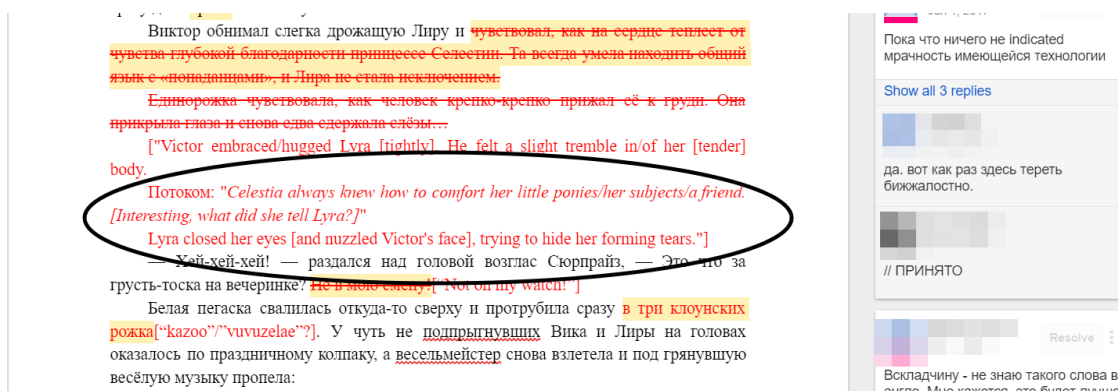
Figure 2. Fanfiction adaptation.

Draft translation.

Each participant chose some parts of the text in order to translate it. This stage took place on the free online editing platform Etherpad, which is similar to Google Docs. The main difference between them is that instead of leaving comments, the users have an additional window on the right of the screen (Figure 3), in which participants would discuss difficult fragments of the translation or engage in short conversations. A different color is assigned to each user so their contributions to the translation could be tracked.
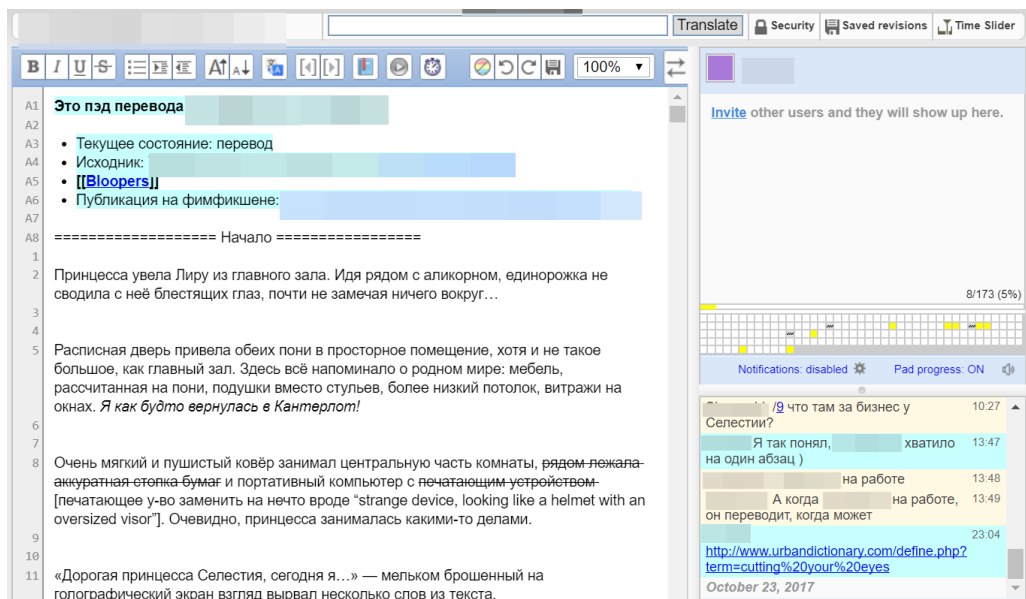
Figure 3. Fanfiction translation in Etherpad.

The Etherpad can be personalized easily as users can program different extensions into it. For instance, Vic developed an automated translation engine similar to Google Translate, but with punctuation corrections incorporated, and then added it to the script of the translation plugin. These corrections were based on previous editing of their work by English native speakers.

Draft Editing.

The participants read and edited the translation introducing their versions of translation. To facilitate this process they sometimes used Skype calls to read excerpts from the text aloud and comment on them. In this stage, one participant was responsible for introducing all changes into the draft document. Particularly difficult parts might be marked as "interesting" for further editing by native speakers.

Native speakers' editing.

In this stage, native speakers checked the text for grammar, punctuation, and "the language flow", this last being the area causing most difficulties for the Russian translators. The English-speaking editors also dealt with the items marked "interesting" in the preceding stage.

Final revision.

Once all corrections to the text were complete and all difficulties resolved, the final draft was formatted and published on the Fimfiction website. Also at this stage, Nork would receive comments from other members of the group about an audiobook he was

producing, with a special focus on improving his pronunciation in English.

English use in written discourse

Some of our participants had posted on the discussion website Reddit or created fanfiction in English based on MLP. However, all of these practices had taken place between three and five years prior to our research and participants did not seem to regard them as crucial to their language learning process.

The exception was Shor, who claimed that he had obtained 70% of his mastery of English by means of writing. He had been crafting pony figurines for over a year and quickly realized that in order to sell them online he would have to be able to communicate with his customers in English. He also promoted his work on DeviantArt by writing descriptions of the figurines in English and responding to the comments he received. Initially, he would have the messages translated automatically from Russian using Google Translator. However, he admitted that this application made "a myriad of mistakes" so he had to thoroughly check its output and if necessary make corrections before using it.

We observed two tendencies in his public messages and comments on DeviantArt from March of 2016 to May of 2017. The first was related to the content of his posts, which started out as simple descriptive labels for images of his figurines and evolved into much more fully-structured and emotionally engaging texts. The second tendency was connected to the increased grammatical competence exhibited in his texts. Two instances of the latter—one regarding his use of articles, the other his use of connectors—are described below.

In the beginning of 2016 Shor used almost no articles in English, reflecting the lack of articles in his native Russian. However, by December 2016 he had already started to use them occasionally.

This is my second work witch airbrush, I'm newbie in the modeling sculpture, and I look forward to every comment from you)
Yes, i ready to sell her) If you need it, please let me know your price)
Its height is 6 ".
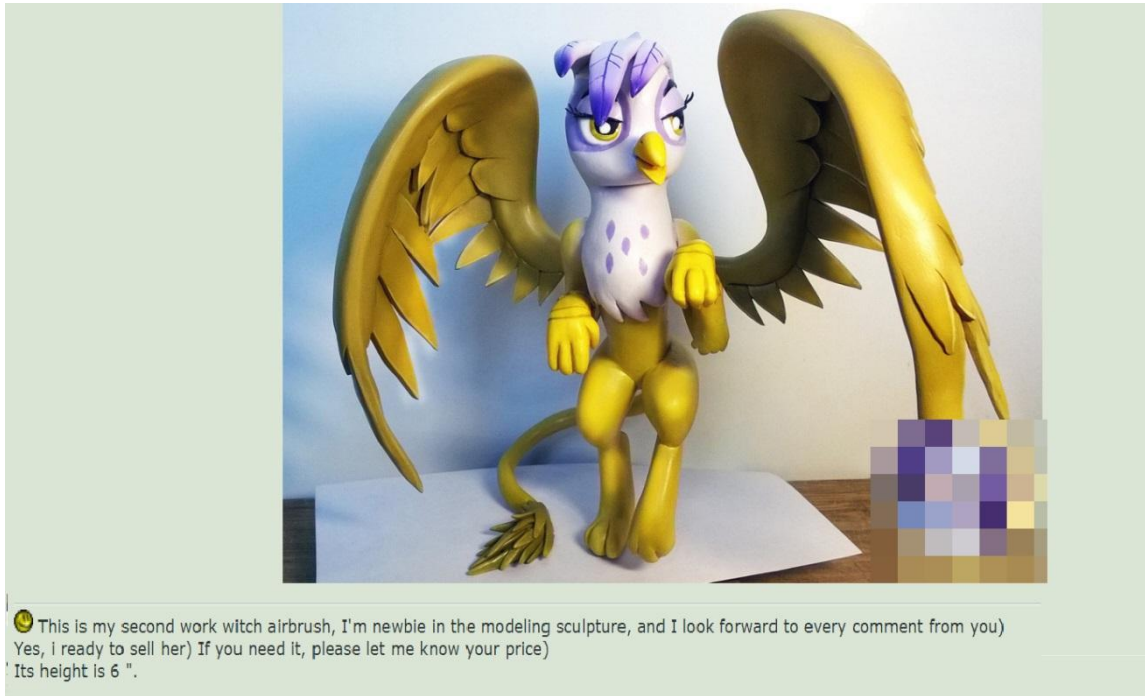
Figure 4. Message published by Shor on DeviantArt, 9 March 2016 (reproduced here with the author's permission).

Figure 4 illustrates several grammar mistakes. Though he does use a definite article correctly ("the modeling sculpture"), Shor fails to use the indefinite article "a" in the structure "I'm newbie". However, a year later (Figure 5) in reply to a comment expressing surprise at Shor's self-description (You say "I'm still a newbie"?), Shor uses the article correctly.

Aug 26, 2017 : Hobbyist Artisan Crafter

I consider myself a newbie even now, because I not do everything right

Reply
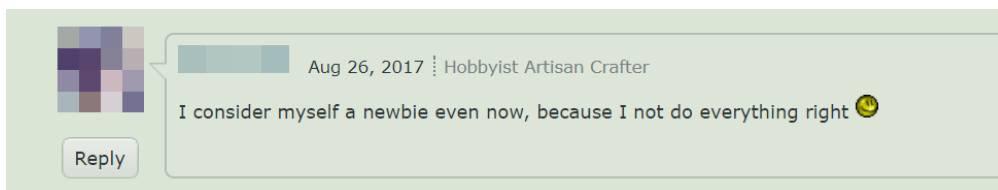
Figure 5. Message published by Shor on DeviantArt, 26 August 2016 (reproduced with the author's permission).

We suggest that there is a connection between the correction offered by the commenter and then Shor's subsequent self-correction; this type of interaction could be playing an important role in Shor's language development.

Over the same period of time, Shor began to create more complex sentences in English using connectors like "so" or "as a result". This can be seen in the publication from May 2016 in Figure 6. We see that compared with the earlier post from March of the same year (Figure 4) his use of English has become more sophisticated. Note also the use of discourse markers like "Oh" and "P.S."

360 VIDEO without focus 😀 www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDvS29... ↗

So, my new work is ready! 30 days of continuous work, a huge number of trials and errors, experiments and attempts to do so as should.

As a result, this Blackjack appeared. 24 centimeters high considering the wooden base with engraving. Electro-lighting pipbuck.

Oh, she really took away a huge part of my strength. I hope you will enjoy!

P.S. I'm always ready to accept a special, big and expensive commission 🙂
And the usual comms too! 😀

Figure 6. Message published by Shor on DeviantArt, 19 May 2016 (reprinted with the author's permission).

Moreover, the text is longer than before, explaining the work process and the difficulties involved. Also, articles are in use. He makes some mistakes but, nevertheless, the message has become much more engaging.

2.4.2. How bronies articulate the use of English

Technology use

Our research showed that digital technology was related to improved English language skills in comprehension and writing or translation, and also facilitated collaborative undertakings.

The participants relied on various elements or tool features to increase their reading and listening comprehension, particularly when they were just beginning to learn English:

Reading. During the viewing routines, almost every participant described the use of subtitles in order to understand the audio as a "phase" when improving their audiovisual comprehension.

Video control. The use of pause and re-watching fragments or episodes in order to review some fragments and improve their comprehension.

Dictionaries. Normally used during viewing, reading, and writing routines with dictionaries such as Wordreference or Dictionaries.com

All participants depended on both dictionaries and machine translators to facilitate their production of written English:

Machine Translators. Google Translate was used by the English beginner Shor, and also, the translator, Korn. In both cases, the participants addressed the use critically, assuming that the machine translator offers only a draft that must be revised.

Diverse dictionaries. During the reverse translation or fandubbing routine, participants would keep more than one dictionary on hand. Bolk mentioned that he mostly used definition and synonyms dictionaries such as Dictionary, Macmillan or Oxford. Also, translation (Russian-English), collocation, idioms, and slang dictionaries were used.

Other software facilitated collaboration among the participants, and was also used to disseminate or promote the fan products. Platforms such as Google Docs or Etherpad were used to work together on texts and share opinions about translations. We have seen that Etherpad was particularly useful because of its customizability. As also noted with regard to the inverse translation process, a group chat was created using Skype in order to communicate about the work in progress. In the case of fandubbing, Mumble software was used to ensure high quality audio recordings. And finally, web pages and social media groups were key to publicizing and promoting the English translation of *The B.T.*

English language learning

All of the participants admitted that MLP helped them to improve their English skills or

at least to maintain their level. We have grouped the reasons for this progress fall under three topics, motivation, collaboration, and sociocultural knowledge.

The majority of the participants affirmed that MLP was a motivational factor in their developing new language skills. For some of them the most motivational "breakthrough" practice was the viewing routine, whereas for others, it was reading or interacting with others. For instance, Derpy claimed that MLP motivated him to start to use English more frequently, which helped him to improve his language skills dramatically. When asked how this progress had become apparent to him, he said that when a native speaker was invited to participate in an English class he was taking, he found himself able to speak "freely" with him. This progress was manifested in his online practices too, as he started to perform a lot of them in English. In his words,

When I want to search for something in Google, I do it in English. If I read manga, the same, in English. I follow a lot of channels on youtube which are in English. I have plenty of examples XD. This is almost a second language for me, and everything thanks to this show about ponies xD (our translation from Spanish).

In fandubbing and inverse translation, the participants were motivated to use English not solely for the fan practice, but also with the clear aim of developing new language skills. For instance, Nork wanted to improve his intonation and writing through his participation in the *B.T.* project.Moreover, in the course of doing inverse translations, the participants noticed that when collaborating they improved their English skills. They corrected each other and members with higher levels of English helped those with lower levels. Nork claimed, for example, that his intonation in English had greatly improved thanks to Bolk's help and corrections. Also, native English-speakers were involved at a late stage in the editing process.

Furthermore, in every fan routine, the participants were aware of the implicit sociocultural context of the North American cartoon and on several occasions they articulated what they had learned from this context. Most of them connected language

learning with obtaining new lexis, which was generally situated in a specific context within the cartoon narrative. For example, Zlos reported that it was thanks to the story line of the MLP episode "Rarity Investigates" that he was able to learn the word "filly" or the idiom "ducks in a row". He claimed that the practice of reading fanfiction also helped him acquire vocabulary through context:

And yes, reading fanfic (of MLP and other things) helped me with my English. I have learned words, expressions, gags, and situations on the basis of reading, which probably would have been more difficult if I had consulted more conventional material (our translation).

According to participants, another advantage of watching MLP was that it allowed them to get accustomed a US English accent. This was especially the case of the Spanish-speaking participants as many of them were used to British English. Also, all of the participants learned to distinguish the "Southern" US accent of some of the MLP characters of MLP, which was initially difficult for even the more advanced learners to comprehend.

This sort of sociocultural awareness was particularly important when it came to fandubbing and inverse translation, because both processes involved situating the translated output within a different sociocultural context. Bolk claimed that for him one of the most important tasks in translation was adapting jokes and idiomatic expressions appropriately so that a Russian audience could understand and enjoy them in their local context.

By the same token, participants reported that cultural adaptation was one of their main goals in the fan language practices. They changed some parts of the fanfic in order to adapt the local rhetorical Russian traditions for a more global audience. For instance, when describing a character's thought process, they replaced the third person point-of-view with a first person narration because according to them the use of first person inner dialogs to present the thoughts of a character was the appropriate rhetorical practice in

English-language fiction. This can be seen in Figure 2 above, where the main character Victor is thinking about how the pony Celestia knew how to comfort the other ponies. In Russian, these thoughts are written in third person but in the adaptation they take an inner dialog first-person form.

2.5. Discussion

With regard to our first research question, we have seen that the way bronies use English in their daily online routines is characterized by several features which concur with those described in previous fandom studies. Among the most noteworthy of these features are a dedicated consumption of the cartoon in English, the creation of their own fan products, and extensive collaboration among the members during these practices (Sauro, 2017; Jenkins, 2006; Williams, 2006). We saw these uses of English illustrated by the case of a Russian brony figurine-maker, Shor, who improved his English use in specific discourse coordinates, making progressively more structured and emotionally engaging descriptions of his products. This process could be viewed as an example of how an individual in a specific context with a specific role in the community can start to dominate one of the multiple literacies of his second language (Knobel & Lankshear, 2015).

The writing of comments, the fandubbing process, and inverse translation can be characterized as new literacy practices in the terms defined by Lankshear and Knobel (2006, p. 27): they are situated; dispersed among different platforms and software, from collaborative writing platforms to individual social media accounts; intensely collaborative, as during inverse translation and fandubbing; participative, as when other fans discuss these fans' products and comment on them; and also involve distributed expertise, exemplified by the correction of English in Shor's comments or the participation of native-speaker correctors in the inverse translation process.

The language practices of a particular fandom can have different levels of participation and collaboration. We observed on one hand individual-driven practices, where the writing or translating process is mainly carried out by one person, such as fandubbing and descriptive writing, and on the other more team-driven practices, such as inverse

translation. The team-driven practice we have seen in this study is similar to the fansubber activity described in Zhang and Cassany (2016), as in both cases the aim is to create a more "professional" product. The process of translation is not only participative and collaborative but also carefully organized and hierarchical, with clearly distributed roles. Therefore, we suggest that collaborative and participative notions can be pursued by fans in multiple ways, which may be linked to whether they are individual- or team-driven.

With regard to our second research question, the bronies in our study attest to the frequent use of sophisticated technologies when using English, many of them greatly facilitating collaboration, such as Mumble, Etherpad, Google Drive or Skype, through which they chat, edit texts, make comments, and discuss their projects. This use of technology is also seen to provide opportunities for all participants to mediate their English use at different stages. A more sophisticated use of digital technology to improve English language output is seen in the creation by the *B.T.* team, with the help of input from a native speaker, of an Etherpad extension to correct punctuation. We consider this important not only because it is an instance of technology enhancing collaboration among team members (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006) but also because this collaboration led to the creation of a new tool designed to improve their written English output.

Furthermore, our research has shown that bronies are keenly aware of the sociocultural value of their language practices. Many of them connect the learning of new vocabulary within a specific context, during reading or watching MLP, with a successful learning strategy. This is reminiscent of the "anime students" described in Fukunaga (2006), who admitted that seeing new words in context helped in acquiring vocabulary. The participants in our research were also fully conscious that during the translation process they were playing the role of "cultural mediators" by adapting their products to the sociocultural realities of their target audience. This cultural mediation was in fact bidirectional, with inverse translation implying movement from local community to global and fandubbing involving flow from global community to local.

In the case of fandubbing, for example, Bolk, a Russian-speaking brony, took a US pop cultural product (MLP) and appropriated it in order to adapt it for a Russian-speaking audience. He treated it as a personal project where he could perform his skills in a creative way. Bolk was performing the role of a translator in the community, appropriating culturally bounded expressions and then localizing for a new audience, in a way that was meaningful for this particular fandom. His creative performance was therefore shaped by rules connected with his identity as both brony and translator.

In the case of inverse translation, one of the main objectives was mediation between the audiences. As Russian-speaking bronies, they were working to present a Russian product to a broader audience. They had to imagine how a Russian fanfic text might be perceived by an English-speaking readership, and adjust it accordingly. Thus, while enacting their digital identities as both Russian-speaking bronies and translators, they had to be socioculturally aware of a global readership's response to their adaptation of the novel.

Drawing on Pennycook (2007), transcultural flows are moving in digital communities, and we suggest that bronies construct their digital identities on the basis of this transcultural mediation. However, they not only appropriate and localize products made in English, but also, with the development of the Russian brony community, seek to present the local product to a global audience. Therefore, brony identity seems to unite local brony communities on a global scale, which in turn provides motivation for many bronies to use English.

We suggest that bronies reflect and learn about cultural differences during these transcultural mediations. It is thus appropriate to associate them with the term "transculturation", which includes not only new ways of constructing meaning but also socialization to different cultures (Black, 2008; Lam, 2005). This transcultural skill offers bronies "the sort of learning and participation valued in contemporary workplaces as well as social spaces" (Black, 2008, p. 602), which can be extremely useful in a globalized society.

Moreover, members of the inverse translation team articulated two main goals for the translation process: to improve their English and to create a high quality product. This contrasts with previous fandom studies, where informal language learning is observed to be more incidental and the main goal of productive effort is generally described as being "by fans for fans" (Gee, 2004; Lam, 2005; Black, 2006; Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016).

Also, the fact that fans could see their improvements while at the same time using the language was a motivational factor to continue learning (Fukunaga, 2006; Williams, 2006). In our case, the participants were motivated not only by their English improvement (particularly in intonation and writing) but also by the fact that they were producing fan products for a brony audience, thereby allowing them to identify themselves as brony-translators or crafters. We suggest that in specific language-based fan practices such as inverse translation, there is a chance that the participants are actively aiming for language learning and can therefore be reflective and critical about their learning. This, according to Barton and Lee (2013), is central in adult learning processes and leads to autonomous learning.

2.6. Conclusion

Our study presents an initial exploration of an informal learning of English in Russian- and Spanish-speaking communities of bronies. Observing and analyzing a wide variety of practices within an individual fandom has enabled us to document several new tendencies within fandom communities, such as practices with different levels of collaboration and participation, the personalization and creation of new technologies, the value of sociocultural knowledge and transculturation, and the variety of motivations that drive fans.

As for limitations of the study, we depended on the availability of the participants and their levels of participation. Moreover, as this was an exploratory study, our focus was wide in scope, and some of the practices we describe, such as inverse translation, deserve a more detailed analysis. The last limitation was the small number of participants from whom our data is taken. This makes it difficult to draw broad,

generalizable conclusions about this particular community, especially since there are for the moment no other studies devoted to it. However, we believe that further research on brony fandom communities will be richly rewarded, given their productivity and collaborative nature. To this end our own research goals include observing the brony community and their language practices over a much longer period in order to gain a larger and more detailed body of data which will allow us to analyze their collaborative practices and language behaviors more precisely.

Chapter 3: From "newbie" to professional: identity building and literacies in an online affinity space

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3.1. Introduction

With the growth of social media platforms, young people from all over the world frequently participate in online affinity spaces, unique spaces that unite people with shared interests or passions (Gee, 2004). In these international online spaces, though different languages may be used, English frequently serves as a *lingua franca* (Lee & Barton, 2011). In order to participate in these spaces, non-native English speakers must use their semiotic, linguistic, and discursive resources in a foreign language, which can then manifest itself as incidental language learning (Williams, 2006; Fukunaga, 2006).

This paper discusses the interconnection between identity building and second language learning in a fandom affinity space. Drawing on Jenkins (2006), fandom refers to cultural and social constructions of deeply engaged consumers with a shared interest in popular culture products. Following previous studies on language learning in a fandom (Black, 2005, 2006, 2008; Lam, 2000, 2006), we address second language learning from the framework of new literacy studies. Hence, we conceptualize online second language (henceforth L2) learning as a form of literacy development or a situated day-to-day practice whose goal is to appropriate different semiotic, discursive, linguistic, technological, and multimodal resources for specific communicative purposes (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Moreover, the studies by Black (2006) and Lam (2000) show that the center and engine of this literacy development lies in the identity building that takes place in a specific online community, driven by its support and encouragement. Hence, we aim to closely examine one particular fan's communicative situations and analyze how he uses English and constructs his identities.

Most previous studies have focused on identity building and literacy development in fans who produced practices directly related to writing (Black, 2005; Valero-Porras, 2018; Zhang & Cassany, 2016), such as fanfiction writing (writing alternative narratives based on a specific popular culture product), fansubbing (translation of audiovisual products and creating subtitles), and scanlation (translation of manga or comics and insertion of the text into the image). This study introduces a multimodal online space that has not previously been addressed in the literature, Deviant Art web platform, which unites fan artists and crafters all over the world. This platform is highly

multimodal as photos and videos are intrinsic to the presentation of artwork, while accompanying texts are short and descriptive. Moreover, the lines between affinity and professional spaces are blurred given that much of the art or craftwork displayed is available for purchase. For this reason, the complex, multimodal context of Deviant Art is a potentially rich area for research into identity building and literacy development. With this goal, we analyze the case of a Russian crafter who makes polymer clay figurines of the characters from his favorite cartoon show.

