STUDENT A:

Introduction and conclusion by Student A:

Media messages have the potential to exert both positive and negative effects on consumers. ML aims to create active, competent users of media messages. The fundamental principle of ML is the process of inquiry – the habit of questioning media messages on a systematic basis. "A media culture has emerged in which images, sounds, and spectacles help produce the fabric of everyday life, dominating leisure time, shaping political views and social behavior, and providing the materials out of which people forge their very identities." (Kellner 1995, 1).

In this media environment, the boundaries between news and entertainment, on the one hand, and between news and propaganda, one the other hand, are increasingly blurred. Consequently, the ability of decoding media messages is crucial for the modern man.

Living in a media-saturated world requires a constellation of skills – critical resources for users to cope with and to process media messages, produced and distributed via traditional and new channels alike (Cernicova 2013, 75). Media Literacy (ML) is a field and a movement that promotes and facilitates critical thinking skills oriented toward media messages. It has evolved from a variety of disciplines, having at its core media and cultural studies and semiotics. ML is a fractured field: many competing frameworks and visions, different schools and factions, antagonistic discourses and practices, unresolved and ongoing debates. As ML builds on different underlying theories and even if there is no consensus on what media literacy exactly is, there have emerged several key concepts. It promotes awareness and mindfulness, enhanced discernment concerning media consumption, and critical abilities for analyzing media messages. ML provides tools for interpreting, analyzing, understanding, and challenging media discourses. All media messages are representations, and so they are inherently ideological and biased. In addition, all media messages have financial and symbolic stakes. ML is multi-dimensional and comprises a set of developmental, progressive skills.

Conclusions

Media not only construct our sense of reality; media represents the reality, through framing events and situations, but also through priming certain elements. Media message involve paradigmatic choices – selecting from a range of possible elements, and syntagmatic combinations – putting the elements together according to established conventions, rules and practices. ML skills help users adopt a critical stance; recognize the persuasion techniques used in various media messages; employ a multi-perspectival approach of media; recognize bias, propaganda, manipulation, misinformation, and disinformation; sceptically examine the often-conflicting media messages based on user's own experiences, abilities, beliefs, and values. Romania cannot wait until the debates and rivalries around ML will end (they will not). ML is an evolving, vibrant field and movement. In our country, there should be expected a more sustained preoccupation for a strategy in ML at the national level. On the one hand, it would be advisable the development of a national curriculum in formal media education and, on the other hand, a public and private support for ML projects and programs at national, regional and local level. The human resources (teachers and trainers) would be educated and instructed by a network of entities involved in ML. In addition, implementation of ML programs should take into account experiences at international, European and national levels (countries more advanced in ML). In the Romanian ML strategy, the focus should be placed less on protectionist approach (which could be covered through more strict and clear laws and regulations) and more on promoting and participatory orientations. The starting point should be the adoption of the Grünwald Declaration and the Paris Agenda, focusing on: developing comprehensive media education programs at all education levels; promoting lifelong learning programs; teacher training and awareness raising of the other stakeholders in the social sphere; research and its dissemination networks; and European and international cooperation. In the medium term, ML education can be expanded to sub-disciplines (news literacy, digital literacy, etc.), but only after a firm foundation is built. However, in a country where the plain literacy is declining sharply, it is questionable whether ML can be seen as anything more than a luxury.

STUDENT B:

