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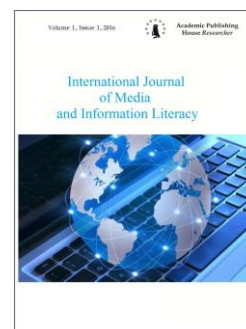
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Hermeneutical Analysis of the Film *Dead Poets Society*

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Abstract

The article is devoted to hermeneutical analysis of the film *Dead Poets Society* (1989, directed by Peter Weir). Reviews of Russian and foreign film critics are included into the analysis. The author presents the historical, ideological, political, social and cultural contexts, that influenced the film production; the main characters, the narrative structure and techniques used by the media text's producers.

Interpreting the results of hermeneutical analysis of the film *Dead Poets Society* the authors come to conclusion that:

– the media text clearly shows the main trends of the state policy in the educational, social and cultural fields;

– the plot does not directly reflect the important events in the political life of the country, but there is a certain trace. Socio-political, economic objectives, ideological upbringing, religious education to varying degrees are reflected in the storyline of the media text (fundamental values are family, religion, love, loyalty, justice, generosity, kindness, mutual assistance, ability to take responsibility for actions, etc.);

– the plot is immersed in the educational process, only slightly touches on love themes and is absolutely devoid of sex scenes;

– the media text's concept is: socio-moral struggle (for personal happiness, love, truth, right for self-identification, freely express one's thoughts and ideas, etc.); confrontation against teachers' dullness, conservatism, bureaucratic approach;

– this media text gives the idealized image of the teacher: intellectual, competent, respectful communicator of humanistic moral values and norms of behavior;

– students' activity is centered around education and self-identity;

– this media text promotes the humanistic ideal of a romantic character, attractive for the high moral and human qualities;

– the film's authors present a strict social distance between teachers and students; unwavering authority and respect for the teacher, the prestige of the teaching profession in the eyes of students.

Keywords: hermeneutical analysis, film, media text, teacher, school, students.

1. Introduction

The article presents the hermeneutic analysis of the film *Dead Poets Society* (USA, 1989)

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directed by Peter Weir - one of the unique film productions of the 1980s, the narrative formula of which is driven by the school theme. This work raises some very important and still topical today, problems of the educational system as a whole: the role and significance of the teacher in the lives of students, the relationship of children and parents, the manifestation of selfishness on the part of adults towards children, the search for one's calling and purpose in life, professional and personal self identification.

Evidently, far not every teacher, like the protagonist of Peter Weir's film, will dare to fight routine or take on the mission of dramatically changing the established educational system at school and school's lifestyle, even clearly recognizing the acute importance and the need for change. In this context, we believe that the film *Dead Poets Society* can make a difference in young generation's outlook which is still at the stage of formation, although the audience of the film is by no means limited to this age category.

We set the objective to conduct a hermeneutic analysis of the film (as an audiovisual media text) through comparison with the cultural tradition and reality; deconstruction of the logic of the media text; the disclosure of the influence of historical, political, and religious factors on the point of view of the author and the audience.

2. Materials and methods

The research material is an audiovisual media text on the school theme; the main method is the hermeneutic analysis of the film *Dead Poets Society* (1989), including: the analysis of stereotypes, ideological analysis, identification analysis, iconographic analysis, plot analysis, character analysis, etc.). The review of related literature by international film critics and scholars (Gallo, 2016; Keyes, 1999; Overstreet, 2014; Puccio, 2006; Schwartz, 2011; Thompson, 2004, etc.) and Russian researchers (Kudryavtsev, 2008; Nefedov, 2009; Podolnikova, 2018; Usov, 1995) has been made, too.

It is important to add that the media analysis technologies authored by C. Bazalgette (Bazalgette, 1995), A. Silverblatt (Silverblatt, 2001: 80-81), W.J. Potter (Potter, 2001), U. Eco (Eco, 2005) and A. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2016; 2017; 2018) serve as the fundamental basis for the presented hermeneutic analysis.

