

**MEDIA EDUCATION AND THE “DIALOGUE OF CULTURES”
IN THE EFL CLASSROOM**

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Rezumat: *Cultura media este studiată în cadrul abordărilor tehnologice, personale, creative și informaționale. Odată cu creșterea noilor media interactive, educația media va avea o schimbare de paradigmă, aducând studiul educației media într-o nouă eră. Factorul determinant în înțelegerea culturii media, în opinia noastră, devine o abordare interactivă care face posibil și eficient dialogul intercultural printr-o rețea globală de comunicații. Mass-media prezintă mediatorii în dialogul culturilor. Acest discurs tratează motivele, definițiile și abordările educației mediatică. De asemenea, autorii oferă o imagine de ansamblu asupra dezvoltării globale a formării în domeniul alfabetizării media.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *educația mediatică, educația la distanță, instrumente mediatică, dialogul culturilor, media digitală.*

It is difficult to imagine modern world without media tools for communication (newspapers, television, cinema, internet). Media today is omnipresent and is one of the most important areas in the lives of people throughout the world today. The vast majority of school children as well as university students now are in contact with media, both traditional and digital media, including the Internet.

“Mass media are not mere vehicles of communication. They constitute a real environment, they condition thought and very often determine behavior” [15, p. 6]. Media education has become a worldwide phenomenon in the 21st century. In such countries as Australia, Britain, Canada (especially Ontario), Finland, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden, France and Switzerland, the terms *“media education”*, *“media study”*, *“media literacy”* have been used almost interchangeably by media scholars such as Silverblatt, Masterman, Worsnop, Buckingham, Lusted, Moore etc. We will review the main approaches regarding this issue. Since the 60s of the XX century, in the pedagogical science of leading countries the world a specific direction of "media education" has formed, designed to help schoolchildren and students better adapt in the world of media culture, master the language of the media in formation, be able to analyze media texts, etc. According to Dorr, in the 90s of XX century media education has become an indispensable component of learning in all high schools in Canada and Australia (from 1st to 12th grade). Media education integrated into the mother tongue lessons in schools of Great Britain, where, for example, 25,000 high school students and 8,000 university students annually choose a media course for final exams. By the way, the intensive development of media education in many countries contributed to the expansion of American media communications: many European media scholars develop *“critical thinking”* to students to help them resist the exposure of mass culture [2, pp. 94-95].

The 2002 UNESCO recommendations emphasized that media education is part of the fundamental right of every citizen of any country to freedom of expression and information, it helps to support democracy. *“The mass media.....contribute to eliminate ignorance and misunderstanding between peoples, to make nationals of a country sensitive to the needs and desires of others, to ensure the respect of the rights and dignity of all nations, all peoples and all individuals without distinction of race, sex, language, religion or nationality and to draw attention to the great evils which afflict humanity, such as poverty, malnutrition and diseases, thereby promoting the formulation by States of the policies best able to promote the reduction of international tension and the peaceful and equitable settlement of international disputes”* [Recommendations Addressed to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO. In: Education for the Media and the Digital Age. Vienna: UNESCO, 1999, p. 273-274. Reprint in: Outlooks on Children and Media. Goteborg: UNESCO & NORDICOM, 2001, p. 152]. Recognizing the differences in approaches and development of media education in different countries, it is recommended that it should be introduced wherever possible within the framework of national curricula, as well as within the framework of additional, non-formal education and self-education throughout a person’s life.

A number of authors have recognized that with the advancement of communication technologies, the rapid development of the mass media as major information distribution channels and influential socialization agents threatened the role of traditional schooling. Some authors have also described the mass media as a sort of *“parallel school”* or *“second educator”* [14, 19, 20].

According to Worsnop, media teachers today use the terms *“media education”*, *“media study”* and *“media literacy”* almost interchangeably. *“My personal preference is to use the term ‘media education’ as a broad description of all that takes place in media-oriented classroom. ‘Media literacy’ is the outcome of work in either media education or media study. The more you learn about or through the media, the more media literacy you have: media literacy is the skills of experiencing, interpreting/analyzing and making media products”* [23, p. 23].

