MEDIA EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES IN TEACHER TRAINING

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Abstract. This article described the methods of media education development of personality (including the audience's individual, *creative critical thinking* corresponding to *conceptual* (knowledge of media culture theory), *sensory* (intentional communication with mass media, orientational experience in genre and topical repertory flow), *motivational* (emotional, cognitive, moral, aesthetic motives of contact with media and media texts), *evaluative* (faculty for audiovisual thinking, analysis, synthesis of space-and-time form of media texts narrative, for self-identification with its character and author, for understanding and evaluation of the author's conception in the context of sound-and-visual media text structure); *creative* (creative self-expression in various activities) indicators. As a result of such set of studies a considerable part of the audience proceeds from the *initial and secondary* levels of media text perception to a higher level of *complex identification,* showing the students' ability to identify with the author's position.

Keywords: media education, teaching methods. media literacy, media competence, media texts' analysis, Russia, schools, universities, educators, teachers.

Introduction

Media education methods (aimed at the audience's studying of mass media – the press, TV, radio, film, video, the Internet, etc.; preparing the new generation for living in the digital age) of teaching school (as well as university) students are based as a rule on using various creative assignments. A theoretical analysis of their components, their development and practical application enables us to draw the following basic functions: educational, adaptational, developmental, and guiding functions. The educational function ensures knowledge acquisition about theories and laws, perception and analysis of media texts, ability to use the obtained knowledge in different situations, and to ratiocinate. The adaptational function is realized at the initial conceptual stage of communication with media culture. The developmental function is connected with developing motivational (compensatory, therapeutic, recreational and others), volitional and other personality traits, media creation experience. The guiding function is aimed at arranging the best conditions for media text analysis.

Various teaching methods are used in Russian media education [Bagenova, 2004; Baranov, 2002; Baranov & Pensin, 2005; Bondarenko, 2000; Spichkin, 1999; Usov, 1989; Zaznobina, 1999 and others]: descriptive (retelling the plot, enumeration of the events presented in a media text), classificatory (media text ranging in historical and socio-cultural contexts), analytical (analysis of the media text structure, its language, the author's conceptions, *et al*), personality-oriented (description of the attitudes, feelings, reminiscences, associations excited by a media text), explanatory/interpretative and evaluative (forming judgments about a media text, its values if applying aesthetic, moral or other criteria).

As regards creative types of assignments, they can be classified depending on the content character of the educational activities (the audience is to systematize facts and phenomena into theoretical and practical, *etc.*), the nature of requirements (one should define the type of the requirement implied in the task – perception, artistic analysis, *etc.*); the relation between *data* and *goals* of the educational activity, its organization and realization (individual, team-based, group work, *etc.*). It is essential to

introduce and repeat the teaching methods which serve to upgrade the audience's skills, to gradually complicate tasks (including independence growth), and to develop creativity.

The creative assignments given below have been practically approved (by instructors: N. Ryzhich, I. Chelysheva, A. Levitskaya and others) at the Faculty of Social Pedagogy of Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute within the framework of the new university specialization "Media Education" (state specialization number 03.13.30., official registration of the Russian Ministry for Education dated June 18, 2002) designed for purposeful teacher training in media education.

I. Literary and imitating, dramatizing and situational, graphic and imitating creative studies for the audience to obtain creative skills on media material via heuristic activities, games and ICT.

Media pedagogics offers various creative means for students to learn such concepts as *plot, story, theme, conflict, composition, frame, shot, etc.* In the most general way they can be divided into: 1) *literary and imitating* (writing a synopsis, composing a short script, media text, etc.); 2) *dramatizing and situational* (dramatization of a certain media text sequence, simulation of media production, etc.); 3) *graphic and imitating* (composing posters, photo collages, pictures on media culture production).

1. Literary and imitating **creative studies.**

The teaching methods used at such lessons are most effectively realized in play activities. The audience is offered to imagine that they are scriptwriters, and asked to compose:

- a synopsis for an original script of a media text of any type and genre;

- a sequence script – a screen version of an episode from a famous literary work;

- a sequence script from their own synopsis for an original script;

- an original miniscript of a media text (e.g. a 3-5 minutes long film, video that can be shot in school);

- starting from a literary miniscript (or an sequence script) to prepare a shooting script (production book) of a media text (film, radio/TV program, computer animation, *etc.*) outlining the system of shots, angles, camera movements, montage principles;

- an original text (of an article, reportage, interview, *etc.*) for a newspaper, journal/magazine, Internet site.