3. Discussion

The film received critics' praise (BAFTA Award for Best Film, César Award, David di Donatello Award for Best Foreign Film, Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay) and became a success with the audience. It can be assumed that *Dead Poets Society* is one of the few legendary film productions on school topic, not only in the history of American cinema but on the international scale as well.

The film takes place in the late 1950s in Vermont, in a prestigious private men's school Welton with longstanding established educational traditions and strict rules. The educational institution's philosophy is based on four postulates: tradition, honor, discipline and perfection. The manifestation of individualism, independence, freedom of expression, rebellious moods within the school walls, is not encouraged.

In general, this is the story of young boys who are endowed with certain abilities and want to realize their desires and dreams, who enter this school not on their own initiative, but at the will and insistence of dictatorial parents. Nevertheless, the life of young film characters is subject to change, and strict weekdays are replaced by a series of bright events, innovations and ambiguous situations. Many of these changes are due to a new literature teacher John Keating, characterized by a very unusual approach to the organization of the educational process, which sharply contrasts to the teaching techniques of his colleagues - adherents of the "traditional schooling". John Keating is an ardent opponent of conformist views and judgments, boring, monotonous classes, clear algorithms, and the presence of rigor and rigidity in the pedagogical process. "To his Welton superiors, Keating is a troublemaker who strays too far from Welton's acceptable teaching policies" (Gallo, 2016).

The authors of the media text create the image of a teacher who unfolds pedagogical activity, not conditioned by the constrained boundaries of the "traditional school". Keating's teaching practices are laced with kindness, humor, and enthusiasm. All this let the audience think that the students' zeal for acquiring knowledge has been triggered by mutually respectful relationship with

the teacher and not in compliance with discipline.

An energetic pedagogue captivately reads poems and draws the attention of school boys to the fact that life is rapid and fleeting, and it is necessary to be guided by the principle "Carpe diem" that is "Ceize the day" in Latin. This philosophy permeates the narration, beginning with the first frames and ending with the culmination scene. One can agree that *Dead Poets Society* "doesn't have the action sequences or special effects that seem to insure ... success. Still, it's a film that deserves to be seen" (Gallo, 2016).

At first, the new teacher arouses surprise among young people with his eccentricity: John Keating urges students to address him: "O Captain! My Captain!", which some students find embarrassing. However, very quickly high school students feel respect for the teacher and begin to study literature with passion, take an interest in poetry. What is important – the new professor's teaching techniques are not rejected by the students, but, on the contrary, activate their interest and avid desire to receive new knowledge.

The teacher tries to broaden the pupils' horizons, to teach them to appreciate every day of their lives, moreover, to live it with interest and benefit, to think and reason, determine life goals and plans: "Now, my class, you will learn to think for yourselves again. You will learn to savor words and language. No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world".

Keating wants to save the obedient boys, however spoiled by wealth, from a narrow understanding of the success imposed by society (Overstreet, 2014). "And medicine, law, business, engineering – these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love – these are what we stay alive for", he says. Art, he is convinced, can help the young heart to be guided by conscience and passion as a life compass. Of course, John Keating starts with destroying well-established stereotypes, he takes students outside the classroom, encourages them to explore an unknown world (Overstreet, 2014). At one of the lessons, the teacher makes the students tear the pages of introduction out of the textbook, believing that "Armies of academics going forward, measuring poetry. No! We'll not have that here... Now, my class, you will learn to think for yourselves again".

After a while, students learn that Keating was a member of the unsanctioned Dead Poets Society while he was at Welton. One of the most promising students, Neil restarts the club and contrary to all prohibitions, children sneak off to the cave at nights, recite their favorite poems, funny or horror stories, reflect on life, sing songs, play music. Thus, the club "Dead Poets Society" becomes a kind of the world model where the characters would like to live.

What happens at the beginning in the form of "madness" acquires a healing rational foundation, the attitudes of high school students are being transformed. For example, Neil discovers his heart set on acting, gets the role in a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and realizes that acting might be his vocation. His friend finds courage to confesses his romantic feelings to the girl, being aware that this can turn into big trouble for him. Thus, "changes affect the dozing souls, and they rise to the struggle between the "I" and the crowd – an eternal conflict, but new each time" (Podolnikova, 2018).

