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#### МЕДИАОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В ДЕФИЦИТЕ И В НАЛИЧИИ (ОБЩАЯ КАРТИНА И ЧАСТНЫЙ СЛУЧАЙ)

**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:** медиаобразование; медиакомпетентность; интегрированные курсы; образовательные потребности; системно-деятельностный подход; учебные курсы; студенты; информационные технологии; иностранные языки.

**АННОТАЦИЯ.** В статье представлен обзор ряда проблем, с которыми сталкиваются разработчики курсов медиаобразования: отсутствие надежных критериев измерения уровня медиакомпетентности, слабый уровень подготовки учителей, обеспечивающих медиаобразование, недостаточное внимание к данному компоненту общей и профессиональной подготовки в стандартах высшего образования ряда стран, включая Российскую Федерацию. Особое внимание уделяется вопросу сопряжения курсов и дисциплин, участвующих в формировании медиакомпетентности в университетах и вузах. В целях предварительной оценки качества медиаобразования было проведено анкетирование студентов 3–4 курсов и преподавательского состава одного из подразделений УрГПУ. Анализ анкет преподавателей и студентов института иностранных языков УрГПУ позволил выстроить предварительный рейтинг дисциплин и курсов, участвующих в формировании медиакомпетентности студентов, а также выявить ряд образовательных потребностей в данной области. К ним в первую очередь относятся: 1) необходимость уделять больше внимания этическим вопросам использования медиаресурсов и формирование умений оценивать достоверность и надежность медиаисточников; 2) привлечение к реализации медиаобразования предметов базового цикла; 3) акцент на методологической составляющей медиаобразования; 4) учет контекста дисциплины при использовании компонентов медиаинструментария; 5) реализация системно-деятельностного подхода в медиаобразовании. Разработка курса медиаобразования на основе междисциплинарной интеграции эффективна при условии тесного сотрудничества преподавателей иностранного языка и информационных технологий, последовательного учета составляющих образовательного контекста и приоритетного обучения тем формам и видам деятельности, которые могут быть применимы в средней школе. Перспективой исследования является создание, апробация и оценка эффективности подобного интегрированного курса.

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#### CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION: NEGLECT AND PROVISION (GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS)

**KEYWORDS:** media education; media competence; integrated courses; educational needs; system and activity-based approach; training course; students; IT technology; foreign languages.

**ABSTRACT.** The article addresses problem zones of adequate critical media literacy education provision: lack of reliable assessment scales or tools within MLE, lack of teacher preparedness and teacher training, the fact that in many countries (including Russian Federation) media literacy is not addressed and made explicit in standards of education. The focal point of the publication is coordination across disciplines studying media literacy at university level. Needs analysis of Urals State Pedagogical University Foreign Languages Department is presented through parallel study of junior and senior students' and staff questionnaires. Questionnaire analysis resulted in grading curricular components on the basis of their effectiveness in MLE and identifying the following major gaps in MLE provision: 1) there is a lack of focus on ethical awareness and media evaluation components; 2) disciplines of core curriculum generally do not contribute to media literacy provision; 3) there should be more focus on methodological aspect of MLE; 4) course specificity is not taken into consideration when a particular MLE tool is selected; 5) there is a lack of task-based activities that keep media literacy skills operational. Principles of cross-curricular course mapped out in the article comprise contextualization of CML activities within discipline framework, close integration of IT and EGP disciplines and focus on skills transferrable to other ELT contexts. Constructing, implementing this course and testing its effectiveness are identified as perspective to this emerging research.

Information society we live in is increasingly shaped and sculpted by audiovisual, digital and web information sources. With printed information sources losing ground, focus of education should be shifted from isolated reading skills formation to critical media literacy education (MLE).

For almost two decades MLE has proved a focus of growing concern and consolidated effort almost globally; setting up NAMLE (National Association of Media Literacy Education <https://namle.net>) CML (Center of Media Literacy <http://www.medialit.org>) in USA, Association of CineEducation and Mediapedagogy

<http://www.mediaeducation.ru/akm.html>, Online Media education library <http://mediaeducation.ucoz.ru> in Russian Federation might testify to the problem being addressed by global community of teaching practitioners. Ironically, both in USA and RF media literacy is not addressed and made explicit in standards of education: CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) standards in US, Federal State Standard for Pedagogical education in Russia.

