

New Ways in Teaching Media Literacy

REIMANN Andrew

Introduction

Considering the range of learner's perceptions, perspectives and communication needs in The Information Age, it is increasingly important that media literacy become an essential component of language learning. To avoid the dangers of popularity and "Likes" becoming the new truth, through Social Media, Fake News and alternative facts, evaluating sources, becoming aware of bias and being able to process and apply information are critical skills for global citizenship. This report will introduce and discuss practical research methods and skills through various activities including active fieldwork, observation, interview, survey and data analysis, to provide the knowledge and understanding needed for navigating the expanse of information impacting our lives. By analyzing platforms ranging from Twitter, Instagram, CNN, NHK to Fox News, students can consider sources, modern forms of communication and the critical thinking skills required for evaluating, processing and applying information responsibly and effectively. Through research and discussion, students can become familiar with key issues, engage with current topics, explore their own biases and exchange opinions through group work, short presentations, projects and fieldwork.

The tools we use to produce, access, consume or share information have changed exponentially in the recent past. Almost every aspect of human interaction has gone through a major paradigm shift in as little as one generation. Whether it be using a rotary dial phone and getting a busy signal, prearranging a meeting place with a set time, having to flip over a record after 30 minutes to listen to the B side, browsing isles in a video store or searching for facts in a dusty library,

time, convenience and accessibility, are the rewards of innovation. The death of scarcity, patience, boredom and truth however, are some of the more serious casualties of our technological progress. The true extent of these changes on society will probably take another 100 years to fully realize. Education is at the forefront of some of the greatest technological changes and some of the most important debates. In terms of learning and developing academic or life skills; is digital really better than analog? Is memorization of facts a useless endeavor? Are handwriting or spelling skills obsolete? Should students be able to use devices in class? Is a smartboard better than a chalk board? Are 10000 books in your pocket better than 100 books on a shelf? Is a 140-character tweet the new expository essay? How can we get students to read more? Which learning/teaching styles are preferable, more useful, relevant to the future? These questions will likely not be answered easily, anytime soon. The education system as well as the attitudes of experienced teachers or tech savvy students will also not easily be changed. What can be done however, is raising awareness of these changes and their consequences, while simultaneously, developing critical thinking and research skills necessary to make responsible and informed choices. The fundamental change that has occurred in information and communication sectors, involves the transformational shift from passive to active participants in media; from audience to producer, consumer to creator. This is not a binary relationship anymore. Traditionally, news was disseminated from a single, major and trusted source to the masses with very little feedback or interaction. Today most information is shared peer to peer with little control and no clear gate keeper. The abundance

of sources and perspectives is convenient, however recognizing truth and quality has become a serious challenge. In this regard, it is paramount that educators provide students, at all levels, with basic media or information literacy skills. The following report will outline several methods for incorporating media literacy tasks and activities into almost any learning environment.

I. Media

A first step to teaching media literacy requires understanding the fundamentals. These include Media, Information and Analysis Methodology. Media typically refers to tools, methods, techniques, technologies or strategies of communication used to connect and influence large numbers of people. Examples include TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and internet. Throughout human history information and the quest for knowledge have been primary activities. The ability to control or influence that information has therefore been the ultimate power. Kings, Queens, governments, dictators and religions alike, have tried to manipulate or control the flow of information through propaganda, fears, hopes, language and new technologies. If we consider two of the most influential and consequential ideologies overshadowing the 20th century, Christianity or the rise of Nazism, neither would have likely had the widespread impact on a global scale, without out effective dissemination of information or manipulation of public opinion, through accessible media. Christianity, for example, would have remained a minor Judean cult, without a unified Church or even Jesus as its head, had Paul not been able to transform the Bible into a medium the Romans could accept. (Ludemann, 2002). It is doubtful whether Hitler would have been able to manipulate the entire German population and seize control of Europe, without the diabolical Media tactics of Goebbels, controlling every German radio broadcast or the propaganda images of Leni Riefenstahl (Sommerville, 2012).