For all that, the tragic turn in the film happens when those, who the future fate of the young man, Neil, depends on, are not at all eager to show sensitivity, and respect for his choice and awareness of his future calling. Neil's father, seeing the son's talent on the stage, feels that Neil can realize himself more fully than he does. But father who lives in his isolated world will never admit it to himself (Overstreet, 2014).

The fact is *Dead Poets Society's* author's approach reflects the dominant socio-cultural situation of the conservative 1950s, when it was still customary to obey patriarchal traditions, so Neil, whose father wants him to become a doctor, is only one of the many. But it is he who is entrusted with the mission of striving to be himself to the last, so that in the balance this aspiration will outweigh the life. However, even this, undoubtedly, dramaturgically strong moment is not the true culmination (Podolnikova, 2018). Neil Perry's suicide could have cooled down the enthusiasm of his classmates, but in reality it only reminds of the responsibility that must be borne by every choice and deed committed, turning out to be the last and most an important lesson, learned by the boys (Nefedov, 2009).

The author's assessment of the confrontation between conservative and creative approaches, the spatial limitation of one approach and freedom, openness to the other's world of the other, is revealed by purely plastic, visual means ... the clock chimes at the Town Hall, the circular rise of

birds off the lake, and the next shot – also a circular motion during a noisy break between classes (the camera is placed at the bottom of the stairs, and up the steps are chattering kids). In contrast to birds, the movement of students is limited by this span, it is closed, set, programmed by the space of the school building, the discipline of the training requirements, the framework of the educational system, which seems to have proved its advantages (Usov, 1995).

A powerful emotional impact is exercised by the closing scene of the film. Perhaps, it is one of the strongest finales in film history. When John Keating is fired, he enters the classroom to pick up his things during the lesson, and tension is broken by one of the students standing up on the desk and saluting him: *O, Captain, my Captain!* Then more and more students jump on their desks, too and solemnly repeat this phrase again and again. And this, perhaps, is above all praise for the teacher, solace and gratitude.

Dead Poets Society raises eternal problems, and the predictability of the finale does not disappoint, but justifies the audience's hopes: main characters are no longer burdened with misleading attitudes, their thoughts are independent, and so they are free. The film succeeds at giving one a deep breath of the thirst for change, the desire of the young men locked in college to free themselves from their parents and obligations, to explore a new, hitherto unknown world ... Poetry serves merely as a conductor of electricity: it is not a sin to try, as it is not a sin to try yourself in something different besides imposed by others. ... In fact, Keating's methods can be treated differently. In general, his unconventional approach, charisma (performed by Robin Williams) wins over. He tells the boys the right things: live full life, so that at the end of your journey you have something to remember, so that you do not regret that you lived a gray, pale, empty, ordinary life (Mor, 2007).

We agree with S. Kudryavtsev that "Peter Weir directed a good and clever picture of adolescents ... The young mentor not only through the mystery of *Dead Poets Society*, introduces students to the subject of English literature, perhaps not that critical for their future careers. He also unobtrusively, delicately, with true respect to the personality, through his behavior teaches moral lessons, explaining those truths that somehow are considered commonplace and are instilled, as a rule, by force. A high level of the director's effort is also noticeable in the painstaking and thoughtful of Peter Weir's teamwork with the teenagers, who made up a wonderful and, most importantly, natural and emotional actors' ensemble. Therefore, without a stretch, you can compare Weir himself with his amazing main character, Professor Keating, who will remain his pupils' kind and grateful memory (Kudryavtsev, 2008).

The distinguished media educator Stal Penzin (1932-2011) appreciated *Dead Poets Society*: "In contemporary cinema I do not know another work, where the second, spiritual life program of the youth was so full. Poetry and theater are not just part of the school curriculum, they permeate their thoughts and dreams, become the meaning of existence. ... I think the film is consciously aimed at confronting modern teenagers from vulgar American films" (Penzin, 2009: 430).

