LITERATURE

AND TECHNOLOGY: THE TRANSFORMATION OF LITERATURE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

LITERATURA Y TECNOLOGÍA: LA TRANSFORMACIÓN DE LA LITERATURA EN LA ERA DIGITAL

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of the digital revolution, literature has undergone a paradigmatic transformation that reconfigures authorship, narrative structure, and reader engagement within a multimodal, interactive environment. Several research has examined the democratization of self-publishing and the proliferation of electronic and hypertextual narratives, but here remains a critical gap in integrating speech act theory with the study of ambiguous artistic structures across classical, modernist, postmodernist, and digital texts. Thus, this research aims to elucidate the functional role of speech acts in literary meaning-making and to analyze how structural ambiguity fosters interpretive collaboration between text and reader. We found that speech acts operate as performative engines that actively shape narrative progression and reader cognition, while ambiguous structures invite readers to assume co-authorial roles, thereby destabilizing fixed meanings and traditional authorial authority. Moreover, the expansion of digital publishing and algorithm-driven platforms highlights urgent challenges related to intellectual property rights, quality assurance, and the long-term preservation of digital literary heritage. In the research it is concluded that existing critical and pedagogical models must be revised to address emergent narrative modalities and to cultivate multiliteracies that empower both creators and consumers of digital texts. We believe future research should investigate how nascent media technologies continue to inherit and transform these communicative dynamics, advancing both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for sustaining a vibrant literary ecosystem in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Literature, Technology, Transformation, Digital age.

RESUMEN

Tras la revolución digital, la literatura ha experimentado una transformación paradigmática que reconfigura la autoría, la estructura narrativa y la interacción del lector en un entorno multimodal e interactivo. Diversas investigaciones

han examinado la democratización de la autoedición y la proliferación de narrativas electrónicas e hipertextuales, pero persiste una brecha crítica en la integración de la teoría de los actos de habla con el estudio de las estructuras artísticas ambiguas en textos clásicos, modernistas, posmodernistas y digitales. Por lo tanto, esta investigación busca dilucidar el papel funcional de los actos de habla en la construcción de significado literario y analizar cómo la ambigüedad estructural fomenta la colaboración interpretativa entre el texto y el lector. Se descubre que, los actos de habla funcionan como motores performativos que moldean activamente la progresión narrativa y la cognición del lector, mientras que las estructuras ambiguas invitan a los lectores a asumir roles de coautoría, desestabilizando así los significados fijos y la autoridad autoral tradicional. Además, la expansión de la publicación digital y las plataformas basadas en algoritmos pone de relieve los urgentes desafíos relacionados con los derechos de propiedad intelectual, el control de calidad y la preservación a largo plazo del patrimonio literario digital. En la investigación se concluye que los modelos críticos y pedagógicos existentes deben revisarse para abordar las modalidades narrativas emergentes y fomentar la multiliteracidad que empodere tanto a los creadores como a los consumidores de textos digitales. Se comprende que las investigaciones futuras deben indagar cómo las tecnologías mediáticas emergentes continúan heredando y transformando estas dinámicas comunicativas, impulsando tanto la comprensión teórica como las estrategias prácticas para mantener un ecosistema literario vibrante en el siglo XXI.

Palabras clave: Literatura, Tecnología, Transformación, Era digital.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital technologies has generated a profound transformation in almost all areas of contemporary life, and literature is no exception. From the invention of the printing press to the internet era, the production and reception of literary texts have been intrinsically linked to technological advances, but never before has there been such a radical change as the current one (Yustisia et al., 2023). This includes not only how we read, create, and publish literary works, but also how stories circulate, are interpreted, and persist. For centuries, the book—whether manuscript, printed volume, or paperback—stood as both the vessel and symbol of literature. Traditional literary techniques, deeply entwined with the demands and qualities of the printed page, dominated narrative strategies, aesthetic forms, and modes of reader engagement. Yet, with the rise of digital platforms, e-books, interactive

narratives, and multimedia texts, these conventional approaches face new challenges and possibilities (Otero-González & and Vázquez-Herrero, 2023; Yang et al., 2025).