With teaching process being increasingly shaped by external pressures (preparation for accreditation), the above-mentioned discrepancy between *educational needs* and *standardized educational outcomes* results in a number of problems:

- lack of reliable assessment scales or tools within MLE;
- lack of teacher preparedness and teacher training to identify teaching practices and activities as part of MLE toolkit and to assess media literacy outcomes;
- lack of communication in the university across disciplines studying media literacy;

The latter is particularly detrimental to MLE provision, since students' initial critical media literacy proficiency is not assessed and their progress within academia is not monitored. Deficiency of these two types is continuously addressed in educational research, *student assessment* being the mainstream. Current publications in this field might be divided into 3 categories:

1) The overruling objective is to address the problem, map out its scale: e.g. V. Protopopova [2], A. Fedorov [4], E. Shilder, B. Locke and D. Saxon [12]. No applicable solution is provided; the problem is presented as ingrained in the nature of MLE content;

2) Publications provide practical assessment tips, presented as transferrable to all teaching-learning environments, whereas in fact they might be tested and probably applied within compatible teaching-learning environment: T. Hallaq [9], A. Fedorov [1; 5; 6].

In Hallaq's research, a set of five constructs was identified as a result of commonalities found in literature authored by media literacy content experts. Constructs are the basic principles found to be common throughout the literature and throughout the strong media literacy education programs across the country. Constructs identified for this study were: media awareness (MAw), media access (MAc), ethical awareness (EA), media evaluation (ME), and media production (MP).

A list of 120 questions was produced; the items are divided into 5 categories in accordance with above-mentioned constructs. After multiple pilot-check and adaptations the final

scale looks like a list of statements. E.g. *I am confident in my ability to succeed in a fully online class* with a 6 item answer scale.

The measurement tool that finally emerged and was tested is applicable and looks reliable but is most obviously based on self-assessment. Self-assessment, unfortunately, is not an entirely reliable tool: media literacy self-assessments may measure people's *confidence* surrounding their use, evaluation and creation of media messages, rather than their actual *competence*.

Works of A. Fedorov are well known and cited in US and Russia, his contribution to the field in terms of content, and curricular development can hardly be overestimated. Regrettably, while measuring media competency of an individual, A. Fedorov simultaneously focuses on media literacy skills *and* personal growth, intellectual development of the *individual*, which makes his assessment criteria overextended and somewhat subjective.

3) Publications that aim to 'promote media literacy in teacher education' – to spread, share, and demonstrate lessons that fit into the traditional curriculum and coursework: A. Grigoryan, John M. King. [8], Christine M. Tardy, [15], G. E. Jacobs [10], S. Simakova [3], Antero Garcia, Robyn Seglem, Jef Share [7], J. Meehan et al [11]. The assessment approach most common here is task-based: 'what students can do in respect to the field of study', which is easy to implement and quite reliable. The limitations are connected with *scope* of research, since the authors address isolated procedures and tasks.

Student assessment, beside lack of satisfactory measurement tools, is a long-term research investment; it would take 4 years from fresher needs analysis to assessment of ML level of undergraduates and adaptation of MLE curricular components in accordance with results of pilot teaching. For this reason *preliminary MLE course assessment* might prove to be a more effective starting point for initial curricular development.

Similar research point is outlined in Chris M. Worsnop [16], T. Scull & J. Kupersmidt [13]. The former provides selection of support materials for evaluating final media course products, students, syllabus and system – e.g. a helpful table that compares assessment and evaluation on a number of points. Implementation of the tools is debatable, since the author strives to monitor and structure high-order thinking by rigid and somewhat restrictive procedures.

T. Scull & J. Kupersmidt present an applicable template for describing results of media literacy training (WHAT and HOW to assess, how to organize feedback from participants and interpret it). Their ML training program

was focused mainly on substance abuse prevention training. Topicality of research is well-argued: there are literally thousands of isolated, engaging media literacy activities or lesson plans with clear instructions that can be found in books and on the internet. However, there are relatively few curricula and even fewer curricula that have been rigorously evaluated.

This lacuna might have *systemic* reasons: only a handful of the more than 7,021 post-secondary institutions in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics 2013) offer media literacy courses, and that even fewer offer media literacy degrees (H. Schmidt) [14].

No initial course development would be effective without embedded assessment (at least in terms of outlines). The shaky foundation that is so far available for learner assessment prompts *course or staff performance assessment* a preferable starting point.

Dietary reactions of the consumers are not the only way to test quality of the menu – it is more common to start with assessing quality of its ingredients. Assessing quality of MLE should start from assessing soundness, cohesion, integration and liaison of its components.

In order to test effectiveness of state-of-the-art media literacy training at Ural's State Pedagogical University (USPU) a questionnaire was offered to both students and staff of Institute of Foreign languages. The questionnaire comprised 3 questions:

1) Respondents were offered to give a definition of critical media literacy (an open question).