However, despite the abundance of positive reviews, there have also been some sharply negative opinions, asserting, for example, that "Keating's ways of striking out new ground mostly superficial, immature, problematic, risky and highly manipulative. Though the villain here is not Keating (he just seems like the fool who doesn't realize he's taking himself too seriously and is unwisely leaving himself open to anything bad that might happen to his students). The true villains are the caricatured ones, such as the rigid parents who don't listen to their children and the inflexible conventional educators who don't listen to their hearts" (Schwartz, 2011). Keyes agrees that situations in the film are shameful, static and manipulative (Keyes, 1999), some other critics add that they are too stereotypical, predictable and implausible (Puccio, 2006; Thompson, 2004).

We are not inclined to agree with these statements, the message of the media text being to be able to find oneself in a vast world and to gain the right of an autonomous world outlook ("But only in their dreams can men be truly free. 'Twas always thus, and always thus will be"), the teacher does create conditions and circumstances that assist students to transform their worldview, be able to express their own opinion, point of view. We believe that *Dead Poets Society* belongs to the rare kind of drama films that contribute to the awareness of the life value.

4. Results

The hermeneutic analysis of the film Dead Poets Society (1989)

Setting, historical, cultural, political, ideological contexts. Peculiarities of the historical

period when the media text was created, market conditions that contribute to the idea and the process of producing the media text, the degree of influence of events of that time on the media text.

The media text was created at the end of the 1980s, the time when in American cinema there was a tendency of intensive increase in audio-visual texts on school/student theme. At that time American audiovisual texts were less politicized than in the previous decade, the style of the 1980s' movies was lighter, more glossy and far less ironic and ambiguous than in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Prince, 2007: 8). Nevertheless, as in the 1970s, the characteristic feature of the majority of the Western countries' films about school and university life in the 1980s was the demonstration of freedom in depicting adolescent sexuality.

Against this background, *Dead Poets Society* is very different from that kind of audiovisual media texts, offering dramatic narrative structure and convincing picture of private school education system in the 1950s, taking into account the cultural, political and ideological contexts, which however, were related to the disturbing situation in mass American school of the 1980s, when it turned out that in the richest and most developed country of the capitalist world, 26 million citizens cannot read or write, and about 72 million are so-called functionally illiterate (meeting a minimum standard of literacy) (Paynter, 1983: 49). It is noteworthy that this crisis was rooted in the late 1950s, when in the process of restructuring the secondary education system, a course was taken to create an "educated elite" of society. This contributed to the emergence of a number of negative factors: reducing the level of requirements for the majority of students; elimination of some important subjects from the mass school programs. Moreover, the situation was aggravated by the lack of financial resources and poor quality of teaching, which gave rise to talk about the "mortal danger" hanging over American public schools (Paynter, 1983: 49). The struggle for the democratization of secondary education, the central theme of which was the elimination of private schools, forced the elites in the 60–70s to decrease their open support for private educational institutions. However calls for "school pluralism" in the early 1980s meant renewal of the endorsement of the system of private schools, the provision of financial assistance, and state subsidies (Paynter, 1983: 50).

The crisis of the American system of public education has become one of the content components of important problems: the growth of society's stratification; the strengthening of antagonisms in society, which accompanied the development of society in the post-war period. That said, the degree of influence of the events taking place in the period, which accounts for the creation of P. Weir's film, was mediated. *Dead Poets Society* focuses neither on the economic and political problems of American society, nor on the love story lines (which are very common in American/European film industry in 1970 - 1980), but first of all it spotlights the role of education, teacher-student relations, parents and children, finding one's calling in life.

The worldview/attitudes of the media text's characters

The world outlook/attitudes of schoolchildren in the *Dead Poets Society* is connected with the desire to gain knowledge and determine the choice of profession that will let them excel in future, life path, the search for one's destiny and place in life, gaining independence and the right to make decisions. In general, student characters are optimists, friends who are ready to help and support at a difficult moment, they are purposeful, sincerely devoted to their dream. At the beginning of the film, young people are completely controlled by authoritarian parents, who deprive them of independence and autonomy, freedom to express their point of view. But then serious changes related to the acquisition of their true personalities occur.