By doing such creative tasks the audience studies in practice such essential concepts as *idea, topic/theme, synopsis, plot, story outline, conflict, composition, script, screen version,* etc. Students master media terms fully, inseparably, together with the so called *expressive means.*

It goes without saying that every such lesson begins with the teacher's introductory speech (about the aims, objectives, and the strategy of doing tasks). During the lesson the teacher takes the position of a consultant. And the audience takes all the above mentioned assignments not as something abstract but as potentially practicable tasks. That undoubtedly ensures the audience's interest and better involvement in media education. The story outlines, miniscripts, sequence scripts, draft journals and newspapers, radio/television programs, Internet sites created by the audience are discussed in the group, and the best variants are selected for further work.

Obviously, working on the task the students should realize, for instance, that video enables us to present stories/plots which are not overloaded with bulky accessories, elaborate settings, costumes, makeup, etc. However, the audience's script fantasy is in no way restricted: on paper (as well as with the help of modern computers, Internet sites) one can create any possible and even fantastic plots and topics. But at the same time, for practical reasons, the preference is given to the scripts that could be easily realized within the school background or on the nearest location.

So, gradually the audience begins to apprehend the important role of the author/scriptwriter in media production and the basics of media text structure. Creative practical activity promotes the audience's acquisition of the ABCs of media text composition; develops their creativity, imagination and fantasy.

The major criterion that proves the audience has coped with *literary and imitating* creative assignments is when students are able to briefly formulate their own ideas about the script which verbally reveal the audio-visual, space-and-time image of a conjectural media text. As a result, the audience develops individual, creative thinking corresponding to *the conceptual and creative* indicators of personality artistic development in media culture.

2. *Dramatizing and situational* creative studies.

The purpose of this stage is creation and further realization of media texts by students (short films, radio/television programs, Internet newspapers and journals, web-sites, computer animation, etc.) in accordance with the pre-written plans and miniscripts. The teaching methods used at *dramatizing and situational* creative lessons are based on role (business) play: the participants act as *directors, cameramen, designers, actors* from the miniscripts and episodes, or as *presenters/hosts, etc.* After the rehearsal period the *team* proceeds with creating a media text (they shoot a short film or a television program, design an Internet-site, a newspaper, etc.). Several teams of students can work on one and the same miniscript or a breadboard of an Internet newspaper for the reason of creative competition. Different versions are compared and discussed.

The teacher's responsibility is to demonstrate to the audience the basics of using ICT (video filming, video recording and video projection, computing), to tactfully correct the work being done, and participate in the discussion of the results. In other words, the audience is given much freedom for developing fantasy, imagination, formal search, self-expression of their individual thinking and creativity.

The audience faces the following specific targets:

- *journalistic* (hosting a TV show, conducting an interview, live-program/on-the-spot reportage; practical newspaper/journal makeup, text inclusion into a site);

- *film directing* (general management of video filming according to the created miniscript, actors/anchormen casting; decision-making about casting, camera work, decorative design, sound and music, light and color; consideration of the media text genre and style, etc.);

- *camera work* (practical videotape realization of the director's system of frames, angles, mise-en-scène, camera movement, shot depth, etc.);

- *lighting* (use of diffuse, directional, artificial and natural light, use of shadow and silhouette picture, etc.)

- *sound and music operating* (use of noises, music, score, etc.);

- *decorative and artistic* (use of natural setting, costumes; design of Internet sites, computer animation, etc.)

- *acting* (acting in an educational film, TV program);

- *editing/montage* (montage/rerecording enabling to significantly alter the form of a media text shot on air, computer-created, etc.);

- *electronic special effects* (use of modern video and computer technologies in media creation).

In the process of video filming and computing in the classroom one can simultaneously look through images on the monitor, edit, eliminate errors, etc. It really helps to cast actors. Any volunteer can act before the camera, soliloquy, and the film directors can compare the results and select the required variants. Besides, having shot different versions of one and the same script sequence it is possible to discuss the received result together in class.

It should be noted that alongside with role play there is a possibility to realize students' ideas in documentary, animation media texts, etc. Documentary plots can be connected with landscape sketches/scenes which do not require long preparatory and production periods. For similar reasons it is more preferable to create animation films either using a three-dimensional (plasticine, etc.) animation technique, or a personal computer.

Assuredly, such lessons merely serve educational purposes and do not pursue the purpose to create an accomplished media text and do not claim to be professional. The result of media production is not important (unlike the case when a film is created for a film festival), such lessons zero in on the audience's understanding of audio-visual language, and their creativity development.