2) Respondents were offered to fill in a 'tick in the box' grid which contained 20 activities traditionally associated with media literacy; the given activities comprised technical media literacy tasks (operating interactive board, use of the web for distance instruction), critical evaluation of media sources, tasks connected with transfer of information from one signal system to another (e.g. mind maps), activities, connected with commercial aspect of the media (advertising). One more option was an open question (*add other tasks...*). Here instructors were asked to tick off tasks regularly used in class while students were asked to tick off same techniques in case they were mastered and name the discipline (courses) that were instrumental in acquisition of the given technique. As an alternative, they were offered to provide the name of the instructor who enabled acquisition of the technique. Finally, here students were asked to tick off those activities which they were ready to implement themselves as part of their professional performance as EFL teachers.

3) Both instructors and students were asked to comment on challenges/obstacles that impeded acquisition/use of the techniques presented in the grid.

All in all, 36 junior students, 33 senior students and 26 staff were interviewed at Step 1. In addition to investigating variety of instructors' media competency toolkit and state of students' readiness to implement the basic assortment of media literacy training at school, the questionnaire allowed for discovery of more far-reaching issues, which might help with cross-curricular CML course development:

1) What are the gaps in media-literacy task provision (are there tasks that most teachers totally neglect through lack of coordination?)

2) What is general effectiveness of CML training (are there procedures stated as 'taught' by instructors but not stated as 'acquired' by students?)

3) Is there overall consistency within MLE tasks implementation? (Are they used throughout 3 years of training in IFL department or are there certain tasks that are introduced by 1 instructor to be 'dropped' and never addressed again (which is detrimental to reaching 'operational' level of the technique).)

4) Which instructional lacunas could be pointed out (courses or modules that are not engaged in CML education in general?)

5) Does IT module within EFL curricular effectively provide what it should provide – technical MLE skills?

6) Finally, do students and staff both have a clear (or, for that matter, at least basic) understanding of what MLE is?

Analysis of students' answers provided somewhat disappointing results: 35% of junior student respondents have never encountered the term or confessed very vague grasp of its essence – '*something to do with IT as means of language instruction*'. 15% of answers limit CML to technical media literacy, still another 15% connect it with 'media culture' and motivational component of addressing media in everyday life (media access). Media evaluation (ME), and media production (MP) as constituents of MLE were mentioned by less than 10% of all participants. What makes this part of feedback still more upsetting is clear lack of any progress in the grasp of the notion for undergraduates: (40% refused to give a definition of the notion, 25% connect it with operational skills. Media evaluation and production have been mentioned in 2 questionnaires (less than 5%).

Teachers demonstrate more adequate grasp of the notion; only 13% confessed 'vague idea' of the notion, and another 13% connected it with technical media literacy. In every other case media evaluation and media production have been consistently highlighted.

Predictably, for third year students 3 activities in media-literacy task provision almost unanimously marked as 'not acquired'/ not ready to use were: *assessing reliability of*

*online resources, web quests and media safety.* 2 more tasks with less than 15% positive feedback ('can use') have turned out to be: a) use of online gaming activities for instructional purposes; b) use of newspapers in a language class. Undergraduates seem to have similar (and even more pronounced) gaps.

Staff questionnaires also have prominent lacunas as to CML activities implementation; of those interviewed only *one* colleague admitted use of interactive board, 1 focused on media-safety activities (e.g. potentially dangerous forums and on-line groups for teens), 2 made use of literary transformation activities (i.e. making table games based on literary works) and none used 'survival CML tasks' (looking for discounts, feedback on films, books, services rendered and the like).

Let's address the question of instructional lacunas (or courses that 'do not work'). Ideally, the feedback given by students should have reflected the entire curriculum – *all* courses and modules should have been engaged in MLE. The state-of-the-art situation is far from this ideal: I have tried to rate courses stated as most helpful in MLE acquisition – the result being:

1. EGP.
2. IT courses.
3. Linguacultural studies, History of English speaking countries.
4. Methods of teaching English as a Foreign language.
5. Theoretical Phonetics.
6. School experience.
7. CML acquisition through individual tuition (scientific advisorship *or* projects within hidden curriculum).
8. Miscellaneous disciplines.
9. Self-taught (self-access).

Curricular modules almost totally *missing* in the feedback as to MLE effectiveness are core (basic) curricular courses (with the exception of Philosophy and Mathematics, mentioned by 2 and 4 respondents). The number of teachers engaged in MLE (those mentioned in Section 2 at least once) is 17 for third-year students. Undergraduates provide a more limited list of 14 staff.

