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THE ROLE OF MEDIA LITERACY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR LEARNERS FROM OTHER CULTURES

ROLA UMIEJĘTNOŚCI KORZYSTANIA Z MEDIÓW W NAUCZANIU JĘZYKÓW OBCYCH UCZNIÓW Z INNYCH KULTUR

Abstract: This paper attempts to explore the idea that media, especially new media technologies, can play a rather significant role in the education of students from other cultures. The use of old and new media emphasizes the possibility of intercultural exchange and understanding and enables children and young people to have global experiences. The authors highlight the potential impact of primary and secondary sources from different media on students' attitudes and dispositions towards culture and argue for the integration of media materials in the foreign language classroom to enhance cultural learning, but also to influence children and students' multicultural attitudes and promote intercultural education for learners from other cultures.

Keywords: media literacy, intercultural education, intercultural learning, foreign language

Abstrakt: W artykule tym podjęto próbę zbadania idei, że media, zwłaszcza nowe technologie medialne, mogą odgrywać dość znaczącą rolę w edukacji uczniów z innych kultur. Wykorzystanie starych i nowych mediów podkreśla możliwość wymiany i zrozumienia międzykulturowego oraz umożliwia dzieciom i młodzieży zdobywanie globalnych doświadczeń. Autorzy podkreślają potencjalny wpływ źródeł pierwotnych i wtórnych z różnych mediów na postawy i predyspozycje uczniów do kultury i argumentują za integracją materiałów medialnych w klasie języka obcego w celu zwiększenia uczenia się kulturowego, ale także w celu wpłynięcia na wielokulturowe postawy dzieci i uczniów oraz promowania edukacji międzykulturowej dla uczniów z innych kultur.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja medialna, edukacja międzykulturowa, nauka międzykulturowa, język obcy

The first decades of the 21st century have been characterized by numerous paradigm shifts and the emergence of new systems in education, caused not only by rapid technological growth but also by the impact of several international conflicts that have led to changing migration patterns. Teachers have had to respond to the demands of their new ICT skills as well as multicultural classrooms. This combined challenge has forced educators to redefine their methods and approaches, to introduce new concepts, topics, and materials into their teaching, but also to create new frameworks that cater for learners with new needs and different cultural backgrounds. Traditional numeracy and literacy skills have been enriched by new competencies, among which media literacy and intercultural awareness have a prominent place.

Foreign language teaching and learning have become an ideal place where the use of media can be combined with the development of intercultural dialogue. The analysis of media messages and the critical and reflective nature of intercultural exchange have been integrated into foreign language communication, emphasizing the learners' ability to use foreign languages appropriately, taking into account intercultural norms in their contemporary and historical perspectives. One can agree with Ranieri, Nardi, and Fabbro (2019) who claim that curricula must be designed to meet the needs of global digital societies and the demands of new competences.

Cruz and Miranda (2022) emphasize the need to include identity discourses in media practices within the new curricula to make them relevant to the cultural diversity of today's societies. Other authors emphasize the role of social change associated with digital technologies and new media, which has expanded and diversified knowledge production and made communicative practices more complex (Ashfaq, & Nabi, 2022). However, they all agree that teachers should adapt their curricula by integrating media literacy and intercultural education into their teaching practice, addressing multicultural differences (Bloom, & Johnston, 2010), promoting equality, and sensitizing students to social inequalities and injustices.

New media technologies have produced an enormous amount of resources that can be used by educators in their daily teaching practice to transform the intercultural learning experiences of their students. Multimodal materials are available as a combination of texts, images, still and moving images, two- and three-dimensional images, printed, online, and more recently in virtual (mixed, augmented, extended, etc.) reality to promote intercultural dialogue among learners meeting in classrooms with already experienced multicultural encounters. The (mass) media literacy framework enables not only access to but also critical analysis of content and forms of media texts, which can help students understand and evaluate particular phenomena from the fields of history, institutions, cultures, identities, and the lives of individuals and groups in a society.

Media texts convey elements and contexts of culture that are encoded in information and symbolic meanings. Every society is reflected in the mass media and the mass media subsequently influence it. The discourse of the mass media inevitably conveys the context of the respective society: political, cultural, and social elements that reach the reader, listener, viewer, or user. The identification of an individual, a group, or society as a whole takes place via the mass media, both in its content and in its diverse forms of expression. All these and many other aspects are at the center of interest of any educational environment, which focuses on different aspects when choosing a particular field of interest. Mass media texts provide a lot of material for studying the cultural aspects of a particular society, but also the aspects of other societies that are transmitted to that society through the mass media.

Each media discourse can be defined as an event that includes all the vectors and features of communication, which are the social context (knowledge, ideologies, values), production processes (political, economic, and social determinants), reception processes (coding and decoding through codes), and functions. The analysis of media materials enables learners to analyze, interpret, and thus understand the basic fact that all media products are the result of

a process of creation, and production and as such are the constructions of their authors, whether individual or team. Media literacy, which is the foundation of this, is based on building and developing students' basic competencies, such as decoding content, form, and message, and teaches them to become autonomous, active individuals orienting themselves in the tangle of media chaos in multicultural societies.

