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THE INTERPLAY OF MEDIA LITERACY AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN EFL TEACHING

The ability to differentiate between facts and opinions constitutes a fundamental aspect of media literacy, particularly in the contemporary information environment. The distinction, however, is not always straightforward: media content often blurs the line between factual reporting and subjective interpretation, frequently with the aim of shaping public opinion or promoting particular ideological stances. For students, developing the skill to recognize this

difference is essential for constructing an informed understanding of the world, grounding their own perspectives, and making responsible, well-considered decisions. Moreover, distinguishing facts from opinions forms the cognitive basis of critical thinking. It enables learners to resist manipulation, evaluate information more effectively and engage in independent judgment. In this way, the cultivation of such analytical skills through media literacy practices is not only pedagogically valuable but also socially significant.

In the digital era, the volume of information generated by humanity has reached unprecedented levels, creating both opportunities and challenges for learners. In such an environment, the ability to filter vast streams of data, identify content that is meaningful, and extract information that makes sense becomes a core competency of the 21st-century student. This selective processing is not merely a technical skill but a prerequisite for academic success, personal development, and professional achievement in a globalized world. Students who can critically navigate information flows are better equipped to adapt to diverse cultural contexts, engage with authentic materials and participate actively in knowledge societies. Thus, the integration of media literacy into foreign language education serves as a means of cultivating learners' capacity to manage information effectively while simultaneously developing linguistic and intercultural competence.

The issue of the influence of the media space on the formation of cultural perceptions among students is highly relevant in contemporary pedagogical research, particularly within the frameworks of digital education and intercultural communication. In the study by W. J. Potter, media literacy is conceptualized as a complex construct that integrates a wide range of skills, including the ability to read, evaluate, and analyze information, generate alternative interpretations, deconstruct media messages, identify patterns, critically reflect on meanings, assess the credibility of information, determine communicative intent, construct counterarguments, seek truth, resist manipulative influence and produce one's own media messages [1].

Scholars I. Rozman and L. Kravchenko emphasize the significant role of media education in developing critical thinking among senior school students and enhancing their ability to perceive, analyze, and evaluate media content [2]. At the same time, Ya. Sydorenko highlights the importance of fostering media literacy from primary school through the integration of social media into classroom activities, including content analysis and project-based learning [4]. According to I. Sakhnevych, the acquisition of media competence represents the highest level of media culture, encompassing an understanding of the sociocultural, economic and political contexts of media, as well as the ability to act as a creator and transmitter of cultural values, norms and standards within contemporary society [3].

Furthermore, researchers underline that media literacy contributes to the development of a broad range of additional skills and competencies. Beyond protecting individuals from misinformation, it facilitates the formation of positive intercultural behavioral practices, supports the transformation of potentially risky behaviors into constructive ones and enables the correction of inaccurate cultural beliefs or biases while preserving well-founded perceptions.

Over the past decades, the media sphere has had a significant impact on the formation of public consciousness in Ukraine. Since the early 2000s, the media space has been actively developing, although it was largely oriented toward a post-soviet audience. However, the full-scale invasion has acted as a catalyst for profound changes in media consumption and citizens' worldviews, leading to a growing awareness of the need for critical evaluation of information

obtained from various media sources. While television remained the primary source of news prior to 2022, during the period from 2022 to 2025 public trust in television channels has significantly declined, with priority shifting to Telegram channels, YouTube platforms and official pages of governmental institutions.

In this context, the development of citizens' ability to critically evaluate and interpret information, particularly from foreign-language media, becomes especially important. Therefore, the integration of media literacy into foreign language teaching is both relevant and pedagogically justified, as working with authentic foreign-language sources contributes to the development of students' informed understanding of Ukraine's role in the global context.

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