Media Literacy at the International, European and Romanian levels

In Romania, there is little concern in developing ML skills at the state level, and, consequently, only incipient, mostly private initiatives exist at this point in time. The present media education policy focuses on computer and information literacy as compulsory discipline. In our country, formal and informal media education is scarcely available, mainly for high school students (a project lead by the Center for Independent Journalism) even less for younger students (a program lead by ActiveWatch) and virtually not at all for adult training, according to the report Charting Media and Learning in Europe – 2011 and 2013, issued by MEDEAnet – a project managed by European Commission and having the NGO ActiveWatch as partners from Romania. In addition, starting from 2004, critical skills for media consumption have become a separate optional subject for high school education, as the result of the advocacy of ActiveWatch. The academic interest in media education at university level is sporadic, as well. At present, a long-term policy strategy to promote media literacy within school education or initial and lifelong learning does not exist in Romania. There is only one organization (NGO) dedicated to promote ML – MediaWise Society, launched in 2014. At the international level, UNESCO has a robust experience in enhancing media literacy, founding the Grünwald Declaration of 1982 which recognizes the need for political and educational systems to promote citizens' critical understanding of mediated communication. The Grünwald Declaration was reaffirmed at the international level by experts (information, communication and media), education policy-makers, teachers and researchers, NGO representatives and media professionals from all the regions of the world who met in Paris, in 2007. The deliberations of this two-day meeting gave birth to the UNESCO Paris Agenda - Twelve Recommendations for Media Education (Media and Information Literacy (MIL). UNESCO uses a composite concept, linking media literacy and information literacy, and employs accordingly the term Media and Information Literacy (MIL). The Organization has since supported various initiatives to engender MIL as an engaging civic education movement and a tool for lifelong learning. The European Charter for Media Literacy aims to foster greater clarity and wider consensus in Europe on media literacy and media education; to raise the public profile of media literacy and media education in each European

nation, and in Europe as a whole and to encourage the development of a permanent and voluntary network of media educators in Europe, bound together by their common aims, and enabled by their institutional commitment. Three strands of cultural, critical and creative media education can be mapped on to seven competencies of ML:

 Use media technologies effectively to access, store, retrieve and share content to meet their individual and community needs and interests;

 Gain access to, and make informed choices about, a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources;

 Understand how and why media content is produced;

 Analyze critically the techniques, languages and conventions used by the media, and the messages they convey;

 Use media creatively to express and communicate ideas, information and opinions; Identify, and avoid or challenge, media content and services that may be unsolicited, offensive or harmful;

 Make effective use of media in the exercise of their democratic rights and civic responsibilities. At the EU level, there is a sustained preoccupation for promoting and developing media education. However, here are still many hindrances to the development of ML at European level. Member States still lack a shared vision in this area. In addition, the lack of visibility of national, regional and local initiatives in this area makes it more difficult to foster European networks.

STUDENT C:

Approaches, Elements, and Skills of Media Literacy There are mainly three approaches of ML: protectionist, promoting, and participatory (Pérez Tornero and Varis 2010, 40-2). The protectionist approach aims at protecting vulnerable users against potential threats of the media messages. Protectionist regulations are frequently associated with children and youth, who are the most vulnerable to the potentially harmful effects of the media due to their age and education.

However, these regulations can also concern sexual, xenophobic and racist content. Protectionist ML seems to assume that all users

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION AND TRANSLATION STUDIES, 9 / 2016 16 process media messages the same way, and therefore require the same antidotes to negative media influences. This approach has been criticized for being both paternalistic and clueless. The promoting orientation consists of encouraging activities that tend to stimulate greater awareness of the media environment. This approach is based on the conviction that the media offer all users opportunities and potentialities. Therefore, it is less defensive than the protectionist orientation and stresses the constructive aspect of the relationship with the media through either intellectual creativity or communication relations. Finally, the participatory orientation stresses the development of social production and communication for the enhancement of knowledge, interactivity and dialogue. This attitude upholds individuals' autonomy, critical capacity and ability to properly guide their own personal development. The Internet and the web facilitates on the highest level the sharing of resources and social interactivity. These orientations might appear mutually incompatible. However, these orientations can be integrated systematically. Despite the existing differences, all three coexist and are complementary in many ML programs. Media scholars (Baran 2014, 21-4) identify eight fundamental elements of media literacy:

1. A critical thinking skill enabling audience members to develop independent judgments about media content. Thinking critically about the content users consume is the very essence of media literacy. Media consumers must take responsibility for the outcome of their choices in content.