The author of media literacy theory is Joshua Meyrowitz. In the text *Multiple Media Literacies* (1998) he lists three types of media literacy. The basis for the development of analytical skills should be the individual's effort to investigate, interpret, and try to understand the media in such a way as to reveal the relationships between individual cultural patterns, institutions, and their influences. The author names the first type of media literacy as media content literacy. In it, he emphasizes that the media convey messages, the meaning of which is presented through a number of elements. The second type of media literacy is the literacy of media grammar, and media knowledge is in this case linked to production factors. Therefore, in this type, one takes into account different languages (means of expression) of the mass media. The third type of media literacy deals with the media as an environment, namely the influence of the characteristics of individual media on the message they convey, or have the potential to transmit.

Media literacy should obviously be on the list of priorities for all levels of education. It is a tool for understanding what is happening in it at various levels, starting from political, through economic, social, and cultural. It enables the discovery, analysis, and interpretation of institutional and cultural mechanisms and understands the media product as an element of society that can be decoded. This idea is also supported by Fran Ilich (2004), who moves media literacy into the field of digital literacy, which he describes as the ability to read and write in various media and to be able to decode the codes of 'cyber lingo'. The author claims that the media participate in the creation of individual and group identity through codes embedded in narratives since the time of Ancient Greece.

When analyzing the structure of mass media texts, the fact that fiction and non-fiction genres of mass media discourse are presented to the consumer as a narrative is increasingly coming to the fore. Almost every media product offers constructed fiction or created reality through stories. One understands narrative as a form of representation, and its main task in media texts, and not only in them, is to organize information into certain structures. In a present-day society, narrative plays one of the most important roles in the process of obtaining the greatest possible economic profit. In terms of marketing, the story

actually mediates the sale of the media product to its potential users. Narrative strategies are applied in film, advertising, television news, comics, or newspaper reports. Moreover, narrative represents the fundamental factor connecting society, culture, and the individual in the post-millennial era. In the current era full of rapid changes, exchange of information, and overproduction, narrative helps to structure reality, it is a mode of leadership. It offers an organized, transformed reality, helps consumers to decode the media text, and thus contributes significantly to the media literacy of the individual.

An almost unlimited amount of both old (traditional) media and new (digital) media material is available for teaching purposes for foreign language courses everywhere. One can divide resources into three basic groups. The first group consists of printed periodical and non-periodical materials – newspapers (dailies, weeklies), magazines, as well as official publications of the government, state, and commercial institutions. Samples of these provide primary information on various elements of society (e.g. legislative documents, statements, notices of non-profit organizations), or secondary material that carries ideology, the views of individuals, social groups, or political parties. Comparative content and textual analysis of editorials or main articles of various newspapers from one day depicts the position of individual periodicals within the political spectrum, familiarizes learners with priorities in the social field, and points to a sensitive perception of the issue of identity in society. Printed advertising is a very rewarding and interesting material, both in terms of content and form. An advertisement in a magazine, a poster, or a product sticker serve to reveal the rules of the ideology of consumerism, which is tied to national and group identities, that are represented by various myths.

The second group of media materials that can be used in the study of a society is represented by the products of radio and television broadcasting by public service and commercial companies. Television can be an important medium for teaching and learning. The cross-cultural images and portrayals on television might influence the multicultural attitudes, values, and beliefs of learners (Berry, 2003). The analysis of recordings of news programs, advertising spots, or samples of popular television genres (sitcoms, soap operas, reality shows) allows learners to exemplify hierarchical relationships in society by revealing symbolic representations and stereotypes. Political and economic aspects along with issues of racial, gender, ethnic, and sexual inequality are identifiable not only in news programs and documentary programs but also in commercials and series. They present the social, group, or individual values of the inhabitants of the country, and present models of behavior and existence of an individual in the cultural-geographic space.

The Internet is not only a third group of analyzable materials, but an independent phenomenon that we perceive as a network, a communication tool, a source of information, education, and above all entertainment, and thus as an element that most personifies the post-millennial characteristics of the media with its interactivity. The Internet has become an integral part, mediator, and creator of culture and incorporates all other media. It enables the reflection and construction of various aspects of society/Primary and secondary sources are thus more accessible.

Digital technologies allow for a constant re-reading and re-mediation of cultural archives by teachers and learners and for the production and distribution of alternative narratives about the present. These are crucial opportunities for intercultural dialogue, and cross-cultural exchanges, that all have the potential to overcome silences around difficult memories or dramatic present situations, they can confront some of the current issues on ethnical diversity, and discrimination and reimagine a more inclusive identity.

The above-listed examples of media texts represent only a fraction of the possibilities of analysis applicable to the cross-cultural perspectives in teaching foreign languages. The choice of materials, the focus of the analysis, as well as the choice of method, depend on the goals set by the content of individual subjects, on individual teachers, and on the intellectual capabilities of students. Thanks to new media technologies learners can encounter a cross-cultural or multi-cultural experience, collaborate on works and actions, and share knowledge, feelings, and moments of cultural exchange, reflection, and friendship (Maekawa et al., 2010). Media literacy thus represents a crucial foundation of inter-cultural dialogue, and education strategies for furthering interculturality in contemporary societies.

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