During the *dubbing-in* period the audience gets absorbed in the laboratory of sound-on-film and dubbing; and faces the following specific targets:

- practical comparison of different variants of post dubbing of a video sequence (forcing and mixing of noises, speech volume, music; change of speech intonations, timbre, etc.);

- realization of different dubbing versions of a video sequence unknown to the audience (without a soundtrack), or of an episode from a foreign film or TV program;

- practice of various sound, noise special effects (sound imitation, sound overlay, etc.).

Such practical classes enable most active students to independently organize amateur games and quiz shows where teams compete acting as juries of a *news program, on-the-spot reportages, etc.*

As a result, such tasks help to develop the following qualities corresponding to particular indicators of personality development in media culture: knowledge of the main stages in media production, author's functions, specific character of their work as it concerns expression of ideas, thoughts, sensations of sound and visual, space and time images in different types and genres (*conceptual indicator*); emotional, artistic motives of one's contact with media (*motivational indicator*); creative, artistic abilities in media creation (*creative indicator*). Play education does not restrict the students' fantasy, imagination; on the contrary, it helps reveal each student's individual creative thinking.

The major criterion that proves the audience has coped with *dramatizing and situational* creative assignments is the students' ability to practically participate in simulative media production.

3. *Graphic/image-bearing and imitating* creative studies.

The teaching methods used at such lessons are also connected with role play and simulation educational possibilities. Logically, after working with miniscripts and passing through the *pre-production* period the audience reaches the phase when accomplished media texts ought to be *advertised*, *marketed, distributed, etc.* The realization of these objectives depends on doing special creative assignments which develop imagination, fantasy, associative thinking, non-verbal audience perception:

- creation of bills/posters to advertise one's own media text (e.g. posters advertising professional media texts) using a photo collage with drawings or one's own original pictures;

- picture and collage creation on the topic of Russian and foreign media production;

- creation of drawn comic strips after some media texts targeted at a certain audience age-group.

After doing the above mentioned creative tasks the teacher announces the contest of posters, collages, pictures, and comic strips. The students discuss their advantages and disadvantages; the authors of the creative products have a possibility to defend their works, answer the teacher's and students' questions, etc.

The major criterion proving that the audience has coped with the task is the students' ability to share their impressions of watching a media text in a non-verbal form.

The knowledge and creative skills acquired by the audience at the introductory practical stage prepared them for the lessons aimed to develop their perception of professional media texts and optimized the educational process, particularly in media education. We can state this with a certain degree of confidence as the experiment was based on two variants of developing media perception: 1) by discussing media texts created be professionals; 2) the same, with preliminary practical creative assignments involving the audience in the media production lab.

The second variant proved to be more productive. After doing creative assignments the audience easily used specific media terminology and gave a prompt and detailed oral description of the offered media image.

The knowledge and skills referring to *ins and outs* of media creation helped the students more accurately express their sensations, feelings of the seen and heard media texts, indirectly developed their capabilities for media perception, and, to a certain degree, prepared them for further media analysis (since without the ability to describe one's own impressions it is difficult to get down to a productive media text analysis).

II. Creative studies aimed at developing the audience's adequate perception of media texts.

1. Creative studies devoted to recollection of the dynamics of space-and-time, audio-visual images of culmination episodes from a media text in group discussion.

So, after the opening creative part there follows the principal stage/phase of developing the audience's adequate perception of audio-visual, space-and-time structure of media texts through watching and collective discussion of media texts.

Here we are guided by the thesis proposed by Y. Usov (1936-2000) that "perception of the sound and visual image is a visual experience of the tempo, rhythm, implication of the plastic form of film narration; this experience results in sensory and intellectual associations excited in process of perception of sound and visual images, plastic composition of their components, and are synthesized in figurative generalization comprising the author's conception, a multidimensional artistic idea" [Usov, 1989, p. 235].

Beside this important indicator of the audience's adequate perception of a media text, one should not ignore the audience's awareness of the frame composition, its space, light and color, sound, and angle solutions which taken together contribute to the sense of a media text. Also the audience ought to develop the so called *editing / montage thinking* – the emotional and semantic condition of the narrative components, their rhythmical, plastic combination in a frame, sequence, scene, so that the media text perception should be based on the interrelation of several processes:

   - perception of dynamically developing visual images;

   - memory retention of previous audio-visual, space-and-time elements of a media image;

   - prediction, anticipation of a probable event in a media text.

To meet this challenge in relation to audio-visual media, the audience is offered to describe the dynamics of the media image development in a rhythmically organized plastic form of narration. The process can be based on discussing the montage (including rhythm, tempo, etc.) combination of frames (taking into account their composition: frontal, underlying, angle, light-and-color, etc.) and sequences, since the development dynamics of an audio-visual image reveals namely in the interrelation of frames and montage.

