Natassia Dudzko
ORCID: 0000-0002-3626-2112
Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, Belarus

Teaching Media Literacy in the ESL Classroom

Abstract

Progress in the field of information technology and the spread of new digital media in the educational environment determine the increasing importance of media literacy, which is recognized almost universally as one of the key competencies in the education system nowadays. In our article we consider the topical issue of integrating media education with the ESL classroom and suggest a number of practical activities to be used in ESL education. The conclusion is drawn about the benefits of media literacy constituent being integrated within ESL, such as the formation of a culture of communication with the media; ethical and aesthetic orientation of learning using authentic English-language media material; understanding the hidden messages of foreign-language media texts; the development of the students' creative potential; the development of inter-lingual, intercultural communication skills through the media basing upon such values as respect, mutual understanding, tolerance for cultural differences thus overcoming cultural barriers.

Keywords: media education, media literacy, media competence, ESL class, media education technologies, media content analysis, critical thinking skills, interlingual and intercultural communication

Modern society is based on the use of huge layers of information and knowledge. Today it is impossible to ignore the ubiquity of the media, various forms of information and communication technologies, or their impact on our personal, as well as economic, political and social life. Therefore, for active and successful participation in the life of the information society, new types of competencies are needed. The often used term "literacy" today is often accompanied by a variety of definitions, among them being "digital", "computer", "visual", "technological", "communication" and, of course, "media" and "information". This trend indicates a growing interest in research in this area and the dynamic transformation of modern society. It is noteworthy that "literacy" today implies something much

more than traditional reading and writing skills. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of counting, reading and writing skills, however, the inclusion of media and information literacy in the set of fundamental skills means that today young people also need to understand the functions of the media, be able to search, evaluate, use and create information to achieve personal, social, professional and educational goals. Studies in the field of media literacy have shown that students experience difficulties in assessing the reliability of data even in the educational environment, although it is believed that technological skills and, consequently, media and information literacy skills are better developed in young people than in the older generation. The acquisition of media and information literacy skills opens up a wide range of opportunities for teachers and students that enrich the educational environment and make teaching and learning more dynamic.

Media literacy today is recognized almost universally as one of the key competencies in the education system. This thesis is illustrated in the monograph "Media literacy and new humanism" published by the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education in 2010[1]. The main goal of the study was to study digital and media literacy in the context of educational communications and new humanism, designed to counter the negative impact of mass technologies. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the latest trends in the development of media culture and media education and defines the conceptual framework of media and information literacy. The textbook "Pedagogical Aspects of the Formation of Media and Information Literacy" prepared by order of UNESCO IITE is intended for teachers who teach not only direct media literacy, but also disciplines in which the media educational component is integrated[2]. In accordance with the thematic sections, this textbook offers practical recommendations, shows how to teach and study media and information literacy. The emphasis is on student-centered pedagogy, online youth culture and the psychological characteristics of child and youth development.

In general, everyone shares the idea that media literacy is a basic skill that becomes the basis for many others, so it should not be taught as a special field of knowledge, or simply as a skill. On the contrary, it should be considered as the integration of all elements at the same time, in this case, it is possible to acquire ideas about the value significance, critical perception and creative approach, which allow an independent well-informed person to play an active role in the continuously updated public sphere.

[1] J. M. P. Tornero, T. Varis, *Media Literacy and new humanism* [Electronic resource], Moscow, http://iite.unesco.org/pics/publications/en/files/3214678.pdf. [dostęp: 30.09.2014].

[2] С. Туоминен, *Педагогические аспекты формирования медийной и информационной грамотности*, Москва 2012, 142 с.

Issues of media literacy and media education today are one of the most pressing topics in the field of public discussion and research. The American National Communications Association defines media literacy as a person's ability to "understand how words, images, and sounds influence the creation of meaning and how it spreads in society, whether explicit or hidden. A media-literate person is aware of the value, significance and importance of using media and messages transmitted through the media"[3]. Media literacy is a complex concept that includes formed competencies, as well as specific knowledge and experience.

A leading Russian researcher in the field of media education A. V. Fedorov proposes to consider media education in the modern world as a process of personality development using and on the basis of media communication with the aim of creating a culture of communication with the media, creative, communicative abilities, critical thinking, skills of full perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, training in various forms of self-expression using media technology[4].

Many media educators quite often mix the concepts of "media education" and "media literacy". Significant discrepancies can be found in theoretical approaches to media education, to highlighting its most important goals, objectives, ways of implementation in the educational process. We share the opinion of Ch. Worsnop, V. Gur, A. Korochensky, J. Panjente and other media educators who believe that media literacy is the result of a person's media education process[5].

