ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' MEDIA COMPETENCE: TEST RESULTS ANALYSIS

Alexander Fedorov

Abstract. Ascertaining levels of media competence (development in the field of media culture) of students is based on the classification of indicators developed by the author. In accordance with this classification, audience is invited to a basic blocks of questions and tasks. The gargets are: to detect the levels of motivational indicators of audience's media competence (genre, thematic, psychological, therapeutic, emotional, cognitive, moral, intellectual, creative and aesthetic reasons which the audience contact with media texts); to identify the level of the user / contact rate (frequency of contacts with various kinds of media, user skills in relation to the media); to identify the level of cognitive / information index (knowledge of terminology, history and theory of media culture) of university students' media competence.

Keywords: assessment, media competence, test, media competence levels, university students, media education, media literacy, media culture, testing, analysis, university.

Key objectives of the audience media competence tests. Justification of the logic underlying the questions

Multiple-choice tests were intentionally chosen because they are less time-consuming due to their structuredness in comparison with tests with extended-response questions, and test results can be more easily analyzed.

Evaluation of the audience's media competence level is based on our classification of media competence (the audience's development in media culture) indicators [Fedorov, 2007, pp. 31-36].

According to this classification, students were offered to answer questions and to do assignments of several basic modules aimed at assessing the levels of the audience's media competence indicators: the *motivation indicator* (genre- and subject-based, psychological, therapeutic, emotional, epistemological, ethical, intellectual, creative and esthetic motives of contact with media texts); the *user / contact indicator* (frequency of contacts with different media, user's media skills); the *cognitive / informational indicator* (knowledge of media terminology, the history and theory of media culture); the *interpretation / appraisal indicator* (based on perception indicator levels of media literacy); the *creative indicator.*

In this paper we examined students' test results within the first three modules.

In the course of the experiment of the 2010 / 2011 academic year 226 students were tested: 123 first- and second-year students of Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute (TSPI, Taganrog) and 103 first- and second-year students of South Federal University (SFU, Rostov-on-Don).

In the course of the initial ascertaining experiment we took into consideration an important fact that neither TSPI nor SFU first- and second-year students are taught media culture, so their media competence develops spontaneously at this stage without educational intervention.

The students' distribution was the following:

Table 1. Gender Distribution of the Questioned Students

University Name	Gender	Number of Students
Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute (TSPI), Russia.	Female:	90
	Male:	33
	Total number of students:	123
South Federal University (SFU), Russia.	Female:	63
	Male:	40
	Total number of students:	103
TOTAL	**Female total number:**	**153**
	Male total number:	**73**
	Total number of students:	**226**

Assessment of the motivation indicator level of the audience's media competence: analysis of students' test results

The objective of the ascertaining experiment: to find out the audience's most popular motives (genre- and subject-based, psychological, therapeutic, emotional, epistemological, ethical, intellectual, creative and esthetic) of contact with media texts; the obtained information will enable to consider the audience's genuine preferences, pay attention to definite genres and subjects, motives that are popular with this audience and therefore exert the highest possible impact (ethical and psychological) on them. The received results are necessary for further comparison with their written creative papers, debates / discussions to better ascertain the audience's self-appraisal of their own preferences and the hidden motives revealed in the research.

Practical realization. The audience is offered a list of genres and subjects of different media (the printed media, radio, TV, internet, video / computer games), they are to choose the subjects and genres appealing to them. The respondents are also given a list of psychological, therapeutic, emotional, epistemological, ethical, intellectual, creative and esthetic motives of contact with media texts: they are offered to choose the motives they prefer.

Being conscious of the genre and subject preferences selected by a respondent, one can reliably surmise the type of other most important motives of contact with the media for the respondent. For instance, if a person prefers entertainment genres of media texts it tells that his / her leading motives of contact with the media are a pursuit of amusement, recreation, exciting experience, etc.

The printed media genres appealing to students. The analysis of the test results revealed that informational, analytical and political, literary genres are most popular with the students. Speaking of the SFU students, informational, analytical and political genres are in good demand (from 59.8% to 73.5% of the Rostov students chose these genres meanwhile the TSPI students' rate was from 49.6% to 63.4%); the boys mainly prefer analytical genres. Literary genres were chosen by 49.6% of the TSPI students and 33.3% of the SFU students.

The students' (both from Rostov and Taganrog) attitude to print advertising proved to be equally moderate in whole: from 13.8% to 14.7% of the students named advertisements among their preferences.

At any rate, practically more than half of the junior students showed their interest for information, analytics and political journalism in the contemporary press. The audience does not seem to be content only with the entertaining press sector (games, competitions) though it also attracted from 19.6% to 51.2% of the respondents. Only 2.9% of the Rostov students, apparently, tend to isolate themselves from the press as they definitely rejected having any favorite press genres.

In 2010, T. Myasnikova tested 200 German students of Ludwigsburg University of Education (157 female students and 43 male students) and 200 Russian students of Orenburg State University (150 female students and 50 male students) using some parts of our test [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 27].

It seemed interesting to us to compare the media preferences of students from four universities – South Federal University, Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute, Ludwigsburg University of Education and Orenburg State University.

About half of the Orenburg State University students (53%) named the informational genre as the most preferable what entirely coincided with the SFU and TSPI students' opinions. But the German students turned out to be more information-oriented - 93% [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 29]. On the other hand, in whole 50% (in the three universities) of the Russian students tend to read analytical press content while the German students' rate is only 29%.