Aside from being a crafter, this individual considers himself a *brony*. *Bronies* (brother + ponies) are male fans of the cartoon program *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (2011; henceforth MLP:FiM), which was originally intended to appeal to young girls as the target audience. Inspired by the show, however, bronies started to produce a significant amount of fan–content, ranging from fanfiction to fan-animation and music videos. This vast output became the object of considerable ridicule, mockery, and hostility from other internet users (Jones, 2015). It also led to a growing body of research on brony fandom, mostly centered around gender studies and masculinity (Jones, 2015; Hautakangas, 2015; Lehtonen, 2017; Robertson, 2014; Valiente & Rasmusson, 2015). However, the present study addresses the topic from the perspective of foreign language literacy, focusing on how this peculiar context can affect one individual's language learning and identity building.

This case study is longitudinal in that it follows the participant's evolving position as a brony crafter in an affinity space over two years. We examine how his crafting practices—which are seemingly unrelated to writing and reading—are in fact linked to the development of his L2 literacy development. We are not concerned with measuring the number of errors in his writing. Rather, because we view literacy as a social practice (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006), we aim to first analyze how the participant uses new vocabulary and appropriates new discursive and multimodal resources, and then show how this is related to the construction of his online identities. Hence, we pose two research questions: *Which linguistic, multimodal, and technological resources does the participant appropriate in the process of building his online identities in an affinity space? And how does he go about building that online identity in English?*

3.2. Theoretical underpinnings
3.2.1. New literacy studies and L2 literacy development

We situate our study within the framework of new literacy studies, which view reading and writing as a part of everyday practices, discourses, contexts, spaces, and social identities (Black, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Knobel & Lankshear, 2014; Fukunaga, 2006). The dissemination of the Web 2.0 and the development of social media platforms, such as Wikipedia, have increased the collaborative component of reading and writing practices in online communities. These new literacy practices are defined as situated, dispersed onto different platforms and software, highly collaborative, and participative (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 27).

Over the last decade, different cases of new literacy practices in foreign languages have been explored in online spaces devoted to popular culture. These studies have analyzed new ways of meaning-making in areas such as gaming (Gee, 2007; Vazquez-Calvo, 2018), scanlation (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2015, 2016), interaction in anime fandom (Lam, 2006; Fukunaga, 2006; Williams, 2006), and fanfiction (Black, 2005, 2006). In all of these different areas, research indicates that there is a connection between participation in the affinity space and literacy development. For example, Marone (2015) observed that the members of one gaming affinity space appropriated specialized language and developed their literacies by integrating themselves into the affinity space and then identifying themselves as insiders (also in Gee & Hayes, 2012; Knobel & Lankshear, 2014). This specialized language appropriation suggests that the literacy development of participants in an affinity space is interconnected with their integration into that space as well as the construction of their identity.

Another substantial segment of the new literacy studies research describes the important role played by multimodal digital resources in online writing. Recent studies on scanlators who used multimodal elements of manga to translate the text (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2015) and fansubbers who used a variety of digital resources to identify the correct meaning of the audio (Zhang & Cassany, 2016, 2019b) showed how these elements helped the participants in reading and audiovisual comprehension. Meanwhile, other studies have demonstrated that Google Translate can also be considered a valid technological asset and the ability to use it critically can empower writers (Vazquez-

Calvo & Cassany, 2017; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019). Drawing on the works discussed above, we aim to research L2 literacy development as the appropriation of not only linguistic but also multimodal and technological resources in the course of new discursive positioning of the self within a specific affinity space.

3.2.2. Identity construction in an online discourse

Following Bakhtin (1981), we describe identity work through its connection to discourse and language use where the process of positioning oneself in a discourse marks a negotiation of one's identity. Moreover, one's position in a discourse always has an intertextual relation with other discourses which can stand for one's affiliation with a specific community.

Gee (1999) follows Bakhtin (1981) by defining identity as a dialogic construct positioned in discourses which are enacted in a socially situated activity. He distinguishes the "big D" Discourses, which characterize the entire social situation in which identity is enacted—the social coordinates within which one must act in order to be recognizable in a certain way—from "little d" discourses, which are the language-in-use practices in specific socially situated activities. Blommaert's (2005) notion of identity is similar to Gee's (1999); however, he focuses on the interactional part of identity, in other words, on how the reaction of others can influence one's self-representation. We combine both of these ideas in our analysis, focusing on how interaction offers new semiotic resources to modify self-presentation (Blommaert, 2005), and how users can position themselves in an affinity space with the use of particular linguistic and other semiotic resources (Gee, 1999).

The notions of identity proposed by Gee (1999) and Blommaert (2005) have been applied in various studies on identity construction and L2 literacy development in a fandom (Black, 2006; Lam, 2000, 2006; Thorne & Black, 2011). Black (2006) argues that a user can construct identities online by using different semiotic resources, such as images, avatars, icons, or sounds to mark his/her position or affiliation with a Discourse (see also in Leppänen et al, 2014; Valero-Porras, 2018). Hence, the appropriation of these resources can mark an identity construction or shift to a different position in a Discourse. At the same time, a positive shift in one's identity (for instance, a change in

position or status within a community or Discourse) can signify learning, as a person is exposed to new ideas, processes, and artefacts (Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017). Drawing on Kramsch and Lam (1999, p. 61), this is not an easy process for a non-native speaker, as "it is the highly self-conscious, rhetorical use of the foreign language" which requires one to position oneself in a new social reality and build an L2 identity.

3.2.3. Affinity spaces and identity building

The notion of affinity space is frequently used in the studies on informal learning in a fandom to conceptualize the context of fans' interactions (Black, 2005, 2006; Magnifico, Lammers & Curwood, in press; Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019). Gee (2004) proposed this term to put emphasis on a place (or digital platform) where people gather to interact with each other, to share practices and ideas based on a common interest. Various studies have developed this term and found that an affinity space frequently encourages people to share their interests, empowers identity building, and facilitates the appropriation of semiotic resources, mostly by providing a "safe space" and positive feedback on their work (Black, 2005, 2006; Neely & Marone, 2016; Vazquez-Calvo, 2018). In our case, we conceptualize the main platform of the study, Deviant Art, as an affinity space in which fan-artists, crafters, and other members of the fandom interact with each other, exchanging knowledge about materials and techniques and collaborating on shared projects.

3.3. Methodology

The approach taken in this study is digital ethnography, following the methodological tradition in similar studies (Black, 2005; Lam, 2004; Lee, 2016). Epistemologically we follow the "ecological view" taken by Markham (2016, p. 5) who understands digital ethnography "as the study of cultural patterns and formations brought into view as we ask particular questions about the intersection of technology and people in the post-internet age". In practice, digital ethnography means adapting the traditional ethnographic methods such as observations and interviews to the online terrain. In our case, the observations consisted of scrutinizing the participant's posts on a digital platform while the interviews were carried out via Skype.

Our main field site was the social media platform Deviant Art, a profile-driven platform centered on fan artwork. On the platform, users first create a profile by uploading an avatar and writing a brief introduction. Once enrolled, they can mark their favorite artwork or "deviations" by other artists and publish their own work ("newest deviations"), which allows them to receive comments. Though the platform caters to various fandoms, our participant was posting only artwork related to brony fandom. His posts normally consisted of an image of one of his craft objects with a short description in English. This was usually followed by a series of comments from other users of the platform.

3.3.1. Participant description and data collection

Our participant, Shor, was a 26-year-old crafter from Siberia. In 2013 he started to watch MLP:FiM on the Internet, participate in fan practices, and identify as a brony. Shor had not used English since middle school, and before engaging with the brony fandom he regarded his level of English as very low. MLP:FiM was the first show he had watched in the original English with Russian subtitles, as previously he had always watched shows dubbed into Russian. Shor made his first pony figurines out of polymer clay in the beginning of 2016. He then made a group on the Russian social media platform VK to share his creations and talk about his crafting experiences. After two months, he opened an account on the global platform Deviant Art, where he was obliged to read and write in English.

We found Shor's work on Deviant Art and contacted him personally via the Russian Social Network, VK, to ask if he would be willing to participate in this study. An explanation of how we first came across the brony fandom and the relationship that ensued between researchers and fans is documented in Shafirova and Cassany (2019). At the time of the first exploratory interview in May 2017, Shor was already a popular crafter. Crafting was no longer merely a hobby for him, but had become a very important part of his life. Proudly labeling himself "*a professional, even though beginner, sculptor and crafter*", Shor explained that he was already making a living by selling his figurines. After the first interview, we browsed Shor's activities online for six months through Deviant Art (Shor's main account in English), VK (his main account in Russian), and YouTube (an account he used at the time to show 360°-view

videos of his products) and took field notes and screenshots of Shor's posts on the platforms as well as the comments written by both Shor and his audience (following Androutsopoulos, 2013b).

The second interview, in November 2017, was based on these observations. The questions we asked referred to his perceptions of his progress in the use of English, his use of Google Translate, and his interactions with clients and other crafters. During this time, 21 rolling screenshots (from 2016 to 2018) from Deviant Art were analyzed in greater depth by means of discourse analysis. The last interview, conducted in April 2018, was focused on how Shor perceived in retrospect his growth as an artist and English user and his use of different resources in writing. All in all, between May 2017 and May 2018 we gathered:

- Three semi-structured Skype interviews with Shor (7,884 words) in Russian via chat;
- 22 rolling screenshots taken from the Deviant Art website;
- 49 posts by Shor on Deviant Art (2,610 words) and 1,100 comments (24,212 words);
- Our own field notes (3,209 words) in Russian.

3.3.2. Ethics

Our data-gathering procedures were at all times consistent with the guidelines of the International Association of Internet Researchers (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). We obtained prior informed consent from our participant and discussed every ethical decision with him, explaining the possible risks of data dissemination. As a popular artist in the brony fandom, Shor agreed to allow his texts and pictures of his work to appear in this article. However, "Shor" is a pseudonym.

3.3.3. Analysis

Following previous studies in the field (Black, 2005, 2006), we applied a bottom-up qualitative analytical framework that combines content analysis (Schreier, 2012) with discourse analysis (Gee, 2011) for the purpose of tracking Shor's identity building and

literacy development on multiple levels, from specific communicative situations to overall tendencies within the timeframe. Our analysis followed the three-step sequence:

We codified and analyzed the interviews, field notes, posts, and comments with bottom-up qualitative content analysis using Atlas.Ti software to to code the participant's perceptions regarding identity and literacy development, and detect tendencies in his posts and the comments he received (Schreier, 2012). The coded content was then sorted into categories such as discourse development in the comments section (Figure 2), length of posts (Figure 3), specialized vocabulary (Figures 4,5), multimodal resources (Figure 6), and the use of Google Translate.

We applied discourse analysis to the participant's writings on Deviant Art in order to see how he used a foreign language and how he positioned himself in specific communicative situations. Here we analyzed the screenshots collected following the toolkit provided by Gee (2011) with reference to the theoretical framework on identity building proposed by Blommaert (2005) and Gee (1999).

We compared the first two sets of results by searching for patterns and creating main categories. These patterns and main categories allowed us to interpret the results and answer our two research questions. The main categories of this step are the subdivisions of the results.

3.4. Results
3.4.1. Online identity building

In this section, we will discuss how Shor, with his limited knowledge of English, started to build his identities with the support of the affinity space.

A newbie crafter and an initial English user
In March 2016, Shor wrote his first post in English. Though he had not used the language for a decade, he was familiar with the overall sociocultural situation of Deviant Art, which is crucial for effective communication (Gee, 1999). We argue that

Shor's previous knowledge about Deviant Art helped him to negotiate his identities as a crafter and L2 user in that space.

Hi people! I use Google Translator, so do not get angry at me 😊 This is my second work witch airbrush, I'm newbie in the modeling sculpture, and I look forward to every comment from you)
Yes, i ready to sell this Gilda) If you need it, please let me know your price)
Its height is 6 ".

Figure 1. One of Shor's first posts (March 2016).

In Figure 1, Shor struggles with the construction of the text. There are several grammatical errors: 1) absence of articles "*I'm newbie*" (interference from Russian language); 2) absence of the verb *to be* ("*i ready to sell...*"); 3) "i" not written as a capital letter; and so on. He also closes three sentences with a single parenthesis, an emoji used by Russian speakers in informal writing to mean "smile" but rarely understood by non-Russians. Nevertheless, Shor manages to write an understandable text and insert a high-quality photograph of his work.

He presents himself as a user of Google Translate (henceforth GT) and a "*newbie in the modeling sculpture*". With this phrase Shor begins to negotiate his two identities: a professional identity as a crafter ("*I'm newbie in the modeling sculpture*") and a language identity as an online L2 user ("*I use Google Translate*"). In both cases, he presents himself as a "newbie", simultaneously marking his entrance into the affinity space and his low confidence. However, he does not directly apologize for being a

newbie or using GT; instead, he asks the audience to "*not get angry at me :)*". Shor anticipates critical judgment of his weak writing skills in English and appeals to the emotions of his audience to arouse their sympathies and good disposition (Martin & White, 2005). Moreover, he addresses his readers with the phrase "*I look forward to every comment from you*", thus dialogically engaging with the audience and indicating that acceptance in this space means a lot to him (Gee, 2011). It shows that even in these early posts, Shor, being familiar with the sociocultural situation, knew how to appeal to the audience when introducing himself.

Interaction on Deviant Art

After presenting himself as a "newbie", Shor began to receive comments on Deviant Art which played a central role in the construction of his two identities (Blommaert, 2005) as well as the development of his literacy (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The comments were mostly written in English and were encouraging for both Shor's professional identity as a crafter and his language identity as an L2 user. The comments on his posts changed over time as the popularity of his craftwork increased. While his first post in March 2016 drew only three comments, the post related to his most popular piece in December 2017—by which time he had begun to make a living entirely from the sale his figurines—received more than 240 comments. In Figure 2, we categorize the different types of comments that emerged over the course of our observations.
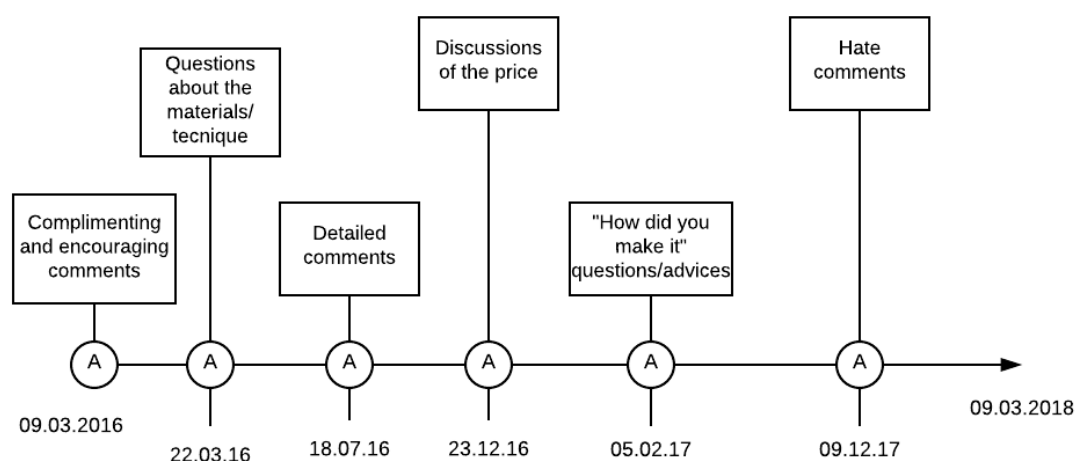
Figure 2. Changes over time in the types of comments made about Shor's posts.

Initially, written reactions to Shor's work tended to be simple compliments such as "*This is amazing*", "*Great work*", "*Wow*", and so on. He also started to get encouraging comments about his English. For instance, below Figure 1, one English-speaking commenter used GT to write in Russian mimicking Shor's apologetic phrase: "*Простите, чтобы использовать как Google Translate...*" (*Sorry for using Google Translate. I like your Gilda and Rainbow Dash...*"). This commenter used GT to code-switch meaningfully from English to Russian, showing Shor that: 1) poor English was not an obstacle in this affinity space, 2) users of the space might actually enjoy Russian, and 3) using GT was not a problematic issue. The commenter encouraged Shor's L2 identity by lowering the pressure on him to write only correct English and normalizing the use of GT.

Other comments were questions about the techniques and materials Shor used, such as "*Are they from plastic?*". These questions began to appear because Shor offered no information about how he made his figurines (Figure 1), and only named the material from which he sculpted them ("polymer clay") after these questions were asked (Figures 7, 8). In July 2016, other figurine crafters started to take an interest in his account and make detailed compliments using crafting terminology such as "*nice airbrushing*", "*nice braided hair*", or "*great crud-muffins*", some comments even exceeding 100 words in length. In December 2016, Shor's work began to draw more attention from potential buyers, with queries appearing about the prices of figurines and how to buy them. In 2017, another type of comment began to appear concerning how Shor created the figurines. Here, fellow crafters asked Shor about his specific technique or even for a particular recommendation: "*How did you make…?*" or "*What type of clay would you use…?*" Thus, the discourse in the comments changed over two years, becoming more specialized and increasingly including discussions of materials and working process, while Shor gained the status of an expert in the crafting field.

Nevertheless, some comments expressed aggression and hate (see the latter type of comment in Figure 2). Among the comments on Shor's most popular post, there were messages which could be characterized as typical attacks on the brony fandom by haters and trolls (Jones, 2015). These comments did not attack Shor directly but denigrated the MLP:FiM cartoon show itself and mocked bronies as a fandom. Shor had different responses to these messages. For instance, he diplomatically answered the comment

calling MLP:FiM a "*shit show*" by writing "*Everyone has different tastes. It was this show that opened up my talent in me:)*". Surprisingly, these negative comments seemed to have little effect on Shor's identity building. He did not delete these messages (which he could have done) or take any measures to prevent them—nor did they seem to bring about any changes in his writing style.

3.4.2. Shifts in identity and literacy development

In this section, we discuss how both language and professional identities of Shor simultaneously shifted over time, and how this shift is connected to his L2 literacy development.

Gaining confidence as a crafter

In his first messages (Figure 1), Shor presents himself as a *newbie* in crafting, and in another post three months later Shor repeats that he is *still newbie*. However, by the six-month mark, Shor avoids using the word *newbie* or mentioning GT. After 10 months, he no longer presents himself in any way, instead focusing on descriptions of the process of making an art piece and using new linguistic and multimodal resources. As Shor ceases to present himself as a newbie in crafting, he starts to build a new identity as an "expert" in this affinity space. Shor starts to use more specialized discourse, negotiate the prices of his work, and even refer to himself as a "professional crafter" (from the first interview). Following Gee (2007), who developed the term "professional" in the context of identity building of dedicated gamers, we refer to Shor's identity as a professional identity.

In our case, Shor builds his professional identity by developing his literacies. For instance, the length of his descriptive texts becomes increasingly greater, as illustrated by the graph in Figure 3.
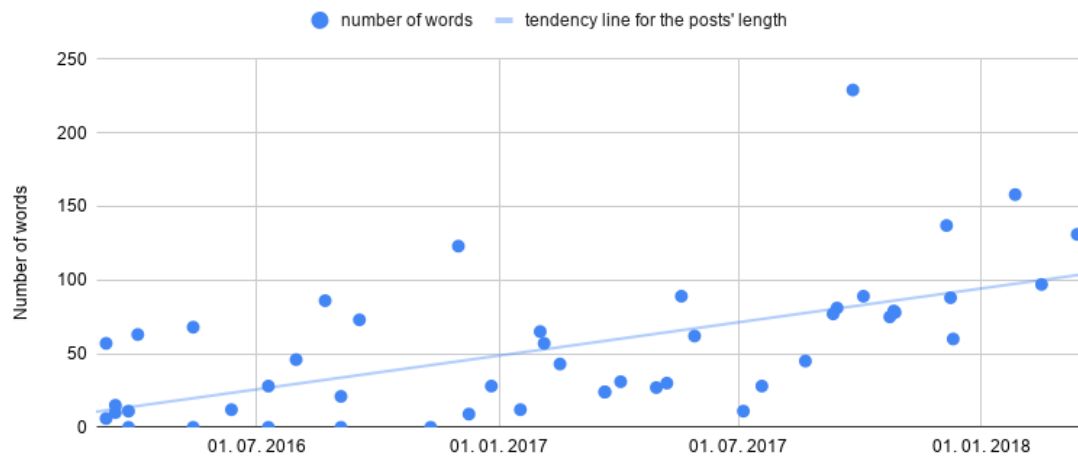
Figure 3. Increasing length of descriptive texts in Shor's posts.

By about one year after his first post (01.01.2017), Shor has ceased to post pictures without descriptions, while he has also begun to be more consistent in the descriptions, producing longer texts for every figurine.

Moreover, his texts develop qualitatively. Building his professional identity, he starts using new linguistic resources, for instance, the specialized vocabulary of crafting. In the previous section, we already noted that the comments section started to include more crafter terminology and became more professionalized. Similarly, over the course of two years, Shor gradually introduced specialized vocabulary while describing the materials and the process of his work.

Figure 4. Specialized vocabulary appearing in Shor's posts, March 2016–March 2017 (26 posts).

During the first year, Shor wrote 27 posts in which we identified 20 items of specialized language (Fig. 4), with three items of especially frequent use ("*commission*", "*polymer clay*", and "*sculpting*"). In Figure 5, we see how this trend continues, during the second

year, with 43 items of specialized vocabulary appearing. These items include not only those used in the first year but also many new words, such as "*strabismus*", "*engraving*", "*handmade*", and so on.

Figure 5. Specialized vocabulary appearing in Shor's posts, March 2017-March 2018 (23 posts).

Simultaneously, Shor was appropriating more professional multimodal resources in order to present his work, as can be seen in Figure 6. Mostly they are connected with the presentation of photographs (angles; specific background for the product), logo development, and video implementation (360º-view short videos showing the product; long videos showing the sculpting process).
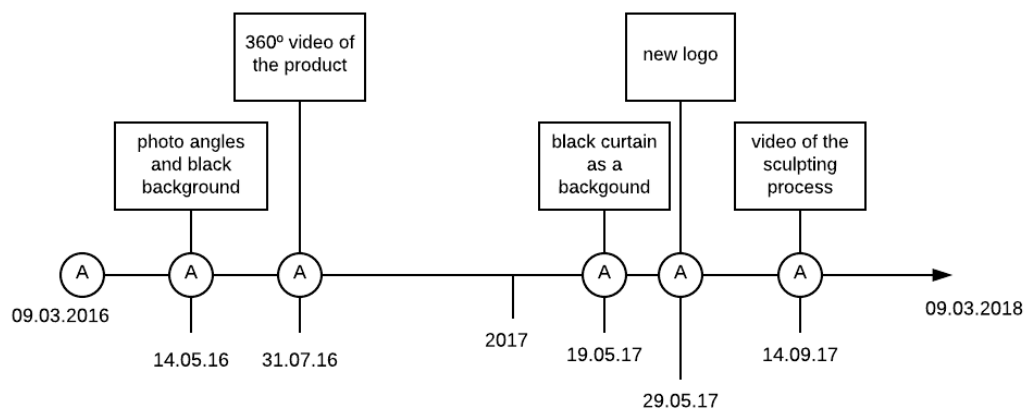
Figure 6. Addition of new multimodal elements to Shor's posts. March 2017-March 2018 (47 posts).

Following Marone (2015), we connect this appropriation of specialized linguistic and multimodal resources with Shor's integration into the affinity space, and also his

professional identity building. In order to look into this in more detail, Figure 7 shows Shor's first long, coherent text involving the use of different multimodal resources.

360° VIDEO www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji401b__
OMG, 51 days, but I did it!
I took this cool art as a basis
anderpable.deviantart.com/art/...
and change it as wanted. Hell, I did the work exclusively for myself, and therefore invested at 100%
I'm a big fan of the band Behemoth, so the sisters are dressed in original merch, and Pinkamena holding a guitar Hex-7 Behemoth frontman. Marble guitar - Ibanez btb 400.
Guitars are made of valuable wood teak, chains and earrings - gold and silver. The base made of real carbon 🙂
I really cherish them, but if you want to buy them - you have the opportunity, but do not think that I will give them cheap 🙂
Height - 15cm, polymer clay.

Figure 7. Shor's first detailed and well-constructed post on Deviant Art (December 2016).

Most of the discourse in this post consists of a detailed description of the figurine and the process of creating it. Shor presents his work visually in detail using new multimodal elements such as video and a collage of photos taken from different angles. The images look more professional in comparison with his first post (Fig. 1), with his personal logo in the center (blurred here to preserve his anonymity), the special dark background, and photos taken from six different angles. Shor shows the importance of these multimodal elements by adding a video to the first line of the accompanying text message.