The goal of these assignments is for the students to develop their emotional, creative activity, non-verbal thinking, sound-and-visual memory in communication with media that in total facilitates the analysis and synthesis of the sound-and-visual, space-and-time image of a media text.

2. Literary and imitation **creative studies.**

The teaching methods used at such lessons are connected with role play, problem-solving and game elements. For the audience to assimilate such essential concepts for the topic understanding as *media perception set, media perception process, media perception condition, empathy, co-creation, media perception levels, media perception typology, system of emotional ups and downs, the phenomenon of unanimous success, media culture functions, etc.,* they are offered to:

   - describe the general characteristics of the best/worst task set for media text perception;

   - describe the best/worst objective (demonstration environment, etc.) and subjunctive (mood, an individual psychophysiological potential, etc.) conditions of media text perception;

- retell the story on behalf of the major or minor character of a media text observing his/her character traits, speech habits, etc. (*identification, empathy, co-creation*);

- put a media text character into an altered situation (with a changed name, genre, time, setting of a media text, its composition: plot, culmination, dénouement, epilogue, etc.; the age, sex, nationality of the personage, etc.);

- retell the story on behalf of an inanimate being taken from a media text that will make the narration sound paradoxical and eccentric;

- remember prosaic, poetic, theatrical, pictorial, musical works which bring up an association with a certain media text, and to justify their choice;

- make up monologues (*letters* to newspaper/journal offices, television, Department for Culture, etc.) belonging to media audiences of different ages, social, professional, educational or other backgrounds, having different levels of media perception (*initial identification, secondary identification, complex identification,* consideration of the audience's orientation on the entertaining, recreative, compensatory and other functions of media culture, etc.);

- disclose the point of the *emotional pendulum* (rotation of sequences exciting positive (pleasant, joyful) and negative (shocking, sad) emotions with the audience, i.e. reliance on psychophysical aspect of media perception) using a certain media text;

- study the list of the most popular media texts (Russian and foreign) and explain the reasons for their success (reliance on myths, folklore, spectacular genre, the system of *emotional ups and downs*; use of entertaining, recreative, compensatory and other functions; a happy ending, the author's intuition, etc.)

- study advertising announcements (trailers) and predict the success of the media text with the viewers.

Among the least desirable pre-viewing activities the audience can mention lack of preliminary information or a too detailed opening speech of the teacher (art critic, journalist, culture expert) imposing their conclusions, spoon-feeding the audience with the conception of the unknown media text, etc.

Among the most preferable pre-viewing activities the audience can name tactful brief information (less than 10 minutes long) about the author's creative development, the genre of the offered media text, the time of its creation, without giving a preliminary analysis of its merits and demerits.

Speaking of the media perception conditions the students can refer to their own viewing experience, e.g. media perception can be interfered by unethical behavior of some viewers in the cinema, Internet-club (loud talks, noise, disorderly conduct, etc.), or when the viewer is in a bad mood, etc.

The creative lesson when students compose stories as if retold by one of the characters is conducted in the form of a contest. Initially, the audience is shown media texts, then they write stories on behalf of the major or minor characters of the media text, and finally they are discussed in class; the stories chosen as the best should be close to the original media text. In this way the educational aim is attained: the audience enters the laboratory of media text authors.

Creative assignments aimed at altering different media text components play a very important role in the development of the audience's media text perception and analytical skills. Students devise different titles of media texts and receive evidence that the perception of one and the same story greatly varies depending on the chosen genre. By altering the time, setting, genre, composition of a media text students take advantage of the opportunity to use their creativity and imagination.

The view angle at a media text can take a paradoxical, fantastic form if the story is told on behalf of an inanimate being, animal that appeared in this media text. E.g. a banknote changing hands; the mirror in the characters' room; the car in which the character pursues the criminals, etc. Sometimes it is possible to use analogies from other arts.

Creative assignments connected with various kinds of artistic associations cause difficulties with the audience as a rule, as they require sound knowledge of different arts. That is why students who achieved good and excellent results in *literature, visual arts, music*, and *world art culture* are at an advantage here.

The major criterion showing that the audience has coped with the creative tasks requiring to retell the story on behalf of the media text character is the students' ability to identify themselves with a personage, understand and verbally reconstruct his/her personality, vocabulary, explain the motives for their behavior (including imaginary actions).