The same goes with literary genres. The average preference rate here is 40% among the students of the three Russian universities and only 24% among the German students.

A wide divergence of opinion manifested itself in relation to games and competitions arranged by the press (from 19% to 51%). But towards advertisements all students' opinions were surprisingly unanimous – in a very short range from 9% to 15% of preferences.

Radio transmission genres appealing to students. The students' preferences in radio transmission genres much more correspond to the general media orientation of the wide audience. In Taganrog, Rostov, Orenburg and Ludwigsburg the overwhelming majority of students (especially females) (from 64% to 82.9%) prefer pop / rock music radio programs. And the preference rate of the students from Ludwigsburg is 81%.

Radio games and competitions look less impressive against this background – from 5.5% to 24.4% of preferences.

The number of classical, jazz and folk music lovers in whole does not exceed 18%, and the male audience absolutely denies listening to folk music. For example, classical music scored only 14% with the students from Ludwigsburg University of Education.

As for informational radio genres here the students' preference rate correlates with their choices in the press: from 42% to 51% of the students from the both countries eagerly listen to news radio programs. Analytical and political radio program genres attract a smaller audience (from 12% to 32%). Literary and dramatic radio programs appeal to not more than 12.2% of the students.

Curiously enough, the popularity of radio advertising with the Taganrog and Rostov students turned out to be three times lower than that towards the press (from 4.0% to 4.9%), and with the German students it was yet lower – 0.5% [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 29]. Apparently, the young audience trusts the printed advertising more.

Symptomatically, the number of the students who are not attracted by radio in general (from 4.0% to 4.9% of respondents) is nearly twice as much as the number of the respondents who ignore the press. However, the number of avid listeners of radio pop-music hits exceeds it fifteenfold.

Television programs appealing to students. Practically all public opinion polls of the recent decades have shown the dominating popularity of film and serials on television. Our survey is not an exception either. Though nearly 80% of the students prefer listening to music on the radio, from 62.75% to 80.5% of the students choose watching movies, serials, sitcoms when communicating with the screen, while the pop / rock music broadcasted on TV scores from 47.1% to 63.4% of the Russian students and only 18% of the German students [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 30].

Admittedly, in relation to the popularity of different music styles the students' television preferences completely correlate with their radio preferences. Classical, jazz and folk music on the screen in whole attracts not more than 9% of the audience.

From 12.7% to 34.1% of the students confirmed their interest in television games / shows and competitions with the dominating female sector of the audience.

As in the case of the press, informational, analytical and political genres are very popular with the SFU students: from 47.1% to 66.7% of the Rostov students chose these genres whereas among the TSPI students the rate was from 31.7% to 43.9%. The Orenburg students made a similar choice (from 37% to 59%). But the German students as in the previous case preferred information to analytics

(correspondingly – 65% and 20%). [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 30]. However, at the average, information both in the press, on the radio and television attracts approximately half of the interviewed students.

There were more fans of television commercials among the Russian students (from 6% to 9%) than of advertisements on the radio, but all the same, this number was obviously less than the number of those who supported advertisement in the press. But the German students again revealed a strong rejection of advertisements (only 0.5% named it as a preferred genre) [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 30]. At the same time, television excites the students' antipathy just like radio (in whole, up to 5% of respondents are against it).

Genres of websites appealing to students. The students have the same informational, analytical and political preferences regarding internet sites: from 52% to 64.7% of the students from Rostov and Taganrog (without a tangible gender difference) refer to the internet in search of the required information and analytical reviews. But the German students as well as in the previous cases prefer information (73%) to analytics (18%).

Literary works are read online and downloaded by less than a fourth of the Russian students. Being more law-abiding (copyright law), the German students are very cautious here (4% of respondents).

From 53.7% to 66.7% of the Taganrog and Rostov students get film and television media texts online. Obviously, it is a trifle less than the number of the same students (up to 80%) who watch movies and serials on television. But let us remember that the quantity of networked PCs is still below the number of home TV sets in Russia.

The German students are not quite active here either (35% of preferences). Curiously enough, the Orenburg students support them in the case (33% of preferences) [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 30].

As for musical preferences, we face with the familiar tendencies in the students' answers: from 44.1% to 73.2% of the Rostov and Taganrog students prefer pop online music whereas classical, jazz and folk music genres scored not more than 13% of devotees.

Internet games and competitions are popular with a fourth of the asked students (from 18.6% to 26.8% of respondents).

The students' attitude to network commercials is approximately similar to television advertising (from 4.9% to 7.8% of the respondents are for it).

Not more than 3% find nothing interesting on the internet for themselves among the questioned students, consequently, the internet content is appealing and interesting in a varying degree for 97% of the SFU and TSPI students.

Film / serials genres appealing to students. A great popularity of movies and serials ascertained in the course of analyzing the test results per se does not help to define the range of the audience's genre preferences. That is why the students were offered to name their favorite genres (the audience could choose from the suggested list of variants as before).

As would be expected, comedy (from 78.4% to 82.9%) and melodrama (from 38.2% to 58.5% with more than a twofold prevalence of female respondents) appeared at the top of the preference list. Well, it is quite natural for young people to enjoy themselves, and for girls (unlike boys) to worry about the never-ending sufferings of their favorite cute heroines of modern melodrama serials.

Another entertainment genre – sci-fi also attracted a significant number of supporters (from 38.2% to 56.1% of votes). The reason is clear: the appearance of new computer 3D technologies made sci-fi movies much more spectacular than, say, 10 years ago.