Most experts consider the most acceptable synthetic way of media education, combining its integration into the compulsory disciplines of schools and universities with autonomous special courses or elective courses. For example, A. P. Korochensky believes that education, including media education, should, in his opinion, be a constant part of the socialization and life of a modern person in a changing „information society" - from childhood to old age"[6].

The goals of media education can vary depending on the specific topics and objectives, on the age of the students, on theoretical basis of media education, however, practice shows that one way or another many educators can quite clearly highlight the most important goals of media education for them: the development of the audience's abilities for critical thinking / critical personality autonomy -development of the audience's ability to perceive, evaluate,

[3] *Media literacy* [Electronic resource], 2016, www.natcom.org [dostęp: 23.05.2020].
[4] А. В. Федоров, *Медиаобразование и медиаграмотность*, Таганрог 2004, с.11.
[5] Ibidem, c. 27-29.
[6] А. П. Короченский, *Медиаобразование: миф или реальность?*, [w:] *Медиаобразование* 2005, nr 2, с. 84–86.

understand, analyze media texts; preparation of the audience for life in a democratic society; the audience is trained to understand social, cultural, political and economic meanings and subtexts of media texts; training the audience to decode media texts / messages; the development of the communicative abilities of the person; the development of the audience's abilities for aesthetic perception, assessment, understanding of media texts, assessment of the aesthetic qualities of media texts; the development in students the skills to express themselves creatively with the help of media; training the audience to identify, interpret media texts, experiment with various ways of technical use of media, create media products / texts; training the audience in the theory of media and media culture [including such key concepts like "media agency" (agency), "media category" (category), "media language" (language), "media technology" (technology), "Media representation" (representation), "media audience" (audience); training the audience in the history of media and media culture.

A. V. Fedorov defines a high level of personal media competence in the following way: "The ability to critically analyze the process of functioning of the media in society, taking into account various factors based on highly developed critical thinking. Media competence of personality - a set of its motives, knowledge, skills, abilities (indicators: motivational, contact, informational, perceptual, interpretive / evaluative, practical / activity, creative) that facilitate the selection, use, critical analysis, assessment, the creation and transmission of media texts in various forms, forms and genres, the analysis of complex processes of media functioning in society[7].

Another important concept is the teacher's media competence, that is, the totality of his motives, knowledge, skills and abilities that contribute to media education in an audience of different ages[8].

The requirement is for a teacher who will teach how to pose questions about values, reflect on the choice of a specific media resource, direct the students to reliable information, and provide support in matters related to media publicity. The teacher should be able to give advice on network etiquette based on his own life experience. A media teacher should start by thinking about his relationship with the media: How do I use media? How do they affect my work? The competence of a media literacy teacher is based on personal media skills, experience and interest in media, willingness to discuss various aspects, and active participation in training events. The media literacy teacher does not make judgments about the correct

[7] А. В. Федоров, *Развитие медиакомпетентности и критического мышления студентов педагогического вуза*, Москва 2007, с. 22.

[8] Ibidem, с. 44.

opinions of students or their tastes in the field of media, but uses them as starting points for discussions. A media literacy teacher offers enough information and skills to help students learn how to protect themselves from the harmful effects of media.

The analysis of scientific and pedagogical domestic and foreign studies gave reason to believe that today the most effective and promising technology is the integration of media education with a foreign language course, since these processes are based on the exchange of information. L. Ivanova, the Russian scholar, believes that since a foreign language is studied as a means of communication, and speech situations are brought in from outside, therefore, like no other academic subject, it is open to use content from various fields of knowledge, including media[9].

The use of media education technologies in teaching a foreign language contributes to the development of all types of student' speech activity, while developing a common, communicative, speech and media cultural competence. Thus, various approaches to language learning are distinguished (linguistic-sociocultural, communicative-active, functional-stylistic, lexical-semantic, structural-descriptive, structural-semantic, media-educational, etc.)[10]

When integrating media education into a foreign language curriculum, the media environment of students is becoming more value-oriented, foreign language education is enriched with relevant content close to the one used among the youth. The educational components of ESL classes correspond to the goals of media education – to help the audience adapt to life in a constant media omnipresence, to teach how to use media resources for personal development and the formation of critical thinking skills.

The media education approach is based on various media activities, which help prepare a person for life in a highly informative space, provides each student, taking into account his abilities, interests, value orientations and experience, with the ability to operate with media resources in order to meet personal and professional needs and interests. It also develops the ability to learn independently using the media and based on the media texts, to activate the knowledge gained at any time suitable, and forms the individual style of media activity among students. Thus, one of the main tasks of integrating media education with a foreign language course is the formation of media competence of a secondary linguistic personality, which is an integrative, strategic characterization of a person, consisting of a set

[9] Л. А. Иванова, *Технология медиаобразования и аудиовизуальный СМК на уроках французского языка* [w:] *Образовательные технологии XXI века*, ред. С. И. Гудилиной, К. М. Тихомировой, Д. Т. Рудаковой, Москва 2009, с. 262-265.