The second utterance of the description is focused on the process of hard work (*"OMG, 51 days, but I did it!"*) and his personal motivation (*"Hell, I did the work exclusively for myself, and therefore invested at 100%").* He adopts a professional profile, underlining that this figurine is made not for a client, but for himself. Moreover, he describes the materials ("*chains and earrings - gold and silver*" or *"real carbon*"), using specific

terms well outside the usual beginning-level English lexicon ("*wood teak*", "*polymer clay*").

The price negotiation component had also evolved, and this indicates Shor's growing confidence as a crafter. In Fig. 1, he uses a conditional construction: "*If you need it, please let me know your price)*". In Fig. 7, he is very confident: *"Do not think that I will give them cheap"*. We can see here a substantial boost in Shor's confidence and his sense of holding the power in price negotiation.

In subsequent posts, Shor's texts gradually evolve further, as can be seen by comparing Fig. 8, his post from May 2017—about a year and a half after his first post—with Fig. 7. Again we see an expanded use of specialized crafting vocabulary and new multimodal resources.

360 VIDEO without focus 😊 www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDvS29... 🔗

So, my new work is ready! 30 days of continuous work, a huge number of trials and errors, experiments and attempts to do so as should.

As a result, this Blackjack appeared. 24 centimeters high considering the wooden base with engraving. Electro-lighting pipbuck.

Oh, she really took away a huge part of my strength. I hope you will enjoy!

P.S. I'm always ready to accept a special, big and expensive commission 😊
And the usual comms too! 😊

Figure 8. 35th post by Shor on Deviant Art (May 2017).

The multimodal presentation seen here is similar to that seen in Fig. 7, with a high-quality photo collage and video link. The new specific vocabulary is also used in a similar way to describe the materials used in sculpting (*"wooden base with engraving"*). The major development apparent in this post, however, consists of the

close integration of the multimodal components with the textual description. He uses the crafter vocabulary ("*wooden base with engraving*", "*electro-lighting pipbuck*") together with the strategic photocollage (specific close-up of the figurine's hoofs and engraving) in order to emphasize the major achievements of his work. This major coherence between different discourse elements indicates how he is mastering the use of different resources in order to build his identity as a professional crafter.

We claim that Shor becomes able to shift his professional identity from newbie to professional crafter by acquiring the use of a more specialized discourse that situates him as an expert, combined with his effective use of new multimodal elements and his increased confidence to negotiate prices from a position of power. These three criteria not only show the shift in his professional identity, but also parallel the development of his L2 literacy.

Building the identity of an L2 online writer
Together with Shor's professional identity, his identity as an L2 user also shifted over the course of two years. As we saw above in Figure 1, in his first post Shor apologized for the use of GT, indicating his low confidence in English use and his embarrassment at having to resort to GT. Nonetheless, as noted in section 4.1.2., his first post drew encouraging comments about his English and the use of GT. With time, Shor no longer mentions GT or his command of English in any way; simultaneously his posts become longer and more coherent and include increasing amounts of specialized vocabulary.

According to what he reported in interviews, Shor continued to use GT over the two years but was increasingly able to interpret its translated output critically. Thus, while initially he simply copy-and-pasted the English text produced by GT into his posts, after only a few months he began to pay more attention to the options that GT offers (self-correction, different equivalences between languages). In our second interview, to the question of why his writing had improved, Shor responded:

Because before I was paying less attention to the analysis of the translation, now I am trying to make the text more vivid. (22.11.2017)

Over time Shor was increasingly able to analyze and edit the English text after translation, which highlights his appropriation of this technological resource and growing confidence in its use. In the third interview, when we asked Shor if at that time he found it easier to write in English, he answered:

It is. I can understand almost everything that they write to me, except a few words, but I am sure if I expand my vocabulary, it will stop being a problem. However, with answering frequently I have the structure of the sentence in my head, but I can't let the client read what I wrote only with my own forces, so I use the translator in order to prove myself. (03.04.2018)

This shows that Shor has already developed his reading comprehension using GT only as a "*proofing tool*" in his writings. He has also become more confident as an English writer, declaring his certainty of future improvement: "*I am sure...*". Shor also notes that he has started answering the comment section "*with his own forces*", without GT, indicating a diminished dependence on the tool and his growing confidence as an English writer. To Shor, this change in his use of GT is one of the central reasons for the improvement in his writing. We argue that this appropriation empowered him to be a more critical user of English—as a reader of translations and a writer of descriptions—and also to be more confident in his abilities as an L2 writer.

Other indicators of Shor's literacy development and L2 writer identity empowerment are the choices he started to make as a writer (Kramsh & Lam, 1999). For instance—as we have already noted—he chose to use more specialized vocabulary in the descriptions (Fig. 4, 5). He also chose to introduce various sophisticated multimodal elements (Fig. 6). Moreover, Shor chose to express his feelings about his work while trying to engage with his audience. Comparing Figure 8 with earlier messages, we see that he uses evaluative adjectives such as *"Guitars are made of valuable wood teak, chains and earrings - gold and silver. The base made of real carbon ☺"* The phrases "*valuable wood teak*" and "*real carbon*" demonstrate his appreciation of the value of these materials (Martin & White, 2005). Similarly, in Fig. 8, the use of "*huge*" (in "*a huge number of trials and errors*"; "*a huge part of my strength*"), instead of "*big*", allows him to intensify the difficulties involved in his working process. Following Martin and White (2005), this type of positive lexical appreciation (valuation) could be connected

with the mental process of ideational worth in a dialogical discourse construction. Shor wants to show his appreciation for the figure in order to engage his readers with the idea of its worth.

Another choice he makes is to use slang, which cannot be checked using GT. For example, in Fig. 8 we see him using slang expressions as intensifiers in order to engage the reader with the idea of the figurine's value ("*Hell, I did the work exclusively for myself*", "*OMG, 51 days, but I did it!*"). During the interviews, Shor mentioned that he was picking up some slang expressions by mimicking the style of his clients' comments. These choices provide evidence that Shor has shifted his identity from an unconfident L2 user to a confident online L2 writer, who is empowered to critically use technological resources (GT) and new linguistic and multimodal resources in order to engage with the audience.

3.4. Discussion

Drawing upon these results, and following Lankshear and Knobel (2006), we argue that, in the course of his professional identity building, Shor appropriated various linguistic, multimodal, and technological resources in order to integrate himself into the affinity space of Deviant Art. As a result, he developed new literacies and built up his identity as a confident and competent L2 writer who is fully competent in the linguistic register appropriate to the specific genre of figurine descriptions (including both slang and professional discourse), uses multimodal resources (videos and images), writes longer and more coherent texts, and is empowered to transmit to the audience values that are meaningful to him such as hard work and the high quality of his product.

Similar to previous studies (Lam, 2006; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Lee, 2016; Fukunaga, 2006), the development in L2 literacies seen here occurred due to Shor's participation in an affinity space. On Deviant Art, Shor was supported by the commenters who admired his work and encouraged him to write in English. The discourse of the commenters became more specialized in parallel with the changes in Shor's discourse. The data presented here show how Shor expanded his crafting vocabulary as the commenters started to position him as an expert in crafting. Hence,

this study develops Marone's (2015) ideas about how specialized discourse is used for participation in an affinity space, and in detail illustrates the dynamic of expert identity building and specialized vocabulary appropriation. The affinity space of Deviant Art was a great space for such learning as the commenters tolerated his English mistakes and also encouraged Shor to use increasingly specialized vocabulary.

Nevertheless, Shor received not only encouraging comments (Black, 2006; Lam, 2006) but also direct hate comments. However, this negative feedback neither affected his identity building, nor did it discourage him. This online hate is related to the fact that brony fandom has always been the target of some Internet users (Jones, 2015). Since Shor, as a brony crafter, expected this reaction from those outside the fandom, this online hate only served to reaffirm his membership in this brony affinity space. Hence, encouragement in the affinity space is not only about positive feedback, but mostly about integration.

The major difference between the studies on fanfiction and fansubbing communities (Black, 2006; Zhang & Cassany, 2016, 2019b) and our study lies in the fact that fan crafting is not a practice directly connected to literacy activities. In these previous studies, the L2 identities of the participants were built simultaneously with their affinity or professional identities. In our case, Shor has to become a better crafter, and also to demonstrate it in his texts and photos. Shor built two identities, one as a professional crafter and the other one as the L2 online writer on Deviant Art. We claim that Shor's professional identity and online L2 writer identities are intertwined. His major goal was to become a professional crafter, so the integration into the affinity space and major support from it encouraged him to build his professional identity. This boost in his professional identity motivated Shor to invest in his identity as an L2 writer and to develop his literacies. He was motivated to use new professional vocabulary, to use Google Translate more critically, and to use the camera and multimodal resources. Shor was also motivated to make choices in his writing involving the use of slang, for example, or evaluative expressions, which provides proof of his growing empowerment as a L2 writer (Kramsch & Lam, 1999).

Another distinguishing component of Shor's literacies is that, in comparison with fanfiction writing, his texts were relatively short and heavily supported by multimodal

resources like photos and videos (Black, 2005). Since his success did not directly depend on his ability to write, this gave Shor the opportunity to enter the affinity space with almost no knowledge of English and to gradually develop his abilities to use English. In other words, he was under no pressure to write with perfect mastery of English and could express his identity relying on both multimodal and linguistic resources. His presentation and price negotiation skills changed drastically as his identities evolved, as did his ability to take pictures and make videos. His discourse became more professional and specialized in tandem with the greater professionalism in his photography and video-making skills. The data indicates that his use of multimodal and linguistic resources was developing in parallel with his online identity construction process.

Moreover, the context of online reading and writing is highly technological, and inevitably linked to the use of online dictionaries and translators. In order to write online in English, Shor appropriated GT as a linguistic and learning resource. This finding is consistent with the study by Vazquez and Cassany (2017), which argued that a more sophisticated and critical use of automatic translators is connected to efficient language learning. Our study develops this idea by showing that GT forms part of Shor's literacy development, because in order to analyze his translations and make editing choices he had to develop his knowledge of English. With this constant analysis, he was able to produce better constructed texts. Moreover, not only did GT serve as a technological tool that Shor appropriated, but his increasing ability to use it critically gave him more confidence to present himself in a foreign language, thus encouraging his L2 writer identity.

3.5. Conclusions

The findings of this study have advanced current knowledge on the interconnection between literacy development and identity building in an affinity space by showing how, in this specific case, the participant was able to simultaneously build both his professional and L2 writing identities. The affinity space of Deviant Art was a crucial factor in the participant's success. The multimodal online environment of Deviant Art offered an initial L2 user resources to build an online identity not entirely dependent on

his linguistic expertise, which lowered the pressure on his linguistic abilities and gave him the opportunity to express himself and build his L2 writing identity by using different kind of resources, both multimodal (images and videos) and technological (Google Translate). Moreover, within this space, Shor encountered a specific international audience interested in crafting, which motivated him to build his professional identity and consequently his L2 writing identity. The affinity space became a good ground for this participant's literacy development as its members encouraged him as an L2 user while at the same time empowering him as a professional crafter.

This specific focus on brony fandom has also shown us how relevant integration into the affinity space is for identity building and literacy development. Previous studies showed that only positive comments and a "safe environment" encouraged the participant's identity building. However, this study illustrated how online hate messages coming from outsiders to a specific fandom will not necessarily affect the identity building and literacy development negatively. This is because for a member of a brony fandom, it is commonplace to encounter online hate, and such negative comments actually serve to confirm the member's integration into the affinity space.

Chapter 4. Online collaboration in a brony fandom: Constructing a dialogic space for identity work in a fan translation project.

This chapter is based on the paper:

Shafirova, L., & Kumpulainen, K. (in review). Online collaboration in a brony fandom: Constructing a dialogic space for identity work in a fan translation project. *E-learning & digital media* (Scopus Q3).

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4.1. Introduction

The Internet and its various social platforms have boosted the emergence of novel participatory cultures "out in the wild" serving various interest groups for recreation, work, civic engagement and learning endeavours (Benson, 2011). Online participatory cultures are evidence of a high level of engagement of the participants, social connections, informal mentorships, and collaborative meaning-making in fandoms (Jenkins, 2006) not typically identified in formal education institutions (Gee, 2004). Fandoms are online or offline spaces formed by deeply-engaged consumers with a shared interest in specific popular culture and its products (Jenkins, 2006; Gee & Hayes, 2012). They provide an opportunity for fans to share their interests, develop and maintain social relationships, and also to express their creativity by producing fan products, such as fan-fiction (i.e. writing alternative stories based on popular culture products), fan-subbing (i.e. translation of the original voice tracks of audio-visual products and editions of this translation with subtitles) and scanlation, fan translation of manga (see e.g. Sauro, 2017; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019).

Previous research on online fandom communities has explored participants' incidental language learning and digital literacy development, underlining the collaborative and participative nature of fan production (Fukunaga, 2006; Korobkova & Black, 2014; Lam, 2006; Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016). For instance, Black (2006) made a case study about a teenage fanfiction writer, Nanako, underlining the dialogic structure of the writing process in which the story was revised and commented on by proofreaders. The comments and reviews of the writing were mostly soft and encouraging, which created a fruitful space for Nanako's identity work and learning. This empowered Nanako to build her writing and cultural identity while developing her writing style.

In the terrain of fan translation research, fansubbing (Zhang & Cassany, 2016), scanlation (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016) and novel fan translation (Saadat, 2017) entail collaboration processes in which members are assigned to specific roles depending on their language abilities (for instance, transcriber, translator or editor). Overall, the organization during collaborative online fan translation has been identified by these studies as being hierarchical and distributed—every participant having certain responsibilities and certain workloads with high commitment and quality standards.

These communities are praised in the research literature for their sophisticated working structures, use of digital resources, and creating opportunities for the participants to learn about translation (Zhang & Cassany, 2016, 2019). However, little research attention has been directed to how participants negotiate and establish a dialogic space for their online collaboration and the opportunities these collaborative spaces create for their identity work and consequent learning opportunities.

In this study, we will analyze a case of fan production, an online community of fan translators who identify themselves as bronies[8]. We argue that despite earlier research in the field, there has been a lack of detailed analysis of how members of fan communities achieve a dialogic space for their online collaboration and identity work when writing and/or translating. By dialogic we refer to a space that is non-hierarchical and in which the participants reciprocally engage in negotiating meanings and their identities (Wegerif, 2007). We propose to analyse in detail the collaborative working process of fan translators focusing on their interactional processes including the values, norms, and identities participants negotiate in the process. To these ends, in this study, we ask: RQ1: *How do translators organize their online collaboration in the fan translation project?* and RQ2: *How does the negotiation of joint translation activity contribute to the construction of a dialogic space for participants' identity work?*

4.2. Theoretical underpinnings
4.2.1. Online collaboration from the dialogic perspective

Our study draws on the dialogic notions of human communication, learning and identity building (Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017; Bakhtin, 1986; Wegerif, 2007, 2013). The dialogic perspective underscores the importance of negotiating and establishing joint attention and mutual agreement for collaborative work and learning (Kumpulainen & Mutanen, 1999; Renshaw, 2004). Following Wegerif (2007), we define dialogic space through the idea of "reflective dialogue", which represents a set of norms and values contriving the ideas of reflexivity (i.e. participants reflect on their arguments and of the others), inclusivity (i.e. everyone is included into discussion), intersubjectivity (i.e.

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[8] Bronies (*brother* + *ponies*) are young male adults who are fans of the cartoon program *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (from now on, MLP: FiM). The core of brony fandom is located in the USA, however, there are fan communities in different parts of Europe, in countries such as Spain, Germany or Finland. This study is centred on a Russian speaking brony community.

participants consider the perspectives of other participants in the dialogue), explicit argumentation (i.e. participants reason their propositions with explicit arguments) and creativity (i.e. participants develop creative solutions to the problems). We have used these characteristics as the guiding categories of our analysis (see also Haythornthwaite et al., 2018; Mercer et al., 2010; Pifarré & Staarman, 2011).

Moreover, we hold that the dialogic space potentially created by the participants for their online collaboration is closely connected to their identity work as it is 'an inclusive "space" within which self and other mutually construct and reconstruct each other' (Wegerif, 2007, p. 43). Hence, we aim to examine closely the interconnection between the dialogic space in online collaboration and participants' identity work. Also, special attention will be paid to the online environment of collaboration, as in dialogic space, it can play 'an indirectly supportive role, resourcing, expanding and deepening learning dialogues' (Wegerif, 2007, p.10). In sum, we hold that the dialogic perspective provides us with a profound viewpoint on the ways in which collaboration is interconnected with the norms, values and identity work of the participants during their joint engagement in working together (Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017).

4.2.2. Identity work in fan communities

Following Bakhtin (1986), we view identity work as being closely connected to the language uses when the process of positioning oneself in a discourse marks a negotiation of one's identity. This interactional positioning is constructed by *voices,* meaning a person's worldview or a specific perspective. In online interaction, a participant's positioning within different perspectives can be incorporated through comments, images, and links manifesting a particular *voice* (Shafirova, Cassany & Bach, 2020; Leppänen et al., 2014; Valero-Porras, 2018). Meanwhile, identity work means managing different *voices* and choosing the ones which are more appropriate for the situation (Arnseth & Silseth, 2013).

Inevitably, *voices* have an *intertextual* relation to other previous discourses which can indicate an individual's previous experience or his/her affiliation with a specific community or group. While being affiliated with a community, members can position themselves with particular ideas, practices and artefacts circulating in this community

(Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017). We have used the idea of *voices* and *intertextuality* as theoretical and analytical tools when investigating participants' identity work in online discussions. We considered how other participants react to these identity negotiations and consequentially co-construct these identities in their ongoing interaction (Blommaert, 2005).

Moreover, identity negotiations during online discussions can develop into a shared identity of a community (Baym, 2015; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Hence, we approach the online community of fan translators - the focus of our study - as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This online community of practice was formed by a group of people who interact with each other on a regular basis with a shared interest in translating fan fiction. Fan translators not only share and negotiate their knowledge, experiences and interpersonal relationships in their community of practice, but also develop their "common knowledge, practices, and approaches" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p.6). Drawing on Wenger (1998), we have defined the shared identity of a community through shared ways of engaging in a practice of translation, certain shared perspective, shared values and shared repertoire (discourse). In sum, the dialogic models of individual and shared identities provide us with the instruments to analyze the identity work of the participants, and also the learning opportunities these entail.

4.3. Methodology
4.3.1. Data collection

The data for this study were collected via semi-structured interviews and participant observations of a translation process, following the methodology of digital ethnography (see e.g. Black, 2005; Lam, 2006; Lee, 2016). In short, digital ethnography means adapting traditional ethnographic methods such as interviews and observation of the online terrain. The first author gained access to the translation team after writing to their website presenting herself as a researcher and arranging an interview with two members of the team (Bolk and Nork) in May 2017. This first exploratory interview was conducted via Skype chat. The participants were asked general questions about the translation, the expected readership, the workflow and other fan practices in which they were involved. After that interview, the first author was asked to join the team as the members recently started translating the fifth chapter of the fanfiction novel "B. T.".

The translation of the novel proceeded chapter by chapter. Later, every chapter was published on the FimFiction fanfiction repository and on the project's website.

The first author was allowed full access to the translation process: she was introduced to the Skype group of translators and was asked to participate in the translation on the collaborative writing platforms. At this point, she started the online observation, which lasted from June 2017 to February 2018 when the translation project was practically finished. The first author was translating the novel with other members, following DeWalt and DeWalt's (2011) definition of *active participation*, meaning that she was actively participating in translation, though, she did not have the lead or a very important role in it. The focus of observation was on the collaborative writing practices of the participants and the strategies they used to translate the text. The researcher documented the processes of collaboration, making screenshots of discussions on Google Drive, Etherpad or Skype, and saving the results of the translation work. She also kept field notes, describing the Skype calls made by the participants, and her perception of the translation process, interactions between the participants and the use of the collaborative platforms.

After this participatory observation period, three follow-up interviews were conducted with three case participants; Nork, Bolk, and Vic. Also, there was a small conversation via chat with the fourth participant, Dan. The questions in these interviews were mainly about the workflow of the translation, the participants' perceived role(s) in the translation process and their perceptions of the learning opportunities during collaboration. Case participants Bolk and Nork remained the key research participants in this ethnographic study, as they provided full access to their translation processes. In sum, the data of this study comprise of:

- Five semi-structured interviews with the participants via Skype chat (12,613 words);
- Field notes (5,942 words);
- The participants' comments from Google Drive on the novel's adaptation (6,648 words, 94 comments);
- Chat from the Etherpad collaborative platform related to the translation (2,866 words);

- Screenshots of the chat and relevant fragments of Russian text with translations into English (55)

4.3.2. Main participants' description

All the case participants are native speakers of Russian who live in post-Soviet countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia and Poland. The participants were not acquainted before the beginning of the translation project.

Nork

Nork is around 35 years old; he works as a graphic designer in a small city in Ukraine. During the first interview, he mentioned that he participated in the fan practices because he didn't want to be "an ordinary middle-aged man", and because he wanted to improve his English skills. Nork is the leader of the translation project and initially, it was his idea to translate the fanfiction novel into English.

Bolk

Bolk is 25 years old from Minsk, Belarus, and works as a manager at an IT company. Bolk strongly identifies himself as a brony and as a translator of the community. He has participated in several translation projects, such as fandubbing, translation of scholarly articles and board games. Bolk was introduced to Nork by the editors of the Russian version of the novel.

Vic

Vic is a 26-year-old web developer from Tallinn, Estonia. He has participated in several translation projects, such as fansubbing and fanfiction novel translations. He engages in these translation practices mainly to improve his English skills. He was invited to work on B.T. during the translation of the third chapter.

Dan

Dan is a 26-years-old system programmer currently living in Poland. He actually doesn't fully enjoy the MLP: FiM show, however, he is impressed by the brony fandom and fan productions. Dan was the main editor of the original Russian fan fiction novel. During the translation of B.T. he was invited by Nork to participate in its adaptation.

4.3.3. Ethics

The ethical standards adopted in this study follow the recommendations of the International Association of Internet Researchers (Markham and Buchanan 2012). We informed all the participants about the study and obtained the informants' consent. To ensure the participants' anonymity, their real names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

4.3.4. Analysis

We analyzed interviews, field notes, and participants' discussions by combining qualitative bottom-up content analysis (Schreier, 2012) and discourse analysis (Gee, 2011). We also used the categories of 'reflective dialogue' (Wegerif, 2007) to respond to our second research question that focuses on the participants' construction of the dialogic space and identity work in the course of their online collaboration. In Figure 1, we have roughly outlined our analysis into two steps.

Content analysis: interviews and field notes
Bottom-up: dialogical structure of collaboration, participants' roles in the collaboration. **Top-down**: intersubjective orientation and reflexivity.

Discourse analysis: discussions of the translation
Bottom-up: Participants' roles in the discussions, expert identities negotiation, and shared community identities. **Top-down**: intersubjective orientation, reflexivity, explicit reasoning, inclusivity, and creativity.

Figure 1. Three steps of data analysis.

Firstly, we concentrated on RQ1 about the participants' organization of their online translation work. With this question in mind, we coded using a bottom-up qualitative content analysis interviews and field notes using Atlas. Ti. The coding was made inductively on the basis of reiteration and comparison (Schreier, 2012). Then we centred on the values and norms of collaboration (RQ2) and qualitatively codified the interview

and field notes data based on the idea of Wegerif's (2007) 'reflective dialogue' with a specific focus on the participants' intersubjective orientation and reflexivity.

We also applied discourse analysis to examine the participants' actual discussions on the collaborative platforms (i.e. comments on Google Drive and the chat on Etherpad). All the online discussions were analyzed and codified in Atlas. Ti. In our analysis, we centred on the participants' roles and identity negotiations, paying attention to the *voices* that manifested in the participants' utterances (Bakhtin, 1986). We were able to distinguish two types of identity negotiation: expert identity (participants' positioning to a certain field of expertise), and roles in the collaboration (participants' positioning to certain duties during the collaboration). We also identified inductively how norms were negotiated by the participants during their online work. In this process, we investigated the participants' explicit reasoning, intersubjective orientation, reflexivity, inclusivity and creativity.