By the same token, perhaps, fantasy (from 25.5% to 41.5%) and myth genres (from 19.6% to 29.3% of preferences) are popular with junior students from Rostov and Taganrog.

Traditionally, the young audience also prefers such entertaining action / suspense genres as detective and thriller (from 32.4% and 41.5% of votes without a tangible gender difference), catastrophe and horror films (from 28.4% to 36.3% with a slight predominance of the male audience).

Musicals are favored primarily by the female audience (22%). In any case, the number of this genre's female supporters exceeds the number of the male students threefold.

Western (from 12.2% to 16.7% of male voices predominately), satire (from 9.8% to 16.7% of preferences), operetta (from 2% to 4.9%) and vaudeville / dance (from 1% to 2.4% of sympathies) turned out to be the least popular entertainment genres. Probably, all these genres are considered by the students as obsolete and out of line with modern 'trends and brands'.

Among 'serious genres' requiring one's active intellectual perception involvement drama (from 41.25% to 46.3% with some predominance of the female audience) took the first place. However, we should not forget that actually not every student can easily tell drama from melodrama.

Such genres as tragedy (from 14.6% to 17.6%) and parable (from 2.9% to 7.3%) which are more difficult for perception were outsiders of the students' preferences. Moreover, none of the questioned male students voted in favor of the tragedy.

Mixed genres scored from 14.6% to 24.5% of the students' votes, in other words, 75% of the audience prefers basic and clearly defined media genres.

There were very few students who rejected movies and serials in principle (from 2% to 2.4%).

In the early 1990s we carried out an analytical poll of TSPI students on their genre preferences. Curiously enough, after 20 years the list of the leading movie genres practically has not changed. In 1991, comedy was selected by 90% of the respondents, melodrama - 88%, sci-fi – 71.1% [Fedorov, 1994, p. 318].

The list of genre outsiders in 1991 approximately coincides with the present-day list – parable (4.7%) and tragedy (3.3%). Though there were much fewer supporters of drama in 1991 (11.6%) [Fedorov, 1994, p. 318].

In spite of the differences in some percentage figures, all this indicates that the general tendency of the students' genre preferences in the media has changed very little recently: the dominating orientation towards entertainment genres has remained the same.

Genres of video / computer games appealing to students. The SFU and TSPI students favored jigsaws / puzzles (from 25.5% to 63.4% votes), action (from 26.8% to 43.1%), role play (from 25.5% to 41.5%) among video / computer games genres. At the same time puzzles were most favored by the female sector of the audience and action and role play were more popular with the male audience.

In whole, our analysis has shown that in relation to computer games there is not such a striking difference of opinion as in relation to movies and serials. For example, quests, stimulation games, strategy games more or less evenly scored from 14.7% to 35.3% (with a slight predominance of male respondents).

At the same time, a fifth of the questioned students are indifferent to computer / video games at all.

Media text subjects of the press, radio / television programs, websites, and computer games appealing to students. The SFU and TSPI students' answers concerning preferred subjects of media texts help to check the validity of the audience's genre preferences.

For instance, if comedy (from 78.4% to 82.9%) and melodrama (from 38.2% to 58.5%) headed the list of the students' genre preferences, naturally, it correlates with the subjects often represented in these genres – youth (from 51.0% to 70.7%), love (from 36.0% to 58.5%), modern life (from 40.0% to 41.5%), sports (from 21.9% to 29.0%), ethics (from 19.5% to 24.0%), erotica (from 16.0% to 29.3%). There are much more supporters of the love subject among the female students as in the case of melodrama. But the erotic subject appeals more to the male audience.

A similar correlation manifests itself regarding the popularity of detectives and thrillers, catastrophe and horror films: from 28.4% to 41.5% of such genre preferences quite correlate with the criminal subject (from 28% to 29%), the adventure subject (from 23% to 48%), the mystic subject (from 30.0% to 36.6%) and the psycho-pathological subject (from 14% to 25%).

The students of both the universities revealed a keen interest in the history subject (from 41.5% to 50.0% of preferences).

The ecological topic appeals mainly to girls (up to 36%) and the war subject – to boys (up to 38%).

One would think that intending teachers should take interest primarily in the school, pedagogical subject, but as a matter of fact, the will-be teachers and future psychologists, sociologists and philosophers showed an equally low interest in this topic (from 10.0% to 12.2%).

Focus-group interviews in the pedagogical university confirmed this tendency: the choice of the future career does not greatly affect the students' genre media preferences.

On the average, such subjects as war, professions, science and research, religion failed to exceed 26% of the students' votes.

Against the background of the more or less coinciding percentage preferences of the SFU and TSPI students, a striking difference in relation to the political subject of media texts is quite conspicuous. The number of the future teachers who favored the subject was only 12.2% (without a noticeable gender difference), whereas the number of the Rostov students interested in the subject was 58.0% (without a significant gender difference either). Such "politicization" of the SFU students is, probably, caused by the fact that most of them study the university subjects connected with sociology, politology and philosophy.

Only 2% of the students (from Rostov) proved to be uninterested in either of the subjects, and it exactly correlates with the number of the students indifferent to movies and serials (from 2% to 2.4%).

An analogous survey of TSPI students in 1991 (we questioned 330 respondents) manifested similar tendencies – such topics as youth (70.9%), love affairs (89.0%) and modern life (73.8%) were at the top of the preference list [Fedorov, 1994, p. 319].