It was reported in literature that media education is basically an educational approach to media it is more comprehensive and media literacy is basically alphabetization to visual codes. Media studies are linked with the knowledge of mass media for technical, political, social, or educational or different purposes, from the point of view of M.Reyes Torres. Another scholars highlighted the idea that media education includes media studies and media literacy (N.Ryzhih, I.Chelysheva, J.I.Gomez) and media literacy is the result of the process of media education,

media literacy is the intended outcome of media education” (S. Penzin, V. Gura, A. Korochenskyi, V. Monastyrsky, T. Shak, J. Pungente, L. Rother, D. Suess).

There are many versions of the definition of media education. Applying to International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, we came across another definition: “*Media education*” is teaching about media, as distinguished from teaching with media. Ordinarily, media education emphasizes the acquisition both of cognitive knowledge about how media are produced and distributed, and of analytic skills for interpreting and valuing media content. In contrast, “*media studies*” ordinarily emphasize hands-on experiences with media production” [International Encyclopedia, 2001, p. 9494].

According to the National Association for Media Literacy Education, US (NAMLE, 2010), media literacy consists of a series of communication competencies, including the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information in a variety of forms. “*Media literacy proponents contend that the concept an active, not passive user: The media-literate person is capable recipient and creator of content, understanding sociopolitical context, and using codes and representational systems effectively to live responsibly in society and the world at large*” [4, p. 9494]. “*Media literacy, the movement to expand notions of literacy to include the powerful post-print media that dominate our informational landscape, helps people understand, produce, and negotiate meanings in a culture made up of powerful images, words, and sounds. A media-literate person – everyone should have the opportunity to become one – can decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media*” [1, p. 7].

Some authors have also suggested the definitions of “media education”. Sharikov wrote that it’s a “*process of media study and study with the help of media, the result of which is the ability to 1) analyze, critically comprehend and create media texts; 2) distinguish the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and /or cultural interest, their context; 3) interpret media texts and values spread by media; 4) choose the correspondent media for the creation and dissemination of one’s own media texts and find the target audience; 5) get the opportunity for the free access to media both for perception and for production*” [21, p. 50-51]. In his turn, A.Guterrez Martin suggests his definition of multimedia education: “*I have referred to multimedia education as that which, making use of prevailing technologies of the day, allows students to achieve those skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to: communicate (interpret and produce messages) utilizing different languages and media; develop personal autonomy and a critical spirit, which gives them the ability to... form a just and multicultural society in which to live side by side with the technological innovations of the day*” [5, p. 12].

The basic definition of “media education” was given by A. Fedorov in his monographic work “*Media Education: History, Theory and Methods*”. He highlighted the idea that *Media education* is the process of personal development with the help and on the material of mass media aimed at developing the media communication culture, creative, communicative abilities, critical thinking, comprehensive perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, teaching various forms of expression through media technology, resulting in media literacy. According to Fedorov A., PhD, prof., winner of the Global Media and Information Literacy Award (2019), *media education* 1) includes using media across the curriculum application; 2) develops critical understanding of media through analytical and practical work; 3) includes teaching about the forms, conventions and technologies; 4) includes teaching about media institutions, and their social, political and cultural roles; 5) places emphasis upon student's experience of the media and their relevance to their own lives. As to *media studies*, it 1) includes a cross-media application; 2) a theoretical application of the media and a conceptual framework; 3) incorporates analysis of a message delivered by the media and the techniques used to create that message. *Media Literacy* builds on the following outcomes of Media Education and media studies: 1) an awareness of the impact of media on the individual and society; 2) an understanding of the process of mass communication; 3) the ability to analyse and discuss media messages; 4) an awareness of media context as a text that provides

recognition of culture; 5) production and analysis skills; 6) traditional and non-traditional literacy skills; 7) an enriched enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of media content [6].