MLE task implementation across curricular looks even less consistent: *mind maps* as information processing tool are listed as 'acquired/mastered' *by* more than 50% respondents. 27 of third-year respondents ascribe mind mapping acquisition to 1 course/1 instructor. The technique seems to be *never* (with 2 exceptions in two questionnaires) *addressed again*. Use of distance mode for assessment, feedback, self-access (course web sites and the like) is ascribed to 4 courses. Making poster presentations, collages, newspapers as part of project work is consistently addressed by 2 staff and hidden curriculum coordinator.

When introducing this questionnaire I had a particular objective of juxtaposing what members of staff claim to have taught/used as part of MLE with what students admit to have learned. The result of student/staff responses comparison looks intriguing (to say the least). 11 staff claim to have been using *newspaper activities* as integral part of EGP instruction; students attribute newspaper focused instruction to 5 staff (2 of those, including myself, do not ascribe this type of activities to their toolkit). *Mind mapping* as a regular procedure is stated by 5 staff, while students almost universally associate it with one language instructor. Addressing commercial discourse, ads analysis and ad busting is ticked off as part of regular toolkit by 9 staff while students ascribe it mostly to three teachers. I could proceed enumerating these discrepancies, even though the difference in other cases is less marked. There seems to be a certain pattern of misbalance in these responses: many staff *claim* to practice instances of CML instruction; not all of these claims have evidence in students' questionnaires. In a number of cases students *claim* to have mastered an activity with the help of staff who never focus on it (and report its regular use). One such surprising discrepancy has been 11 students reporting newspaper-based activities *mastered* in the course of American Studies. Unlike mind mapping, this has never been the focal point in my course: what I did, though, was giving regular 'credibility check' work: tasks to read highly sensational/controversial/aggressive/judgmental publications and sift them for facts versus allegations with the help of more credible sources (newspapers included). In fact, it was a heuristic *operational level task* which might have had a 'learn by doing' effect.

Contrary to popular belief, IT courses have proved to be for the most part effective in operational ML formation – the average of 5 out of 20 media literacy activities are attributed to IT instructors.

When asked to comment on challenges/obstacles that impeded acquisition/use of the techniques presented in the grid students and staff produced contrasting feedback. For *staff* the major impediment is *lack of time*, next comes lack of general IT skills, and 'not necessary for the course' response. This part of feedback worked well for *needs analysis*: colleagues would like to make addition of digital stories, web-quests, language corpus techniques, interactive board, and distance mode of instruction to their toolkit (this need can be easily met with the help of peer instruction swap-shops). For students the main obstacle is lack of experience in implementing tasks (what they need is task-based approach to LME), lack of consistency for CML tasks in the course of

instruction ('they should be used more regularly'), with 'lack of time' and 'lack of IT literacy' taking third and fourth position.

To sum up, analysis of students and staff responses give ground for the following preliminary observations:

1) So far, unplanned and uncoordinated MLE effort of staff has led to a number of *gaps*, most evident of them being lack of focus on *ethical awareness* and *media evaluation* components.

2) General effectiveness of MLE is rather *low* (52% 'mastered' being the best result for an activity; in most cases 'mastery' is attributed to 5–10 different courses and instructors, with 1–5 students to a course).

3) MLE task implementation lacks general consistency, which is reflected in students' questionnaires (without any prompts or clues for giving this response).

4) Courses *not engaged* in CML formation are basic module curricular courses (History, Psychology, Physical Education, Life Safety Basics etc.). Since these courses comprise every baccalaureate program at USPU they might be considered *generally non-contributing* for MLE.

5) IT courses, often believed to be at fault when MLE is concerned, adequately contribute to media access and technical literacy skills. Their low productivity might be connected with supplying skills for which there is no further *demand* (for task-based activities).

6) Most staff have adequate grasp of CML notion, which they for some reason do not *impart* to students (the reason most likely being absence of the notion in the curriculum).

7) Results of junior and senior student feedback testify to *negative progress* in CML acquisition: if not implemented regularly many media literacy techniques might 'fade' and become non-identifiable for students.

8) For students, when a technique is stated as 'mastered', it is almost automatically (with very few exceptions) stated as 'ready to apply at school'. Students, for that matter, have a sound idea what 'mastered' is – it corresponds to operational level, *not* awareness level.

9) The toolkit of MLE activities is basic, not to say impoverished for students and staff both. 4 staff were able to add tasks to the list (2 of the activities – 'I can create PowerPoints and videos' being glaringly self-evident); as to students, there was one extension for junior group and one extended list of technical literacy skills from a senior student. None of the groups were limited in time to provide responses.