Let us compare the media text subjects favored by students from the four universities - South Federal University, Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute, Ludwigsburg University of Education and Orenburg State University [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 27].

As is obvious from Table 2, the most common subject preferences of students from the four universities concerned the following topics: history (more than 40%), modernity (about 40%), sports, ethics and science (on average, about 20%). The criminal subject excited an identical interest with the Rostov, Taganrog and Ludwigsburg students (about 30% of preferences). The love subject is nearly equally popular with the students from Ludwigsburg and Taganrog (from 53% to 58%).

Table 2. Media Texts* Subjects Appealing to Students

№	Media text subjects appealing to students	Number of students (in percentage terms) who chose the topic in the following universities:			
		South Federal University (Russia)	Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute (Russia)	Ludwigsburg University of Education (Germany)	Orenburg State University (Russia)
1	history	50.0%	41.5%	44.5%	41%
2	space	15.0%	17.1%	9%	14%
3	crime	28.0%	29.3%	30%	14%
4	love	36.0%	58.5%	53%	45%
5	mystery	30.0%	36.6%	10.5%	31%
6	youth	51.0%	70.7%	19%	49%
7	science and research	24.0%	17.1%	24%	19%
8	ethics	24.0%	19.5%	19%	20%
9	politics	58.0%	12.2%	27%	25%
10	adventure	23.0%	48.8%	28%	33%

11	business	14.0%	4.9%	8.5%	6%
12	religion	13.0%	4.9%	24.5%	11%
13	modernity	40.0%	41.5%	43%	39%
14	sports	29.0%	21.9%	25%	20%
15	ecology	6.0%	21.9%	6%	11%
16	erotica	16.0%	29.3%	10%	16%

* some subjects included in our testing experiment (e.g. war, pedagogic themes, etc.) were used in the experiment carried out by T. Myasnikova.

A third of the students (from Rostov, Taganrog, Orenburg) favors the mystic subject to the prejudice of religion (that failed to score more than 14% of the respondents in either of the Russian universities). But the German students who are, probably, more religious treat these two subjects differently: almost one fourth of them supports the religious subject and only 10% are interested in the mystic subject. They do not seem to care about the space exploration subject either.

It seems rather surprising that the German students are practically indifferent to the youth subject, and we still cannot find a rational explanation of the phenomenon…

The TSPI students (12.2%) turned out the least politicized in their subject media preferences. On the other hand, they are most ardent supporters of the adventure (48.8%) and ecological subjects (21.9%), the latter can be explained by the fact that TSPI junior students attend a course of ecological education.

However, in spite of some discrepancy, the topical media preferences of students from the four universities and two countries have, evidently, more common rather than different features. Anyhow, the dominating popularity of modern, love, adventure, history, youth, criminal subjects (as we have ascertained, mainly, of the entertainment sector) is obvious. And this again confirms the validity of the testing results.

The motives of students' contacts with the media (the press, television, film, radio, computer games, internet, etc.) and media texts. Do the motives of the students' preferences coincide with the media genres and subjects chosen by them? The analysis of the test results gives a positive answer to the question.

Half of the SFU and TSPI students (without a tangible gender difference in answers) confidently confirmed the nonrandomness of the dominating orientation to entertainment genres by announcing their aspiration for entertainment (50% - 51%; it's essential to note that with 330 of the TSPI students of 1991 the rate was almost twofold - 91,5%), "just passing the time" (29% - 46%), recreation, a virtual escape from real life problems (from 26% to 41%), hearing their favorite music (from 37% to 61%, remember that the students generally prefer pop music) as the direct motives for their contacts with the media.

The students' aspiration for deriving new information from media texts (70% - 81%) is connected with their orientation to informational media genres to a significant degree, approximately in the same or smaller percentage rate announced by them before.

The pragmatic motive of research joins the SFU and TSPI students (48% - 51%). Thereupon it is astounding that only half of the respondents announced it as their leading motive. Whereas such a motive (especially in relation to the internet) is supposed to be important for the majority of university students.

S. Freud wouldn't be satisfied if he learnt that only from 2.4% to 8.8% of the SFU and TSPI students announced an aspiration for compensation (virtual acquisition of something missing in real life) as a direct motive of their contacts with the media, and only from 7.8% to 9.8% of the respondents confessed to their aspiration for psychological 'treatment' (a therapeutic release from psychological discomfort in the process of their contact with the media). Well, these issues are rather intimate and not every respondent, even anonymously, will confess to being a prey to the "compensatory effect" and "psychological discomfort". Although, both of them are quite natural for the human psyche.

Moreover, these motives manifest themselves when people watch melodramas as a rule, and there were many supporters of them among the students as we ascertained earlier (from 38% to 58%).

Another Freudian motivation indicator is aspiration for identification (for empathy, self-identification with a character / anchor of a media text) that was enormously supported by the students (from 7.8% to 17.1%, with a predominance of female respondents).

Curiously enough, the aspiration for exciting, stressful experience during the contact with dynamic media texts (action) was marked among the leading motives only by from 4.9% to 13.7% of the SFU and TSPI students. Whereas the adventure subject (where action dominates) was chosen as favorite by much more respondents – from 23% to 48%. We aren't inclined to believe that the students intended to deceive the examiner. Perhaps, they either read the questions in a perfunctory manner or wanted to answer them somewhat quicker. But, most likely, having marked their aspiration for entertainment in general as a leading motive the students didn't find it necessary to go into detail.