The analysis of the suggested definitions and interpretations of the notion of “media education” leads to the following: “media education” in the modern world is considered as a process of personal development using mass media with the aim of creating a culture of communication with the creative and communicative abilities; critical thinking; the skills of full perception; interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts; teaching various forms of self-expression with the help of media technology. It can be divided into the following main areas: 1) *media education of future professionals* in the field of radio, television, film, video and the Internet – journalists, editors, directors, producers, actors, cameramen, etc.; 2) *media education of future teachers* at the universities and pedagogical institutes, during some advanced training courses; 3) *media education as a part of the general education* for schoolchildren and students; 4) *distant media education* for schoolchildren and university students (that is rather actual nowadays during coronavirus pandemic) with the help of diverse educational platforms: *LearningApps, Slideshare, Story Jumper, Google Sites, Kahoot, Quizalize, Purpose Games, Live Worksheets, EdPuzzle, JeopardyLabs, PowToon, Flisnack, Issuu, Animator, StudyStack, Voki, Blabberize, Quizlet, Biteable* and others.

Thus, media education provides a methodology for conducting classes, based on problematic, heuristic, didactic games and other productive forms of education that develop the personality of a student, the independence of his/her thinking, stimulating his/her ability through direct involvement in creative activity; perception, interpretation and analysis of the structure of the media text; assimilation of knowledge about media culture. At the same time, media education, combining theoretical lectures and practical classes/ labs, is a kind of involving students in the process of creating works of media culture, that is immerses the audience in the internal laboratory of the main media professions, which is possible both autonomously and in the process integration into traditional academic subjects.

Analyzing the historical perspective of media education, it is worth mentioning that media education has rapidly developed in school systems and communities all over the world. Since the 1960s, a new school subject, “media education”, appeared in the USA, France, Italy, Britain, Germany and Poland. Later on, in the early 1980s it became more critical in the works of Hoggart, Williams, Stuart Hall. In the late 1980s media education appeared in Spain with a huge number of TV educational programs. Digital literacy (the Internet and the Web) predominated beginning with 1990s. The teachers and the students felt the necessity of acquiring new technical skills and managing new modern digital tools. Beginning with the 21st century till nowadays we all feel the advanced level of the society with the new communication platforms, multimedia tools, and new mobile communication technology.

Media education is based on the media culture studies. These two notions appeared simultaneously. Media culture obtains the special priority position under conditions of the information society. Media culture should be viewed from the perspective of two fundamental terms’ learning: “media” and “culture”. Definition of “media” (translated from Latin - “means, mediator, focus”) by many scientists (Byram, Hall, Cullen, Fleming, Fenner, Geertz, and others) is interpreted as a means of communication and transmission of information of different types - from the most ancient (gestures, drawings and others) to modern, using integrated hybrid digital telecommunications networks (internet, mobile telephony, etc.) [Zemlyanova, 2004, p. 197]. This word appeared in England in the 16th century. In the XVIII century it meant newspapers, in the XIX – the post, the telegraph; and since the 20th century, it also denotes radio, television, the internet. Nowadays its meaning becomes broader.

Traditionally, the concept of “media culture” is associated with a specific information carrier/ data storage device or communication channel, but under “media” one should mean “*not just a system of mass media and mass communications, ... but a very specific and powerful “matrix” - the system of cultural and information monopolies*” [9, p. 21].

As an information approach, culture is presented as a system for creating, storing, distributing and using the content. According to Lotman, culture is “*a complex semiotic system, its function is memory and its main feature is accumulation*” [13, p. 228]. This point of view allows considering media culture as information support of society with social information accumulated through sign systems and various media channels [6].

As a dialogical approach, culture is considered as a form of communication between its subjects. Media culture makes intercultural dialogue possible and effective through a global communication network. The main issue in this understanding of media culture is precisely the interactive way of interconnection of individuals/ societies with the modern world. Dialogue interaction is, on the one hand, the essential property of media culture, “*as it expects feedback, mutual understanding, mutual change and development of the subjects*”, and on the other hand is a mechanism for mastering media culture [4, p. 9]. The possibility and the tendency towards the dialogue become a key characteristic of media culture; it reflects its dynamic side and interaction between a person and media.

We also have to consider the interconnection of learning, media and technology. Modern education takes place in digital “third space” [Bhabha, 1994 in Potter and McDougall, 2017]. Potter and McDougall define the ‘third space’ for (digital) media education as “*the area between official curriculum and informal knowledge, with skills and dispositions brought in from outside culture*” [16, p. 88]. They explain that this is a space that meets learners after school, a so called “after-school media education” that may include education or literacy that learners acquire while visiting museums, theatres, galleries, clubs, cinema, but is also can be a metaphorical space that is located in educational institutions and is “*negotiated through dialogue and pedagogical strategies designed to mediate expertise and challenge dominant roles and representations of knowledge*” [ibid.]. Digital media education requires digital literacy. Digitalization of education is also a very dynamic and changing process that requires adapting of educators and learners fast to the constantly evolving world. That is why there is a big necessity in educating teaching personnel and learners in educational institutions on how to operate and use different digital appliances.