Goebbels, addressing the newly formed Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, stated;

“...you have in your possession the most modern instrument in existence for influencing the masses. By means of this instrument you are the creators of public opinion.” (Goebbels, 1933b, pp. 183-4). For better or for worse, the fate of human society and ultimately its existence, depends on media and the dissemination of information.

II. Information

We are bombarded by vast amounts of data, facts and information at almost every waking hour. The sheer volume of this media makes it impossible for us to take our time and evaluate each post, story or claim carefully or thoroughly. As a result, we develop unique skill sets for managing and organizing information quickly. This may be as simple as just clicking “like” or “delete” but nevertheless influences our decisions, actions and attitudes. This efficiency is both useful and dangerous at the same time. Companies take advantage of our stereotypes, expectations, assumptions and tendencies to target our interests and weaknesses, we naturally develop bias to help us with this process, however if not understood carefully, these can lead to accepting fake news, propaganda or misleading advertising. It is important to understand how and why we accept, reject and react to information.

III. Analysis

Analysis is the first essential step towards understanding, managing, organizing and using information. Without clear analysis, information becomes a distraction or confusing noise. To do analysis effectively we first need to understand what information is and how or why it is constructed. Information starts as a series of sounds and signals called *data*. If we can make sense of these, it can be considered *information*. This information can be used to learn or communicate ideas or concepts in the form of knowledge. If we can apply this *knowledge* to our lives and analyze it carefully to determine its source, purpose and value, then we have a more complete *understanding* of the information, that is both practical and useful. The process of analysis therefore follows a

logical progression, moving from data to information to knowledge to understanding.

Blooms Taxonomy of Learning (1956)

One of the primary goals of communicating and transferring information, through various media is learning. Learning in this sense involves the processing and organization of data and transforming it into knowledge and ultimately a deeper understanding. Knowledge is information, which has been processed, organized or structured in some way, that it becomes useful or practical. If we can consider why and how this knowledge is created or is useful, we will have achieved a higher level of understanding. Benjamin Bloom outlined a process for learning and processing data and information into higher levels of practical knowledge and understanding. His model is summarised below.

Table 1. Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning

Category	Example
Knowledge ↓	Cows are farm animals. Cows produce milk.
Comprehension ↓	Holstein, Angus, Hereford, Jersey
Application ↓	Some cows produce better milk.
Analysis ↓	Healthier, tastier milk. Efficient production.
Synthesis ↓	Plan, design system for delivering best milk.
Evaluation	Determining best qualities of milk.

Bloom (1956)

This taxonomy can be applied to any information and used as a model for determining quality and relevance. Students are encouraged to ask these basic questions when considering new information.

- *How do I know what I know?*
- *Who created this information?*
- *Why was this information shared?*
- *How can I use this information?*

IV. Awareness

An overall “awareness” or critical thinking sense is one of the first tools students need to be able to understand and analyze media and information. Awareness of how they access and use media and awareness of where the information is coming from, as well as who produces it. There are two simple tasks students can try in order to raise their awareness.

Task 1: Consumption and Usage Survey

In 2018 the WHO identified gaming and mobile phone usage as a health issue and addiction, not unlike alcoholism, gambling or nicotine (11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) 2018). To help students understand their habits the following list of questions is useful.

- Do you sleep with your phone?
- Do you check your phone for no reason?
- Do you check your phone before sleeping and first thing when you wake up?
- Do you feel uncomfortable when your phone is out of reach?
- Do you use your phone when you are with other people?
- Do you film important events instead of watching them?
- Do you use your phone in the toilet?
- Do you feel phantom vibrations?

Answering yes to 3 or more questions suggests a tendency towards nomophobia or mobile phone addiction. (Archer, D. 2017).