The motive to read / see / hear a media product of one's favorite author (from 21.6% to 34.1% with a predominance of female respondents) per se doesn't speak of anything yet. This author can be different: a popular creator of stereotyped detective stories or a great classical writer. The same goes with the motive to see / hear one's favorite anchor (from 13.7% to 24.4%): he / she can be an intellectual politologist or a charming compere as well.

From 12.2% to 17.6% of respondents announced their aspiration to criticize media content, the authors' positions (with a predominance of male respondents). The desire to develop one's own critical thinking is praiseworthy; it's another matter that its manifestation requires additional investigation.

The aspiration for philosophical / intellectual dispute / dialogue with the authors of a media text (from 7.3% to 18.6% of preferences with an evident dominant of the SFU students), aspiration for aesthetic impressions, deriving pleasure from the author's workmanship (from 26.5% to 26.8% of preferences), craving for deriving a moral lesson from a media text (from 17.1% to 18.6%) are characteristic of the audience that usually chooses such media genres as drama, tragedy or parable.

 If we take the medium percent of all the SFU and TSPI students who preferred drama (43%) we will see that only half of them rest on esthetic, philosophic or moral motives. But the students' preferences of tragedy (from 14.6% to 17.6%) and parable (from 2.9% to 7.3%) correspond to the above-mentioned motivation a lot more.

From 8.8% to 12.2% of the SFU and TSPI students announced an ambitious aspiration to confirm their competence in different spheres of life and media culture as their leading motive of contact with the media. Approximately a similar number of students reported about their intention to learn how to create and spread media texts (from 7.3% to 11.8%). However, it's not surprising as our respondents are not students of media or journalism departments (we deliberately did not include students of the journalism faculty in the poll in order not to put students from different faculties in unequal conditions). But the fact that one in ten of the respondents announced their wish to create media texts themselves as their leading motive corresponds to a world tendency of the increasing mass involvement of people of different jobs and professions in the process (internet blogs, social networking sites, digital videorecording, etc.).

Under such an option in the test as deriving material benefit (resulting from one's contact with the media) we meant, on the one hand, popular forms of network marketing and online business projects, and on the other hand, numerous grants for students and youth which are regularly announced in the press as well as on the internet. As it turned out, such financial motivation in relation to contacts with the media is not sufficiently developed with students. From 5.7% to 10.8% of the TSPI and SFU students reported it as a leading motive what correlates in a varying degree with the rate of the students inclined to develop their critical thinking and intellectual disputes with media texts creators.

Only from 1% to 1.6% of the students appeared to have no motives for contact with the media. And that concerned only boys. It is clear that in whole these are the same respondents who manifested their rejection of any media genres and subjects before.

We agreed on the following:

- **a high level of motivation indicator of media competence** is characteristic of the respondents who gave affirmative answers to 80% - 100% variants of their genre, topical, psychological, recreational, compensatory, esthetic and other motives of contact with the media and media texts.

- **a medium level of motivation indicator of media competence** is characteristic of the respondents who gave affirmative answers to 50% - 79% variants of their genre, topical, psychological, recreational, compensatory, esthetic and other motives of contact with the media and media texts.

- **a low level of motivation indicator of media competence** is characteristic of the respondents who gave affirmative answers to less than 50% variants of their genre, topical, psychological, recreational, compensatory, esthetic and other motives of contact with the media and media texts.

Eventually, it turned out that not more than 1% (only female respondents) of the TSPI and SFU students possess a high level of motivation indicator of media competence, from 2% to 4.9% (with a predominance of male respondents) possess a medium level of motivation indicator of media competence. A low level of motivation indicator of media competence proved to be characteristic of 95% - 97% of the respondents (with no gender difference).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that a low complex level of motivation indicator of media competence is in no way equal to the concept of a low motivation to media texts as such. As a matter of fact, the audience totally motivated by the desire for entertainment as a rule is unable to give affirmative answers to more than 50% of our test questions, otherwise they will inevitably have to supply a more intellectual and varied range of answers.

On the other hand, a relatively narrow range of motives towards media texts can also be characteristic of highly intellectual people who choose, for example, the aspiration for esthetic impressions and / or philosophical dispute as their leading motives of media contacts. That is why 19.7% of the SFU and TSPI students having such preferences can claim on a positive assessment of their media competence in our experiment (though its total motivation component does not overcome a 50% barrier).

Using the results of a similar research carried out by T. Myasnikova [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 28], we composed a table of the motives of media contacts preferred by students from four universities – South Federal University, Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute, Ludwigsburg University of Education and Orenburg State University (Table 3).

Table 3. Motives of students' contacts with the media (the press, television, film, radio, computer games, internet, etc.) and media texts

№	Motives of contact with the media, media texts appealing to students (% of preferences in whole)	Number of students (in percentage terms) who chose the motive of contact with the media and mediatexts in the following universities:			
		South Federal University (Russia)	Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute (Russia)	Ludwigsburg University of Education (Germany)	Orenburg State University (Russia)
1	Information gaining (73.5%)	81.4%	70.7%	75%	67%
2	Entertainment pursuit (56,0%)	50.0%	51.2%	84%	39%
3	Listening to favorite music (45.6%)	37.3%	61%	36%	48%
4	Information search for academic, scientific purposes (42.3%)	48.0%	51.2%	26%	44%
5	Leisure activity (40.2%)	29.4%	46.3%	47%	38%
6	Recreation, rest (a virtual escape from	26.5%	41.5%	45%	38%