2. An understanding of the process of mass communication. As users comprehend how mass media operate and how its various components relate to one another, they can form expectations of how the media messages can benefit or harm them.

3. An awareness of the impact of media on the individual and society. Mass media is a change agent and it is influencing people on any levels. If users ignore the impact of media on their lives, they run the risk of being caught up and carried along by that change rather than controlling or leading it.

4. Strategies for analyzing and discussing media messages. To consume media messages thoughtfully and meaningfully, users need a foundation on which to base thought and reflection. If we, we must possess. The users can employ critical tools to interpret media messages, or the meaning can be imposed on them.

5. An understanding of media content as a text that provides insight into users' culture and lives. A culture and its figures, attitudes, values, concerns, and myths become known through communication. For modern cultures, media messages increasingly dominate this communication, shaping its understanding.

6. The ability to enjoy, understand and appreciate media content. ML does not mean refusing the media messages, or always being suspicious of harmful effects and cultural degradation. Consumers can enhance their understanding and appreciation of media texts, as well. Learning to enjoy, understand, and appreciate media content includes the ability to use multiple points of access – to approach media content from a variety of perspectives and derive from it many levels of meaning.

7. Development of effective production skills. ML makes the assumption that the effective and efficient comprehension of media content can be enhanced by production skills that enable users to create their own media messages. The online platforms, in particular, require effective production skills.

8. An understanding of the ethical and moral obligations of media practitioners. To make informed judgments about the performance of the media, users also must be aware of the competing pressures on practitioners as they do their jobs. They must understand the media official and unofficial rules of operation.

STUDENT D:

Boundary between the media and the user

In the current conceptions of media literacy, the media and users are discrete entities inhabiting separate spheres, allowing for more detached analyses and disimpassioned assessments. Social media may lack these discrete boundaries, as this world is coinhabited by the media and the

users. In social media, the content is selected, fed back, and refined through iterative interactions between the media, the community, and the individual user (Bolin, 2011; Neff, 2005). The self develops and manages ties and relationships on social media, thereby determining not only the content but also the sources and routes of delivery and receipt of the messages (Klinger and Svensson, 2018). Through these networks and processes facilitated by social media platforms, users develop their episteme with which to filter and evaluate environmental stimuli, including information, facts, and anecdotes. Schwarzenegger (2020) found that social media users exercise selective criticality and pragmatic trust and negotiate between their own feelings of competence and confidence in navigating personal media repertoires. The self is the foundation on which one builds their social media content and is inextricably linked to all aspects of their social media use. One's social media world may be Bourdieu's (1977) habitus, a "subjective system of perceptions and practice." Core to social media use are the motivations of self-expression, self-validation, and self-enhancement, as well as social belonging, social learning, and social management of impression and relationships through selective self-presentation afforded by the technical capacities of social media (Cho et al., 2019; Moreno et al., 2013; Zheng et al., 2020). Consequently, one cannot analyze the content of social media without an understanding of the self. This blurred boundary and increased intimacy between the media and user should be accounted for in the conception of social media literacy (see the Self and Evaluation below).

Mass media influences the health behaviors of adolescents. Evidence shows that traditional strategies such as censorship or limitation are no longer efficient; therefore, teaching media literacy is the best way to protect adolescents from harmful effects. The aim of this pilot study was to evaluate the effects of a media literacy training program on knowledge and behavioral intention of a sample of female students according to the stages of change in dealing with media Media literacy is defined as the "ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages". Media literacy training increases the individuals' doubt about the media content. After all, existence of the individuals with high media literacy leads to increase in the media quality because such individuals require more realistic messages of higher quality.