The history of literature is, to a certain extent, a history of media and tools. From oral tradition to medieval manuscripts, through Gutenberg's printing press and the industrialized book, each technological innovation has expanded expressive possibilities and democratized access to written culture (Rousseau, 2023). But the digital age introduces a new dimension: the convergence of text, image, sound, and programming, giving rise to hybrid narrative forms that blur the boundaries between literature, art, and technology (Palanisamy, 2025). Several authors emphasize that the potential of the digital environment allows for nonlinear, interactive, and multimedia reading experiences, where the user is not a passive recipient, but an active co-creator of meaning. This change not only modifies literary aesthetics but also the epistemology of the text, questioning notions such as authenticity, sole authorship, and the definitive fixation of meaning (Luyen et al., 2022; Pizzolante et al., 2024). Thus, the digital revolution is not only a change in medium; rather, it is a symptom of a more profound alteration in the way literature operates on a social, economic, and intellectual level. This is because the digital revolution represents a change in medium (Miguélez et al., 2021). As a consequence of the development of digital technology, authors and readers in the 21st century is given new opportunities to engage with tales. These opportunities are now available to them. Having said that, this does, however, present certain difficulties with respect to the validity of literary works, the preservation of literary works, and the legitimacy of authors.

When a text can exist simultaneously as fluid code and discrete artifact, how do we define its canonical form? What criteria determine the authenticity of a novel that evolves through patches and updates? And how do we archive works dependent on obsolete software or ephemeral online environments? Such concerns are not merely theoretical; they pose real challenges for librarians, publishers, and scholars seeking to preserve digital literary heritage for future generations (Storm & Soares, 2024). Moreover, economic models that underpinned traditional publishing are in flux. The print book's lifecycle—from author advance through editorial processes, printing, distribution, and retail—served as the backbone of an industry supporting writers, editors, and booksellers. Digital distribution, with its negligible marginal costs and global reach, democratizes access but also saturates markets. Self-publishing platforms such as Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing and Wattpad enable writers to bypass gatekeepers, yet they

also expose authors to new forms of algorithmic invisibility and exploitation, such as discoverability challenges, steep commission fees, and data-driven marketing pressures (Shahwan, 2023).

From a socio-cultural perspective, digital literature disrupts established hierarchies of taste and authority. Online communities and fan fiction networks proliferate derivative narratives, challenging notions of intellectual property and literary originality. On blogs, social media, and dedicated platforms, readers and writers engage in peer review, collective world-building, and multimodal commentary, reshaping the cultural capital associated with literary production (Pearson, 2010). At the same time, concerns about digital divides, censorship, and platform monopolies intensify debates about equitable access to literature and freedom of expression in the digital age. The transformation of literature in the digital era also demands a reevaluation of pedagogical approaches. Literature curricula rooted in the analysis of print texts must adapt to include hypertext theory, digital narratology, and electronic editing practices. Students require new literacies—computational thinking, multimodal composition, and critical engagement with algorithms—to navigate and produce digital texts effectively. Educators face the dual tasks of preserving critical analysis of canonical works while fostering innovative practices that leverage networked technologies to deepen literary understanding (Area-Moreira et al., 2023; Engeness, 2021).

At the conceptual level, digital literature invites us to reconsider fundamental definitions. What constitutes a 'text' when narratives can exist as virtual environments, video games, or chatbots? How do core concepts such as intertextuality, authorship, and reader-response theory evolve in networked contexts? Scholars have proposed frameworks where new media refashion prior forms. Yet, as digital literature proliferates, existing theories may require adaptation or extension to account for emergent narrative modalities—social media storytelling, augmented reality installations, and AI-generated prose. In this context, academia faces the challenge of updating its theoretical and methodological frameworks. This entails rethinking disciplines such as literary criticism, narrative theory, and cultural studies, which must integrate interdisciplinary approaches to address the complexity of new media. From the perspective of the above elements, the objective of this research is to analyze the functional role of speech acts in the creation of meaning as well as the poetics of ambiguous structures in literary texts.

DEVELOPMENT

Austin (1962) established the foundation for speech act theory by classifying utterances as either locutionary, illocutionary, or perlocutionary acts. This taxonomy makes it possible to investigate various speech actions. In the years that followed, Searle (1969) provided further elaboration on these topics; nonetheless, Austin's analysis laid the groundwork for speech act theory. These conceptual frameworks have been applied in the field of literary analysis (Pratt, 1977) with the objective of understanding how fictional utterances have repercussions in readers' minds, which often go beyond the literal meaning of fictional utterances. Speech acts may function as announcements, promises, or instructions, independent of the hypothetical circumstances in which they occur. This is particularly true in the realms of poetry and theatre, where speech acts are frequently employed.