Task 2: Device Activity

A further, more concrete, task involves directly checking usage activity on the device. Recently, to facilitate moderating behavior and controlling tendencies, several mobile phone manufactures have added features to allow users to monitor their usage and even set limits. On IOS devices this can be done by accessing settings, battery and usage. This gives a clear indication of either the amount of time or the percentage the device was used for certain activities.

V. Sources

The sheer volume of information being shared, uploaded and accessed, as well as the diversity of authors and distributors makes information available, but calls into question its validity, reliability and credibility. In an unprecedented monopoly, for the first time in human history, five organizations from the same country, control virtually the entire source, and flow of the world's information. Known as the "Frightful Five", Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft and Google (Alphabet) have become an indispensable part of our daily lives. It is virtually impossible to have any kind of modern interaction or engage in any communication without using one of these companies' products or services. The New York Times conducted a survey in May 2017 to determine how difficult it would be to stop using the 5 companies and in which order they would quit. 56% of respondents reported that Facebook would be easy to quit. Followed by 22% for Microsoft, 10% Apple and both Google and Amazon would be most difficult with only 6% reporting they could quit those services. This further raises the issue of control, neutrality and legitimacy of sources. Having students engage in a similar survey, further raises awareness of their dependency and sources of information.

Task 3: Digital Diet

Gauge student's dependency on the *Frightful Five*. (Google, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook) Which could they easily give up? How would their lives change? Analysis, comparison and discussion of results is an effective awareness raising exercise.

VI. Bias

Truth is a human value, it is often gray and rarely binary, therefore it cannot be determined by the algorithms that select the information in our feeds or search results. The information we ultimately choose, usually confirms or supports what we already believe. This type of convenient truth is a product of our bias. Bias typically refers to an opinion or conclusion for or against a person, group, idea or thing that is

disproportionate or unfair. People form biases based on their perceptions, reality or social expectations. Many of these are in the form of stereotypes, prejudices, tendencies or discrimination. Bias is often used to make sense of or to organize confusing or conflicting information. In media, bias is used to package information, making it easier for specific target audiences to distribute, access and consume. There are many kinds of bias, which influence our choices and interactions. As these are influential in our daily life, it is important to have an awareness of different types of bias and their social impact.

Task 4: Bias Analysis

Introduce and highlight some of the most common types of bias which students use to make decisions, and which are used to target or influence their behavior. Simple stereotypes, over generalizations and tendencies are a good starting point. Have students find examples from social media or advertisements. These can be dissected and analysed to determine the type and impact of bias.

Click Bait

Media companies like Google, Amazon, Facebook or Instagram generate much of their revenue by using bias to influence choices. Most of these companies use algorithms to analyze interests and patterns to determine behavior. Consider what products, news feeds, stories or advertisements frequently show up in your browser or as a suggestion. Why does this happen? Is it the same for others? What do you click on? Why? According to Eric Schmidt, Executive Chairman of Google, "It will become hard for people to watch or consume something that has not in some sense been tailored to them." (Schmidt, 2010). What impact will this have on choices, diversity of information and the ability to challenge or adapt new ideas?

Task 5: Variable Search Results

Have students search a typically common or "safe" keyword, such as "France" or "Ice Cream".

After completing the search, they should compare and analyse the differences in their search results. Considering why these differences occur? This is an important task to allow student to realise that they are not just passive consumers of information. Their online behavior is monitored, recorded and used to influence their attitudes and actions.

Fake News

Fake news works by appealing to our emotions and bias to persuade us to accept something, with limited evidence, because it easily appeals to our fears, hopes, desires or what we already tend to believe as true.

Task 6: News and Information Evaluation

Students should find a news story, published claim, fact or opinion and determine how and why they know it is either true or false. Cross referencing keywords or topics, using multiple sources or triangulation of methods and media, is an effective way to build credibility. Students should compare sources and explain how information or facts are used differently to support an idea or form a conclusion.