Recently, talk of "fake news" – and its relation to wider epistemic crises, from climate denialism to the creep of global ethno-nationalism – has renewed attention to media literacy in education. For some, revived discussions of media literacy offer protection (e.g., strategies for identifying

and critiquing media bias and misinformation). For others, they offer empowerment (e.g., equipping youth to produce media messages that challenge misinformation or represent marginalized perspectives). Today, concerns over post-truth politics are beginning to make visible the limitations of "literacy" as a guiding idiom for navigating the emerging media landscape. Though there is increased public demand for media literacy education as an antidote for "fake news," there is little agreement about what such an approach should look like (Bacon, Citation2018; Bulger & Davison, Citation2018). Many have argued, convincingly, that there is a need to ground media literacy in principles of civic learning and action. For some, this means nurturing "civic intentionality" by rooting media consumption and production practices in values like agency, care, persistence, critical consciousness, and emancipation (Mihailidis, Citation2018). For others, it means cultivating forms of "civic reasoning" by adopting critical reading practices to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information (McGrew et al., Citation2017). Such approaches are generative, to be sure, and they offer concrete resources that are immediately usable in classrooms. Indeed, we have used them in our own teaching and advising. But they also continue to bring a representational lens to the challenges of post-truth politics and "fake news."

STUDENT E

The world we live in today is very different from the world that most of us over 25 years old remember from our childhood. The twenty-first century is a media-saturated, technologically dependent and globally connected world. However, most education in the United States has not kept up with advances in technology or educational research. In our global information society it is insufficient to teach students to read and write only with letters and numbers. We live in a multimedia age where the majority of information people receive comes less often from print sources and more typically from highly constructed visual images, complex sound arrangements, and multiple media formats. The influential role media play in organizing, shaping, and disseminating information, ideas and values is creating a powerful public pedagogy (Giroux, 1999). In response to these changes in society, critical media literacy that teaches the skills of analysis and production in multimedia as well as print literacy is essential to meet the twenty-first-century

needs of participatory democracy. Critical media literacy expands the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture, and deepens the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information and power. In this article we explore different approaches commonly used for teaching media education and propose our definition of critical media literacy. We should address the theoretical underpinnings of critical media literacy using a multiperspectival approach addressing issues of gender, race, class, and power to explore the interconnections of cultural studies and critical pedagogy. We argue that alternative media production should engage students to challenge the master narratives and the systems that make them appear natural.

Teaching critical media literacy should be a participatory, collaborative project. Watching television shows or films together could promote productive discussions between teachers and students (or parents and children), with emphasis on eliciting student views, producing a variety of interpretations of media texts and teaching basic principles of hermeneutics and criticism. Students and youth are often more media savvy, knowledgeable, and immersed in media culture than their teachers, and can contribute to the educational process through sharing their ideas, perceptions, and insights. Along with critical discussion, debate, and analysis, teachers ought to be guiding students in an inquiry process that deepens their critical exploration of issues that affect them and society. Since media culture is often part and parcel of students' identity and most powerful cultural experience, teachers must be sensitive in criticizing artifacts and perceptions that students hold dear, yet an atmosphere of critical respect for difference and inquiry into the nature and effects of media culture should be promoted. A major challenge in developing critical media literacy, however, results from the fact that it is not a pedagogy in the traditional sense with firmly established principles, a canon of texts, and tried-and-true teaching procedures. It requires a democratic pedagogy which involves teachers sharing power with students as they join together in the process of unveiling myths and challenging hegemony. Critical media pedagogy in the USA is in its infancy; it is just beginning to produce results, and is more open and experimental than established print-oriented pedagogy. Moreover, the material of media culture is so polymorphous, multivalent, and polysemic that it necessitates sensitivity to different readings, interpretations, perceptions

of the complex images, scenes, narratives, meanings, and messages of media culture which in its own ways is as complex and challenging to critically decipher as book culture. Teaching critical media literacy involves occupation of a site above the dichotomy of fandom and censor. One can teach how media culture provides significant statements or insights about the social world, empowering visions of gender, race, and class, or complex aesthetic structures and practices, thereby putting a positive spin on how it can provide significant contributions to education. Yet we ought to indicate also how media culture can advance sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice, as well as misinformation, problematic ideologies, and questionable values, accordingly promoting a dialectical approach to the media.

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