The hierarchy of values in the media text

Leading values of the characters in the analyzed media text include such important landmarks as education, acquiring professional skills, self-realization in life, family, friendship, love, respect, tolerance, justice, decency, honesty, striving for moral and spiritual ideals. Unselfishness, kindness, loyalty, purposefulness, mutual understanding, teenage love, respect for the authority of the older generations and teachers, are inherent to them.

The stereotype of the characters' success lies in following the highest values of friendship, devotion, love, the ability not only to dream, but also to make independent decisions, to take responsibility for oneself and the collective. There are no material values in the foreground of the media text, but spiritual and moral ones. Self-realization in a professional, creative way, in romantic relationship, the ability to consciously and maturely determine life goals and plans –

these are the basic ideas of the characters about success.

Narrative structure and techniques:

- *the location and time setting of the media text:* the USA, 1950s. The main location is a campus of the private boarding school, school classes, a library, a principal's office, students' rooms in the dormitory, a school yard and the adjacent territory. Schoolchildren only occasionally appear outside school;

- *the environment, objects of everyday life of characters of media text:* is typical for emblematic ideas about an elite educational institution of that time (classes, light school hallways, large school canteen, student rooms are equipped with all necessary furniture for accommodation and study, school yard and adjacent territory are neatly taken care of;

- *(stereotypical) techniques of depicting reality:* the media text does not sharply separate the characters into "positive" and "negative". In the film, every character has its own plot significance.

Typology of characters: features of their character, appearance, vocabulary, body language, the presence or absence of the stereotypical manner of characters' representation:

- the age of the characters: the average age of senior students is 17-18. The age of other characters (teachers, parents) varies from 40- to 60-something.

- level of education: incomplete secondary education for schoolchildren; teachers, obviously, have university degrees;

- social status: the material situation of the characters is not accented, although, apparently, most students come from wealthy families;

- the marital status of adult characters: teachers are not portrayed as married with children; school children usually come from both parents families;

- appearance, clothing, body language, vocabulary. The characters are mostly dressed in uniform/business suits, modestly and ascetically, in general, dark colors prevail. Characters schoolchildren are handsome, fit young men of medium height. In most sequences, they are cheerful, active, building plans for the future, energetic and hopeful. Most of their time is assigned to studying, communicating and thinking.

Communicative process is built with observance of subordination. There is no profanity in the film, however one episode features students smoking and drinking alcohol beverage.

The appearance of the teachers is similarly formal, the teachers' clothing resembles a uniform (a dark suit, a white shirt and a tie). Teachers are disciplined and adhere to conservative methods of teaching. The absolute opposite of the majority is the teacher John Keating - energetic, creative, determined, eccentric, optimistic, a supporter of progressive views, possessing a wide cultural horizon, dedicated to his work.

Character Arcs

Each character has his own challenge and character arc (Neil discovers his heart set on acting, gets the role in a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and realizes that acting might be his vocation. Against circumstances, his friend finds courage to confesses his romantic feelings to the girl he likes. Todd, a modest, shy and insecure boy, afraid of reading his own poems in front of the class, gradually gets rid of his fear and inhibition).

The challenge that the character faces and its solution:

- pattern 1: the problem of interpersonal nature: suffering from unrequited love; the solution of the problem becomes gaining confidence and courage to manifest one's feelings and gaining personal happiness;

- pattern 2: search for professional and personal identity, for one's calling in life; to solve the problem a character is engaged in an uncompromising struggle with the older generation for freedom of choice, perseverance, upholding point of view and victory;

- pattern 3: the problem of fears and insecurities; solution of the problem is found due to pedagogical skill and talent, the teacher changes the character of the senior student, views and attitudes. In the end, he gets rid of the inhibitions and becomes confident;

- pattern 4 (pedagogical): conservative educators are challenged by an ardent opponent of the standard school framework, who tries to change the entrenched teaching methods; to establish friendly, trust-based relations with students. The solution of the problem: the struggle with the conservative boss (school principal) leads to the dismissal of the unorthodox teacher, however, remaining true to his beliefs, he manages to gain authority and respect of the students, thus, the goal is achieved.