All in all, lack of communication in the university across disciplines studying media literacy results in expectedly mediocre (if not poor) performance. The question is what should *underlie* a more effective cross-curricular liaison?

There is a general universally applicable rule for effective content input – *manner* of presentation should be in keeping with *the matter*. In respect to MLE it means cross-curricular approach would work on condition **there is hierarchical system of tasks that address age, proficiency, core subject matter and the proper component of MLE itself**. Let's take a closer look at these prerequisites.

Age difference of university students has not so far been much of a focus, since technically all the 4 years of college refer to 'adult' audience. In practice, though, freshmen audience is markedly dissimilar from junior students – 3 years in academia make the difference. MLE tasks should be used discriminate-ly, e.g. tasks:

– recycle thematic glossary by creating a crossword puzzle making use of <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/CrissCrossSetupForm.asp>;

- make a poster to illustrate a workshop item;
- design a digital story;
- make a Wiki publication;
- make a 'wanted' ad

are tasks technically manageable for 1–4 year students. When applied they might turn out to be heuristic tasks, tools to meet a certain high-order objective, edutainment or mere waste of time – depending upon *age* or learning experience of the target audience.

At first glance, it would seem a trivial observation that MLE tasks we design and implement should provide more effective mastery of core content. However, once generous sources like <https://namle.net/publications/media-literacy> or <http://www.mediaeducation.ru/akm.htm> are 'discovered' and addressed, some EGP instructors turn to be voraciously indiscriminate as to activities they introduce in a language class. Washing off printed stuff from a plastic bottle and asking students to remodel the ad or shooting an 'anti-tobacco campaign' version of "Three Piglets and the Big Bad Wolf" might be fine stand-alone activities, the question is how they fit within curricular framework.

Within the MLE field *proficiency* comprises 2 aspects – language proficiency and technical literacy. To apply the general rule of 'one focus – one challenge' to MLE tasks, the focus should be either the media text *or* operational challenge (mastering a new IT program), whereas focus on *both* might turn out to be impractical and counterproductive. E.g., shooting and presenting a 3-minute film to illustrate students' experimental instruction of a treatment group has proved an effective tool to highlight research presentation. Recording interviews of guest lecturers at conferences ELTA URALS has hosted proved a frustrating task

outmatching students' proficiency.

Besides, technical literacy as part of proficiency is much more problematic to estimate than language proficiency partially due to insufficient operational skills of IFL teachers. The 'estimation challenge' might be to a greater extent result of lack of liaison (often total) between IT teachers and EAP instructors. I think the problem is grounded in Federal Standard of Education for Pedagogy: the previous version (2011) contained core competencies:

– Readiness to apply main methods, ways and means of acquisition, storing, processing information, readiness to use PC as information management device (CC-8).

– Ability to [discriminately] use web information resources (CC-9), which effectively outlined IT instructors' domain; in 2015 FSE anything pertaining to technical literacy is *conspicuously absent* (or should be painstakingly deduced, which is not in keeping with documents of this type). As a result *means* of MLE are liberated from *ends* and glide ecstatically in a carefully constructed void. EAP colleagues often try to provide *means* of MLE, with modest success. Cross-discipline IT and EAP integration (estimated by regularity of team-teaching, amount of integrated classes) might be considered a core prerequisite for effective cross-curricular MLE.

This brings us to a more general consideration – which aspect of critical media literacy should be focused on and become priority for

MLE: motivational, analytic (information-processing skills or mature reading skills in a broad sense), methodological, operational or creativity aspect? The answer might be unexpectedly simple – let's focus on the component that could be *taught*, which makes methodological aspect the focal point for EAP instructors' input. Even though facilitating creative thinking or fostering positive attitude is undoubtedly important (and seems to be mainstream fashion of pedagogy), these are aspects of blurred teacher-learner responsibility; the more so, measuring motivation or creativity in most cases borders on mystic rites. The input an effective cross-curricular MLE course would definitely need is a toolkit of applicable algorithms (analytic procedures, assessment scales, anchor papers, questionnaires etc.), preferably transferrable and adaptable to secondary education context.

Building a cross-curricular CMLE course with consistent focus on: a) type of student audience; b) contextualization of CML activities within discipline framework; c) close integration of IT and EGP disciplines; d) focus on skills transferrable to other ELT contexts – looks the order of the day. The purpose of this survey was to map out *needs analysis* of IFL (USPU) academic environment. Constructing, implementing this course and testing its effectiveness would be next stage and, consequently, perspective of research and collaborative effort of USPU staff.

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