	real life problems) (37.8%)				
7	Desire to read / see / hear a media product of the favorite author (22.5%)	21.6%	34.1%	6.5%	28%
8	Getting esthetic impressions (enjoying the author's workmanship) (20.8%)	26.5%	26.8%	5%	25%
9	Deriving a moral lesson from a media text (18.6%)	18.6%	17.1%	11.5%	27%
10	Desire to see / hear a favorite actor / anchorperson (17.9%)	13.7%	24.4%	11.5%	22%
11	Aspiration to disclose, criticize a media message, the authors' position (13.7%)	17.6%	12.2%	17%	8%
12	Aspiration for philosophical / intellectual dispute / dialogue with the authors of a media text (11.1%)	18.6%	7.3%	1.5%	17%
13	Desire to confirm one's competence in different spheres of life and media culture (10.4%)	8.8%	12.2%	6.5%	14%
14	Aspiration for identification (empathy, self-identification with a character / anchor of a media text) (8.9%)	7.8%	17.1%	1.5%	9%
15	Exciting, stressful experience during the contact with dynamic media texts (action) (8.7%)	13.7%	4.9%	7%	9%
16	Intention to learn how to create and spread media texts by studying professional media production (8.0%)	11.8%	7.3%	4%	9%
17	Psychological 'treatment' (a therapeutic release from psychological discomfort in the contact with the media) (6.8%)	7.8%	9.8%	1.5%	8%
18	Compensation (virtual acquisition of something missing in real life) (5.6%)	8.8%	2.4%	0%	11%
19	No motives for contacts with media texts (1.5%)	1.0%	1.6%	3.5%	0%

A comparative analysis of the table data shows that the leading motives for contacts with the media and media texts in the four universities are: information gaining (73% on the average), entertainment pursuit (56% on the average, but the rate is much higher with the German students – 84%), listening to favorite music (45% on the average), information search for academic purposes (42% on the average), a popular pastime or leisure activity (40% on the average), recreation and rest (38% on the average), a desire to read / see / hear a product of the favorite author (22% on the average).

Here, despite some differences in the figures, one can see that the entertainment and recreation motives are common for students of all the four universities.

Getting esthetic impressions and deriving a moral lesson from a media text in aggregate collected 20% of the students' votes. The German students showed here the lowest motivation (from 5% to 11%). By the way, the German students reveal a lower motivation in comparison to the Russian students in many positions. For instance, a desire to read / see / hear a media product of the favorite author (6.5%), a desire to confirm their competence in different spheres of life and media culture (6.5%), an aspiration for identification (empathy, self-identification with a character / anchor of a media text) (only 1.5%), an aspiration to disclose, criticize a media message, the authors' position (the same 1.5%), etc.

It is also surprising that only 26% of the German students announced an information search for academic, scientific and research purposes as a leading motive of contacts with the media, whereas with the Russian students this motive was mentioned by half of the respondents.

The significant difference between the Russian and German students in these positions can be probably explained by a certain 'closedness' of the respondents from Ludwigsburg towards a foreign examiner (T. Myasnikova) who tested them. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that German students are quite immune to such natural aspects of media perception as self-identification with a character / anchor of a media text, or a compensation pursuit (aspiration for virtual acquisition of something missing in real life). A grant of the German scientific fund DAAD gave me an opportunity to communicate with Ludwigsburg students in June, 2010, and our talks confirmed indirectly their caution and restraint in relation to admitting their media preferences.

Assessment of the user / contact indicator level of media competence (frequency of contacts with different types of media, ICT skills): analysis of students' test results

The objective: to ascertain the frequency of the audience's contacts with different types of media, the audience's ICT skills; the obtained results will show the degree of the respondents' media awareness, priority selection of certain media.

Each respondent is offered to choose a variant of frequency of contacts with different media (the press, television, radio, internet, computer / video games) and ICT skills from several alternatives.

It is clear that the levels of the motivation indicator of media competence will affect the content of media contacts. However, according to our hypothesis, this influence is not direct: in other words, even a wide range of motives for contact with the media does not mean that these contacts will be too frequent and vice versa.

Frequency of the audience's contacts with printed media texts (the press). The analysis of the test results showed that the students generally read the press several times a week (from 36.6 % to 53.9 % - with a predominance of female respondents). From 11.8 % to 21.9 % read the press several times a month (here male respondents prevail), from 13.7 % to 24.4 % of respondents refer to the press even more seldom.

The difference between the SFU and TSPI students manifests itself in relation to two extreme positions. 17.6 % of the SFU students read the press daily while only 2.4 % (only females) of the TSPI students have the same habit. Among the German students the percentage of the respondents reading the press daily appeared to be higher – 21.5% [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 29].

While among the SFU students there are no people ignoring the press, there are 9.8% (all of them are male respondents) of the TSPI students who do not read the press at all. On the one hand, such a rate difference can be explained by a relatively small sample of respondents. On the other hand, – by a higher level of the general intellectual development of the SFU students, one of the largest universities in the country (there are more city dwellers who enter South Federal University than Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute).

Frequency of the audience's contacts with radio programs. Listening to the radio is noticeably more popular than reading the press with the students: from 26.8 % to 37.3 % of the audience (girls, in a greater degree) refer to it daily, and the additional 17% do it several times a week. At the same time, the number of students who rarely listen to the radio or never listen to it is not less than a third of the respondents in total.

And it is the Taganrog male students who most rarely listen to the radio. The German students listen to the radio much more often (52 % of them do it daily) [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 29].