4.4. The results
4.4.1. Structure of collaborative work

Our analysis reveals that the process of online translation was organized by the members of the brony fandom into three main phases: adaptation, translation, and editing (see Figure 2).
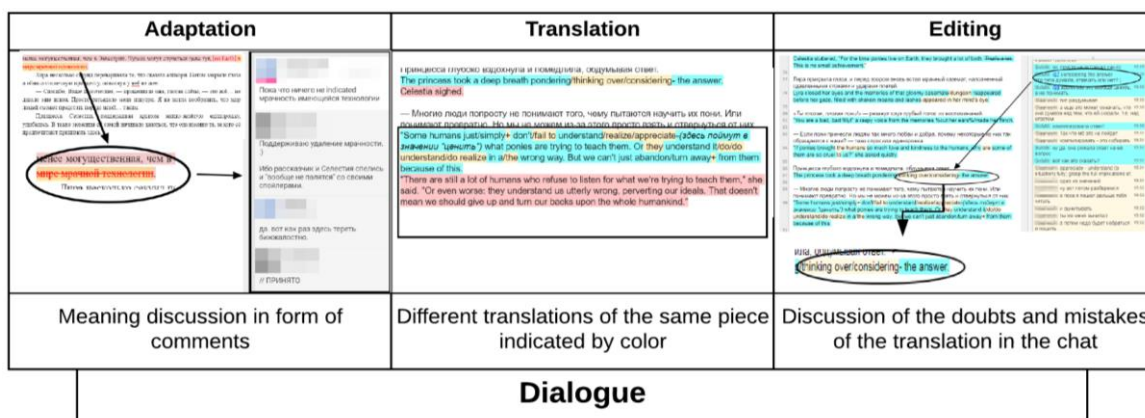
Figure 2. Structure of the dialogic workflow.

The workflow had neither strict task divisions nor obligations on the participants. In other words, there were no divisions between editors, reviewers or writers, meaning that

everybody could be engaged in every phase of the translation. Further, the participants could choose to translate the part they wanted to and to propose their versions of other participants' translations. This absence of hierarchy and role distribution resulted in active and engaged collaboration among the participants, who used the comment section of Google Doc, EtherPad chat, and Skype chat and calls in order to communicate. To illustrate these findings, the three major parts of the participants' working processes during their online collaboration on their fan translation project are discussed below.

Adaptation of the novel for a global readership

During the adaptation phase, the research participants of the brony fandom were discussing how to adapt the novel for an English-speaking readership. Nork described the adaptation phase of their joint working processes as: "*We are trying to keep the emotional context of the scenes and the plot, however we can change the details, which are not that important for the plot adapting them for the English-speaking readership[9]*". During this phase, each participant had to read a chapter of the novel in Russian and to make his/her comments in Google Doc concerning the necessary changes (see the adaptation stage in Figure 2). During a period of 1.5 months, the participants actively discussed changes to their text, reaching 94 comments to one chapter of the novel. Many of the comments were organized into long discussions, e.g. 11 comments made over one issue. The conversations were mainly asynchronous, so the participants had time to think in order to respond. Overall, the adaptation phase was framed by the participants paying attention to the difficult parts of translation (i.e. idiosyncrasies) whilst discussing the novel's adequacy for a global readership.

Translation

After discussing necessary changes to the text (i.e. adaptations), the research participants moved to the translation process which took place on the Etherpad platform. During this second phase, the Russian text with changes and annotations from the adaptation phase was inserted and divided into paragraphs. Below every paragraph, the participants made their translations, choosing the parts they liked and proposing alternative translations to their peers' texts. The online platform facilitated this structure by providing a different color for each participant (see the coloring in Figure 2) and a

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[9] All the quotes are translated by the first author from Russian to English.

shared writing space. The online platform also included a chat which worked as a space for the participants to discuss difficult parts of the translation, to share their emotions regarding the process or to provide constructive feedback to the translators, as described by Bolk: "*The comments are also made here, as like, here I am not sure, here we have to correct it, here we have to look at how to make it better, and so on*".

Editing

When the whole chapter was translated, the editing phase would begin in full force. It was the longest step, as in comparison, the translation was made in a few days while the editing process lasted for months. When the main core of translation was made, it had to be read by all the participants. In the course of reading the document, they would express their doubts, discuss mistakes, and propose their variants of the translation. Some of these doubts were discussed during the chat, meanwhile, others were discussed during Skype calls in which the participants talked about which translation was the best choice. As Bolk pointed out:

Recently we are trying to gather by voice and read everything together. Meanwhile, one person from the team is appointed to be a "seamstress", which means a person who will write down the corrections.

A joint Skype call was the final stage of the editing process before sending the chapter for proofreading. The next step consisted of sending this edited translation to a native speaker, outsider of the translation group, but an online friend of Bolk, who he got to know inside the brony fandom. The native speaker then would proofread the translation without participating in the discussions. After that, the final editing with finishing considerations and last touches would be made.

4.4.2. Identities, values and norms of the dialogic space

All the research participants were identified to negotiate identities during their online collaboration around the translation work. These identity negotiations correlated with their roles in the team and their relevant fields of expertise. In Figure 3, we have illustrated the identities negotiated by the participants and the functions these identity negotiations played in their collaboration.
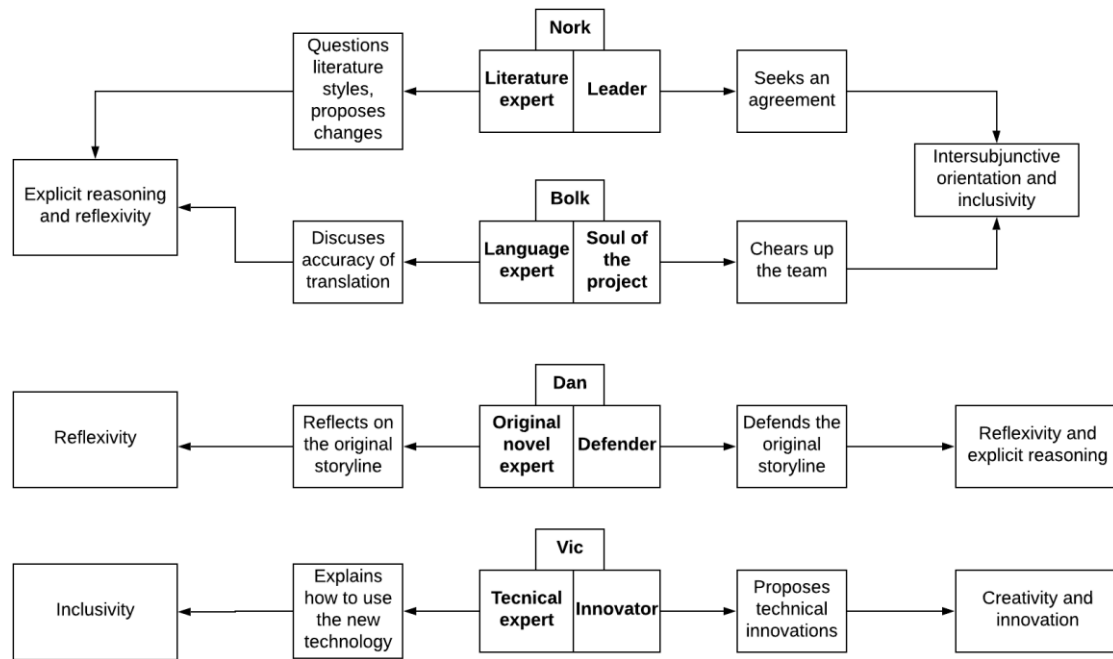
Figure 3. Individual identities in the dialogic space.

Drawing on Baym (2015), we asked the participants what roles they established in the translation process. In the second interview, Bolk described them as:

Nork is a leader and a person who took on a lot of the workload. I am the soul of the project and a person who was kicking others in order to work. Dan is an expert in the original story, and he is a person who would write it better by himself. Vic is a kind of 'rebel', who was trying to move the status quo in order to improve the work and find the mistakes in the process...

These roles were described similarly by Vic and Nork. Hence, Nork was the leader of the project who was responsible for major decisions. Bolk called himself *the soul of the project* or a team motivator who drove the project and animated the participants to translate. Vic was an innovator or a *rebel*, who questioned the workflow and proposed changes while Dan was the original novel editor who provided a valuable critique of the adaptation of the novel.

During the discourse analysis of interactions, we noticed that the participants constructed their comments with a high level of *intertextuality* (Bakhtin, 1986) in their argumentation strategies. Their arguments contained *voices* based on their previous

knowledge in some areas. Hence, the participants were negotiating their identities according to their field of expertise. To illustrate the participants' identity work in the course of collaboration, discussions about every participant's role in the process of creation of the dialogic space.

4.4.3. Nork as a leader and a literature expert

Nork identified himself as the leader of the group; however, he also negotiated his identity as a 'literature expert'. This negotiation consisted of his active critique of the novel while making intertextual remarks about different literary genres or comparing it with other novels. Both voices of the *leader* and *literature expert* were found in the analysis of interactions. Also, as a leader, Nork exercised the norm of a democratic vote in the group. The connection between identity work and dialogic space are demonstrated in Figure 4.

Frase from the novel [translated from Russian to English by us]:
They didn't say a word to each other, and Victor quickly fell asleep feeling the beating of pony's heart under his hand and the minty smell coming from her mane. And thinking about how full of trustworthiness was what this pony did.
Comments addressed to it [translated from Russian to English by us]:
Nork: I propose not to indicate the scale of trust, basically, for the second time in two paragraphs. S. [the main character] at the time could not recognize the meaning or the scale of the problem, or the deepness of her [pony's] feelings and concerns. And let's low the degree of the stereotypical romance novel. [...] Dan: No, the conclusion about the "full of trustworthiness did" is obvious, and S. [the main character] would surely do it. In the end, he did not have time to emotionally degrade to the point of "wood and glass". Nork: Ok, I am relying on you. //REJECTED

Figure 4. Extract of the comments from the adaptation phase of the novel.

In the first line, Nork proposes cutting one part of the phrase developing his argument according to the character development logic (*S. at the time could not recognize the meaning...*) and the literature genres adequacy (*stereotypical romance novel*). Both of the argumentation points are *voices* of his knowledge of the literary genres and editing process, which indicates that he begins this interaction negotiating his identity of a 'literature expert'. Being a literature expert, he reflects deeply on the text including three points of argumentation in the comment (frequency *the second time in two paragraphs*, character development, and literature genre adequacy). However, Nork starts his comment with the verb *to propose* (*предлагать*), which brings dialogically expansive modality to the phrase (Martin and James, 2005) and helps other team members to join the conversation. Hence, in only one comment Nork already supports the values of explicit reasoning by argumentation, reflexivity by doubting the position of the author and inclusivity by proposing the change and not imposing it (Wegerif, 2007). This appeared to open the conversation for other team members and supported the value of intersubjective orientation between the participants.

Dan answers with a confident *No*, denying the previous argument and proposing his argument instead. His argument is also based on the character's development, but he comments on it from the positioning of the storyline expert saying that the storyline is *obvious,* and the main character *would surely do it*. The use of such adverbs as *obvious* and *surely* indicates Dan's positioning as a 'novel's storyline expert'. However even as an expert on the topic, he still felt the need to argue explicitly why he doesn't suggest this change following the value of explicit reasoning (Wegerif, 2007).

At the end of the discussion, Nork said: *I am relying on you*. He used the deictic *you*, and the verb *relying on*, which haven't necessarily meant that he agreed with Dan's argument, but he underlined their interpersonal relationship and the level of trust between them. For Nork, it was less important to defend his identity of a literature expert than to perform his identity of the leader of the group. He wrote "rejected" at the end of the comment. As a leader, he preferred to doubt his own position and to avoid the conflict by focusing on the level of trust supporting the construction of Dan's identity of a 'novel's storyline expert'. This example of choosing specific *voices* which are more appropriate for the situation is an example of Nork's identity work (Arnseth & Silseth, 2013). Moreover, with this identity work, Nork supports the dialogic space by following

the values of intersubjective orientation, inclusivity, reflexivity and explicit reasoning (Wegerif, 2007).

4.4.4. Bolk as a language expert and a motivator

Bolk was the most experienced translator in the group. All the participants admitted that Bolk was the English language expert and they learnt a lot from him, such as how to use different dictionaries or to develop their writing. In Figure 5, we have presented an example of Bolk's expert identity negotiation.

Лира прикрыла глаза, и перед взором вновь встал мрачный каземат, наполненный сдавленными стонами и ударами плетей.
Lyra closed her eyes and the memories of that gloomy dark-seary casemate/dungeon reappeared before her gaze, filled with shaken moans and lashes appeared in her mind's eye.

«Ты плохая, плохая пони!» — резанул слух грубый голос из воспоминаний…
"You are a bad, bad filly!" a raspy voice from the memories %cut her ears%/made her flinch.

>in her mind's eye
а у твоего разума есть глаза?
: один
: всевидящее око
: это устойчивое выражение
: серьезно
: но можешь засунуть его себе в свимик транслейт
: ок. просто не встречал как-то

s appeared in her mind's eye.

Translation to English:

1. Vic: >in her mind's eye
and does your mind have eyes?
2. Bolk: one
3. Bolk: all-seeing eye
4. Bolk: it is an idiom
5. Bolk: seriosly
6. Bolk: but you can put it to vic translate
7. Vic: ok. I've just haven't encountered it

Figure 5. The editing stage on Etherpad. Bolk explains the meaning of an idiom.

Bolk uses a metaphorical idiom in his translation "*in the mind's eye*" creatively translating the piece and indicating his level of English knowledge, hence negotiating his identity as a language expert. Vic responds to this negotiation, and without knowing this idiom, ironically asks: "*does your mind have eyes*?". He doesn't directly correct Bolk, but rather indicates his doubt about this translation. Bolk plays with the meaning of translation and ironically mentions that it is an "*all-seeing eye*". He explains without hesitation that it is an idiom, supporting his claim with only the word "*seriously*", to which Vic easily agrees (line 7). In line 6, Bolk even mentions that Vic can put his translation into the "*vic translate*", which is the document where they put all the funny translations. We can see how confident is Bolk in his identity of the language expert and that Vic co-constructs his identity by relying on his expertise. This confidence helps Bolk to be more creative with his translation, without being judged by the group. It also shows the other members of the team a new linguistic item.

As a language expert, Bolk also frequently corrects other participants. In Figure 6, Bolk corrects a rather basic grammatical mistake in the text (lines 1-3).

	/44 где это вы такой неправильный глагол shew откопали, товарищи?	17:30
	это товарищ Люся	17:30
	Товарищ Люся, ну вы даете	17:30

Translation of the dialogue:

1. Bolk: /44 where digged from the irregullar verb shew, comrades?
2. Vic: it's comprade Lusya [the researcher's name]
3. Bolk: Comrade Lusya, I am surprised

Figure 6. The editing stage on Etherpad. A dialogue between the participants Bolk and Vic.

In the first line, Bolk asks the team about who wrote the wrong form of irregular verb "show", however, he maintains a rather playful tone by using the metaphor "to dig out a verb" instead of directly calling it a mistake. He also addresses the participants as *comrades*[10]*,* playing with the Soviet tradition of such addressing. He uses this rather playful talk as a strategy in order to soften the error's discussion. Bolk doesn't want to de-motivate the teammates, so he puts into play his identity of a team motivator. Then Vic pinpoints the error to Lusya [the researcher], however, he is still addressing her as a *comrade* maintaining the conversation as more playful than serious, while supporting the value of intersubjective orientation. In such situations in which Bolk has to correct others, he would normally use a similar strategy of playful talk, managing the *voices* of his identities of the team motivator and language expert according to the situation, somehow protecting the dialogic space.

4.4.5. Vic as a technical expert and an innovator

Vic did not have the highest level of English or interest in literature, but as a web developer he was savvy in technology, hence he easily negotiated his identity as a technical expert. His technical expertise went hand in hand with his role in the group as an innovator. When he entered the team, the group faced the problem of over-saturation

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[10] A typical address to a person in the Soviet Union. It was used frequently in communist parties and beyond.

of the Google Doc with the comments on the translation phase which made it time-consuming to open the document. Vic was the one who introduced Etherpad as the new platform for collaboration. Due to this innovation, he frequently had to explain the use of the platform and its features. We can observe in Figure 7 how Vic was negotiating his technical expertise by explaining to Nork, the leader of the project, how to use the Etherpad platform properly.

> , у нас должен сохраняться формат русский абзац - английский абзац - пустой абзац. Это нужно для корректной работы разнообразных скриптов автоматизации
>
> Поэтому я добавил [русский текст отсутствует], чтобы было хоть что-то

> Vic: Nork, we have to maintain the format of - Russian paragraph - English paragraph - empty paragraph. This is needed for the correct work of the automatic scripts.
>
> Vic: That is why I added [Russian text is missing] in order to have something.

Figure 7. Fragment of the chat on Etherpad, editing stage.

In Figure 7, he explains the norms of using the platform from his area of technical expertise. He does not propose the norms, but he describes them by using an imperative and marking his position as an expert: *we have to maintain the format*. He has already built his identity as a technical expert in the group, which gave him the power to make major changes in the process of collaboration, and also the responsibility to include every participant in the use of the new technology. That is why there is a need to explain explicitly the details of use or to "teach" the other members to use the new technology. All the participants, and even the leader of the group, were co-constructing his identity of a technology expert, going along with his explanations of the use of the new technology.

Furthermore, Vic proposed a creative and technological innovation in order to confront the problem of English punctuation mistakes. He wrote a plugin for Etherpad with recurrent mistakes in English punctuation detected by the proofreaders.

```
}
if(line.match(/\s-|-\s/)){
        paragraph_errors.push("Пробел вокруг тире в английском предложении");
```

Translation: ("Space bar around dash in an English utterance")

Figure 8. Example from punctuation plugin.

Figure 8 is an extract from this plugin which indicates the recurrent error of the use of space around dashes in English punctuation. This creative and technological innovation was made to address a specific problem in writing by making visible the participants' recurrent mistakes. Building his identity of an innovator, Vic was supporting the value of reflexivity as he could reflect on the flows and problems of the workflow and the values of creativity or innovation as resolved these problems with innovative and creative solutions. The role of the technical expert made him face some responsibilities of explaining the use of technology to other members which correspond to the value of inclusivity (Wegerif, 2007).

4.4.6. Dan as an original novel expert and its defender

Dan did not have to build his identity from scratch in this community as he was known as the editor of the original fanfiction written in Russian. So, he mainly participated in the adaptation process in which he would frequently oppose the changes proposed by Nork, a literature expert. His opinion on such changes was normally asked as he was respected as an editor of the novel. When the researcher asked Nork in the second interview about how they achieved a compromise, he claimed:

We tried to achieve if not a consensus but a compromise. Everybody had a democratic vote [...]. Subjectively we tried to listen to the information or the opinion of Dan as he was the best expert of the world of this novel [...]

The reflection of this quote could be observed in the discussions between Nork and Dan in Figure 4, in which Nork relies on Dan's expertise. We argue that Dan's expertise added values of reflexivity and explicit reasoning to the group, as the members had to reflect on a contrasting point of view and to reason their proposal of change constructively in order to be approved by Dan (Wegerif, 2007). This constructive

reasoning also could be seen in Figure 4, in which Nork appealed to various references in order to even propose a change.

4.4.7. Shared values and shared identities

Our study makes visible how the identity work of the research participants of the brony fandom was intertwined with the negotiation and construction of the collective identity of the whole group (Lave & Wenger, 1991). We identified this shared collective identity through the participants' use of common language (Blommaert, 2005; Valero-Porras, 2018). With discourse analysis of comments and chats, we found that the participants built a common discourse of creative language use in the form of jokes or irony. As the norm, they put the funniest translations at the end of the translated chapter and used them as common jokes. Another example could be Bolk's ironic use of the word *comrades*, which was instantly picked up by Vic (Figure 6). This practice wasn't necessarily useful for the translation process, though, it indicated that they were having fun working together in their free time. We argue that by this common discourse the participants build the shared identity of affinity.

Another mode of belonging to the community was manifested through the shared values, norms and goals (Wenger, 1998). We argue that the participants had a shared professional identity of translators as they shared a specific goal of creating a high-quality translation for their specific readership of the brony fandom. This professional identity of translators was observed in how they called each other *colleagues* and treated each other with mutual respect, as Nork mentioned in his second interview:

Everybody just tried to be rational and use the colleague as a "sanity check" who can say just in time: "Comrade, tune it down a notch, let's do it in another way".

These shared identities and a sense of belonging to the community of practice also positively influenced the construction of the dialogic space. For instance, the "playful talk" and affinity identity helped to take the mistakes of others more lightly and create a safer space for errors (as it was discussed in the example of Figure 6). While the professional identity of translators helped them to be more determined and reflective in their work as they tried to create the best product possible for the brony readership.

4.5. Discussion

This study makes visible how fan translators worked and collaborated on an online fan translation project in a structured way (i.e. chapter by chapter), following the work phases of adaptation, translation, and editing. These findings of the participants structuring their working processes resonate with those of fansubbing and scanlation communities (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016; Zhang & Cassany, 2016), who have reported on participants developing and following high-quality standards for their online translation process. At the same time, our study brings forth somewhat different findings from these other online communities. In fansubbing and scanlation communities, research has shown that the roles of the members are typically hierarchical and narrowly-focused on a specific task. However, in our study, we did not find distinct roles among the participants. Instead, everyone took part in joint online work throughout the work phases in many ways and in different roles. The decisions were made democratically, valuing the opinion of every member which made the collaboration non-hierarchical. The establishment of such a dialogic space was reached with the values of reflexivity, intersubjective orientation, inclusivity, explicit argumentation and creativity (Wegerif, 2007). Namely, the research participants were reflective about their own and each other's work proposing changes or correcting each other, while always sustaining their position with explicit arguments. While entering the discussion, the participants considered the positions of others, sometimes even by choosing not to defend further their own argument. Moreover, when proposing a change, the participants were including everybody into the discussions, indicating the value of different opinions. All these features of online collaboration appeared to contribute to the participants being creative and innovative in their field of expertise, i.e., in English use for Bolk, or coding for Vic.

Our study also shows how the construction of a dialogic space for the participants' online collaboration was supported through digital platforms, such as Google Docs and Etherpad. Similar to the findings of Wegerif (2007), these online collaborative platforms helped the participants to deepen and expand the dialogic space for their joint work. For instance, Etherpad made it possible for the participants to have two parallel spaces to construct the dialogue: one in the chat and the other one in the text of the translation. The dialogue in the text of translation was not an implicit dialogue with

different ideas in one text, as described by Bakhtin (1986), but this dialogue was explicit, as we could see the competing alternative translations. With so many visible alternatives, the participants had to make many decisions together in order to find the best solution. At the same time, they contributed to the creation of a shared digital artefact, visually noticing their part of work in the document. Drawing on Mercer et al. (2009), we claim that a shared digital artifact can encourage collaboration between participants.

The results of our study make visible how the research participants in the brony fandom built multiple identities in the course of their online collaboration. Some of these identities represented the shared identity of the community (Wenger, 1998), and others reflected the participants' individual identities. The shared community identities of the participants were related to the affinity identity of fans and the professional identity of translators (Gee & Hayes, 2012). These shared identities were negotiated through playful and professional discourses, embedded in the shared values of reflective dialogue, and shared norms for working. The individual identities were negotiated through the participants' roles in the team (Baym, 2015) and their areas of expertise. The expert identities were mostly negotiated in a dialogue characterized by constructive argumentation with different intertextual references, such as literary genres or technical expressions (Bakhtin, 1986). Meanwhile, the roles in the group were negotiated by the responsibilities each member was eager to enact. These individual identities were co-constructed by other members while participating in the discussions (Blommaert, 2005).

Drawing on Kumpulainen and Rajala (2017), we suggest that identity work is an important part of the dialogic space construction in online collaborative affinity groups. In this study, the research participants worked on their identities when they were seeking an agreement, correcting each other or innovating the space creatively, by choosing the appropriate *voices* of their identities for the creation of the dialogic space. The shared identities of belonging to this community-oriented the participants to value the opinion of the other, to reflect on their product and to enjoy this practice together creating a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This could form a base to construct a safe and scaffolding environment for collaboration (Black, 2006), one in which the participants are encouraged to negotiate their individual identities by constructing fruitful discussions and performing according to their knowledge of a

particular field. Every member of the group was found to have their own expert identity which was respected by other members. This made every member of the group valuable for collaborative work while the distribution of expertise constructed more balanced power relationships in which the participants were empowered to be constructive, reflective, oriented to one another, creative and innovative.