The efficiency criterion of the creative tasks revealing the relations between different works of art is the student's maturity of associative thinking, understanding of the interrelation of sound, visual, space, time, sound-and-visual, space-and-time arts of different kinds and genres.

In the long term, the whole group of creative tasks complements the knowledge and skills obtained by the audience at the previous lessons: students develop cognitive interests, fantasy, imagination; associative, creative, critical, individual thinking, audio-visual literacy. The acquired knowledge and skills mix with the concepts from *literature* lessons *(topic, idea, plot, etc.), world art culture (color, light, composition, angle, etc.), music (tempo, rhythm, etc.).* The audience better understands such concepts as *perception set, empathy towards a character, identification, etc.*

Practical acquisition of media perception typology is facilitated by creative tasks offering the audience to simulate writing letters to different institutions from people of different ages, education levels, artistic perception and tastes, etc.

The knowledge acquisition indicator is the audience's capacity to identify themselves with an imaginary *recipient* possessing this or that media perception level.

In the following creative lesson the audience attempts to explain the essence of the so-called *emotional pendulum* mechanism (alteration of sequences exciting positive and negative emotions with viewers) using a certain media text as an example.

The purpose of this lesson is to show the students that the emotional impact is a natural phenomenon with media texts as well as with arts using the psychophysiological effect on the audience appealing to human feelings. Any art affects the reader, viewer, and listener not only intellectually but also emotionally. It is very important for students to understand that the so called *strong impression* produced on the audience by mass (popular) culture is not always connected with high artistic quality, and sometimes depends on skillful influence on human sense perception.

It is known that even a most thrilling film cannot keep the viewers either in *a state of shock* or in *the emotional comfort*. In either case there comes an inevitable obtrusion of feelings, emotions, fatigue, and loss of interest in what is going on. Stimulation intensity cannot increase endlessly. Hence, a lot of authors of mass culture resort to an accurate calculation of situations, a sequence alteration evoking positive and negative emotions, but with an invariable happy end so that the viewers should not consider the media text heavy (that will undoubtedly repulse a significant part of the audience).

Assuredly, this psychological law is well known to artists who create complex, ambiguous works from the philosophic point of view, but namely mass culture production based on spectacular genres (comedies, melodramas, detectives, thrillers, etc.) very often sticks to the similar principle in the most simplified and schematic form, that enables the audience to easily cope with the above given assignment.

The lesson is divided into the following phases:

- collective viewing of a mass culture text;

- extraction of the episodes evoking positive and negative emotions with the audience in order to determine the degree of the emotional effect produced on the audience;

- media text division into major parts of the plot with giving them the corresponding signs: "-" (the episode excites negative emotions of fear, horror, etc.); "+" (the episode excites positive emotions, joyful, comforting feelings) and "=" (the episode is emotionally neutral); the aim is

to show how the system of the *emotional pendulum* is built using a certain media text, to make the audience understand that its impact is frequently based not on the deep penetration into characters, problem heart, etc., but on a kind of a sign system of sequence alterations of different emotional polarities.

So, the objectives of the lesson are achieved: the audience comes to the conclusion that mass culture media texts can be easily divided into blocks (which sometimes can interchange each other without changing the plot or meaning of a media text) connected by an elaborated mechanism of the *emotional pendulum.*

It should be noted that a lot of media texts are constructed according to this emotional *formula for success* (including compensation for lack of feelings, a happy end, use of spectacular genres, etc.). Beside mentioning the entertaining and recreational functions, let us include here the use of myths, folklore, the author's intuition, sequence, in other words, the orientation on many perception levels.

The creative task of predicting the media text success is closely linked to the previous assignments and requires not only a good knowledge of the antecedent material but also associative thinking and intuition from the audience. Relying on the genre, topical or other parameters of unknown media texts the students endeavor to form a judgment as to the media text future in the media market.

3. Dramatizing and situational creative studies.

The teaching methods of these lessons are based on dramatized sketches touching upon the concepts and problems similar to the ones of the *literary and imitation* lessons. These two stages supplement each other; develop different aspects of the audience's creative skills.

By analogy with the sequence of *literary and imitation* lessons the audience is offered to:

- act out different variants of pre-viewing perception activities (for example, an opening speech of the video/film club moderator);

- act out dramatized sketches on the topic of objective and subjective media perception conditions, etc.

Acting out such sketches one can imitate the viewers' noisy behavior, stressful situations experienced by the audience after the contact with a media text (jackpots, expulsion from school, etc.), dialogues, and arguments between representatives of different media perception types. In short, the audience better understands the peculiarities of media perception in an amusing and semi-parody form.

