MEDIA LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL: NECESSITY OR LUXURY?

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OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Defining Media Literacy
- Types of Media Messages
- Media Literacy and English as a Foreign Language
- Approaches to Analyzing Media Texts
- General ELT: Advertisements
- ESP: Health Fraud
- Conclusion
LITERACY

- In the past – ability to **read** and **write**

- Today – the **skill** of understanding, interpreting, and critically evaluating texts

- Literacy changes as new **technologies** emerge

- Central problems:
  - **Uncritical** acceptance of facts/ideas/opinions
  - Interpreting texts as **right** or **wrong** instead of being **open** to interpretation
MEDIA IN THE ELT

- provide **authentic language** - use of media sources of written, audio, and visual texts

- however, it should also be a **tool** for learning to interpret multiple layers of messages

- **awareness** of mediated images of people, places, things, ideas, values versus reality
WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

Silverblatt (2008):

1. Promoting **critical** thinking skills

2. Understanding the **process** of mass communication

3. Media impact on the **individual** and **society**

4. **Strategies** for analyzing and discussing media texts

5. Insight into our **culture** and **ourselves**

6. Understanding and enjoyment of media **content**

7. **Producing** effective, responsible media messages
WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

Quinlisk (2003):

- Media messages are constructed representations of reality
- Individual experiences filter media messages
- Media messages carry social, political, economic, and aesthetic power
- Each form of media has its own communicative characteristics
WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

Hobbs (2011):

1. Media messages are **constructed**
2. They are produced within economic, social, political, historical, and aesthetic **contexts**
3. Interpretation – an interaction between the **reader**, the **text**, and the **culture**.
4. There are **codes** and **conventions** associated with different genres
5. Media representations **impact** people’s understanding of and participation in social reality.
6. Media messages **reflect** and **shape** individual and social behavior, attitudes, and values.
WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

- reality is mediated via **symbolic representations**
- media messages arise within specific **contexts**
- they provide **insights** into our world
- they are conveyed through **genres**
- they impact on **individual** and **society**.
TYPES OF MEDIA MESSAGES

1. **manifest messages**: overtly expressed, recognizable by the target audience.

2. **latent messages**: hidden in the media text, being therefore difficult to notice

3. **cumulative messages**: frequently occurring, add new shades of meaning over a certain period of time, reproducing gender, age, race, and cultural stereotypes
MEDIA LITERACY AND EFL

Bringing specific issues into focus:

- portrayal of people, society, and culture
- promoting attitudes and values by specific images
- meaning via technical and symbolic features
- media influence on opinions of others, world views, social relations, and behaviors
- meaning is interpreted through different cultural positions
**FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING MEDIA TEXTS**  
(HOBBS 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Concepts</th>
<th>Critical Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authors and Audiences</td>
<td>1. Who is the author and what is the purpose?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Messages and Meanings</td>
<td>2. What creative techniques are used to attract and hold attention?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. How might different people understand this message?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Representation and Reality</td>
<td>4. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. What is omitted?</td>
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APPROACHES TO MEDIA LITERACY

- **PROCESS:** the purposes of a media text
- **FORMULAIC:** structure, characters, and plot
- **HISTORICAL:** depiction of events in specific genres
- **IDEOLOGICAL:** reflection of ideologies in media
- **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL:** individual perceptions
- **NON-VERBAL:** analysis of gestures, visuals, fonts...
- **OTHER:** mythic analysis, industry perspective, analysis of production elements, ...
DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

- **DE NOTATION** – refers to the **literal meaning** of a sign. It is the **dictionary definition** of a word – e.g., *snake* – “any of numerous scaly, legless, sometimes venomous reptiles”.

- **CONNOTATION** – refers to the **associations** that are connected to a certain sign such as **emotional suggestions** related to a word. The connotative meanings of a word exist together with the denotative meanings. E.g., the connotations for *snake* might include danger or evil.
**Denotation:** a brown cross  
**Connotation:** a symbol of religion, a symbol of Christianity
**Denotation:** where a person lives  
**Connotation:**  
HOME – cozy, loving, comfortable  
HOUSE – the actual building or structure  
RESIDENCE – large, cold, no feeling
THE RED FLAGS OF HEALTH FRAUD
REDUCE
THROUGH
LISTENING

by EDWIN L. BARON
EASY NEW METHOD

HELPS YOU DEVELOP A DISLIKE FOR FATTENING FOODS... HELPS YOU REDUCE YOUR CALORIC INTAKE WITHOUT THE NEED FOR WILL POWER!

PLAY THIS RECORD DAILY AND WATCH YOUR POUNDS MELT AWAY!

A SELF-IMPROVEMENT SERIES RECORD
NEW WEIGHT LOSS SOLUTION

“This miracle pill can Burn Fat FAST!”

DR. OZ

LEARN MORE
THE RED FLAGS OF HEALTH FRAUD

- fast results and no restrictions on diet, exercise, or lifestyle
- easy fixes to obesity or impotence
- promises to cure untreatable diseases
- expressions connoting mystery, such as hidden ingredients
- the use of all natural therefore safe
- testimonies from unknown physicians alias actors
- product endorsement by sportsmen
- the before/after comparison (adjusted with Photoshop)
- sense of urgency: limited availability, act now
- no-risk guarantee with money back
EVIDENCE-BASED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

ProCon.org website: [http://www.procon.org](http://www.procon.org)

- addresses selected controversial topics by listing pro- and con-arguments
- is based on unbiased and objective sources of scientific information
- thus debunks some of the common myths related to the topic
Is Obesity a Disease?

The debate over whether or not obesity is a disease grows as obesity rates and the cost of treating obesity-related conditions increase in the United States.

Proponents stress that obesity is a disease because it is caused by genetics, biological factors, or illnesses that cause weight gain, including hypothyroidism, Cushing’s syndrome, and polycystic ovary syndrome.

Opponents argue that obesity is not a disease because it results from a person’s chosen lifestyle, eating habits, and environment (i.e., residential location, social circle, economic status, etc.). Read more...

Obesity ProCon.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit website that presents facts, studies, and pro and con statements on questions related to whether or not obesity is a disease.

Did You Know?

1. Between 2005-2006, experts estimated 67% of the adult US population [18] to be either overweight or obese.
2. Mississippi had the nation’s highest obesity rate at 34.4%, with Colorado having the lowest at 19.8%, according to a July 2011 report.
CONCLUSION

Media literacy approach to EFL teaching:

- valuable contribution to classroom practice
- reading, writing, and discussion skills
- successful language learners are media literate
- media representation of people, communities, nations, and races as opposed to reality
SOURCES