4.6. Conclusions

This study contributes to present-day knowledge about the interactional practices, norms, and values that foreground online collaboration in affinity groups engendering the construction of a dialogic space for joint organization of collaboration and identity work. In particular, the study makes visible how an online fandom relates to participants' identity work as a fan, professional translator or expert in a field. The dialogic space the research participants constructed encouraged them to negotiate their identities freely and gain recognition and build their areas of expertise. Further, they could apply their expert knowledge throughout their joint translation processes, and in this way make their expertise visible to others to negotiate and to learn from. This level of trust led the group to certain creativity and innovation.

The findings of the study will be useful for further educational research on informal online working and learning communities, informing the design of online collaboration practices and tools. We also hold that the concept of "dialogic space" is a useful heuristic to guide future research on informal online collaboration in various online communities to gain insights into the processes and conditions of online collaboration and informal learning opportunities.

Chapter 5: Transcultural literacies in online collaboration: a case study of fanfiction translation from Russian into English

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5.1. Introduction

Digital technology has made intercultural contacts a daily activity for many people in the world. As a result, the globalization of cultural flows and the various ways that people appropriate these cultural flows have become hot topics for investigation, and the prefix 'trans-' can now be seen in terms like translocalities, transnational, translanguaging and transculturing, underlying the fluidity and mix of cultures, languages and localities in the digital environment (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Black, 2008; Kytölä, 2016; Sultana & Dovchin, 2016; Vallejo & Dooly, 2019).

These transcultural meaning-making practices frequently occur in the context of fandoms (Black, 2006; Kytölä, 2016; Sauro, 2017; Thorne, 2008), which are online spaces made up of deeply engaged consumers with a shared interest in specific popular culture products (Jenkins, 2006). Fandom frequently unites people from different countries, who can engage in practices of cultural remix to produce fanfiction,[11] fanart, fandubbing,[12] etc. These practices can lead to informal learning, cross-border affiliation and the development of transcultural digital literacies (Black, 2008; Kim 2016).

Drawing on Kim (2016), we use the term *transcultural literacies* to describe a fluid cultural identification across boundaries and states within the realm of multimodal digital communication. Transcultural literacies can bring learners to reflect on cultural differences and reconstruct their identities by affiliating themselves with different cultural entities (Black, 2008; Kim, 2016; Zaidi & Rowsell, 2017). Though the field of transcultural digital practices is still relatively underexplored, the nature of transcultural meaning-making in online out-of-school environments is potentially of great interest to those involved with developing and implementing modern multicultural educational programs (Darvin & Norton, 2017; Kim, 2016).

The current study is intended to show how a digital practice can be enmeshed in different modalities, cultural flows and identities in the context of a brony fandom. 'Bronies' ('brother' + 'pony') are the male fans of a North American animated cartoon

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[11] The writing of alternative fictional narratives based around pop culture products.

[12] The translation and subsequent audio overdubbing of an audiovisual product.

called *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (henceforth MLP:FiM) which premiered on television in 2010 and ran until 2019. Though the core of the fandom generated by this cartoon is in the United States, there exist several local fandoms, which gather on specific digital platforms, speaking either a local language or a lingua franca. The brony fandom of interest here consists of fans from various post-Soviet republics who create and share animations, videos, fanfiction and fanart on different digital platforms. All of this is produced in Russian, making it in some cases unavailable for a global public.

The case study presented here is entangled in a variety of different cultural contexts and localities as we analyse the fan translation of the fanfiction novel based on the North American animated cartoon but written in Russian. In further, the fan translators—from Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia and Poland—translate this text from Russian into English, while using Russian as their lingua franca. We argue that this practice of translation can open up opportunities for the development of transcultural literacies.

5.2. Theoretical underpinnings
5.2.1. Transcultural communication and translanguaging in a fandom

There is a growing body of research in sociolinguistics which connects popular culture with transculturality or translocality (Hepp, 2009; Kytölä, 2016; Valero-Porras, 2018), starting with the work of Pennycook (2007), who coined the term *transcultural flows* while analyzing the relationship between the hip-hop culture and English language appropriation. For Pennycook (2007), the term transcultural flows refers to not only the global movement of cultural flows but also the unique way in which each culture appropriates these global flows in different communities all over the world. Baker and Sangiamchit (2019) have developed this idea further, claiming that during online interactions users can appropriate a variety of global cultural references, which leads to the blurring of the borders between different cultures and languages. The authors use the term *transcultural communication* to describe the movement of texts and images across cultural and linguistic boundaries. During this transcultural communication, it is natural for *translanguaging* to occur, this term being understood as the dynamic use of the full linguistic repertoire in interaction (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Jones, 2019; Vallejo & Dooly, 2019). We hold that the notion of transcultural communication provides the ideal

framework for analysing online interaction that jumps back and forth across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

5.2.2. The new literacy studies and transcultural literacies in a fandom

The new literacy studies is a theoretical framework frequently used in fan studies focused on language learning (Zhang & Cassany, 2016, 2019b; Aliagas, 2017; Gee & Hayes, 2011; Fukunaga, 2006; Vazquez-Calvo, 2018; Vazquez-Calvo, Elf & Gewerc, 2020). This framework describes reading and writing as social practices engraved in the coordinates of people's daily routines. As these routines have migrated to the Internet, people have started to develop new abilities and skills, such as online teamwork or the use of multimodal resources. The main feature of the developing new literacies is that reading and writing on Web 2.0. has a social core, frequently developed in online communities, which makes it more collaborative, participative and distributive (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

Although, some of the characteristics of transculturality in the fandom were discussed previously (Lam, 2006; Black, 2008; Thorne, 2008; Thorne, Black & Sykes, 2009), the main focus of the new literacy studies has been mainly on the collaborative and social dimensions of literacy practices. Nevertheless, more recently Kim (2016) emphasized the importance of transcultural fan practices by adding the cultural dimension to new literacies and using the term *transcultural digital literacies*. With this idea, she followed Kostogriz and Tsolidis (2008) who defined transcultural literacies as literacies that enable people to communicate across cultural borders while creating a third space beyond the dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' in the context of the Greek diaspora in Australia (Similarly, in Ntelioglou (2017) the concept of transcultural literacies was used in cosmopolitan, diverse classrooms). Kim (2016) took this term outside the diasporic context to argue that the collaborative and participative practices of young people communicating over the Internet could develop meaning-making and self-positioning relative to different cultural products and communities from all over the world. According to Kim (2016, p. 205):

The practice of transcultural digital literacies is predicated on possibilities of new paths and combinations for cross-border connections and self-representations. This process is active not only in forging the online itinerary but also in the direct communication that occurs with other people from around the world.

These self-identifications and cross-border connections with different cultures, literacies and languages provides such Internet-users with a skill of 'movement' through different cultural affiliations. We find this concept extremely useful for the present study as it adds a dynamic cultural dimension to an understanding of online writing practices. Putting together both sociolinguistic and literacy perspectives on transcultural online meaning-making (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Kim, 2016; Kostogriz & Tsolidis, 2008), we define transcultural literacies as social practices of reflective meaning-making and positioning relative to different cultural products which develop the users' ability to move across cultural affiliations. It also enables users to construct flexible transcultural and plurilingual identities which can be manifested through transcultural communication and translanguaging.

In order to analyse transcultural literacies in the fan-translators' community under study here, we formulated the following two research questions: (a) *What type of negotiations do fan translators engage in when discussing cultural elements of the novel?* and (b) *How do fan translators engage in transcultural literacies?*

5.3. Context
5.3.1. The brony fandom

From 2011, the phenomenon of bronies was vastly discussed by the media questioning why men could be interested in a show made for little girls (Peters, 2013, March 19; Fallon, 2014, May 1). Very different attitude toward bronies emerged: from fighters of traditional masculinity to perverts or an embarrassment (Gilbert, 2015), though, always situated outside the norm.

Similarly, most of the research on brony fandom has been centered around gender and masculinity (Hautakangas, 2015; Lehtonen, 2017; Valiente & Rasmusson, 2015). These studies discussed how bronies can challenge stereotypes about hegemonic masculinity.

For instance, in the Finnish brony fandom, bronies "incorporated new elements" into the traditional masculinity (Hautakangas, 2015, p. 115), and even challenged it while working on gender identities (Lehtonen, 2017). Important to notice that there is lack of the studies on brony fandom from the literacy or transcultural perspectives (Shafirova & Cassany, 2019). This study will be one of the first to explore fan translation in the brony fandom.

5.3.2. The fanfiction novel

The Russian version of the fanfiction novel (*B.T.*) around which this case study revolves was written by A. in 2014 and published at ponyfiction.org for the adult readers. It is over 130,000 words in length and has received more than 1,000 comments. Readers have given it a five out of five rating and some 500 people have tagged this work as a favourite,[13] making it a highly popular work in the fanfiction genre.

The fanfiction novel takes place in a far-away future in which biological engineering has advanced to the point where humans can create synthetic creatures based on cartoon characters, among them ponies. These creatures are living and breathing beings each with its own set of characteristics and personality traits. Nevertheless, the human population uses them as toys, slaves or sex workers. In this context, they essentially become commodities. The main character of the story, a human, becomes interested in the MLP:FiM show and buys a synthetic pony from it called Lyra. Lyra eventually runs away and faces all the terrors and injustices of the modern world. The resulting work of fiction is thus a dystopian novel covering such topics as freedom, slavery, capitalism and economic inequality while retaining the main idea of MLP:FiM, the value of friendship, as its leitmotif.

Transculturally, the action takes place in the gigantic global "City" without specific mention to which country it belongs. The names of the characters (such as Steven) suggest that it takes place in somewhat Western reality; meanwhile, the main reference to Russia consist of the place of the main character's grandad, Siberia.

5.3.3. The translation team

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[13] Exact numbers are not provided in the interest of data protection.

The team entrusted with translating B.T. into English consisted of four members, Bolk, Nork, Vic and Dan, all MLP:FiM fans and participants in a Russian-speaking brony fandom, with the main platform at https://tabun.everypony.ru/. Three of them were in their early 20s during the period when our data was collected, with only Nork, the leader of the team, in his mid-thirties. Living in Belarus, Ukraine, Estonia and Poland, they mainly communicated with each other using Russian as their lingua franca. All of the participants were not professional translators and had different areas of occupation with Nork being a graphic designer, Bolk working in support service of an IT company, Vic working as a web developer and Dan a as system developer.

For Bolk, the translation process was his hobby and his passion; he was the most experienced translator and was simultaneously participating in various translation projects within the fandom including the translation of scientific articles and board games, and also fandubbing. With less experience, Nork and Vic were hoping to improve their mastery of English through translating Russian into English. Dan, the fourth member of the team, was the original editor of the Russian version of the fanfiction novel; hence, he participated in the translation as he felt ownership of the original text of the novel. From the outset, the team had considerable leeway in their translation as long as they did not stray too far from the original sense of the text, with Dan acting on behalf of the author, to ensure that this was the case. Bolk and Nork identified as devoted brony fans, while Nork and Dan supported the brony fans and brony culture, though, did not identified as bronies. Nevertheless, all the participants shared one main objective, which was to present the Russian fanfiction novel to an international adult readership, thereby connecting the Russian-speaking fandom with their international counterparts. They therefore aimed to create a product of the highest possible quality.

5.3.4. The process of translation and adaptation of the novel

The translation process of the fanfiction novel began in 2016 and proceeded chapter by chapter with all members of the translation team working in close collaboration. The translation was carried out mainly on two digital writing platforms, Google Docs and

Etherpad.[14] Afterward, every chapter was published on the fanfiction repository FimFiction. The process of translation was divided into three main phases, as illustrated in Figure 1 below: adaptation of the Russian text for the international audience, translation and editing. During the first phase, each participant read the original text of the chapter in Russian and made comments on a shared Google Document concerning the adaptations they thought would be appropriate. These comments were frequently organized into discussions concerning cultural and linguistic differences between the Russian- and English-speaking worlds. During the second phase, working on the Etherpad platform, participants translated the parts of the chapter they had chosen, with each translator's work distinguished by a particular colour highlighting. During the editing phase, the participants corrected and discussed all the translations until they reached consensus about the best translation for each paragraph. Finally, the entire translation was turned over for proofreading by a native speaker. In the present paper we will be primarily concerned with the first of these three phases, the adaptation phase.

Figure 1. Structure of the translation workflow (Shafirova & Kumpulainen, in review).

5.4. Materials and methods

Digital ethnography is a popular framework for research on online literacies (Black 2006; Lam 2006; Lee 2016; Vazquez-Calvo, 2018) and was the methodological framework applied here. Digital ethnography applies traditional ethnographic methods,

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[14] A platform for collaborative writing, similar to Google Drive.

such as observation and interviews, to the digital realm while taking into account the peculiarities of the digital media (Markham, 2016). We also hold our design as an in-depth case study of the fan translation team. Our main field site of observation was a network of digital platforms including Google Docs and Etherpad (Burrell, 2009). The main observations were made by the first author, who first contacted the members of this fan translating community and then followed the individual participants online, even participating in the translation of one chapter of the novel as an 'active observer' (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).[15] The bulk of her interactive involvement consisted of written chat discussions with participants on Google Docs during the adaptation phase and on Etherpad during the translation and editing phases and written interactions over Skype. Data gathering consisted of making screenshots and taking field notes that focused on the participants' discussions among themselves and her own perceptions of the translation process. The fieldwork of the study lasted from June 2017 to February 2018.

Moreover, five semi-structured interviews were conducted via Skype. The first exploratory interview was made previous to the observation process with Nork and Bolk, who answered general questions about their motivation, the phases of the translation process and their perceived level of English. Afterward, a follow-up interview with Bolk was conducted which centred on his participation in the project, his feelings about collaborative work, his other fan practices and his engagement in fan translation. Finally, individual follow-up interviews with Bolk, Nork and Vic were conducted after the observation period and focused on cultural references, the adaptation phase, the overall workflow and their particular involvement in the translation process.

The primary data comprises 94 comments from Google Docs on the novel's adaptation (6,648 words). The secondary data includes transcripts of the five semi-structured

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[15] This study was compliant with the guidelines of the International Association of Internet Researchers (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). All the participants were fully informed about the study and signed a participation consent form which explicitly gave their permission to publish direct quotations. Participants' real names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

interviews via chat of Skype (12,613 words), field notes (5,942 words) and screenshots of the chat discussions and translations (55 images).

5.4.1. Analysis

The data was analysed in terms of qualitative content and discourse. We analysed the interviews and field notes using qualitative content analysis to extract information regarding the participants' ideas on translating and adapting the text. The analysis of the interviews yielded different common attitudes of the participants such as values of *effective collaborative work*, *adaptation of the translation for the global audience*; as well as the common objectives such as to achieve *native-like language flow* and *the best translation possible.* From the fields notes we got to know that the participants valued *plurilingualism,* that they chose *the quality of translation over time constraints* and that they genuinely enjoyed translating and debating about the text in their free time.

The 94 comments comprising participants' discussions during the adaptation phase were subjected to content bottom-up analysis following Schreier (2012). We explored what topics the participants were discussing and the relation of those topics to transcultural meaning-making, where each single comment with its reference to the text of the novel represents a unit of analysis. Categories such as *the logic of the narrative*, *stylistic errors*, *the fantasy world description*, *character development* and *cultural elements* emerged from the topics of the comments.

We then used discourse analysis following Gee (2011) to analyse the category of *cultural elements* (57 of 94 comments in total) in greater depth. We analysed what cultural changes the participants proposed to make and how they argued their propositions. From this analysis, categories such as *semantic change* (32 comments), *stylistic change* (16 comments) and *content change* (9 comments) emerged. We then focused on transcultural communication inside these categories. Following Bakhtin's (1986) notion of intertextuality and the above mentioned study by Baker and Sangiamchit (2019), we indexed the instances of the use of different *voices* referring to various sociocultural products and contexts, which we coded as *translanguaging* and *transcultural references.* These data from the discourse analysis of the discussions were

fully consistent with the results of our analysis of interviews and field notes, which supports the credibility of this study.

5.5. Results

Fan translation, as a practice, opens up great opportunities for reflecting on differences between cultures leading to intercultural learning (Vazquez-Calvo et al, 2020). During the translation process under study here, the participants had to discuss what parts of the novel they felt it was necessary to adapt culturally and how. The three main types of cultural changes required by the adaptation process, which resulted in different kinds of discussions and transcultural meaning-making, are presented in Table 1 below.

	Comments/length	**Discussions/individual comments**
Semantic change	32 comments/300 words	10 discussions/4 individual comments
Stylistic change	16 comments/557 words	6 discussions/4 individual comments
Content change	9 comments/477 words	2 discussions

Table 1. The three areas of discussion about elements of the translation that required cultural adaptation.

Most frequently, cultural adaptation concerned semantics, with the participants searching for the equivalents of idiosyncratic Russian expressions and proper nouns in English in order to make the text more 'native-like'. Nonetheless, the changes proposed were usually straightforward and consensus was reached quickly, making the discussions relatively short (300 words in 32 comments). The second most prominent type of change regarded stylistics as participants attempted to adapt Russian narrative style to something more appropriate to modern English literature. This led to longer discussions (557 words in total), but mostly because style changes were often associated with other issues such as inadequate character development. The last area of discussion was concerned with bringing a character's actions into line with the values and ideology of English-language literature. This topic yielded only two discussions, but these discussions were the longest and the most reflective ones. In the following section we

will discuss each type of cultural change that provoked discussion and provide examples of participants' comments.

5.5.1. Semantic change: Idioms, puns, and proper nouns

A clear example of this kind of discussion, which generally revolved around the translation of idioms, puns or proper nouns, can be seen in Figure 2, in which Bolk proposes to change the Russian expression *Не в мою смену* 'Not on my shift' to the English expression 'Not on my watch' in order to make the phrase of the character-pony more native-like. Dan then approves the translation and Nork closes the discussion with the word *Принято*, 'approved'.

Figure 2. English equivalence of an idiom.

In this case, Bolk demonstrated his intercultural and linguistic proficiency, and his proposed solution was quickly approved by the other participants. However, other issues of a semantic nature led to more extensive discussions in which the participants discussed semantic adaptation using different cultural and linguistic resources. This is illustrated in Table 2, where a discussion about how best to adapt the name of the character *Дед* 'Grandad' involves different argumentation strategies including translanguaging and transcultural resources.

	Original text	**Translation made by the researchers**
Original text of the novel	*Парень перевёл взгляд с пони на родителей. И что вдруг Дед, патриарх их небольшого семейного клана, решил созвать родню в своё обиталище посреди Сибири, где безвылазно жил уже лет пятьдесят?*	'The fellow shifted his gaze from the pony to the parents. And why did the Grandad, the patriarch of their little family clan, recently decide to summon the family to his abode in the middle of Siberia where he lived without going out for fifty years?'
Comment 1: Bolk	*Знаете, я бы ему придумал титул. Не grandfather. Не granddad. А что такое а-ля Дон Карлеоне.*	'You know, I would invent him a title. Not *grandfather*. Not *granddad*. But something more like Don Corleone.'
Comment 2: Dan	*дык, это ж в словарике уже есть.* **Granpa***, вроде. он же* **Bart***, он же* **Fart***.*	'But it is already in our Vocabulary List. *Granpa*, I think, he is also *Bart*, also *Fart*.'
Comment 3: Bolk	*Я бы тут подумал именно над тем, чтобы дать ему титул. Патриарх семейства, все такое. Больше пафоса. Потому что потом умрет он не менее пафосно*	'I would think specifically in terms of giving him a title. The patriarch of the family, all of that. More zeal. Because he will die later in an extravagant way.'
Comment 4: Nork	*Эти размышления- по сути и так поток сознания- следует сделать потоком сознания В. Неформальная кличка при этом подойдёт к ситуации.*	'These thoughts could be considered already part of the "inner dialogue", we have to put them as a part of K's [main character] conscience. An informal nickname will be appropriate for the situation.'

Final translation by Vic	K. shifted his gaze from L. to his parents. *Why would Grandpa, the patriarch of our little family clan, call up a family gathering in his abode in Siberia, which he hasn't left in fifty years?*

Table 2. Discussion surrounding how to adapt a character's name.

In his initial proposal to change the name of the character, Bolk (Comment 1) mixes English and Russian and also the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets: *He **grandfather**.[16] He **granddad**. Not **grandfather**. Not **granddad**.*', where "*не*" is written in Cyrillic. Bolk refers to the object of discussion in English, but makes his argument in Russian. Similarly, Dan (Comment 2) uses the two alphabets and languages when he writes *он же **Bart**, он же **Fart*** 'he is also **Bart**, also **Fart**'. The main meaning is transmitted in Russian, while a joke is made in English with the Bart-Fart rhyme. In these two comments, the participants construct meaning through translanguaging as they easily switch between alphabets and languages in order to make an argument (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019).

Moreover, according to our ethnographic notes, plurilingualism was of high value for the participants. In their Skype conversations, they were curious to ask each other how certain phrases could be translated into the various languages they knew, whether Polish, Hebrew, Ukrainian or Spanish. The use of multiple languages was viewed as an asset.

Going back to Table 2, we also see the interactants intertextually mix different cultural references in order to transmit meaning (Bakhtin, 1986). They talk about a grandfather from Siberia and try to modify his name into something in English with a different connotation. In order to describe this difference, Bolk in Comment 1 uses the analogy of *а-ля Дон Карлеоне* 'like Don Corleone', referring to the 1972 American movie *The Godfather* and thus making a global cultural reference. Then Dan (Comment 2) disagrees with Bolk and uses the pun of *он же **Bart**, он же **Fart*** 'he is also **Bart**, also **Fart**'. Bart was the actual name of the character in the fanfiction novel, while Fart

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[16] We have marked the use of different language and Latin alphabet with boldface for clarification purposes.

references the North American TV cartoon *The Simpsons*, since a universally known character from that cartoon, Bart, has been repeatedly called Fart Simpson in memes and gifs. This comment creates a playful double meaning which crosses several different cultural and linguistic boundaries. Responding to this, Bolk (Comment 3) defends his point of view by referring to the narrative of the fanfiction novel ('Because he will die afterwards in an extravagant way'), bringing in the dimension of the plot of the fanfiction novel.

Because this mix of global cultural references of different origins manifests the free movement between cultures and national boundaries, this discussion can be labelled transcultural (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). To participate in this transcultural discussion, the interactants had to develop the ability to move through different references and languages (Kim, 2016). This discussion thus serves as an example of cross-border connections in discourse in the context of fan translation.

5.5.2. Stylistic change: modern English literature

The most common stylistic change debated by the translating team was related to a character's thought process. The original Russian text contains many passages narrated from a third-person perspective. In many cases, the translators felt that a first-person 'inner dialogue' would be more consistent with rhetorical practice in English-language fiction. According to field notes and interviews, the participants called this practice a 'show not tell' technique and actively applied it during translation. As Bolk comments during the first interview:

> *Например, прием 'мысли вслух' - это как раз адаптация, потому что английский художественный текст требует соблюдения принципа show, don't tell, чего в русском языке нету.*

> 'For instance, the method "thoughts out loud" - is an adaptation because an English literary text needs to adjust to the rule show, don't tell, which doesn't exist in the Russian language.'

It could be seen in our observations that the participants had reflected on the stylistic differences between the English and Russian literary traditions and came to the conclusion that this stylistic change was necessary. In what we observed, this type of

change was executed as a norm during the adaptation process, only rarely eliciting extended discussion. In fact, this norm is apparent in the discussion reproduced in Table 2, where Nork proposes to change the style of the narrative to make it part of the character's train of thought ('*These thoughts could be considered already part of the "inner dialogue"...*'). Nobody answers this comment, and in Vic's final translation we see that this is the only change which has been executed, as indicated by the use of italics and the switch from third-person to first-person pronouns ('*Why would Grandpa, the patriarch of **our** little family clan, call up a family gathering in his abode in Siberia, which he hasn't left in fifty years?*').