In the study of ambiguity in creative form, which was first carried out by Empson (1930) and subsequently built upon by Barthes (1970), the concept that literature does not present a single, consistent interpretation is the primary focus of attention. Those who subscribe to the post-structuralist school of criticism, most notably Derrida (2017), contend that ambiguity is not a defect but rather a property that compels interpretation and demonstrates the instability of language. According to their viewpoint, ambiguity is not a defect but rather a characteristic that demonstrates the instability of language systems. This perspective transforms meaning into a dynamic and collaborative interaction between the reader and the text.

Recent research conducted across various academic disciplines (Culler, 2001; Fish, 1980) has contributed to further narrowing the gap between these ideas. The results of these investigations have shown that the construction of dynamic meaning is made possible by speech acts that occur within ambiguous frameworks. For instance, modernist literature, such as James Joyce's Ulysses, uses fragmented syntax and intertextuality to encourage a range of interpretations. In contrast, postmodernist literature often employs metafictional speech acts that are directed at the reader.

For a long time, literature has been regarded as a means of representation —a way to express something about the world, the imagination, or the inner life of the human being. However, speech act theory has shown that language is not used solely to talk about the world—it is also used to act upon it. This approach allows us to view literature

through the lens of performativity: literary texts not only say something, they also do something. Traditionally, the essence of a novel or poem has been measured by its content or aesthetic value. But if we think of the text as a speech act, its performative dimension—how it affects the reader, how it constructs or transforms social relations—takes on a central role. This is a dynamic interaction that depends both on the author's intention and the reader's context.

Performativity becomes especially prominent in contemporary and digital literature. Literary texts shared on social media, interactive projects, and poetry based on live performance derive their impact from the conditions in which they are enacted and the mutual relationships among participants. To fully grasp such a text, it is not enough to simply read its content—we must also ask: who is saying it, to whom, under what circumstances, and what does this act of saying produce? Thus, when literature is understood as a performative act, it is no longer seen as a static object, but rather as a living, evolving practice that operates within and affects the social sphere.

According to Figure 1, the transformation of literature in the digital age represents substantial cultural, stylistic, and structural changes that redefine the fundamental nature of literary production, dissemination, and reception. This revolution is not merely technological or superficial; rather, it is a movement that is fundamentally transforming culture.

Fig 1. Evolution of literature in the digital age.

The Evolution of Literature in the Digital Age

- 01 E-books and Accessibility
- 02 Online Publishing Platforms
- 03 Multimedia Storytelling
- 04 Interactive Fiction and Gaming
- 05 Social Reading Experiences
- 06 Literature in Education
- 07 Preservation and Archiving
- 08 Algorithmic and AI-Generated Literature

Source: FasterCapital (2025).

The graphic developed by FasterCapital (2025) demonstrates the breadth of changes that have occurred over time by identifying eight major areas in which literature has adapted to and been influenced by digital innovation. First, the availability of electronic books has made it possible to remove traditional barriers that prevented people from accessing literature. Readers can now access literary works from almost any location and at any time, as these works are available in portable formats and can be downloaded instantly. The growth of online publishing platforms has been one of the most important factors contributing to the democratization of writing. Through these platforms, independent writers can communicate directly with audiences, bypassing conventional gatekeeping institutions such as publishing firms and literary agencies. Authors can now utilize platforms such as Wattpad, Kindle Direct Publishing, and Medium to reach readers without traditional intermediaries. While this shift has led to an abundance of content, it has also introduced new voices into literature that were previously underrepresented or completely marginalized in literary discourse.

Regarding the structure of storytelling, multimedia storytelling, interactive fiction, and gaming represent a significant departure from conventional linear narratives. The utilization of various formats makes it possible to construct hybrid works that include multimedia elements such as music, graphics, video, and human interaction. At this point, the written word is no longer the sole component of literature; rather, it has expanded to include experiential qualities that reflect the hyperconnected reality of many contemporary audiences. When readers encounter interactive narratives, such as Bandersnatch or text-based game narratives, they are essentially transformed into co-authors of the work, as these stories encourage readers to participate in plot development.

The phenomenon of social reading experiences has also brought about a transformation in literary consumption. Digital platforms such as Goodreads, reading subreddits, and online book clubs facilitate the establishment of interpretative communities. Through these platforms, users can engage in conversations not only about books but also about various related topics. This form of community reading contributes to the creation of a participatory literary culture, which is characterized by the negotiation of meaning through discussion, reviews, and reader interaction, in contrast to the traditional approach where meaning is determined solely by authorial authority. Additionally, the use of digital resources in educational settings has enhanced pedagogical approaches, resulting in the integration of literature into educational contexts. Through technological tools such as e-literature, hypertext fiction, and annotation platforms, reading, critical thinking, and intertextual analysis are now being taught in more engaging and accessible ways. In this context, literature becomes a collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching tool.