VII. Production

All messages are created for a specific audience with a specific purpose. As most purveyors of information are for profit conglomerates or businesses like Turner, Time Warner, Google, Facebook or Fox, it is important to be aware of the motive behind the message. The goal of most media companies is to increase their ratings, revenue, readers or viewers. Reporting true or useful information does not necessarily coincide with that goal. "Sensationalism sells.", "if it bleeds it leads", "no news is good news". Maxims like these illustrate how media corporations target audiences hopes and fears, in order to manipulate behavior and manufacture consent that may or may not be the truth. Most popular stories or successful ad campaigns can be explained and related to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1970), All humans have the same basic needs and fears. Worrying about

these fears or satisfying our needs is a major focus of our attention. For this reason it is beneficial for companies to target audiences by appealing to their needs and fears. For example, in the United States since the 1990s violent crime has for the most part decreased, however reporting of violent crime has gone up, creating a false sense of insecurity and fear. (Moore, 2004). Media companies have become the mammoth corporations they are today by perpetuating a cycle of fear and consumption, not by publishing useful, truthful or beneficial information.

Task 7: Advertisement Production and Analysis

One method, students can use to become aware of media message creation and targeting, is analysing messages to determine their purpose and then creating their own. Advertisements are perhaps the simplest and most obviously manipulative forms of communication. Students should view several advertisements, relate them to Maslow's hierarchy and determine the target audience and how the message is constructed for a specific purpose and demographic. Part of this analysis should include images, stereotypes, bias, methods, strategies, logos and slogans. As a final part of this task students should create their own advertisement, aimed at a specific demographic, promoting a product or service and applying media strategies or advertising techniques. These can be presented to the class and further analysed.

Ethnographic Research

Understanding the multifaceted impact of media on society, communication, perspectives, values or attitudes requires a comprehensive description and analysis of the context in which it is found. An essential and effective means of developing understanding of social behavior or phenomena requires qualitative research methods such as ethnography. Ethnography is the process of *describing a phenomenon occurring in cultural or social contexts*. It means creating a *portrait of a people*. An ethnography is a written description of a particular culture including communities, *perspectives, people,*

products and practices. This type of research is based on information collected through *fieldwork*, which usually involves a process known as *triangulation*. Triangulation is a way of getting accurate and unbiased data by using at least three different sources or methods, typically these are: *interviews, observations, surveys or documents*.

The goal of ethnographic research is to get an *insider perspective* and understanding of another way of life. Rather than studying people, ethnography focuses on learning from them to better understand how we perceive others and social differences. There are many situations and ways in which ethnographic research can be done. In fact, each one of us unconsciously does ethnographic research every day. Whenever we enter a new environment, try something new or meet new people, we automatically try to get as much information as we can by observing the situation and others behavior, asking questions, participating, listening or reading. Ethnographic research is a cycle with no real beginning or end. Since social behavior is unique and unpredictable it is impossible to make any final conclusions, which can be generalized to all people of a particular group. There are however some important steps which make understanding the phenomena in question less vague or subjective.

Task 8: Fieldwork

A final task for developing media literacy and awareness of methods, messages and meaning, involves designing and conducting an ethnographic project through fieldwork. In this task, students identify a phenomenon in society, that they would like to understand more deeply. It is important that they describe the context as well as the subjects clearly and formulate some basic questions upon which to build a hypothesis which can be tested through fieldwork. Determining the best methods to test a hypothesis is also critical, as students want to accurately collect data to ensure reliability and validity. Once data is collected and analysed, it can be related back to the hypothesis in order to conclude whether the initial claim was either true or false.

Example: Product and Trend Evaluation

Phenomena: Celebrity indorsed rainbow cotton candy has recently become popular.

Context: Takeshita Street, Harajuku, Young girls and women aged 10-20.

Questions: What is the reason for the popularity rise? Is it really delicious? Is it worth the ¥900 price?

Hypothesis: The cotton candy is delicious and worth the cost and the trip to Harajuku.

Method: Travel to Harajuku to taste it. Interview or survey other consumers. Review social media and news sites.