[10] Н. М. Духанина, *Медиаобразовательный подход к обучению иностранным языкам* [w:] *Историко-педагогические исследования*, Киев 2011, с. 103-105.

of special abilities that allow a person to interact in a global information space, to carry out interlingual and intercultural communication[11].

Media education in the context of ESL teaching provides a methodology for conducting classes based on problem-solving, heuristic approaches, games and other productive forms of training that develop the students' individuality, their independent thinking skills, stimulate their abilities through direct involvement in creative activities, perception, interpretation and analysis of the structure of media text thus mastering knowledge of media culture. At the same time, media education, combining both lectures and practical classes, is a kind of inclusion of students in the process of creating works of media culture, that is, immerses the audience in the 'internal laboratory' of the main media professions.

ESL classes using media education technologies are designed taking into account the variability, interactivity, improvisation, creativity; based on the dialogical form of educational process, using various forms of working with information sources (analysis, review of media texts, writing a script, creating clips, advertising posters of own media texts, etc.).

According to Russian media educators L. Ivanova, N. Khlyzova, teaching communication n foreign languages should be aimed at preparing a person ready to implement not only inter-lingual, intercultural, but also the so-called mediated communication, which is especially important in the context of the formation of a global information space and the creation of an effective communication infrastructure. L. Ivanova defines foreign-language mediated communication as the interaction of a person with foreign mass media, the content of which is to comprehend the value of a given media product, its emotional-semantic relations and a hidden component[12]. Therefore, the modern pedagogical strategy of teaching foreign languages should provide for the formation of media competence of a secondary linguistic personality, and media educational technologies should be focused on the formation of a culture of communication with foreign-language media, mastering the person with the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for perception, interpretation, analysis, evaluation of media products, creation quality media texts as a constructive form of mediated interlingual and intercultural communication.

[11] Н. Ю. Хлызова, *Педагогические условия формирования медиакомпетентности вторичной языковой личности* : дис. … канд. пед. наук :13.00.01, Москва 2001, 210 с.

[12] Л. А. Иванова, *Обучение иностранному языку и медиаобразование – единый процесс* [w:] *Непрерывное образование в Западной Сибири : современное состояние и перспективы : материалы четвертой региональной научно-практической конференции*, отв. ред. О. К. Сазонова, Горно-Алтайск 2010, с. 90-92.

In the process of teaching foreign languages, an important condition is the creation of an appropriate media educational environment, since this allows us to bring the academic atmosphere of the school closer to the realities of the modern information society, contributes to the fullest possible satisfaction of the information and educational needs of agents of educational process, increases the motivation to learn using foreign language media, and expands cognitive abilities of a personality, develops creative abilities of students. Substantive filling of the media educational environment, consisting of foreign language media texts of different types and genres stored in databases, electronic educational resources serves as a means of contributing to the formation of all types of speech activity, and the basis for the implementation of media educational activities.

The entire spectrum of media materials should be used in order to most effectively prepare the students for fluent communication in English on the topics studied. As media resources, print media, broadcasting recordings, news, Internet portals, public performances of famous people in media can be used.

The use of media texts in the classroom helps to effectively prepare the students for communication in the linguistic environment, raise issues that are relevant not only to a specific student audience, but also of universal importance, organize discussions, model real-life language situations. Media texts can stimulate motivation for learning English and learning foreign language culture, as well as provide an opportunity for dialogue between cultures.

Achieving a high quality of student performance at media classes in the framework of the ESL class depends on the following main factors:

- the atmosphere of media classes, which should be friendly, respectful, trustful, involving mutual understanding, the possibility of free expression of one's own thoughts, views, ideas without any fear of being criticized;
- technical classroom equipment (the availability of the necessary computer equipment, hardware, software, media resources, free access to the Internet);
- the content of the educational material (relevance, novelty, compliance with interests, age, value orientations, capabilities and abilities of the student);
- interesting, creative, original situations, tasks, which contribute to increasing students' interest in the topic;
- the effective choice of organizational educational forms, methods, techniques, training tools;

- providing students with freedom of choice, the possibility of self-expression;
- ethical and aesthetic orientation of training on the material and with the help of media, culture of communication with the media;
- the purposeful formation and implementation of universal skills, artistic and creative potential of an individual, necessary for the implementation of media educational activities;
- providing an adequate system for assessing the results of an individual's activity using media and on the media material;
- providing feedback between the teacher and students during the implementation of the educational process using media educational technologies reviews, comments, suggestions, ideas of students regarding improving the effectiveness of media educational activities).