On the whole, the set of lessons aimed at developing media perception prepares the audience for the next stage – media text analysis.

III. Creative studies aimed at developing the audience's ability of media text analysis.

The basic stages of this set of lessons are the following:

- study and content examination of media texts episodes which express the characteristic features of the whole media text to the utmost;

- analysis of the media text authors' logic of thinking: in the development of conflicts, characters, ideas, audio-visual, space-and-time sequence, montage, etc.;

- understanding of the author's conception and explanation of one's personal attitude to this or that position of the media text authors.

The teaching methods used at these stages are based on the set of practical classes devoted to the analysis of particular media texts.

Practice shows that, on the one hand, it is necessary to go from the simple to the complex: to choose in the beginning clear media texts in point of its plot, author's thoughts, stylistics. On the other hand, it is essential to take into consideration the genre, topical preferences of the audience.

It goes without saying, here again creative, simulation, heuristic and problem-solving tasks are used, which significantly enhance the audience's activity and motivation.

The heuristic form of conducting a lesson supposes that the audience is offered several falseand true statements; that substantially facilitates the analytical tasks facing the audience and serves the first preparatory stage for the following role play and problem-solving forms of media texts discussion. The heuristic teaching methods include:

- true and false interpretations of the author's logic of thinking on the material of a certain episode of a media text;

- true and false versions of the author's conception opening in a particular media text.

This heuristic form of giving a lesson appears to be especially effective with the audience having a low level of basic training, showing lack of personal initiative and independent thinking. Such an audience certainly needs *supporting* statements helping the students to form their own analytical judgments (including their own additions, etc.)

The simulation forms logically carry on the previous tasks. The audience is offered the following variants of simulation assignments:

1. Literary and imitating **creative studies***:*

- the audience writes synopses, scripts of advertising/commercial media texts (or *anti-advertisements* aimed at criticizing the shortcomings of a media text);

- the audience writes their own *improved* variants of some famous media texts: the alterations that can be introduced into the design and lay-out of the Internet site, journal, newspaper; the cast of actor/anchormen to play the leading parts in a film or TV program; the alterations in the plot of a particular media text (deletions, additions, etc.).

These play activities prepare the audience for a more serious problem-solving analysis of media texts. Naturally, all the above-mentioned works/projects are collectively discussed and compared. A greater part of tasks is done by the audience on a *competitive* basis, the best work is chosen, etc.

The task performance indicator: an ability to tell in a play form about the most attractive, spectacular aspects of media texts (advertising), to present logically and artistically a convincing variant of partial substitution of the media text components.

2. Dramatizing and situational **creative studies:**

- a dramatized sketch on the topic – *a press-conference* with the media text author (*a television anchorman*, *script writer, film director, actor, cameraman, composer, artist, sound man, producer, designer, etc.*); *the journalists* ask 'cut and dried' questions, sometimes 'posers' to *the authors,* who in their turn are prepared in advance to *defend* their hypothetical (or really created) project – a particular media text, etc.;

- a dramatized sketch on the topic – *an interview with foreign media culture experts* (with a similar distribution of functions);

- a dramatized sketch on the topic – *international gatherings of media critics/experts,* who disapprove of different media aspects, analyze particular media texts, etc.;

- *a juridical* role play including an investigation of the major malefactor of a media text; *a trial* on the media text authors;

- a dramatized sketch on the topic – *an advertising campaign:* a contest *media commercial* (as a variant – *anti-advertisement*).

As a matter of fact, *dramatizing and situational* creative lessons supplement and enrich the skills acquired by the audience in *literary and imitating* practical play activities. Beside the skills of oral collective discussion, they stimulate the audience's relaxed behavior and communicability, make the students' speech more spontaneous, and activate their improvisatory skills.

Probably, the weak point of some *dramatizing and situational* lessons is a rather long pre-training period of the audience that is necessary for the students to get into the roles of *actors, journalists, etc.*

The next set of lessons is dedicated to problem-solving collective discussions and media text reviewing. Here one can use the following types of problem-solving creative tasks:

- comparison and discussion of reviews (of articles, books) created by professional media experts, journalists;

- preparation of essays/abstracts about theoretical problems of media culture;

- oral collective discussions of media texts (with the help of the teacher's problem questions);

- students' written reviews of particular media texts of different kinds and genres.

The logic of the creative tasks succession proceeds from the principle that the media text critical analysis begins with the students' acquaintance with works of professional media experts/critics (reviews, critiques, and monographs dedicated to media culture and particular media texts), which enable the students to judge about different approaches to such type of work.