Frequency of the audience's contacts with video / computer games. Unlike school students the SFU and TSPI students play computer / video games more moderately. From 12.2% to 37.3% of the students (with a bare majority of male respondents) do it daily. From 17.6% to 24.4% (without a significant gender difference) do it several times a week. About 10% of the respondents do it several times a month. However, from 27.5% to 36.6% of the students play computer games rarely and 11.5 % do not play them at all.

Frequency of the audience's contacts with television programs. The SFU and TSPI students watch television programs much willingly than they read the press, listen to the radio or play computer games. From 54.9% to 70.7% of the students (predominantly, female respondents) confirmed their daily contacts with the television screen. From 9.8% to 15.7% of the respondents watch TV several times a week. From 3.9% to 7.3% watch TV several times a month. The number of the students who rarely watch or do not watch TV at all is only 8.7% in total.

Frequency of the audience's contacts with the internet. Not long ago watching TV was a number-one priority with any audience. Nowadays students prefer the internet to television: from 73.2% to 89.2% of the SFU and TSPI respondents (without a significant gender difference) go online daily. From 6.9% to 19.5% of the students go online several times a week. The number of the Taganrog and Rostov students using the internet or going online rarely does not exceed 5% what again proves the internet more often fulfills multimedia functions for a student audience – those of the press, the radio, television, and video / computer games.

By the way, the percentage of the German students going online daily is similar - 73% [Myasnikova, 2010, p. 29].

Frequency of the audience's contacts with a mobile phone. However, one should not forget that the modern mobile phone has already incorporated almost all media functions – from the press and the radio – to video games, television and the internet. That is the reason for the dominance of mobile communication in the students' media preferences: 97% of the Taganrog and Rostov students (without a tangible gender difference) announced the mobile phone among their most preferred daily contacts with the media. That is extremely significant that such variants of answers as using a mobile phone several times a month, rarely or never collected a single (!) student's vote. Thus, it seems pretty certain that a present-day student cannot imagine his / her media contacts without mobile communication.

Unfortunately, T. Myasnikova did not research the students' attitude to mobile communication.

Types of media which the audience can use. In the first place the SFU and TSPI respondents (from 92.7% to 98%, without a noticeable gender difference) mentioned mobile phones, computers and TV sets. They are also good at using other types of media (a video recorder, a sound recorder, a dictophone, a camera): from 80.4% to 93.1% of positive answers. Only 2.4% of the students confessed to having no ICT skills (only Taganrog female respondents). So, in general the students' level of media awareness can be assessed as high.

Types of media texts which the audience can create. As one would expect, the types of media texts which the students' audience can create correspond to their ICT skills. So, from 85.4% to 93.1% of the SFU and TSPI respondents (without a noticeable gender difference) can create computer texts (Word, PDF, etc.). From 58.5% to 76.5% of the students (also without a noticeable gender difference) can make photos, multimedia presentations, portfolios. About a third of the students (here the male respondents dominate) can create videos / films, clips, sound media texts. There are also more advanced media users: from 7.3% to 17.6% (here the majority of the respondents are male SFU students) can create computer and video animation (cartoons), texts and images for web pages, portals.

Less that 5% of the respondents have no ICT skills or find difficulty in answering.

Types of media activity of the audience.

We tried to verify the students' answers concerning the types of media they can use and the types of media texts they can create by asking them about the types of their media activity.

As it turned out, the SFU and TSPI students preferred the following types of activities (in descending order):

- creating and active using e-mail boxes: from 41.5% to 52.9% of preferences;

- active engagement in internet groups, blogs of interest ('Classmates', 'In Contact', etc.): from 44.1% to 49.6% of preferences (without a noticeable gender difference);

- creating and active using / adding photo / video / film texts: from 29.4% to 46.3% (without a noticeable gender difference);

- active use of websites, blogs: from 26.8% to 34.3% (without a gender difference in the answers);

- creating and active using / adding multimedia portfolios, presentations: from 19.5% to 31.4% (with a sharp difference in gender and place of education);

- active membership in the authors team of a periodical (including online press) or a radio / television program, in a group of internet shop owners or / and other portals providing commercial services: from 2.4% to 5.9% of the respondents.

Only 5.7% of the students failed to choose any type of media activity (generally, they were male SFU respondents). 15.9% of the students find difficulty in replying (chiefly female respondents).

Thus, these results confirmed the tendency that manifested itself in the answers to the previous sets of questions: at least a fourth of present-day students actively participate in media production, and are involved in practical media activities.

Classification of user / contact indicator levels of the audience's media competence.

We agreed on the following:

- **a high level of the user / contact indicator of media competence** is characteristic of the respondents who can use 80% - 100% of ICT types; can create 80% - 100% of media texts types suggested in our questions; engaged in 80% - 100% of different media activities.

- **a medium level of user / contact indicator of media competence** is characteristic of the respondents who can use 50% - 79% of ICT types; can create 50% - 79% of media texts types suggested in our questions; engaged in 50% - 79% of different media activities.

- **a low level of user / contact indicator of media competence** is characteristic of the respondents who can use less than 50% of ICT types; can create less than 50% of media texts types suggested in our questions; engaged in less than 50% of different media activities.

Eventually**,** it turned out that none of the TSPI and SFU respondents revealed a high level of the user / contact indicator of media competence but it is quite natural as none of them studies at a media or journalism department, all the more so they are far from being media professionals.

From 12.2% to 17.6% showed a medium level of the user / contact indicator of media competence (without a noticeable gender difference) what is a bit less than the fourth of the students who announced their inclination for practical media activity.