Results: Based on research and multiple sources, the cotton candy is overpriced and interest in the product is manufactured through the creation of line ups and celebrity images.

Conclusion: The hypothesis must be partially rejected. The taste was too sweet, and I felt sick afterwards, however the photos generated much buzz on my Instagram. Therefore, the value of the cotton candy is purely aesthetic and social. It is a product created for its image not for its quality.

Conclusion

One of the main goals of this report has been to raise awareness of how we access, process and apply information. The activities and projects “tasks” described, encourage students to work towards developing autonomous, research and critical thinking skills necessary for navigating various sources and ideas as well as participating actively in the global networks that have become primary means of communication and interaction. For the international student, global understanding is of key importance. Learning languages, communication styles and cultures, is of lasting significance and value, even if you never leave your own country. Language is thought and understanding other languages, even partially, broadens your perspective. As the economy of the 21st century is based more on connecting or sharing ideas as opposed to just producing good products, it is increasingly important that students have

a deeper understanding and competency in a diverse range of communication styles, have a flexibility and tolerance for differences and are able to cross barriers and overcome obstacles to connecting easily and efficiently. However, with this increased connectivity, comes a heightened risk of mis-information, fake news, propaganda, manipulation, fraud or misleading advertising. Media Literacy gives students the tools and knowledge to protect themselves and helps ensure that the messages, ideas and content shared are true, good and useful.

When Johannes Gutenberg made the first viable printing press in Europe 600 years ago, the volume of books in Europe grew from 20 million to 200 million in 50 years. For the first time in history books and information were accessible to the masses and not controlled by the elite. At the time, no one understood the impact of this change. Looking back however, we can see it as one of the most influential events of modern history. Freedom of information through printable books stimulated the Renaissance, facilitated Luther's Reformation and Columbus's voyage to America, sparked the 30 Years' War, created momentum for the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, helped English to become a global language and allowed Europe to dominate the world for over 500 years.

"What the world is today, good and bad, it owes to Gutenberg. Everything can be traced to this source, but we are bound to bring him homage ... for the bad that his colossal invention has brought about is overshadowed a thousand times by the good with which mankind has been favored."

Mark Twain (1900)

Today information technology is expanding faster than ever and we have no idea of the impact this will have, on the future. There is no doubt that the democratization of education and freedom of

information are hugely beneficial to the entire human race, however these same freedoms facilitate criminals and allow terrorist groups to organize and plan their attacks. There are many questions that the present and future generations will have to come to terms with. For better or for worse, information and knowledge are power and these, more than ever, are accessible to everyone, stimulating innovation and growth at an unprecedented rate in human history. What impact will this have on our future? Regardless of the answer, it is every educator's responsibility to prepare students with the tools, skills and knowledge required for success and survival in tomorrow's world.

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メディア・リテラシーの教授法

ライマン アンドリュウ

抄録

情報化が進む現代社会では、学習者の認知、視点、コミュニケーション・ニーズを考えるにあたり、言語学習におけるメディア・リテラシーの重要性は増している。ソーシャルメディアの「いいね！」や、フォロワー数、フェイクニュースやもう一つの事実などが新しい真実となるのを避けるために、これからの時代のグローバル人材には、偏見に気が付き情報を処理・活用することができる能力が求められる。このレポートは、フィールドワーク、観察、インタビュー、調査票を使った調査やデータ分析などの様々な研究手法の紹介を通して、学習者が身近な生活に溢れる情報を処理するための知識と理解を養うきっかけを提供することを目的としている。ツイッター、インスタグラム、CNN、NHK、Fox Newsなどにみられる様々な情報を分析することで、学習者は情報源、コミュニケーションの現代の形、情報を効果的に評価・処理・発信するために求められる批判的思考能力について、考えを深めることができる。学習者は、調査と議論を通して今日の問題について認知を広げ、グループワークやプレゼンテーションなどのアクティビティーを通して自らの偏見と向き合い、他者と意見交換をする機会を得ることができる。

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