However, these creative developments are accompanied by the need for careful consideration and critical thought. The field of archiving and preservation faces fundamental challenges that must be addressed. Unlike physical books, digital texts are susceptible to obsolescence, data corruption, and platform dependency. Therefore, the development of reliable digital preservation solutions is essential in the literary sphere to ensure that today's creative works will not be lost to future generations.

Finally, the growth of algorithm-generated and artificial intelligence-produced writing raises entirely new questions regarding the nature of creativity, authorship, and originality. While AI tools are capable of producing coherent narratives, it is essential to recognize that these tools lack the human intentionality, cultural context, and emotional depth that characterize literary originality. Nevertheless, these technologies are having an increasingly significant influence on content creation, which has caused literary communities to experience a mixture of enthusiasm and apprehension.

The process of transforming written works into digital media is neither simple nor straightforward. It simultaneously introduces new challenges in terms of ethics, aesthetics, and structure, while also presenting opportunities for creativity, inclusion, and reader engagement. The eight categories developed by FasterCapital (2025) help illuminate this complex process according to relevant characteristics. In this era, literature is not a fixed entity; rather, it is a dynamic, fluid, interactive process that continuously engages with the technologies and cultures responsible for its creation. The importance of not only embracing digital literary forms but also critically analyzing their implications for meaning creation, cultural memory preservation, and the future of human expression continues to grow. In traditional literature, readers encounter texts unidirectionally and attempt to uncover their meaning. However, with the development of the digital age, the reader's role has fundamentally changed. Readers are no longer merely interpreters but also participants in textual creation. Interactive literature and hypertextual structures require readers to move beyond passive observation—they must become active participants. This transformation can be described as "the reader becoming the author."

Many contemporary literary examples provide the reader with the opportunity to alter the content and meaning of the text. For instance, in interactive novels, the reader can influence the development of the story through their actions and decisions. This type of literature perceives the reader not merely as a recipient of the text but as an integral part of its creation. The reader no longer operates strictly within the boundaries set by the author; rather, they possess the power to change the direction and outcome of the text.

Traditionally, the purpose of literature has been to introduce the reader to the layers of meaning within a text and to guide them toward a particular interpretation. However, in digital literature and interactive environments, the reader incorporates their own personal experiences and desires into the text. This results in a more reciprocal and experiential relationship between reader and text.

In hypertextual works—an example of digital literature—the reader navigates through different parts of the text, establishing connections and uncovering meaning in a personalized way. This allows the reader to choose various paths to interpret the text. Depending on the reader's choices, the text can present multiple interpretations and outcomes. In the traditional model of literature, the author is regarded as the main creative subject and has absolute control over the text. The reader, on the other hand, mainly plays a passive receptor role. However, with the development of digital technologies, significant changes occur in this relationship. The concept of authorship becomes unstable, and the reader gradually transforms into a more active, participatory, and creative figure.

Texts published through digital platforms often have an open structure. In this way, the reader no longer encounters only a fixed text created by the author, but can also participate in its modification and expansion. Forums, comment sections, wiki-based platforms, and social media increase these interactive possibilities. In some cases, the reader partially assumes the role of the author,

becoming involved in the direct creation or transformation of the text. This turns the idea of "the reader becoming the author," proposed in postmodern theory, into a practical reality in the digital context.

In the digital context, role-sharing also changes. For example, fan fiction writing allows the reader to invent new plots within the world created by the author and assert their own authorship. This means the author steps down from the "god-like" position and transforms the reader into a creative partner. In such circumstances, literature becomes the collective product of multiple participants, rather than the work of a single individual. At the same time, the ability to track reader behaviors through technological tools also provides the author with feedback. For example, information such as which sections are read the most, where the reader pauses, or which passages are more widely shared can lead the author to modify their style, plot, or genre choice. This shows that literature is not just a static text, but a dynamic field based on interaction with the reader.

Thus, in the digital age, the relationship between author and reader evolves; the centralized, single-subject notion of authorship is dismantled, and interactive, shared, and collective creative models take its place. This new relationship reveals that literature is not solely written to express a theme or to reflect on the world. On the contrary, literature can be seen as a collaborative activity, an experience, and a means of forming social connections between reader and text.