The audience tries to answer the following problem questions: *Wherein do the reviewers see the merits and demerits of this media text? How deep do the reviewers penetrate into the author's message? Do you agree or disagree with the reviewers' judgments? Why? Do the reviewers possess their own style? If yes, what does it itself manifest (through stylistics, vocabulary, intelligibility, irony, humor, etc.)? What information is out-dated and what data is still actual in the book? What media text topics, genres does this reviewer support? Why? Why did the author express the conception of his/her book in this way?*

Then follows the students' work on abstracts/synopses. And only after that begins their independent discussion of media texts.

The lessons developing the audience's skills of media text analysis and synthesis are aimed at training their sound-and-visual memory, stimulation of personality creativity, improvisation, independence, culture of thinking, an ability to use the obtained knowledge in new educational situations; at psychological, ethical work, reflections on moral and artistic values, etc.

The general scheme of media text discussion usually consists of:

- the moderator's opening speech (his aim is to preview the media text, tell about its creators, remind of their previous works for the audience to go beyond the bounds of a particular media text and refer to the other creations of these authors; if necessary, to touch upon the historical or political contexts of the events, abstaining from giving artistic, moral, or other appraisal judgments of the author's conception, and without relating the plot of the media text), i.e. pre-viewing perception set;

- collective *reading* of the media text (communication);

- discussion of the media text; drawing conclusions at the end of the lesson.

The discussion of a media text (according to Y. Usov's recommendations) starts with a comparatively easy media text of mass (popular) culture and includes the following stages:

- choice of the episodes expressing the characteristic construction features of the whole film to the utmost;

- the analysis of these episodes (an attempt to understand the author's way of thinking, the complex and interconnected development of the conflict, characters, ideas, sound-and-visual sequence, etc.);

- the audience defines the author's conception and estimates it.

The discussion ends with a problem-testing question which shows the audience's skills quality of media text analysis (e.g. *What media texts can this work be compared with? Why? What do they have in common?*)

Similar teaching methods of discussing particular media texts with youth, students', pupils' audiences are discussed in more detail in my previously published works [Fedorov, 2001; 2007].

The criterion showing the audience's skills to analyze the audio-visual, space-and-time media text structure is the ability to comprehend a multilayer image-bearing world, both of separate components and a whole media product: the logic of the sound-and-visual, plastic development of the author's train of thoughts in the complex, integral unity of various means of image and sound organization.

It is well known that one of the media education main priorities in modern conditions [Bagenova, 2004; Baranov, 2002; Fedorov, 2007] is formation and development of the audience's critical thinking in relation to particular media texts distributed through mass media.

But the development of the audience's critical thinking is impossible without their preliminary acquaintance with typical aims, methods and techniques of manipulating media influence, its social and psychological mechanisms, and without information problem analysis. Being aware of such techniques students will be able to more critically perceive any information spread via mass media (the press, TV, films, radio, the Internet, etc.).

Unquestionably, the manipulating influence of mass media on the audience is realized at different levels. Let us describe some of them:

- the psychophysiological level of influence on primitive emotions, when together with a personage's action the viewers subconsciously accept the world in which, for example, the ends justify the means, and cruelty and violence are looked at as something normal;

- the social and psychological level based to a large extent on the compensation effect when the reader, listener, viewer are supplied with an illusion of achieving their most cherished dreams by self-identification with a media text personage;

- the informational level consisting in the reflection of useful utilitarian, living data for the audience: how to get on in love, to avoid danger, to stand up for themselves in a critical situation, etc.

- the aesthetic level meant for a *smart* audience, for whom the formal workmanship can serve an argument for justification, for example, of the naturalistic representation of violence and aggression if they are depicted in the *aestheticized, ambiguous, ambivalent* form.

The manipulating media influence is also based on such far-famed factors as standardization, mosaicity, serial presentation, folklore motives (the magic power of personages, consistency of metaphors, symbols, a happy end, etc.). Herein two mechanisms of the human mind are used – identification (self-identification, imitation) and compensation (*projection*).

Comparing the general media manipulation techniques one can use the following typology:

- *orchestration* – psychological pressure in the form of constant repetition of particular facts irrespective of the truth;

- *selection (juggling)* – choice of definite trends, for example, exclusively positive or negative trends, misrepresentation (spin), exaggeration (underestimation) of these tendencies;

- *embroidery* (embellishment or exaggeration in the description or reporting of an event);

- *tagging* (for example, condemnatory, offensive, etc.);

- *transfer (projection)* – a shift of some qualities (positive, negative) onto another phenomenon (or man);

- *evidence* - reference to authorities (not always correct) in order to justify a certain action, slogan;

- *a folksy manner,*   including, for instance, an extremely simplified form of information presentation.