Language teachers are coping with the impact of Covid 19 pandemic on teaching and learning. Due to diverse pedagogical online seminars and workshops, organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of Republic of Moldova as well as by the Alecu Russo Balti State University, we might explore what teachers’ experience have been during this period of time and what the Ministry of Education has done and is still doing to support remote teaching and learning. Being present at the series of online webinars organized by British Council in March-April 2020 (“Teaching online – alternative platforms, lesson structure and task-types”; “Teaching through the Covid-19 pandemic”; “Research into teacher professional development: implications in the current context”) we received useful information about resources and ideas which help us support our students remotely and help us manage the return to learning in schools/ universities.

As multimedia learning occurs when students build mental representations from words and pictures that are presented to them, it can also include other elements such as audio, video, and animation along with words and pictures. These digital media can be delivered through various solutions such as instructional videos, games and simulations, online and mobile courses and emerging learning environments. Some of the most promising new learning technologies include virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence. The majority university lecturers use some common digital media tools. For instance, as learning management systems we used *Moodle, Canvas*, etc. As synchronous online tools we used *Google hangouts, Zoom, Adobe connect, Skype, Cisco WebEx, Join.me, StartMeeting, Citrix GoToMeeting*, etc.

As an example of a successful application of media education recently we can mention a Latvian case where in the situation caused by Covid-19 in the second semester of study year 2019/2020 Latvian pupils in secondary schools were forced to study remotely. Apart from E-klase (E-class) platform that was used to access all important information, including guidelines

for teachers for providing distance learning, other platforms were widely used (Uzdevumi.lv and Soma.lv). What is more during two weeks the special educational TV channel was created and it allowed supporting pupils, teachers and parents of learners from grade 1 to grade 6. [Situation caused by Covid-19 in Latvia on the official website of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia] The TV channel was used additionally to the classes that happened online and covered different subjects, including Mathematics, language-teaching, geography, and others. It was available online and was especially appreciated by parents who were forced to assist teachers in teaching their children.

Language teachers as well as scholars and methodologists who work in the fields of linguistics, culture studies and language teaching (Bahtin, Bibler, Bacewicz, Ter-Minasova etc.) were the first who realized the necessity of “*a dialogue of cultures*” with students. The modern intensive development of the media, in our opinion, has even more sharply highlighted the thoroughness and relevance of the philosophical theory of the “dialogue of cultures”, the research that was started by M.M. Bakhtin and continued by V.S. Bibler. Indeed, “the culture of modern thinking is a culture of “pulling” all past and future cultures into a single civilizational ladder” [2, p.8]. Media culture at a new level of technical capabilities (satellite television, video, the Internet, etc.) effectively promotes such a unification, creates unprecedented opportunities for a dialogue of cultures in the global (dialogue of cultures of nations, countries), in the interpersonal, and in the introverted (intrapersonal) levels.

New media are challenging the very existence of human communication in the traditional meaning. New media not only influence the form and the content of information, but also influence on how people understand each other in the process of communication, especially people from different cultural backgrounds. In fact, new media culture creates a continuity gap between tradition and cultural innovation. After reviewing the literature, we found that emerging topical areas in this field of research mainly include three categories: 1) the influence of national / ethnic cultures on the development of new media, 2) the impact of new media on cultural / social identity, 3) the influence of new media (especially social media) on various aspects of intercultural interaction (for example, intercultural relations, intercultural dialogue and intercultural conflict).

Media education, if applied in general education, in schools or at tertiary level could make educational policy establishers and implementers consider the following questions: - *What should be the role of educators in media education in the present-day conditions?* - *How can the content of media education be integrated in the general education?* - *How should curricula be drawn up including media education?* - *How to integrate technology into curriculum?* - *How to use media effectively to meet the varying needs of learners?*

This requires a further research in the field and could be recourse for the next study.

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