Similarly, in Figure 3 below Nork proposed to include more action to the text cutting the parts about "feeling gratitude", while also to shift from third-person narration to 'inner thought'. He marks the 'inner thought' segment by using italics, inverted commas and the word *Потоком* 'as a flow'.
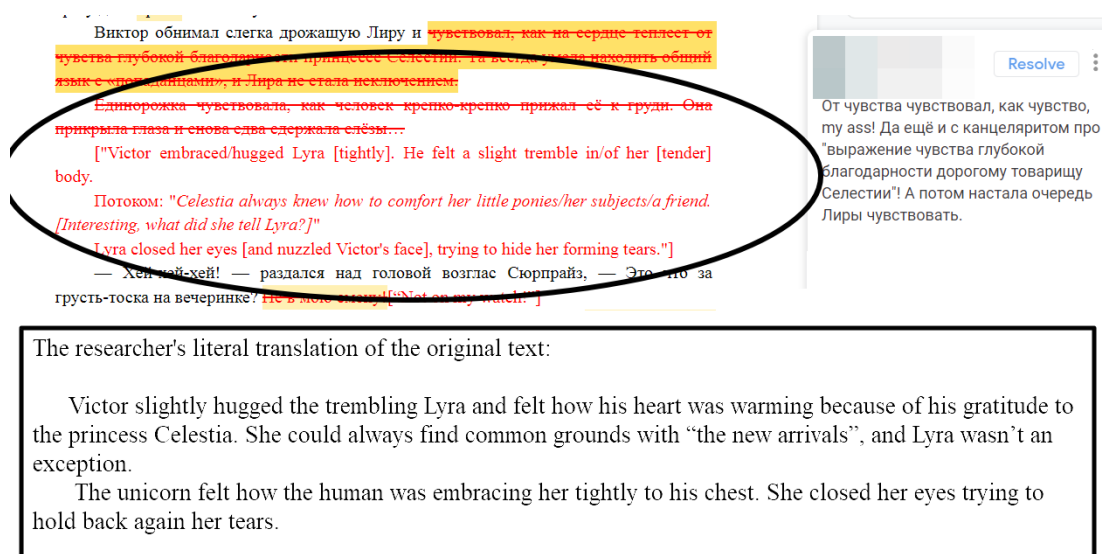
Figure 3. Discussion among translators in which stylistic adaptation to an 'inner thought' narrative perspective is proposed.

In this case, the stylistic change was also executed as a norm, almost without discussion, with all participants fully aware of how to convey an 'inner dialogue'. This collective meaning-making and agreement on differences between literary styles indicates how the participants portray themselves as mediators of different audiences with distinct literary traditions. Their self-positioning as mediators between different cultures also develops

their ability to not only move across different cultural traditions but also develop reflective thinking about such differences. However, as the participants had clearly reached consensus on this issue at some earlier time, we cannot trace the line of their debate on this topic.

5.5.3. Content change

In comments related to the adaptation of content, the most significant changes to the narrative discussed were aimed at culturally adapting the text for a global readership. The translators proposed to change the behavioural patterns of the characters in order to adapt them to what they assumed would be the cultural expectations of such a global readership. As an example, we present in Table 3 an excerpt from the longest and most profound discussion in our data (6 comments, 356 words) regarding one character's behaviour. In short, in this discussion the main character Lyra talks to the other pony Princess Celestia (the most powerful figure of MLP:FiM) about the cruelty of the human world in which Princess Celestia calms down Lyra explaining to her that it is nearly impossible to change anything.

	Original text	**Translation made by the researchers**
Original text of the novel	*Лира: Но тогда что мы можем сделать, если люди так извращают понятия добра?* *Селестия: Мы? Мы можем нести любовь и дружбу, как и раньше. Как и более ста лет назад. И если хоть один человек изменится из-за этого к лучшему, это уже будет нашей победой.* *Лира: Но принцесса! Вы не видели ту Флаттершай!*	'Lyra: But what can we do if people have this perverted notion of goodness? Celestia: We? We have to bring love and friendship as always. The same way as 100 years ago. And if at least one human changes for better because of it, this will already be our victory. Lyra: But Princess! You haven't seen the Fluttershy!'
Comment 1: **Nork**	*Требуется значительное изменение нижеследующего диалога. Если вкратце: ватная Лира, способная поверить в мысль 'Жизнь дерьмо, сделать ничего нельзя, потому не нужно и пытаться, а следует*	'The dialogue has to be significantly changed. In short: passive ('cotton') Lyra, capable of believing in the thought "Life is shit, you can't do anything, so you shouldn't even try, you just have to

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	*забиться в дыру и сидеть там, как бы чего не вышло' - условное ООС; а подобная философия не будет принята и понята англоязычной аудиторией от слова 'никогда'. Независимо от неравенства сил, проактивный герой 'шекспировской школы' никогда не согласится сидеть на крупе ровно и ждать смерти, сложа копыта, словной чеховская барышня. Лира должна до упора искать пути 'помочь'. Ложь Селестии должна быть перестроена в нечто на манер 'Дела идут, дружбомагия овладёвывает миром. Наше дело правое. Служба и опасна, и трудна. Но на первый взгляд конечно не видна. Ты сможешь АКТИВНО внести свой важный вклад в дело овладёвывания человеков дружбомагией ПОСЛЕ того, как полностью адаптируешься и изучишь Землю. Ожидай инструкций, **майн зольдатен**, а пока притворяйся нормальной! ЗЫЖ Верить в наше время нельзя никому, мне можно. Вику и всем нашим человекам тоже.' Предлагаю вынести обсуждение в отдельный документ.*	hide in a hole and sit there, in case something bad happens" - could be OOC [out of character]; also such a philosophy will be 'never' accepted and understood by the English-speaking audience. Regardless of the inequality of forces, the proactive heroine of the "Shakespearean school" would never agree to calmly sit on her rump and wait for death with her hooves folded like a Chekhovian young lady. Lyra has to search for ways to "help" until the end. The lie of Celestia must be rebuilt into something in the manner of "Things are going well, friendship is taking over the world. Our cause is right. Service is both dangerous and difficult. But could not be observed at first glimpse… You will be able to ACTIVELY make an important contribution to teaching humans friendship AFTER you fully adapt and learn about the Earth. Wait for instructions, **mein soldaten**, but for now pretend to be normal!" P. S. Nowadays you cannot believe anyone, only me. K. and all our people too. … '
Comment 2: **Bolk**	*Независимо от неравенства сил, проактивный герой 'шекспировской школы' никогда не согласится сидеть на крупе ровно и ждать смерти, сложа копыта, словной чеховская барышня.* *Тогда как в реальности мне вспоминается заголовок из британской газеты про недавний теракт в Манчестере про то,*	Regardless of the inequality of forces, the proactive heroine of the "Shakespearean school" would never agree to calmly sit on her rump and wait for death with her hooves folded like a Chekhovian young lady. 'Meanwhile, in reality, I recall a British

	*что **Britain should carry on as if nothing happened (as it did countless times before)***	newspaper headline about a recent terrorist attack in Manchester about how **Britain should carry on as if nothing happened (as it did countless times before).**'
Comment 3: **Dan**	нет. лучше нет. Селестия, в конце концов, ни разу не тянет на Майкла Коллинза. [...]	'no. better not. Celestia, after all, is not Michael Collins.' [...]
Comment 4: **Nork**	[...] В заголовке цитата. "Keep calm and carry on"- их плакат времен ВМВ. Послание просто означает, что цивилизованному человеку не пристало оскотиниваться, сдаваться, впадать в панику... [...]	'In the heading, the citation "Keep calm and carry on" - is their poster from the times of WW2. The message just means that the civilised man doesn't has to turn into savage, give up, panic... ' [...]

Table 3. Discussion of a content change based on cultural values.

In Comment 1, Nork proposes to reformulate the narrative by changing the character's behavioural patterns as he suggests that Lyra has to be more active and assertive following the English literary traditions. Nork describes the 'passive' Lyra by using metaphors 'you just have to hide in a hole and sit there' and a Russian idiom 'hoping it won't lead to anything' which became popular due to Chekhov and his portray of a conformist and anaccertive character in the novel *The man in a case*. Nork argues that 'passiveness' on the part of Lyra would be 'OOC' (out of character), as Lyra is a North American character that, albeit fictional, must be consistent with what one would expect of the heroine of a work of English literature. Being 'OOC' is a constant preoccupation in fanfiction writing, where it is essential that the portrayal of characters and setting in the fan text must be fully consistent with the original cultural product (Guerrero-Pico, 2015).

In the next turn, Nork based his argument on the examples from the literature attributing Russian literary traditions to the passive 'Chekhovian young lady' as opposed to the

active 'Shakespearean school': 'the proactive hero of the "Shakespearean school" would never agree to calmly sit on his rump and wait for death with his hooves folded like a Chekhovian young lady'. He argues that the novel's 'passive' character could never be perceived as a 'good' one by an English speaking audience. Nork allures to the idea that our expectations for the "main character" in literature are based on our previous reading experiences (his use of Chekhov's idiom earlier is consistent with this idea), which is an interesting point. However, it also provides a binary categorization of different cultural expectations based on only two literary examples, without reflecting, for instance, on literary movements, which these authors represent, such as romanticism and realism (Shcherbenok, 2010). We do not portray this comment as a stereotype reinforcement as Nork does not generalize further with his conclusions, nor he uses inner-group or outer-group pronouns (we-they; us-them), which are to be expected in the creation of stereotypes or categorizations (Ladegaard, 2011). Instead, Nork position himself as a literature expert distancing himself from the dichotomy of *us-them*. Moreover, in Nork's comment cultural literary traditions are intertwined with the brony fandom references when Nork uses the word 'hooves' instead of the 'hands' one would expect. This reference to ponies keeps the discussion playful and appealing to his fellow bronies.

After extensive reasoning, Nork proposes to change the narrative by writing an alternative speech for one of the pony-characters, Celestia. Curiously, while this speech is intended to be oriented to the English-language reader, it is mixed with references to Soviet popular culture. For example, the phrase *Наше дело правое* 'Our cause is just' is from the 1941 radio speech announcing the entry of German forces into the USSR at the outset of the Second World War. The following phrases *Служба и опасна, и трудна* 'Service is both dangerous and difficult' and *Но на первый взгляд конечно не видна* 'But could not be observed at first glimpse' are both quotes from a song featured in a very famous Soviet TV series called *Investigation held by Znatoki* (1971–1989). Both references are widely known in the former USSR and form part of the common ground of the participants. With these cross-border connections, Nork illustrates the actual 'activeness' and 'assertiveness' of the fictional characters in Soviet Union which goes against the categorization of all the Russian fictional characters as 'passive'.

Nork does not reflect on this slight inconsistency in the use of references, more likely he uses these to appeal to other participants and to make the comment playful, while negotiating his post-Soviet cultural identity. At the end of Celestia's speech, Nork uses different languages and alphabets playfully, writing *Ожидай инструкций, майн зольдатен* 'Wait for instructions, mein soldaten', the last two words in German transliterated in Cyrillic. Here he humorously frames Celestia as a German commander sending her troops on a mission, in the process crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). In sum, in just one comment, Nork defends his argument by juggling references to Russian and English literary traditions, the MLP:FiM cartoon series, fanfiction values, Soviet popular culture and German military discipline.

Later on, Bolk (Comment 2) disagrees with Nork's opposition of 'Chekhovian young lady' as opposed to the active 'Shakespearean school' providing a counter-argument for which he switches to English at the end of his comment (here in italics): 'Meanwhile in reality, I recall a British newspaper headline about a recent terrorist attack in Manchester about how *Britain should carry on as if nothing happened (as it did countless times before)*'. His opening 'meanwhile in reality' proclaims his proposition as valid and 'objective', while it also questions the validity of Nork's literary examples (Martin & White, 2005). By using English, he not only reinforces his claim to validity but also negotiates his expertise as an English speaker. Bolk reflects on the English speaking readership values of 'assertiveness', however, he does not try to re-categorize these values or to compare those to Russian readership. In further (comment 4), Nork questions the validity of this Bolk's critique and explains that the phrase *keep calm and carry on* is actually a transcultural reference to WW2 and Bolk's argumentation is based on a false assumption.

Meanwhile, in comment 3, Dan questions Shor's argument about the proactiveness of Princess Celestia. He reacts to the quite militarised speech of Celestia and makes a transcultural reference to Michael Collins, the Irish revolutionary of the beginning of the XX century, while also demonstrating his expertise and British culture and history. In the end of the discussion, Bolk agrees about the meaning of the British headline and asks Nork to show his version of the fragment.

In every argumentation strategy, we see an abundance of different cultural references and translinguistic play. Cultural references serve two main communicative purposes: to evidence the argument and to relate to peers by using shared references. The data indicates that references to British culture and the use of English language were of value for the participants. These type of references served as evidence of their expertise in the topic of adaptation, meanwhile, Nork's references to Soviet culture and ponies were made to appeal to other team members. Moreover, the importance of evidentiality and objectivity indicates that the interactants were eager to show the credibility of their point of view, yet also attempt to stay neutral with respect to the comparison of different traditions and cultural values avoiding the dichotomy of *us and them*. They were also reflective about arguments of their team members and were not afraid of demonstrating some false assumptions. However, there was some lack of criticality when the expectations of the English speaking readership were generalized. Moreover, while hypothesising about activeness or passiveness of a female character, the gender was not problematised or discussed, as it was noted in the previous works on the fandom (Lehtonen, 2017). The problem was addressed only to literary traditions without a critical reflection on the possible intersectionality of it. Nevertheless, we stand that the reflection on these topics and the respectful argumentative discussion indicate their engagement in transcultural literacies.

5.4. Discussion and conclusions

Our participants engaged in online discussions of issues arising from the adaptation of a Russian fanfiction novel for a global readership. In this highly collaborative team activity, the participants had to exchange views and come to an agreement. The collaborative and participative nature of this translation process indicates that it could be characterized as a new literacy practice in the sense that the fan translators share their distributed knowledge and follow certain values and norms of the community (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Vazquez-Calvo et al, 2019; Zhang & Cassany, 2016, 2019b). Moreover, this practice can be linked to the notion of transcultural literacies given that it involves, following Kim (2016, p. 205), 'new paths and combinations for cross-border connections and self-representations'. These new paths for cross-border connections were found in the transcultural discussions we have analysed related to the

adaptation phase of the translation process. These discussions included transcultural communication and translanguaging (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019) and emerged as a result of the movement between different localities, cultures and nation-states (Pennycook, 2007).

Analysing the 'new paths for cross-border connections', these discussions revealed three different types of cultural adaptations, namely semantic (i.e., finding English equivalency for idiomatic expressions or word-play), stylistic (i.e., changing style to make it consistent with English stylistic traditions) and content-related (i.e., changing elements of character, behaviour or setting to make it credible and appropriate to an English-language readership). We found that each type of discussion activated a different level of reflection and transcultural communication. In the first type, related to semantics, the participants reflected on the differences between audiences, occasionally engaging in transcultural discussions; however they almost never engaged in profound, reflective discussions. The second type of discussion, related to style implied more profound reflection, revolving around differences in literary traditions (though, as we have noted, the participants seemed to have previously reached agreement, thus reducing the need for further discussion). Finally, the third and least frequent type of discussion, related to content, not only produced the longest turns but was also the most polemical and reflective. Here, the participants constructed elaborate arguments regarding cultural differences between the Russian and English literary traditions, values and philosophy.

We suggest that the mixed cultural context of the whole situation of translation (translators from different Post-Soviet countries, North American cartoon MLP: FiM, fanfiction written in Russian for the Russian speaking audience being translated into English for English speaking audience) encouraged the translators to use different cultural references during the discussions and to reflect on some of these references. Transcultural communication and translanguaging mostly appeared in this type of discussion, serving to bolster evidentiality and linguistic and cultural play while appealing to the other participants. Hence, we can see that polemical discussions about major changes in the translation opened up more opportunities for not only reflection on the text but also a fuller use of cross-border connections and transcultural communication (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). We suggest that this type of discussion

was the most fruitful for the development of transcultural literacies as it induced reflection about the differences between cultures (Kostogriz & Tsolidis, 2008) and elicited different cross-border connections (Black, 2006, Kim, 2016).

A further indication of the participants' engagement in transcultural literacies is the way they revealed new forms of self-representation (Kim, 2016; Pandey, Pandey & Shreshtha, 2007). The participants positioned themselves as 'mediators' between different cultures (similarly to what is reported in Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019). As mediators, not only did they have to adapt the novel for the expectations of a new readership, but they also had to appear more objective and constructive when attempting to convince their fellow translators about changes they proposed. We suggest that self-positioning as mediators in this cross-border meaning-making process pushed them to be reflective about each other's arguments, to avoid the dichotomy of us and them and, in consequence, to engage in transcultural literacies. The participants in previous studies (Kim, 2016; Kostogriz & Tsolidis, 2008) engaged in transcultural literacy practices by affiliating with other cultures (with Korean culture in the case of Kim, 2016), or with different nation-states (in the case of Kostogriz & Tsolidis, 2008). Meanwhile, in the context of fan translation, the cultural mediator identity is one of the ways to engage in transcultural literacies by listening to an interlocutor's position, by using playful translinguistic and transcultural resources in argumentation, and by reflecting on cultural differences in dialogue.

All in all, this study adds knowledge about the development of the novel and unexplored concept of transcultural literacies while it also sheds the light on the transcultural discussions of young people from Eastern Europe, outside the dominating Westernized perspective. In particular, it draws parallels between transcultural communication and transcultural literacies, underlining how cross-border connections can be constructed. Finally, it shows the rich opportunities for reflective transcultural discussion that arise for those who engage in fan translation.

Chapter 6. General discussion and conclusions

This thesis reported on an overview of language practices in the brony fandom. This chapter concludes it with a summary of all studies presented above (6.1.) as well as the juxtaposition of the findings with the previous studies while answering the main research questions. Specifically, the results' discussion highlights the answers to the RQs with such topics as the use of L2 (RQ1) and language learning opportunities in the brony fandom (RQ2 and RQ3) in sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2. Then the theoretical implications will be presented including new literacy studies (6.3.1) and identity building (6.3.2.). Furthermore, the methodological implications of the studies will be presented (6.4), and finally, future research and pedagogical implications will be discussed (6.5).

6.1. Summary of findings

The general aim of this thesis was to explore the language learning opportunities in the brony fandom. In the first study, it was analysed how two different groups of bronies—one in Russia and the other in Spain—carried out fan practices in English (Chapter 2). This first approximation to the brony fandom included six months of ethnographic observations and various interviews with the participants of the study. Ontologically, this study was based on the notions of New Literacy Studies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006) and identity building (Black, 2006).

The findings showed that bronies both consume and create products such as fan translations, fanfiction, fan art and fandubbing in different contexts with the use of sophisticated technologies. They used English for a variety of purposes including receptive practices, such as: watching *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* in English while appreciating the voice actresses of the show, reading fanfiction and international discussions on Reddit. Also, the participants not only consumed the content in English but they also used English during the production of fan artifacts. Mainly, the participants used English during fan translations (fanfiction translation from Russian into English; fandubbing from English into Russian), and during the presentation of the fan art on the international platform of Deviant Art. Moreover, they were self-critical and autonomous in their English use which allowed them to improve their English language skills. In sum, in this first study, we were able to identify the most pertinent

points of research in the language use in the brony fandom including distinct fan practices and the varieties of written output.

The second paper is a case study focused on one specific fan practice—crafting pony figurines. Drawing on one year of longitudinal observations and interviews, the identity building and L2 literacy development of a Russian brony crafter was analysed (Chapter 3). This topic already appeared in the first paper (Chapter 2) following the similar theoretical notions including new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006) and identity building (Gee, 1999; Blommaert, 2005); though this second paper (Chapter 3) is an in-depth longitudinal exploration of the fan practice of crafting. The main participant of the study, Shor, had to write in English on the platform Deviant Art while building his identity as a professional crafter. Over the two years, he gained online fame as a crafter, and at the same time developed his writing by appropriating new linguistic, technological, and multimodal resources. Within these resources it was recognized the more critical use of Google Translate, making of better quality pictures and logos, and also appropriation of the specialized "crafting vocabulary". All of these evidence foreign language literacy development which goes together with the appropriation of technological and multimodal resources. This study also shows how participation in the affinity space encouraged Shor to develop his foreign language literacies and also to build his online identity as an expert in crafting.

The third paper (Chapter 4) is focused on another fan practice—collaborative fan translation of a fanfiction novel from Russian to English. The gathered data consisted of the one-year observation of this small translation community including active participation in the translation process. This paper is mainly focused on the collaborative writing processes in this specific practice of fan translation with its connection to identity building and learning. It was written in collaboration with Kristiina Kumpulainen, the specialist on the dialogic learning and identity building and the host of the PhD candidate's research stay. In order to understand how collaboration is connected to learning and identity building, it was decided to introduce the new theoretical notion to the thesis—*dialogic space* (Wegerif, 2007). It helped to research how four bronies negotiated a dialogic space for their online collaboration on a fan translation project and how this created opportunities for their identity work and learning. The findings made visible how the participants shared the values of reflexivity,

intersubjective orientation, inclusivity, explicit reasoning, and joint creativity constructing one dialogic space. Meanwhile, in this dialogic space, the participants negotiated their expert identities which furthered their discussions about writing and translating.

The last paper of this thesis (Chapter 5) is based on the same fan practice―collaborative fan translation. The same data as in the previous study was used, including field notes, documented discussions of the participants and interviews. However, the focus of this study was not on collaboration but on the cultural aspect of language learning. The central role of cultural adaptation during fan translation emerged from my observations within the community. It made me question what cultural knowledge the participants could acquire. Hence, to analyse this question of culture in literacy development, the notion of *transcultural literacies* was used (Kim, 2016). Use of this notion enabled me to analyse how four bronies participated in transcultural discussions while adapting the fanfiction novel for a global readership. During these discussions, the participants creatively mixed different linguistic and cultural resources as they reflected on the literary and philosophical traditions of the Russian and English-speaking cultures. The participants positioned themselves as mediators between two different readerships which pushed them to reflect on cultural differences in dialogue.

6. 2. Discussion of the findings
6.2.1. Use of L2 in the fandom

Taking the studies together, a general picture on how bronies have been using their L2 emerges. They used English during such practices as comprehension (audiovisual or text), communication with global brony fandom and fan translation.

Previous studies repeatedly confirmed that fans from different countries and with different mother tongues prefer to watch their favorite shows in the original version, with original voiceover (Zhang & Cassany, 2016; Sauro, 2017; Shafirova, 2016). Similarly, findings of the first paper (Chapter 2) showed that Russian and Spanish speaking participants preferred to watch the show in the original version, English, with or without subtitles, dictionaries or transcripts. Some of the participants, who started to watch the cartoon with low audiovisual comprehension skills, after watching MLP: FiM

for years noticed the improvement by achieving comprehension without subtitles (i.e., case of Derpy; chapter 2). Also, the participants with low audiovisual comprehension skills created particular individual viewing routines which responded to their needs and interests. Similarly, the individualization of the viewing routines was found in my Master dissertation from students who were informally learning Russian (Shafirova, 2016; Shafirova & Cassany, 2017). Moreover, due to the data of the first paper (Chapter 2), the fandom motivated the participants to watch and read content in English and then made them capable to use English outside the fandom.

Furthermore, the participants used English to interact with other fans from different countries on such platforms as Reddit or Deviant Art (Chapter 2). In the case of Deviant Art, it was explored how one participant used English to interact within the community and build an expert identity (Chapter 3). This kind of participation in the community through the use of L2 was previously discussed by the researchers who explored other communities, such as gaming (Gee & Hayes, 2012; Marone, 2015) and fanfiction (Black, 2006). Deviant art and fan art, in general, was of less interest in literacy research, however, this study showed it to be a promising field for exploration due to its technological affordances of the use of multimodal resources (such as videos, photos, logos and so on).

Moreover, the participants of collaborative fanfiction translation also used English when interacting with each other: discussing the adaptation of the novel or commenting on the translation (Chapter 5). The use of English, in this case, was quite unexpected as the participants mainly used Russian as lingua franca while interacting. However, they also used English mixing it with Russian to make jokes or evidence their argument. The use of different languages was spotted in other cases of fan translation mainly connected to the Japanese language i.e., the community of scanlators (Valero-Porras, 2018), who used Japanese when translating manga; also in the *otaku* fandom greetings such as *konnichiwa* (*hello* in English) were prominent during the interaction and participation in the forum (Shafirova, 2019). In the cases of fanfiction writing, the Finnish participants were also using English when recontextualizing various pop-cultural resources (Leppänen, 2007; 2009).

Nevertheless, this study is first to show the cases of translanguaging between English, Russian, and in one case German, in the collaborative discussions during fan translations. Also, this *languaging* was made at ease together with cultural cross-border connections while mixing the references of Soviet Popular Culture with brony fandom references, English literature or German disciplinarity. This shows the flexibility of the borders between languages in the fan spaces and supports the findings of the translanguaging theory (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015). In short, according to this theory, translanguaging is a natural thing to do for multilingual speakers, while the divisions between different languages are socially constructed.

It also supports and surpasses the idea of plurilingual competence which can be developed with the use of multiple languages while adapting to different cultural situations (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2018). The plurilingual competence does not take into account the playful mixing of different borders and the practical use of translanguaging and transculturing for meaning-making. Fan spaces show how people creatively construct meaning online going through linguistic and cultural borders and mix resources that belong to different languages or contexts without visible difficulties.