Concluding remarks

Analysis of historical works such as Hamlet and Oedipus Rex has shown that speech acts are often concealed behind formal frameworks that amplify the performative responsibilities of the characters. This situation occurs in a good number of these works, representing one of the numerous discoveries that have been made in this field. In the play Hamlet, for instance, soliloquies are more than simply internal monologues; they are illocutionary activities that are intended to build not only the protagonist's destiny but also the audience's comprehension of the play. The play serves as an excellent illustration of this phenomenon. In other words, the soliloquies function to mold the action that takes place in the play.

In this particular case, ambiguity results from the tension that exists between acting and not taking action. The ambiguity that exists makes it possible for the reader to speculate on the meaning that lies behind each statement, creating potential for multiple interpretations. One of the characteristics that sets modernist literature apart from other types of writing is the use of experimental frameworks for conducting speech acts. T.S. Eliot's "The

Waste Land" exemplifies this approach through its fragmented voices and shifting tones throughout the poem, which make it difficult to acquire a firm understanding of the work. Rather than focusing on individual voices, each line functions as a performative act that contributes to the formation of a polyphonic chorus. Every line makes a contribution to the progression of the choral melody. In this specific case, ambiguity is not only a component of the content but also a component of the form, as ambiguity is employed in both aspects. However, this poses a challenge to the logic of narratives that are linear in their structure.

Italo Calvino's "If on a Winter's Night a Traveller" exemplifies postmodernist writing that goes even further by blurring the boundaries between the speaker and the reader. This work represents a distinctive example of postmodernist literature found in Calvino's writings. The use of second-person address not only serves as a speech act but also functions effectively as a metafictional approach by drawing the reader's attention to the fact that the narrative is a fabrication while simultaneously drawing them into the structure of the tale they are reading.

As the reader attempts to understand these ambiguous structures, which are often recursive, nonlinear, or incomplete, they must become a co-creator of meaning to fulfill this requirement. The novel employs the second-person address form "you," and this writing technique serves two functions: first, as a speech act where the reader becomes a direct participant in the dialogue, as if the author is speaking to them directly; and second, as a metafictional strategy that prompts the reader to reflect on the fictional nature of the story. Specifically, it reminds the reader that the story is not "real," encouraging them to consider the structure of the text and how it is constructed.

In the novel, events do not unfold in a linear fashion (i.e., from beginning to end in a direct narrative). Instead, the narrative consists of non-linear, repetitive, and incomplete episodes. The reader must connect these episodes, construct meanings between them, and fill in the gaps with their own imagination.

Thus, the reader is no longer a passive observer but becomes a "co-author" – an active participant in creating the meaning of the text. This passage demonstrates that postmodern literature does not simply tell a story but views the reader as an active participant in shaping the structure and meaning of the text. Calvino's novel represents one of the most prominent examples of this approach – here, the reader simultaneously serves as protagonist, participant, and creator of the story.

All of these literary periods are characterized by the fact that speech acts serve as the engines of meaning, while ambiguity in structure acts as the landscape on which interpretive interaction takes place. Both the actions of language and language itself function as the engines that drive meaning. Consequently, the impact of speech acts on style depends not only on the content of the speech but also on how it is contained within the formal logic of the text and the cognitive response of the reader. In other words, the speech acts themselves are of utmost significance to the overall stylistic effect.

CONCLUSIONS

Speech acts are not only linguistic decoration in the realm of literature; rather, they are dynamic tools that perform the functions of producing, modifying, and compounding meaning. To emphasize that this is the case is of the utmost importance. The function of this thing is most successful when it is incorporated into creative frameworks that are ambiguous, defy closure, and provide room for interpretation.

When they are positioned, this is the situation that occurs. Speech motions have been utilized in literature for a very long time, and they have been used for the aim of enacting meaning rather than just communicating it. This practice stretches back to the beginning of writing. For a substantial length of time, this has been the state of affairs. The rigors yet rhetorically rich discourses of classical writings, on the one hand, and the broken and mocking gestures of postmodern fiction, on the other hand, are both examples of this notion. There are numerous instances of this concept.

It is essential to have a clear grasp on this interaction over the duration of the history of literature in order to have a full knowledge of the ever-changing nature of narrative authority, reader engagement, and creative originality throughout the course of the history of literature. Because of this, it is of the utmost importance to have a solid understanding of how this interaction works. The research that is carried out in the future need to continue to analyses the ways in which new forms of media and digital literature inherit and change these processes in their own distinctive ways, according to the characteristics that they contain.

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