



Methodology of Strengthening Students' Media Literacy

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Abstract: In today's digital age, media literacy has become an essential skill for students. The rise of social media, fake news, and information overload necessitates that students critically evaluate and understand media messages. Media literacy involves the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and communicate using various forms of media. It is not merely about learning to use digital tools, but about understanding how media influences perceptions and behavior. The growing role of media in shaping political, social, and cultural realities makes it essential to adopt methodologies that strengthen students' media literacy skills. This article explores key methodologies that educators can implement to enhance media literacy in students.

Keywords: Media Literacy, Media Education, Media Content, Mediatization, Digital, Visual, Communication.

Introduction

In recent years, the acceleration of the flow of information several times, the increase of information of a negative nature along with positive information has increased the need to acquire media literacy (Livingstone, 2004). Traditionally, media literacy refers a person's ability to analyze literary works and create quality texts. However, now media literacy refers to the capacity to critically assess and interpret media content (Wenner, 2024). The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) defines media literacy as the ability to *"access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication"* (NAMLE, 2024). It goes beyond digital skills by incorporating critical thinking, an understanding of media representations, and how power structures influence media production. By fostering these skills, students can make informed decisions about the media they consume and produce (Fan, 2021).

Nowadays, media literacy is taught as a separate subject in the complex of humanities in Great Britain and Australia, media literacy was included in the curricula of secondary schools in Finland in 1970, later it was included in higher education institutions in 1977. In

the 1990s, media literacy was replaced by the concept of media education. In Sweden, it has been taught as a separate subject in educational institutions since 1980 (Prantl, 2022).

The modern development in the field of information technologies and the widespread use of new digital media and educational tools lead to the increasing importance of media literacy. Today, media literacy is recognized as one of the most basic competencies in almost the entire world education system (Carmona, 2020).

According to Fresno Pacific University, "Media literacy helps students become wise consumers of media as well as responsible producers of their own media (Pun, 2017). In the same direction, teaching media literacy helps students develop critical thinking. This type of thinking can eventually become second nature to a person, which will help them in many areas as they grow up." In the classroom, students working on media and news literacy will help them become strong critical thinkers in all aspects of their lives (Imron, 2019). Today, the information society poses many problems to the modern university. The Internet and modern technologies not only filled the lack of information, prevented excessive time consumption and became a serious competitor of traditional educational norms. Teachers and students are constantly forced to look for new resources to improve their media competence (Bernate, 2024).

Methodology

Development of media and information skills in students requires advanced media competence (Icen, 2020). Teachers actively use a multimedia projector in the auditorium (nowadays lectures are rarely given without a presentation), video materials, and an interactive whiteboard. Some teachers have created a social page to communicate and post updates for students. Members of the online community use it for professional development. Media education is the path to the world of technology, without which it is impossible to imagine (Vega, 2018). In the current conditions, its role and importance are increasing more than ever, and the high demand for information has an impact not only on the means and types of its transmission, but also on the main function and content of information. As a result of media education, media literacy is not limited to students' mastery of modern information technologies or development of critical information analysis skills. A broader view of the concept of media education is required. In the efficient and quick use of information, the student can determine the type of information needed to solve a specific problem, can access this information efficiently and quickly; identify keywords and relevant terms to access information of interest; can identify different types and formats of potential information sources, etc (Kunicina, 2018).

In today's developing era, "literacy" is not limited to the concept of having traditional writing and reading skills. The inclusion of media and information literacy in the set of fundamental skills without reducing the importance of numeracy, reading and writing skills, today's young people know the possibilities of media and other information suppliers (for example, libraries serving as books as a media resource), at the same time personal, collective, means they need to be able to search, evaluate, create and apply information to achieve their professional and educational goals (Tretyakov, 2024).

Therefore, media literacy includes the following:

1. Aesthetic and creative skills refer to the ability to understand, create and interpret media content creatively. By creating media content, the young generation can develop these skills.
2. Interactivity skills are demonstrated through the ability to communicate through media and perform various media roles. These skills can be developed through education and practice. Interactivity skills indicate a willingness to express one's thoughts and opinions.
3. Critical analysis skills refer to the ability to interpret and understand the significance of various media content using a variety of analytical tools. These skills are best developed by exploring diverse media content and genres;
4. Safety skills are manifested in the ability to get out of difficult situations and prevent them. Safe use of virtual space means protecting personal space and refraining from harmful content and communication.