Moreover, according to the data, the question about if L2 users need to have a certain level of confidence in their L2 in order to participate in these practices of translanguaging and transculturing emerged. In the case of the initial user of English, brony crafter (Chapter 3), there was no room for *languaging* or *translanguaging*. He tried to translate everything into English with minimum referencing of the Russian language or culture. These data diverge from the case of fan translators discussed above, who frequently used different languages and cultural references. There is also an interesting connection with the previous studies of Black (2006) on fanfiction writing, in which with the growing confidence in writing in English, the participant would use more plurilingual resources. These results give us food for thought and ideas for further research; however, it is still difficult to answer the question if multilingual speakers need to have a certain level of confidence in their L2 to use multiple languages at once.

The final use of L2 was observed in the production of fan translation. It was already discussed above how the participants used English while interacting with each other. However, it is also pertinent to discuss how the participants used English in the actual

translation. Similar to previous fan translation studies, the bronies followed specific norms in the translation which became the community guidelines for translation (Valero Porras, 2018; Zhang & Cassany, 2016). The participants reached an agreement with the author of the fanfiction novel to be able to make significant changes to the novel. It empowered the participants to construct their norms of translation including the idea of the native "language flow" which meant writing similar to the modern British novels with similar expressions and stylistic norms. To implement these norms, the participants had to heavily adapt the fanfiction novel for the global readership.

Moreover, according to the first study, the participants used different dictionaries and machine translators to write in English during most of the practices. Similar to the previous studies, the use of dictionaries and translators had in general positive effects in comprehension, writing and translating (Zhang & Cassany, 2016; Vazquez-Calvo & Cassany, 2017). In case of Google Translate, the brony crafter, Shor, was using it critically and reflectively, which in general gave him more confidence to use English to participate in the international space of Deviant Art (Chapter 3). In the case of fan translation, the participants used a variety of different dictionaries, including dictionaries of synonyms, definitions, slang and collocations which helped them to enrich their vocabulary (Chapters 2 and 5). All in all, the data indicate the variety of uses of L2 in the brony fandom creating various opportunities for language learning which will be discussed in the next chapter.

6.2.2. Language learning opportunities and identity building in the brony fandom

Taking all the studies together, the general picture on the several language learning opportunities in the brony fandom could be observed. Most of these language learning opportunities were displayed in the first paper (Chapter 2) including development in audiovisual comprehension, and reading and writing. The learning opportunities were both documented from the learners' perspective and also from our observations.

Audiovisual comprehension
According to the first paper (Chapter 2), two of the six bronies noticed substantial improvement in their audiovisual comprehension (p. 30). Both of them had changed their viewing routines during the several years of participation in the brony fandom, and

both of them estimated their level of English as low when entering the fandom. Meanwhile, other members with a higher estimated level of English did not notice any trouble in watching the animated cartoon; hence, they did not notice any improvement either. Some of them claimed that MLP:FiM was an animated cartoon targeted for children, hence, the vocabulary was quite simple and easy to comprehend giving it less room to improve. This finding goes along with the findings of my master dissertation which showed how cartoon watching could be found beneficial for beginner L2 users (Shafirova, 2016).

These findings indicate that longitudinal viewing routines in L2 could be researched more as a valuable learning opportunity. We have to keep in mind that studies on audiovisual comprehension in cartoons mostly consist of short experiments without taking into account the level of language of students (Arıkan & Taraf, 2010; Karakas & Sariçoban, 2012; Vulchanova, Aurstad, Kvitnes, & Eshuis, 2014). These data indicate that more longitudinal studies with beginner learners will be beneficial in order to observe if the learning occurs after the periodical viewing of cartoons.

Identity and literacy development of a brony crafter
Two different fan practices were closely observed for a year, and in both cases, various opportunities for language learning emerged. Due to the data of the second paper (Chapter 3), brony crafter, Shor, appropriated linguistic, multimodal and technological resources while participating in the affinity space of Deviant Art. It was documented that Shor not only had opportunities for language learning, but also he used these opportunities in order to develop his use of English. Similar to the previous studies, his development in reading and writing was mostly due to his motivation to integrate into the affinity space and build an identity of a professional crafter (Black, 2006; Lam, 2000). Also, similar to the studies on fanfiction or gaming affinity spaces, the affinity space of Deviant Art was a safe space, in which Shor was not critiqued for his lack of English competence and perceived as a member of the affinity space (Black, 2006; Gee, 2004). For Shor, learning English had been a social practice which went in parallel with his integration to the affinity space of Deviant Art and his identity building.

For instance, it was observed how by entering the affinity space, he appropriated some specialized crafting vocabulary. In order to present himself as a professional crafter, he

had to use more specialized crafting vocabulary on a daily basis. During a two-year period writing on Deviant Art, Shor extended his vocabulary, gained more followers, and presented him being in control of the marketing process. Similar results were found in two different gaming affinity spaces, in which the appropriation of specialized vocabulary was one of the ways in participation in the affinity space (Gee & Hayes, 2012; Marone, 2015). In all of the cases, the appropriation of specialized language opened opportunities to use it effectively in communicative situations and to build identities in the affinity space. These findings demonstrate an efficient way to evidence the process of social language learning in affinity spaces which is interconnected with integration to the affinity space and identity building.

This paper also showed the opportunities for language learning together with the appropriation of the multimodal resources, such as photos, logos etc. (Chapter 3). The quality of Shor's texts improved together with the quality of the photos he took and the videos he made. I suggest that in communicative situations, language learning not only includes the appropriation of linguistic resources, but also multimodal (such as to choose what images to post) and technological ones (i.e., the use of the camera or editing programmes). This generally supports the theory of Kress (2003) who reconceptualized the notion of *language* while proposing that semiotic and multimodal resources are equally valuable means of communication as they form part of the *language*. This thesis joins this discussion and proposes an example of this interconnection between multimodal and linguistic resources in the context of literacy development.

Moreover, the use of multimodal resources could also be beneficial for beginner L2 users for the purposes of comprehension (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2015) or, in our case, text production. In particular, Shor did not have to rely only on his L2 knowledge, but he could use various multimodal resources to advertise his work. These data suggest that the multimodal context lowers the pressure on producing the "perfect text", and also encourages the participant to learn how to connect the linguistic resources with multimodal ones. Moreover, this appropriation of linguistic and multimodal resources allowed Shor to shift his identity from newbie to a professional crafter and from beginner L2 user to a confident writer. The dynamic of the identity shift went in parallel

with the dynamic of resources' appropriation, which underlines the direct connection between identity building and language learning.

Literacies and identity work during fan translation

Furthermore, the third and fourth papers showed various language learning opportunities in the brony community of fan translators (Chapters 4 and 5). Previously, we discussed how participation in the affinity space was linked to language learning. Here, the main focus is on collaboration inside the community. The third paper of the thesis opens up a discussion on how an online collaboration can create a "dialogic space" which opens opportunities for learning and identity work (Chapter 4). Similar to the dynamic in the participation in the affinity space (Chapter 3), during the collaborative practice, the participants were building expert identities (Similarly in Fiesler et al, 2017; Liu & De Seta, 2014). These data showed that expert identity construction opened opportunities for language learning.

Though, there were some crucial differences between this study and the previously discussed one. In the previously discussed study (Chapter 3), the participant was eager to build an expert identity through *participation* and *socializing* in the affinity space. In this study (Chapter 4), the expert identities were built through *collaboration* and *joint decision-making*. Every member of the translation community was able to negotiate his expertise including literary, technical, linguistic, and plot making expertise. When discussing the translation, they would ask the opinions of each other and elaborate their points of view. Moreover, the team supported the negotiation of these expert identities which led the participants to certain creativity and innovation during the process of translation (i.e., the development of punctuation plugin). Hence, this collaborative practice opened opportunities for practicing argumentation and reasoning strategies, together with innovation.

We argue that the participants achieved these particular learning opportunities by creating a dialogic space, which included reflexivity, inclusivity, intersubjective orientation, explicit reasoning and creativity (Wegerif, 2007). In the previous studies on the collaborative fan translation, the collaboration was described as more hierarchical and less dialogic (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016), which did not lead to extensive

dialogues and joint meaning-making between the participants (Zhang & Cassany, 2016) and in some cases produced group tensions (Liu & De Seta, 2014).

Moreover, this close dialogic collaboration of fan translators led them to develop transcultural discussions which were analysed in our fourth paper (Chapter 5). If in the third paper we focused on the form in which the participants organized the collaboration (Chapter 4), in the fourth paper, we analysed the content of the participants' discussions. The data showed that the participants from Post-Soviet space frequently discussed how to culturally adapt different fragments of the original fanfiction for English speaking readership. These discussions opened up various language learning opportunities such as: to construct elaborate arguments regarding cultural differences between the Russian and English literary traditions, values and philosophy, to use different transcultural and translingual resources in communication, and to position themselves as mediators between different cultures.

Combining both results from the analysis of the collaborative form of the practice (Chapter 4) and the content of the discussions (Chapter 5), it can be induced that the creation of a dialogic space and the identity work helped the participants to engage in transcultural literacies. For instance, Nork was able to construct an extensive and reasonable argument according to his literary expertise, while reflecting on the differences between Russian and British literary traditions. Moreover, building the shared identity of translators with shared norms and values, established a context in which the participants could position themselves as mediators between different cultures. These findings indicate that there is a certain connection between dialogic collaboration, identity work and transcultural literacies.

6.3. Theoretical implications

The findings of this study advance knowledge in the field of new literacy studies (6.3.1, 6.3.2.) and identity building (6.3.3.). First of all, this study broadens the description of different literacy practices in the fandom by introducing the brony fandom, which was not explored earlier, while also adding some less discussed fan practices such as crafting and fanfiction translation. Moreover, the findings also provide some theoretical

implications for crucial terms in the theory of new literacies and identity building which will be discussed further.

6.3.1. Collaboration and participation in new literacies

New literacy studies claim that Web 2.0. creates a space for more collaborative and participative reading and writing practices. This is built on the idea that people engage in literacy practices online according to a more social core than offline. Various studies evidenced this statement by presenting different collaborative and participative ways to read and write online including fanfiction writing (Black, 2005; 2006), fansubbing (Liu & De Seta, 2014; Zhang & Cassany, 2016) and scanlation (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016). All of these studies describe the new social language practices including the new ways of organizing these writing practices between the groups of people. Nevertheless, they include a little reflection on the differences between the terms of *participation* and *collaboration*. I suggest that this is a pertinent reflection to be made as fan practices could vary in terms of participation and collaboration; hence, it is important to draw the borders between the terms.

This thesis provides the data on both participative (Chapter 3) and collaborative practices (Chapters 4 and 5) which makes visible the differences between the terms and marks distinct dynamics during these practices. During the *participative* writing practices, Shor was creating meaning to enter the affinity space and to gain a specific status (Chapter 3). The feedback from affinity space influenced the meaning-making process, and more so encouraged him to build his identity of a professional crafter in English. In other words, the feedback was empathic not only towards his work (the figurines) but also toward his identity. Shor integrated and build his identity in the affinity space through *participation*.

Nevertheless, Shor was the only one responsible for decision making when writing posts and descriptions. Meanwhile, during the collaborative writing practice of fanfiction translation, the participants were involved in joint meaning-making, creating a product with shared ownership while taking advantage of each other's knowledge and experiences to build a new fan product (Chapter 4). This made the process of meaning-making more sophisticated and pushed the participants to learn how to come to an

agreement to make decisions together. As it was mentioned in the previous section, both of the literacy practices led the participants to expert identity work and identity building. However, the *collaborative* practice led to *reflexivity,* critical discussions and feedback during the writing process, meanwhile, the *participative* practice led to social integration and identity building.

It is important to highlight that this study is rather opening this discussion about the differences between *participation* and *collaboration* without the intention to draw big conclusions. Hence, this study just shows that this focus on the differences between *collaboration* and *participation* gives us a better chance to describe this *social* component of literacy practices in the fandom.

6.3.2. Transcultural literacies

This thesis also focuses on the fandom outside of the more explored Western-oriented perspective. The main participants of the study are from Post-Soviet space; they are multilingual speakers and use repertoires of different languages when communicating. When engaged in translation and joint decision making, they reflect on cultural differences between British and Russian literature while making transborder connections and transcultural references.

In previously described fan practices, this cultural dimension was also prominent (Black, 2006, 2008; Lam, 2000; Leppänen, 2007; Valero-Porras, 2018; Zhang & Cassany, 2016), though it was rarely described in terms of new literacy practices or language learning opportunities. One of the reasons for that lays in the fact that new literacies paradigm does not specifically focus on this cultural dimension (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, Knobel & Lankshear, 2015) of the reading and writing practices.

In this cultural discussion of new literacies, I follow Kim (2016), who proposed the term of *transcultural literacies*. This concept draws on the new literacies paradigm focusing on cultural dynamics of the literacy practices. The utility of the term was evidenced in Chapter 5, where it was shown how transcultural communication and transborder connections helped the participants to overcome the dichotomy of comparison between "us" and "them" and position themselves as mediators between different cultures. All in

all, this study proposes to use the term of *transcultural literacies* when exploring the cultural dynamics of literacy practices in the fandom as it efficiently helps to analyse the new transcultural realities of reading and writing online.

6.3.3. Identity building and informal language learning

This study has also advanced knowledge of the connection between language learning in the fandom and identity building. In fan studies, identity building was frequently viewed from the sociolinguistic position focusing on how fans build their identities using different languages, semiotic and technological resources (Leppänen, 2007; Valero-Porras, 2018).

Drawing on the findings, fans could perform their cultural identities during fan practices; while they can also build specific identities inside the specific community or affinity place. According to our data, these identities of community *insiders* included expert identities; role identities and shared community identities (Similarly, in Liu & De Seta, 2014). Moreover, the data demonstrated a strong connection between expert identity building and language learning in both participative and collaborative practices. In order to build an expert identity, the participants had to acquire certain vocabulary, be able to follow reason effectively while following the norms of the community, and ultimately to explain or help the newbies in this area. All of these practices can lead to literacy development and language learning.

Hence, according to these data and some previous studies (Lam, 2000; Black, 2006), I follow the idea that language learning could be described through expert identity building, where positive shifts in identity could possibly produce positive changes in writing and overall literacy development. Moreover, in more collaborative practices, learning could also be described through the process of identity work (Chapter 4), during which we can analyse how learners negotiate their identities in order to reason effectively or reach an agreement.

6.4. Methodological implications of the study

This study is situated in the methodological framework of digital ethnography following similar previous studies in the field (Black, 2006; Lam, 2000; Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016; Zhang & Cassany, 2016). Since I described some difficulties during the data gathering in the Introduction section, here I will discuss how these problems have been resolved, including the implications these difficulties could add to the methodological framework of digital ethnography in the area of literacy studies.

6.4.1. Flexibility

Digital ethnographers underline the importance of *flexibility* when adopting ethnographic methods to the digital terrain (Markham, 2016; Postill & Pink, 2012). In this case, flexibility was crucial to thoroughly describe the language practices. The participants gave me different access to the practices; hence, I used different types of observation techniques while gathering the data on two fan practices. In the first case study (Chapter 3), I was making *passive observations* of the online discourse of Shor (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). In this case, Shor could not show me the private conversations and chats he had with other fans or customers, so I observed the changing posts on the website Deviant Art focusing on the online discourse and taking screenshots. These *passive observations* are usually made by ethnographers who study online discourse while paying attention to the changes and variations of this discourse through time (Androutsopoulos, 2013b).

When planning the second case study (Chapters 4 and 5), I also aimed to make *passive observations* of the fan translation in order to conserve the design homogenous. However, I was asked to join the fan translation practice and to become another member of the translators' team which guaranteed me the total access to the group conversations and negotiations. So I chose to join the translation team and changed the initial methodological design opting to use *active observation* instead of the *passive* one (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Without this access, it would be impossible to research group dynamics and negotiations during the process of translation.

Though this choice disrupted the methodological design and led me to obtain a slightly different data varying on a case, at the same time, it led me to a better understanding of both practices which in the end was my main goal. For me, the main lesson in this design change consisted in this value of *flexibility* of research, as sometimes it is impossible to dictate to the participants how the research had to be conducted which makes the researcher adapt the methodology depending on the access the participants give him/her.

6.4.2. Active observation

As it was mentioned, *passive observation* was a frequent choice to ethnographically research language practices (Androutsopoulos, 2013b; Black, 2006; Lam, 2000; Valero-Porras, 2018), while *active observation* was only occasionally used (Zhang & Cassany, 2016). This is due to several difficulties of conducting such research: 1) *access,* as not always researchers are allowed to enter the group and become insiders; 2) *data jeopardizing*, when actively participating in language practices, the researcher can change the analysed data. In this study both of these difficulties as follows:

- I was allowed to get *access* to the team as a reciprocating action I helped with the actual translation.
- In order not to jeopardize the data, I tried to be "an ordinary" team-member, which meant: not to attract too much attention, mimic the workload of other participants and not to take any organizing or decisive tasks. Moreover, I discursively analysed my sections of the translation and discussions in the same way as of the other team members.

This study shows that *active observation* in language practices helps to gather data about the process of collaborative writing and not just the product. I also suggest that this type of observation is very useful when describing learning processes and group dynamics.

6.4.3. Ethics

Another methodological implication consists of my ethical position within the study. During this study, I learnt that sometimes it is nearly impossible to have the same

ethical protocol for all the participants. It is very important to have an open dialogue with every participant about every *ethical decision* the researcher is going to make (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). The main ethical dilemma that I faced during this study was *anonymity*. The full *anonymity* of online data could be a tricky task for online researchers. If a researcher publishes any of the quotes posted by their *subject* in the open space online, those could be easily traceable, as every other person can introduce this quote to the search engine and locate the *subject*. Also, the same logic works with the images.

At the beginning of the study, I was convinced that fully anonymizing the participants is the best decision in all of the research cases. However, I found out that it is not always the case, as one of my participants asked me to directly publish his quotes and full images of his work (Chapter 3). Shor valued that I would present his crafting work in a specific way, i.e., at first, I cut the images by half for the anonymity purposes, but Shor preferred to display his images in full size instead of keeping it anonymous. Shor created a product, so he had his *rights of authorship* on the distribution of the images of the products and, as a researcher, I had to respect those rights. In this case, it meant that these rights would cross the *anonymity* principle. Hence, Shor and I discussed every aspect of anonymity in distribution reaching an agreement on partial anonymity which consisted of the use of a pseudonym, but publishing of the quotes and pictures without alteration. Following Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz (2013), I suggest that the job of a researcher, in this case, is to make sure that the participant makes an informed choice on the issue of *anonymity*.

Another important part of ethics that I encountered is *reciprocity*. As it was mentioned in the Introduction (section 1.6.), I was able to build trustworthy relationships mostly with the Russian speaking bronies. And one of the reasons for that is *reciprocity*. In both cases, I was able to help the participants with translations from Russian to English or from English to Russian. This made the relationships less one-directed and more open and trustworthy. All in all, I hope these ethical principles of *discussing anonymity* and gaining *reciprocity* are presented as possible solutions to reaching an ethical investigation.

6.6. Pedagogical implications of the study
6.6.1. Language as a social practice

This study outlines the conceptualisation of language as a social day-to-day practice and not just a rigid system of grammatical rules (Knobel & Lankshear, 2015) as our participants used different linguistic, multimodal and technological resources depending on the communicative situations. Following Canagarajah and Said (2010, p. 162), we propose to implement this shift "from language-as-a-system to language-as-social-practice, from grammar to pragmatics, from competence to performance, in our attitude to proficiency" into the language education.

Particularly interesting is the idea of going from *grammar to pragmatics* with paying more attention to *meaning negotiation* and *collaboration* between the students (Canagarajah & Said, 2010; Valero-Porras, 2018). I find it an important point as due to our data the literacy practices outside the classroom are mainly participative or collaborative, where the better quality of collaboration between the participants can create learning opportunities in meaning negotiation, explicit reasoning and innovation (Chapter 4).

6.6.2. Transcultural literacies and semiotic repertories

Following some previous studies (Canagarajah & Said, 2010; Valero-Porras, 2018), I propose to shift the purpose of language teaching from developing a specific target language to the encouragement of all the semiotic repertories students have at disposal. To explain this idea, we can look at the case of Shor (Chapter 3) who developed his English writing together with the quality of the images and the coherence between the text and the images. For Shor, during the day-to-day communication, English was of the same value as the photos and videos he was making, because both of these semiotic modes equally served him to succeed in specific communicative situations. The data suggest that different semiotic modes served to lower the pressure from the use of "perfect English" and also gave him a chance to become more creative in this genre of figurines' descriptions. Such a successful "in the wild" practice could serve as inspiration for language educators for the use of different semiotic repertories in the classroom.

The use of extensive semiotic repertory also means to use different languages or even *translanguaging* for specific communicative purposes going away from the monolingual perspective. The results showed that the participants used different languages when they were engaging in different *transcultural flows* during collaboration, which is frequent for online interaction (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). Moreover, the participants positioned themselves as *mediators* between different cultural products while engaging in *transcultural literacies*. As Kim (2016) pointed out, digital transcultural fan practices "illuminate the shifting, emic cultural identifications of youth" (p. 215). These cross-cultural identifications, going beyond the prescriptive identities of the students, can give them a sense of agency between different cultural flows and should be implemented into the language education curriculum.

6.6.3. Language creativity

The data of this study is also useful for the discussion of creativity in language education. Creativity was not among my direct objectives; however, in all of the analysed practices, the creative language use was encountered. Both researchers and educators seem to overview creativity in language production as something positive (Pope, 2005). Though, as Jones (2019) implies, language creativity is a lot of the times viewed as an abstract subject without looking into the real creative practices of the students. Hence, examples of creative *languaging* could be useful for educators. According to the data of this thesis, language creativity was enacted mostly through translanguaging and transculturing (Chapter 5). The participants used transcultural and translingual resources during their discussions of the novel with a humorous purpose trying to gain the positive reaction of the other participants and finally, win the argument. Following Jones (2019), this use of transcultural and translingual resources forms part of the creative language use, while this study illustrates how language creativity could help the participants to lead the discussion by winning a power position.

As a pedagogical implication, this study can encourage educators to reflect on language creativity and its connection to the learner's agency within the remix of transcultural, translingual, and multimodal modes. I hope that the data from this study can inspire

educators for the implementation of language creativity by showing the successful examples of language creative uses in the digital wild.

6.7. Limitations and future research

This research majorly has methodological limitations. As it was mentioned in the Introduction (1. 6.), the participants from Spain became less active in the fandom in the course of the investigation. Hence, I had to narrow my focus only on the Russian speaking bronies which also narrowed down the opportunities for cross-linguistic comparisons and overall description of a variety of different cases.

Moreover, I chose a brony fandom as an object of research, while the specific fan practices emerged from the participants. This methodological model had some positive effects such as: 1) the ability to choose case studies based on the relationships with the participants and not by the particularities of the practices, 2) the ability to be *flexible* with different fan practices, and 3) the possibility to make an initial description of the variety of viewing routines and practices in the fandom which was beneficial for the initial approximation.

However, it is important to notice that this methodological model has its limitations. As I did not choose the specific language practices from the beginning, the practices that had emerged were difficult to compare with one another. The analysis across different cases could have made this study less descriptive leading to more substantial results. It also pushed me to develop different data gathering approaches (active observation in one case and passive observation in another case), which could be seen as a complication. Nevertheless, with all of these limitations, this methodological design could be considered successful due to the time constraints, individual data gathering and still viable results divided by cases.

Moreover, there are various future research directions which could be developed in two main directions: 1) Research of different fan practices in the wild and 2) Implementation of similar to encountered fan practices into the classroom. Following Valero-Porras (2018), the possible future research could consist of the exploration of

other multimodal and multilingual language practices produced by fans. Especially, it would be interesting going away from focusing on just English, opening new perspectives and practices. Following Kim (2016), future research can focus on the transcultural flows in the fan communities in order to develop a new language curriculum. I am also interested in future longitudinal studies that focus on the effectiveness of these practices and learning opportunities they provide (similar to chapter 3), as the recent studies tend to be more descriptive.

Another possible way of future investigations is the implementation of the fan practices in the language classroom as it was successfully made with fanfiction writing in English at the university level (Sauro & Sundmark, 2019). The present study indicates the future research on implementations to the classroom, which could consist of developing writing practices with multimodal elements, or the collaborative novel translations. It would be interesting to make this research focusing on motivation and agency of the students.