From 81.4% to 87.8% manifested a low level of the user / contact indicator of media competence (also without a noticeable gender difference). It means any student can be very good at using some types of media (making photos or using e-mail), but he / she does not possess the necessary integrated skills for using media for creating different media texts.

Assessment of the cognitive / informational indicator level of the audience's media competence: analysis of students' test results

The objective of the experiment: to ascertain the students' knowledge of media terminology, history and theory of media culture. The test results, on the one hand, will show the knowledge gaps in media terminology, history and theory of media culture of the control group of respondents, and on the other hand, will confirm the effectiveness of media education lessons conducted in the experimental group.

Practical realization. The peculiarity of the experiment is that a respondent is offered to answer questions concerning media terminology (10 questions), history of the media (10 questions) and the theory of media culture (10 questions).

Of course, there is a certain connection between the levels of the contact, motivation and information indicators of media competence. It is clear that a person who has no media contacts or motives is unlikely to know anything about media culture. However, according to our hypothesis, a high level of the contact and motivation indicators of media competence can easily be combined in a person with a low / medium level of the information indicator and vice versa.

We take it for granted that a multiple-choice test is always accompanied by a possibility of giving an accidental / intuitive right answer that is not actually knowledge-based. Besides, we cannot exclude prompting. However, the results of such testing can always be validated / accompanied by a set of individual analytical, creative assignments, or interviews.

Knowledge of media terminology. More than half of the TSPI and SFU respondents - from 48.8% to 90.3% (average 69.5% without a significant gender difference) managed to answer correctly the questions concerning such terms as *media text, editing, media category, mediateque, media culture, media perception, media language, media competence.*

A smaller number of the respondents (42.8%) correctly defined the term the *plot / story* of a media text.

Knowledge of the history of media culture.

As for the knowledge of some specific dates, time periods, surnames of people, connected with the historic development of media culture, the TSPI and SFU students appeared less competent in these questions: 17.8% of correct answers were given by the Taganrog respondents and 29.6% - by the Rostov students; the average knowledge percentage of both the universities is 23.7%.

Knowledge of the theory of media culture.

Judging by the answers to the given questions and assignments, the students' awareness of the theory of media culture was the following: 31.5% of correct answers were given by the Taganrog respondents and 36.2% by the Rostov students (the average percentage – 33.8%)

Classification of the cognitive / informational indicator levels of media competence.

We agreed on the following:

- **a high level of the cognitive / informational indicator of media competence** is characteristic of the respondents who answered 80% - 100% of the suggested questions correctly. Consequently, the respondents who answered 50% - 79% of the questions correctly have **a medium level of the cognitive / informational indicator of media competence.** And those who gave less than 50% of correct answers possess **a low level of the cognitive / informational indicator of media competence.**

Eventually, it turned out that the number of the Taganrog and Rostov students who showed a medium level of the cognitive / informational indicator of media competence was average 39.1% (without a significant difference in gender). 59% of the respondents revealed a low level of the cognitive / informational indicator of media competence (without a significant difference in gender either). Only 3.8% of the Rostov respondents manifested a high level of the cognitive / informational indicator of media competence, whereas among the Taganrog respondents there were no such students at all. Generally speaking, it shows that more than half of the students despite their close involvement in some media (chiefly, in the internet, mobile communication, and television) and practical media skills/ ICT skills, revealed a low level of the cognitive / informational indicator of media competence in whole.

Conclusion

Despite the students' active motivation for media entertainment and distraction from real life problems (more than half of preferences), in whole, the integrated level of the motivation indicator of the students' media competence can be characterized as low (96%).

The percentage of the students motivated for a philosophical / intellectual dispute / dialogue with the authors' of media texts, obtaining esthetic impressions, enjoyment of the authors' craftsmanship, deriving moral lessons from a media text, does not exceed 16.5% (including both the TSPI and SFU students) in total. But this category of students seems to have ignored many of the other essential components of the motivation indicator of media competence, and thus, failed to score the necessary number of points to fill the high level niche of the integrated motivation indicator of media competence.

A low level of the integrated user / contact indicator of media competence is characteristic of 84.6% of the respondents of both the universities in total. It goes without saying that many of the students are advanced media users indeed, but they do lack complex / integrated skills of using various media for creating media texts. Thus, the students' user skills are not of a versatile character.

A low level of the cognitive / informational indicator of media competence was characteristic of 59% of respondents. At the same time, about 40% of the students revealed a relatively acceptable (for students who do not study at media or journalism departments) – medium level of knowledge concerning media terminology, the history and theory of media culture.

In further research we will have to ascertain the levels of the perception, appraisal, practical-operational (activity) and creative indicators of the youth audience's media competence.

References

[1]   Fedorov, A. (1994). Teacher Training for School Students Aesthetic Education on the Material of the Screen Arts (Film, Television, Video). Taganrog: Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute, 383 p.

[2]   Fedorov, A. (2007). Development of Pedagogical University Students' Media Competence and Critical Thinking. Moscow: ICOS UNESCO Program 'Information for All', 616 p.

[3]   Myasnikova, T. (2010). Comparative Analysis of Media Preferences of Russian and German Students: Axiological Perspective. In: *Herald of Orenburg State University*, № 10, pp. 25-32.

Acknowledgement

Author

Alexander Fedorov, Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute, Taganrog (Russia) and Russian Association for Media Education, e-mail: 1954alex@mail.ru