How do students know which source is reliable when faced without the help of a teacher? Whether they are watching YouTube, reading the news, or analyzing images, students need the skills to understand information, put it into context, and distinguish between real and fake. Students should ask questions in media analysis and evaluation is:

- Who is the author?
- What is its purpose? (inform, entertain, persuade)
- How might other people interpret this message?
- Did he leave some details? Why?
- Are any sources cited? Are there any grammar or spelling mistakes?

It is also important to give students time and space to think for themselves and teach them how to ask questions so that they can learn to analyze and evaluate media independently. Also, studies have shown that people tend to choose views and ideas from the media that are consistent with their views, values and feelings (Yu, 2024).

Result and Discussion

A recent study showed that only 26% of people worldwide trust social media platforms as reliable sources of information (Edelman, 2024). Moreover, students are among the most vulnerable groups to misinformation due to their high levels of digital engagement. Strengthening media literacy helps students to:

- Detect biases and manipulate messages in news or advertisements.
- Become responsible creators of media content.
- Engage in informed civic participation.
- Analyze how different media platforms influence public opinion and social movements.

Methodologies for Strengthening Media Literacy

Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) Inquiry-based learning encourages students to ask questions and engage in self-directed exploration (Dvorghets & Shaturnaya, 2015). In media literacy education, students analyze media texts, identify underlying messages, and reflect on the purpose and audience of those messages. IBL promotes critical thinking and helps students understand that all media messages are constructed with specific intentions. For example, students might examine a news article or advertisement to discuss its target audience, the information it conveys, and the possible biases that influence its content (Savchuk, 2023).

Project-Based Learning (PBL) Project-based learning allows students to actively engage in creating media, fostering not only an understanding of media's power but also practical skills (Dvorghets & Shaturnaya, 2015). Through creating their own media projects (e.g., podcasts, blogs, videos), students apply their understanding of concepts like audience analysis, ethics in media production, and fact-checking. *Example:* Students might create a documentary on a social issue, exploring how media coverage shapes public perception. The project requires them to research, interview, and fact-check sources, offering real-world media literacy practice.

Collaborative Learning Media literacy can be strengthened through collaborative tasks where students critically discuss various forms of media (Icen, 2020). This approach promotes peer learning and diverse perspectives (Al-Qudah, 2023). By working in groups, students reflect on how different interpretations arise from their personal experiences and social contexts. For example: Students collaborate on analyzing media representations of race, gender, or class in popular films. They then present different perspectives and develop a collective understanding of the media's impact on shaping identities.

Gamification makes media literacy engaging by integrating game mechanics into learning activities. It encourages students to interact with media content in fun, meaningful ways (Dvorghets & Shaturnaya, 2015). Games that require media analysis, such as identifying fake news, can develop students' ability to critically evaluate information sources. For example: an educational game where students must navigate through a series of news articles, sorting fact from fiction, helps them practice discernment and verify information accuracy (Godoy-Pozo, 2019).

Analyzing case studies of real-world media events, such as the spread of misinformation during elections or the portrayal of a public health crisis, provides concrete examples for students to apply their media literacy skills (Icen, 2020). This method encourages students to assess the credibility of sources, identify biased reporting, and understand the role of media in shaping public perception (Wirth, 2022). For example: students may evaluate how media covered a major global event, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, discussing how different outlets shaped public opinion, what misinformation spread, and the consequences of media framing.

Critical Media Literacy (CML) Critical Media Literacy (CML) emphasizes the exploration of media from a sociopolitical perspective. Students learn how media reinforces power dynamics and often marginalizes certain groups. CML encourages students to question how race, class, gender, and sexuality are represented and how these

representations impact societal structures. For example, students analyze advertisements, films, or social media content to uncover hidden ideologies and power relations embedded in them. This approach helps students become more conscious consumers of media and advocates for change.

Conclusion

Media literacy is no longer a skill for just journalists or communication professionals; it is a critical competency for students to navigate the complex media environment of today. Educators must adopt diverse methodologies such as inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and critical media literacy approaches to help students critically analyze and produce media content. By doing so, students can become informed, responsible media consumers and creators, better equipped to participate in a democratic society.

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