Nevertheless, not all the fan practices need to be implemented to the classroom, but it these could be investigated in combination with in-school activities exploring learning beyond formal and informal communities (Kumpulainen et al, 2010; Kumpulainen & Sefton-Green, 2014). In this direction, the future research could gather an interesting combination of fan practices and in-school practices, which can help to develop new innovative learning environments in the classroom. In addition, following Aliagas, Garrido and Moore (2016), I suggest that research on "bridging" activities between the informal language practices and the classroom could be profitable. These activities could include the teachers' exploration of the language fan practices, the possible reflection concerning the popular products and creation of the space for the students to share and promote successful language practices.

All in all, this research made visible the variety of language learning opportunities in the brony fandom including the development of multimodal, transcultural and translingual literacy practices. The main implications of this study consist of providing more examples of interconnection between identity building, collaboration, participation, and language learning together with the development of the relatively new notion of

transcultural literacies. Without a doubt, the area of literacy practices in the fandom offers valuable topics for further investigation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Publication list

1) Shafirova, L., & Cassany, D. (2019). Bronies learning English in the digital wild. *Language learning and technology*, 23(1), 127-144.

2) Shafirova, L., Cassany, D., & Bach, C. (2020). From "newbie" to professional: Identity building and literacies in an online affinity space. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction, 24*, 100370.

3) Shafirova, L., & Kumpulainen, K. (second review). Online collaboration in a brony fandom: Constructing a dialogic space for identity work in a fan translation project. *E-learning & digital media.*

4) Shafirova L., Cassany D., & Bach C. (second review). Transcultural literacies in online collaboration: a case study of fanfiction translation from Russian into English. *Language & Intercultural Communication.*

Appendix 2. Guide of exploratory interviews (Spanish brony fandom)

Guide in original language (Spanish)	Researcher's translation
Nombre: Edad: País: Ciudad: Oficio:	Name: Age: Country: City: Job:
Prácticas Letradas y experiencia fan ¿Cómo y cuándo has encontrado la plataforma SpaniardHooves? ¿Porque la empezaste a buscar? ¿Cuantas veces por semana la visitas? ¿Qué haces normalmente? ¿Tienes amigos, conocidos de la plataforma? ¿Cómo la describirías? ¿Estás en otros fandoms? ¿Lees Equestria daily? ¿Qué distingue este fandom de los otros? ¿En cuáles hilos de la plataforma participas? Participas en juegos de rol, fanfiction, fan-art? ¿Hay quedadas? ¿Se puede ver videos de MLP en directo? ¿Tienes alguna gente del foro quien te inspira?	**Literacy practices and fan experience** How and when did you find the SpaniardHooves platform? Why did you start looking for her? How many times a week do you visit it? What do you do normally? Do you have friends, acquaintances on the platform? How would you describe it? Do you participate in other fandoms? Do you read Equestria daily? What distinguishes this fandom from the others? In which platform threads do you participate? Do you participate in role-playing games, fanfiction, fan-art? Do you visit meetups? Can you watch MLP videos live? Do you have any people on the forum who inspires you?
Ser brony ¿Tú te consideras como brony? ¿Lo has comentado a tus amigos/conocidos en la universidad? ¿Has recomendado a alguién ver MLP? ¿Piensas que MLP tiene muchos haters? ¿Porque? ¿Has visto trolls en SpaniardHooves? ¿Porque te gusta MLP? ¿Cual personaje es tu favorito y porque? ¿Cómo has empezado a ver MLP? ¿Qué es lo que consideras más valioso del fandom de MLP? ¿Te ha ayudado en algo la comunidad? ¿MLP transmite unos valores? Cuáles son? ¿Piensas que los transmite también el fandom de MLP?	**Being a brony** Do you consider yourself as brony? Have you told your friends / acquaintances at the university? Have you recommended anyone to watch MLP? Do you think MLP has many haters? Why? Have you seen trolls at SpaniardHooves? Why do you like MLP? Which character is your favorite and why? How did you start to see MLP? What do you consider most valuable in the MLP fandom? Has the community helped you in any way? Does MLP transmit values? Which are? Do you think the MLP fandom also transmits them?
Español y referencias culturales a España	**Spanish and cultural references to Spain**

¿En el sitio web hay mucha gente de diferentes países? ¿Hay mucha gente de España? ¿La lengua franca siempre es española? ¿A veces japonés o inglés? ¿Hablas con alguien en catalán? ¿Haces quedadas? ¿Tú prefieres mirar MLP en raw, con subtítulos o doblado?	There are a lot of people from different countries on the website? Are there many people from Spain? The lingua franca is always Spanish? Sometimes Japanese or English? Do you speak to someone in Catalan? Do you meet? Do you prefer to watch MLP in raw, with subtitles or dubbed?

Appendix 3. Guide of the second interview (Derpy)

Guide in original language (Spanish)	Researcher's translation
Fan de animación ¿Cuáles dibujos animados estás mirando en inglés? Describe lo que haces relacionado con MLP en inglés. ¿Has probado hacer fansub? ¿Miras cosas en Deviant art? ¿Cómo piensas aprendes japonés con anime? ¿O has visto la influencia positiva del dibujo animado solo en inglés? ¿Cuándo empezaste a entender que MLP te ayuda con inglés? ¿Cuando quitaste los subtítulos del video? ¿Empezaste mirar MLP en 2013?	**Fan of animation** What cartoons are you watching in English? Describe what you do, related to MLP in English. Have you tried doing fansub? Do you see things on Deviant art? How do you think do you learn Japanese with anime? Or have you seen the positive influence of the cartoon only in English? When did you start to understand that MLP helps you with English? When did you remove the subtitles from the video? Did you start watching MLP in 2013?
Rutina de MLP ¿Dónde estás mirando capítulos de MLP? Lo haces solo o con alguien? ¿Con qué frecuencia ves MLP? ¿También ves animaciones fan en inglés? ¿Sigues youtubers en inglés? ¿De qué manera miras MLP: usas solo inglés? ¿Lees los comentarios después de ver el capítulo? ¿Escribes algo? ¿MLP es facil o dificil de comprender para ti? ¿Porque? ¿Entiendes bien los diferentes acentos de MLP? Ves algunas referencias a la sociedad Estadounidense allí?	**MLP viewing routine** Where do you stream MLP episodes? Do you do it alone or with someone? How often do you watch MLP? Do you also see fan animations in English? Do you follow youtubers in English? In what way do you look at MLP? Do you use only English? Do you read the comments after watching an episode? Do you write something? Is MLP easy or difficult for you to understand? Why? Do you understand the different MLP accents well? Do you see some references to American society there?
Estrategias ¿Qué haces cuando no entiendes algo (una palabra, estructura, situación) en el video de MLP? ¿Paras el vídeo?, ¿Repites el fragmento o vas al diccionario? Cuando no entiendes algo, has dicho que usas las transcripciones, ¿en inglés o español? ¿Dónde las encuentras? ¿Podrías decir cuántas veces tienes dudas de comprensión en un capítulo, más o menos? ¿Esto ha cambiado con el tiempo de ver MLP? ¿Qué recursos de la red usas para solucionar dudas de	**Strategies** What do you do when you don't understand something (a word, structure, situation) in the MLP video? Do you stop the video?, Do you repeat the excerpt or go to the dictionary? When you don't understand something, have you said you use transcripts, in English or Spanish? Where do you find them? Could you say how many times you have doubts about understanding in a chapter, more or less? Has this changed over time watching MLP? What online resources do you use to solve comprehension doubts? Do you use a

comprensión? ¿Usas diccionario?, ¿Cuál?, ¿El traductor? ¿Cómo? ¿Cuál es el último episodio que has visto? ¿Recuerdas alguna palabra que hayas aprendido con MLP? Explica cómo la aprendiste.	dictionary? Which one? The translator? How? What is the last episode you have seen? Do you remember a word you learned with MLP? Explain how you learned it.
Aprendizaje de inglés ¿Por cuánto tiempo estás aprendiendo inglés? ¿Qué nivel has tenido antes de empezar a ver MLP? ¿Cómo ha evolucionado tu inglés mirando MLP? ¿Cómo has notado que tu nivel de inglés había mejorado con MLP? Usas inglés en tu día-día?	**English learning** How long are you learning English? What level did you have before you started watching MLP? How has your English evolved by looking at MLP? How did you notice that your level of English had improved with MLP? Do you use english in your day-day?

Appendix 4. Guide of an exploratory interview (Shor)

Guide in original language (Russian)	Researcher's translation
Имя: Возраст: Место жительства: Профессия:	Name: Age: Country: City: Job:
Фан анимации Что ты сейчас смотришь на английском? Ты смотришь MLP с субтитрами? а раньше как смотрел? Как и когда ты начал смотреть MLP? Опиши, пожалуйста, что ты делаешь, как фанат MLP? Что из этого ты делаешь на английском (Youtube, fanfic, comics, art)? Как ты думаешь это повлияло на твой уровень языка? Ты используешь английский чтобы договариваться о продажи фигурок? Откуда большинство твоих клиентов? ты используешь еще какие-нибудь словари для переписки на Девиант Арт? Как ты понимаешь, что фраза, которую перевел Google. Translate некорректна? Можешь привести пример? Собираешься ли ты сделать сайт или блог на английском для продажи своих работ? У тебя много заказчиков из других стран? Часто ли приходится общаться?	**Fan of animation** What do you watch in English now? Do you watch MLP with subtitles? How did you watch MLP beforehand? How and when did you start watching MLP? Please describe what you are doing as a fan of MLP? What do you do of this in English (Youtube, fanfic, comics, art)? Do you think it has affected your language level? Do you use English to negotiate the sale of figurines? Where do most of your customers come from? Do you use any other dictionaries to write on Deviant Art?How do you understand the phrase that Google translated is incorrect? Can you give an example? Are you going to make a website or blog in English to sell your work? Do you have many customers from other countries? How often do you have to communicate?
Рутина MLP На каком сайте ты смотришь MLP? Как часто ты смотришь MLP? За какими аниматорами ты следишь? Оставляешь комментарии на Youtube? Каким тебе кажется по уровню сложности английский в MLP? Тебе легко или сложно его понимать? Ты хорошо понимаешь разные акценты в MLP? Как ты думаешь дает ли MLP отсылки к американскому обществу? Какие?	**MLP routine** Which site do you watch MLP on? How often do you watch MLP? What animators are you following? Do you leave comments on Youtube? How difficult do you think English is in MLP? Is it easy or hard for you to understand? Do you understand the different accents in MLP well? Do you think MLP gives references to American society? What kind?
Стратегии Что ты делаешь, когда не понимаешь (слово, выражение, ситуацию) в MLP? Ты останавливаешь мультик? Просматриваешь тот же фрагмент?	**Strategies** What do you do when you do not understand (word, expression, situation) in MLP? Are you stopping the cartoon? Looking at the same piece? Turning to the

Обращаешься к словарю? Сколько примерно раз за один эпизод ты сомневаешься в значении слов? Это число меняется со временем просмотра? Какими веб-ресурсами (словарями, гуглом) ты пользуешься, чтобы разрешить твои проблемы с пониманием MLP, фан-анимации, ютюберов или фан-фикшина? Какой был последний эпизод, который ты видел? Можешь вспомнить какое-нибудь слово, которое запомнилось?	dictionary? How many times in one episode do you doubt the meaning of words? Does this number change over time? What web resources (dictionaries, google) do you use to solve your problems with understanding MLP, fan animations, YouTube, or fan fiction? What was the last episode you saw? Can you recall any word that you remember?
Изучение английского Ты знаешь какой уровень английского? Он изменился с тех пор как ты стал фанатом MLP? Сколько примерно времени его ты изучаешь английский? Как изменился твой английский в связи с увлечением MLP? Тебе бы хотелось повысить свои навыки английского?	**Learning English** Do you know what level of English you have? Has it changed since you became a fan of MLP? How much time do you study English? How has your English changed in connection with your MLP hobby? Would you like to improve your English skills?

Appendix 5. Guide of a follow up interview (Shor)

Guide in original language (Russian)	Researcher's translation
1. Как продвигается твоя крафтерская деятельность? И как идет общение с заказчиками на английском? 2. Ты еще используешь гугл транслейт для составления сообщений? 3. Как ты думаешь тебе стало легче с начала общения использовать артикли, слова связки.. 4. Ты стал уверенней в общении на английском? 5. В общении с заказчиками твой английский исправляют? Или задают вопросы? Ты замечаешь ошибки? 6. Заказчики иногда переводят сообщения на русский? Говорят там "привет"? 7. Ты ездил на галакон в Германию? Как ты там общался на английском? Было сложно? 8. Ты посмотрел 7й сезон? Ты так же смотришь серию по два раза?	1. How is your crafting going? And how is your communication with customers in English? 2. Do you still use google translate to compose messages? 3. Do you think it has become easier for you to write (use of articles, linking words...) 4. Have you become more confident in communicating in English? 5. In dealing with customers, do you correct your English? Or ask questions? Do you notice mistakes? 6. Do customers sometimes translate messages into Russian? They say hello there? 7. Did you go to Germany for a convention? How did you communicate in English there? Was it difficult? 8. Have you watched the 7th season? Do you also watch the series twice?

Appendix 6. Guide of the third interview (Shor)

Guide in original language (Russian)	Researcher's translation
1. Как продвигается твоя крафтерская деятельность? И как идет общение с заказчиками на английском? 2. Ты еще используешь гугл транслейт для составления сообщений для заказчиков, написание описаний в девиант.арт или отвечая на комментарии в ютюбе? 3. Ты стал уверенней в общении на английском? 4. По поводу MLP и крафтерской деятельности ты больше общаешься на английском или на русском? Сколько примерно в день ты переписываешься на английском? Приходится созваниваться иногда? 5. Youtube. Когда ты начал свой ютюб канал? Как пришла эта идея? Тебе много приходится общаться с людьми? Какие планы по развитию? 6. Patreon. Когда ты открыл аккаунт на патреон? Как возникла идея? Как это работает? Какие у тебя планы в дальнейшем? Сложно было сделать описание? Много ли приходиться взаимодействовать с людьми? (на русском или на английском?) 7. Есть ли ты на еще какой-нибудь платформе? На какой платформе как тебе кажется ты более активен? Вконтакте это только для русскоязычных пользователей? Какая платформа для чего служит?	1. How is crafting coming along? And how is your communication with customers in English? 2. Do you still use Google translate to compose messages for customers, write descriptions in deviant.art or respond to comments on YouTube? 3. Have you become more confident in communicating in English? 4. Regarding MLP and crafting do you communicate more in English or Russian? How much about a day do you correspond in English? Do you have to call up sometimes? 5. Youtube. When did you start your YouTube channel? How did this idea come about? Do you have to communicate with people a lot? What are your development plans? 6. Patreon. When did you open your patron account? How did the idea come about? How does it work? What are your plans for the future? Was it difficult to make a description? Do you have to interact with other users? (in Russian or in English?) 7. Are you on any other platform? On which platform do you think you are more active? Vkontakte is only for Russian-speaking users? What platform is it for?

Appendix 7. Guide of an exploratory interview (Bolk and Nork)

Guide in original language (Russian)	Researcher's translation
Имя: Возраст: Место жительства: Профессия:	Name: Age: Country: City: Job:
Фан анимации Как и когда вы начали смотреть MLP? Как и когда вы начали читать фанфик? Опишите, пожалуйста, что вы делаете, как фанат MLP помимо проекта? Что из этого вы делаете на английском(Youtube, fanfic, comics, art)? Как вы думаете ваши фан-практики повлияли на ваш уровень языка? Расскажите о проекте: как вам пришла идея, что входит в этот проект? Сколько по времени занял проект? Как пришла идея создать аудиокнигу? На каком вы сейчас этапе? Есть ли другие проекты? Как вы разделяете работу между собой? Пользуетесь ли вы гугл драйвом когда пишите? Как вы нашли пруфридера и сильно ли он вам помог? Как вы подбирали сленговые слова (pal, lass..)? или это делали пруфридеры? Откуда они? Старались ли вы переводить ближе к тексту, или иногда интерпретировали текст в зависимости от контекста? Был ли у вас какой-то гид по стилю переводчика? Помог ли этот проект с изучением английского? Какая именно фаза вам показалась более эффективной? Были ли какие-нибудь трудности в английском, которые вам удалось преодолеть? Что вы делали, когда у вас появлялись трудности с переводом? Пользовались ли вы какими-нибудь программами или словарями? Уточняли ли вы у автора значения каких-то фраз? Были ли у вас проблемы со словарным запасом? На каком английском вы писали - американском или английском? Была ли идея придерживаться какого-то определенного стиля? Как вы думаете повысился ли ваш	**Фан анимации** How and when did you start watching MLP? How and when did you start reading fan fiction? Please describe what you are doing as a fan of MLP besides the project? What do you make of this in English (Youtube, fanfic, comics, art)? Do you think your fan practices have influenced your language level? Tell us about the project: how did you get the idea of what is included in this project? How long did the project take? How did you get the idea to create an audiobook? What stage are you at now? Are there any other projects? How do you share your work? Do you use google drive when you write? How did you find the proof reader and did he help you much? How did you choose slang words (pal, lass ..)? or did the proofreaders do this? Where are they from? Have you tried to translate closer to the text, or sometimes interpreted the text depending on the context? Did you have any kind of guide about the style of the translation? Did this project help with learning English? Which phase did you find more effective? Were there any difficulties in English that you managed to overcome? What did you do when you encountered difficulties when translating? Have you used any programs or dictionaries? Have you clarified the meaning of any phrases from the author? Have you had any problems with vocabulary? What English did you write in - American

словарный запас в результате? Используете ли вы английский в своей рутине? Участвуете ли вы в других переводческих проектах? Общаетесь ли вы с англоговорящими людьми по поводу MLP?	or British? Was there an idea to stick to any particular style? Do you think your vocabulary has increased as a result? Do you use English in your daily routine? Do you participate in other translation projects? Do you communicate with English speaking people about MLP?
Идеология Как вы думаете MLP и его фандом транслирует определенные ценности-принципы? И влияют ли эти ценности на совместные проекты? Как вы думаете эти ценности влияют на совместные проекты? Можете ли вы сравнить MLP с другими фандомами?	**Ideology** Do you think that MLP and its fandom transmites certain values-principles? And do these values influence joint projects? Do you think these values influence collaborative projects? Can you compare MLP with other fandom?
Изучение английского Вы знаете какой у вас уровень английского? Он изменился с тех пор как вы стали фанатами MLP? Сколько примерно времени вы его изучаете?	**Learning English** Do you know your level of English? Has it changed since you became MLP fans? How much time do you study it?

Appendix 8. Guide of a specific interview (Bolk)

Guide in original language (Russian)	Researcher's translation
Конфликт Что произошло с проектом? Она сейчас переводится? Был какой-то конфликт?	**Conflict** What happened to the project? Is it being translated now? Was there some kind of conflict?
Работа в команде Тебе нравилось работать над проектом? Тебе помогала команда? Как бы ты охарактеризовал роль каждого в команде? (неформально) Какую часть работы делал ты? Что для тебя важно в работе в команде? У вас были какие-то негласные правила? Ты хотел научится чему то конкретному при этом переводе?	**Teamwork** Did you enjoy working on this project? Did the team help you? How would you characterize the role of everyone in the team? (informally) What part of the job did you do? What is important for you in teamwork? Did you have any unspoken rules? Did you want to learn something specific with this translation?
Аудитория Как ты думаешь люди ждали дальнейшего перевода? Как ты думаешь иностранная целевая аудитория отличается от российской? Как? Эти взгляды совпадали у тебя с Норком?	**Readership** Do you think that people were waiting for further translation? Do you think the foreign target readership is different from Russian? How? Did your views coincide with Korneev?
Свои проекты Сейчас вы работаете вместе над чем-то? А в будущем предвидится? В каких ты проектах на данный момент? Почему ты оставил фандаббинг? Ты сейчас увлекаешься какими-то другими фандомами? Как ты думаешь ты выполняешь роль переводчика в фандоме?	**Own projects** Are you working on something together right now? Do you expect to work together in the future? What are your current projects? Why did you leave fundabbing? Are you into any other fandoms right now? Do you think that you have a role of translator in the fandom?

Appendix 9. Guide of a specific interview (Nork)

Guide in original language (Russian)	Researcher's translation
Процесс работы	**Work process**
Организация процесса на этапы адаптации, перевода, редактуры - как вы к этому пришли? Это было твое решение? Я заметила, что в комментариях на стадии 0, ты часто спрашиваешь мнение других. Как вы пришли к такому принятию решений большинством голосов? Как вы приходите к консенсусу, когда мнения очень разные? На стадии пруфридинга английского, каким образом вам делали поправки, вы их потом обсуждали с пруфридером? Как проходила последняя стадия редактуры после пруфридинга?	Organization of the process through the stages of adaptation, translation, editing - how did you come to this? Was that your decision? I noticed that in the comments at stage 0, you often ask the opinions of others. How did you come to that decision by a majority vote? How did you reach consensus when opinions are very different? At the stage of English proofreading, did you make the corrections and then you discussed them with the proof reader? What was the last stage of editing after proofreading?
Платформы	**Platforms**
Какая есть разница в работе между гугл док и падом? Что ты предпочитаешь? У тебя остались ссылки на старые переводы в гугл доке? Хотелось бы посмотреть на комментарии.	What is the difference between google doc and etherpad? What do you prefer to use? Do you still have links to old translations in Google Dock? I would like to look at the comments.
Западная аудитория	**Western audience**
Как возникла идея что именно нужно было адаптировать роман для западного читателя? Вы ориентировались на определенные произведения? Как ты представляешь этого "интернационального", западного читателя? Например, ты говорил о том, что Лира должна быть более проактивным героем, и так ее лучше поймет англоязычная аудитория. Это связано с англоязычной литературной традицией?	How did you get the idea that it was necessary to adapt the novel for a western reader? Did you focus on certain works? How do you imagine this "international", Western reader? For example, you said that Lyra should be a more proactive hero, and so the English-speaking readership will better understand her. Is it connected with the English literary tradition?

Appendix 10. Guide of a follow up interview (Vic)

Guide in original language (Russian)	Researcher's translation
Имя: Возраст: Место жительства: Профессия:	Name: Age: Country: City: Job:
Работа в команде Как ты попал в команду? Чем тебя привлекает перевод? Тебе нравилось работать над переводом? Тебе помогала команда? Как бы ты охарактеризовал роль каждого в команде? (неформально) Какую часть работы делал ты? Что для тебя важно в работе в команде? Расскажи как появилась рубрика Vic translate. Как ты стал техническим помощником? Ты хотел научится чему то конкретному при этом переводе? Тебе помогали поправки Bolka? Как обычно происходил перевод?	**Teamwork** How did you get into the translation team? What attracts you to the translation? Did you enjoy working on the project? Did the team help you? How would you characterize the role of everyone in the team? (informally) What part of the job did you do? What is important for you in teamwork? Tell me how the Vic translate section appeared. How did you become a technical assistant? Did you want to learn something specific with this translation? Did Bolk's corrections help you? How did the translation usually happen?
Аудитория Как ты думаешь люди ждали дальнейшего перевода? Как ты думаешь иностранная целевая аудитория отличается от российской? Как? Эти взгляды совпадали у тебя с Норком?	**Readership** Do you think people were waiting for further translation? Do you think the foreign target audience is different from Russian? How? Did these views coincide with Nork?
Свои проекты Сейчас вы работаете вместе над чем-то? А в будущем предвидится? В каких ты проектах на данный момент? Ты сейчас увлекаешься какими-то другими фандомами? Как ты думаешь ты выполняешь роль переводчика в фандоме?	**Own projects** Are you working on something together now? Do you expect to work on something in the future? What are your current projects? Are you into any other fandoms right now? Do you think you have a role of a translator in a fandom?

Appendix 10. Model of informed consent

Informed consent of participation

With this document I agree to participate as an informant in the project of the doctoral thesis "Language learning with the use of cartoons" by student Liudmila Shafirova with tutors: Daniel Cassany and Carme Bach of the Pompeu Fabra University.
By signing this document, I confirm that:
• I know the purpose of this research and the methods;
• I participate voluntarily;
• I agree to be interviewed by the researcher (in person or virtually);
• I know that I can limit participation in any way and at any time, without giving explanations and without any repercussion for me;
• I know that my real and virtual identities (name and surname, nick, avatar, etc.) and those of any contact or person present in my social networks or in the data provided for the research will always remain anonymous;
• I will be entitled to read or correct any results and publication (presentation in congress, article or books) that is made of this research and based on the data provided by me;
• All my and third-party data will be treated with confidentiality in accordance with national and European legislation (Royal Decree 1720/2007, Personal Data Protection Act 15/1999 and European Directive 2002/58 / EC);

Participant

Nickname:

Signature:

Researcher:
Name: Shafirova Liudmila

Signature