The ideal audience for media manipulation is the people devoid of critical thinking towards media texts, who do not understand the difference between advertisement and entertainment. That is why a media text action is often arranged in the form of a kaleidoscope, mosaic of dynamic change of rhythmically organized episodes. Each of them cannot last long (for the texture should not bore the

viewers); carries some information, actively relies on the compensation effect, and affects the emotional and instinctive spheres of the human mind.

Hence, we developed a technology of developing the audience's *anti-manipulative* critical thinking on media material:

  - students' acquaintance with basic aims of media manipulation;

  - demonstration of social and psychological mechanisms/tactics used by media text authors to achieve manipulation effects;

  - demonstration and analysis of methods and tactics used by media text creators trying to reach the desired effect;

  - attempting to understand the author's logic of thinking and conception, the audience's evaluation of this conception.

It goes without saying that this approach is effective under certain conditions. Firstly, it must be based on the audience's theoretical knowledge. Such theoretical training, beyond question, can be integrated with the practice of problem analysis, but, in our opinion, the preliminary general theoretic familiarization of the audience with typical goals and tactics of media manipulation greatly facilitates further media education.

While analyzing media texts students use different methods:

  - *information sifting* (well-reasoned high-lighting of true and false information in the press, TV, radio content; information filtering that removes any *embroidery* and *tags* by comparison with absolute facts, etc.);

  - taking off the halo of *typicality, folksiness, authoritativeness* from the information;

  - critical analysis of the aims, interests of the *media agency*, or the source of information.

In case an art media text is taken for critical analysis instead of a news TV program, the peculiarities of its artistic structure are also taken into consideration. Otherwise, one will not feel the difference, say, between a certain political action in real life and a more multiform influence of a work of art.

One of the most acute issues regarding the problem of media manipulation is violence on the screen. Indisputably, not many people try to copy cruel blockbuster heroes in real life. But many others get used to violence shown by mass media, and their thoughtless consumption of episodes with numerous scenes of murders, tortures, etc. leads to indifference, callousness, and inability to empathize with other people's sufferings. That explains the purpose of studying this aspect. For instance, it is possible to disclose the real essence of a superman character killing dozens of people; to show the harm caused by violence presented in the form of *a game, joke, etc.*

To vary a lesson one can use a very effective learning game called *investigation:* the audience is offered to investigate the crimes committed by characters from different media texts containing violent scenes. The task is to find unseemly, illegal, cruel, anti-humane actions of the characters which, in addition, can be presented by the authors' in a *merry and humorous form.* So, having gathered the evidence the audience states the charge against the authors (*agencies*) of the media texts manipulating with scenes of violence.

There is no doubt, that the analytical skills can provide good educational results cultivating a certain immunity to unprovedness, omissions and falsehood.

One cannot but admit that a man unprepared for media perception is unable to fully understand and analyze the information, unable to resist media manipulation, and to independently express his/her thoughts and attitudes. But for artistic analysis of any media text *defense* against manipulation is, of course, not sufficient.

Conclusions

Ultimately, the whole set of the above-described lessons is meant to contribute to personality development (including the audience's individual, creative thinking corresponding to *conceptual*

(knowledge of media culture theory), *sensory* (intentional communication with mass media, orientational experience in genre and topical repertory flow), *motivational* (emotional, cognitive, moral, aesthetic motives of contact with mass media), *evaluative* (faculty for audio-visual thinking, analysis, synthesis of space-and-time form of media narrative, for self-identification with its character and author, for understanding and evaluation of the author's conception in the context of sound-and-visual media text structure); *creative* (creative self-expression in various activities) indicators.

As a result of such set of studies a considerable part of the audience proceeds from the *initial and secondary* levels of media text perception to a higher level of *complex identification,* showing the students' ability to identify with the author's position.

In addition, the audience (see, for example, Y. Usov's works) develops the following development indicators in media culture:

- emotional inclusion (from a nonconscious, spontaneous characteristics of a media text the audience proceeds to a holistic media text characteristics);

- emotional activity of judgments (from formal judgments drawn with the teacher's help students proceed to a more vivid, image-bearing, individual expression of their media impressions);

- maturity of image thinking (from spontaneous, intuitive – to conscious usage of perception images and artistic notions);

- skills of media text partial analysis (from fragmentary use of critical evaluation components – to adequate, holistic analysis of sound-and-visual, space-and-time structure of dynamic media art images).

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Aknowledgement

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