Thus, the use of media educational technologies in ESL classes will help students develop not only speech communication skills, but also such skills as:

- to find, evaluate, understand, analyze, synthesize information;
- to understand the social, economic, political and cultural meanings and implicit meanings of media texts;
- to discuss controversial topics, express ideas, argue and prove individual point of view;
- to identify, interpret media texts, experiment with various methods of technical use of media;
- to create students' own media product, to prepare a high quality media content;
- to analyze and adjust their own activities, independently acquire knowledge using and on the material of the media;
- to use media education technologies for self-improvement and professional development.

Here are some examples of exercises aimed at the formation and development of the aforementioned skills using and on the material of foreign media:

1) select the material on a specific topic under study using newspapers / magazines and prepare a report on your findings;
2) find the materials on the same topic in various media (using at least 4 types of sources, for example, an Internet site, radio programs, television news, newspapers), analyze them and create your own media text on the same topic, adhering to 3 principles: audience (for whom

you write), purpose (purpose of writing), material (the material that you have: facts, examples, personal experience);

3) compare the materials of various media on the same event, identify similar and distinctive features;
4) determine the position and the intent of the creators of the documentary / feature film based on its analysis; compare several views (film critics, viewers, directors) for the film. Express your opinion and offer a mini-script for the film;
5) listen to the information and present it in the form of a text (articles, interviews) for the school / student newspaper, scientific conference, website, etc.);
6) listen to the speeches of a famous public figure and write a speech for him, using style, rhetorical techniques, turns typical of this person.

The forms of media education can include lectures, conversations, written works (reviews, essay; report writing, articles, interviews, mini-scripts, "screen versions", a story on behalf of the hero of the film, television broadcasts; compilation of collages, posters, film and video shooting, etc.); heuristic, game classes (quizzes, competitions, etc.); disputes, conferences on various topics related to media culture; excursions, meetings with media representatives.); conducting a sociological study of students' preferences in the field of media culture.

Modern youth is often called the "aborigines of the digital world"; it is believed that their media skills are better developed than those of their teachers'. Such a generalization does not take into account differences in the level of media literacy of specific students, and this fact can be very significant. Although most students consider the use of media and media content to be a natural and routine process, not all children have the same opportunity to access media outside school hours. In addition, media skills cannot develop on their own, without purposeful teaching. This necessitates the systematic formation of media literacy skills at educational establishments.

The introduction of media education in the process of ESL teaching inevitably changes the nature of the activities of its participants – the teacher and students, which consists in improving or transforming the educational methods, content and pace of learning, contributes to the creation of a high motivation for learning foreign languages, ensures consistency of foreign language knowledge, skills and abilities based on an increase in theoretical and factual media-communicative knowledge.

The integration of media education with an ESL course contributes to the formation of a culture of communication with the media, ethical and aesthetic orientation of learning using mass media and on the material of foreign-language media, understanding the implicit subtexts of foreign-language media texts; the development and implementation of creative potential of the individual as a result of media education activities; shaping a student's cultural values through the media, the development of intercultural communication skills through the media on the basis of respect, mutual understanding, tolerance for cultural differences.

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Nauczanie umiejętności korzystania z mediów w klasie ESL

Streszczenie

Postęp w dziedzinie technologii informatycznych i rozprzestrzenianie się nowych mediów cyfrowych w środowisku edukacyjnym determinują rosnące znaczenie umiejętności korzystania z mediów, która jest obecnie powszechnie uznawana za jedną z kluczowych kompetencji w systemie edukacji. W naszym artykule rozważamy aktualny problem integracji edukacji medialnej z klasą języka angielskiego jako języka obcego i sugerujemy szereg praktycznych działań do wykorzystania w edukacji języka angielskiego. Wyciąga się wniosek na temat korzyści płynących z integracji elementu umiejętności korzystania z mediów w ramach języka angielskiego jako języka obcego, takich jak tworzenie kultury komunikacji z mediami; etyczna i estetyczna orientacja uczenia się z wykorzystaniem autentycznych anglojęzycznych materiałów medialnych; rozumienie ukrytych wiadomości w obcojęzycznych tekstach medialnych; rozwój potencjału twórczego uczniów; rozwój umiejętności komunikacji międzyjęzykowej i międzykulturowej za pośrednictwem mediów w oparciu o takie wartości, jak szacunek, wzajemne zrozumienie, tolerancja dla różnic kulturowych, a tym samym pokonywanie barier kulturowych.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja medialna, umiejętność korzystania z mediów, kompetencje medialne, klasa ESL, technologie edukacji medialnej, analiza treści medialnych, umiejętności krytycznego myślenia, komunikacja międzyjęzykowa i międzykulturowa