5. Conclusions

As it has been mentioned above, the film got both critics' acclaim, and professional community's approval. What is even more significant in the social context of its impact on mass audience – the real in-service and pre-service teachers were inspired by this media text. The wave of the following acknowledgements descended in social media worldwide after Robin Williams' (as John Keating) death in 2014. "O captain!! my captain!! you inspired me to be a teacher!!! and I know you have inspired a generation," tweeted Sujana Chitrakar. "Feel like I lost a mentor. Robin Williams as Mr Keating changed my path in life. Dead Poets Society led me to teaching," added Cori Marino. "He made you feel like it matters, that poetry matters," says Jonathan Taylor, a lecturer in creative writing at the University of Leicester, who was 16 when he saw the film. "I loved the film so much that maybe on one level it is the reason I became a teacher. Roselyne Marot, a science teacher from Belgium, watched *The Dead Poets Society* as a teenager. "(He) gave me motivation to become a teacher," she says. "I decided then that if I ever became a teacher, I would be more of the Robin Williams style in that movie, rather than the classical style. He has been in the corner of my mind any time I've been in a teaching situation. And will always be." There have been many more comments like these (Townsend, 2014).

The analysis of *Dead Poets Society* defines a range of important problems: the role of the teacher in the life of the younger generation; the choice of the future profession and life path, the search for one's vocation and place in life; self-identity; interpersonal relationships (friendship, unrequited love); generation gap (children vs. parents, teachers of the "old school" vs. teacher-innovator); moral choice between truth and lies, loyalty and betrayal, self-sacrifice. Certainly, the content is based not only on cause-effect relationships, but also on associative, polyphonic relationships ... the context of the centuries-old culture of mankind, philosophical questions about an individual, the freedom limitations, the perniciousness of compromise, the problem of moral choice, life and death (Usov, 1995).

The film clearly traces the main trends in the US public policy in the educational and socio-cultural areas of the 1950s, the atmosphere of time, although the plot is not directly related to key events in the US history in the 1950s. The students' activity is aimed at learning and acquiring knowledge, self-identification, professional and creative expression. In the media text, an idealized image of a teacher is presented - an intellectual, a respected, and a competent person, a communicator of socio-cultural, humanistic moral values and norms of behavior.

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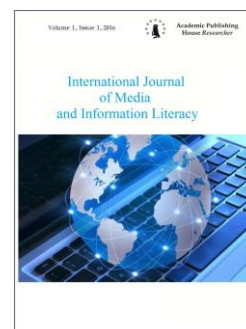
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Assessing Information Literacy Skills of Undergraduate Freshmen: A Case Study from Hong Kong

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Abstract

University students use information from the Internet for solving their own problems or assignments. However, there has been a little discussion on the use of internet-based information literacy skills of freshmen in Hong Kong. The present study assessed the internet-based information literacy skills of undergraduate freshmen from author's university. This study included four information literacy areas: (1) identify information needs and internet sources; (2) locate information from the internet; (3) evaluate information from the Internet; (4) synthesize information. These areas are important learning skills for survival in the information age. This study measured the perception of information literacy skills by self-rated survey and actual information literacy skills by using multiple-choice knowledge test and task-based information problem from sixty-one undergraduate freshmen. The findings indicate that the participants have difficulties in all information literacy areas. These results signify that further support on information literacy skills should be provided.

Keywords: information literacy, information skills, information problem solving, freshmen.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, students use information from the Internet for solving their problems or searching some information for their assignments and projects (Kolikant, 2009; Van Deursen, 2013). Information is easily available on the Internet. According to Netcraft Web Server Survey, there were 1,734,290,608 websites on the World Wide Web in December 2017. If students have difficulties in identifying information needs, locating, evaluating and organizing information from the Internet, they cannot solve their information problem effectively and efficiently.

However, there is little care in formal school curriculum. Teachers believe that students should develop their information skills without any instructional support (Walraven, 2008; Van Deursen, 2013). Researches have shown that both secondary school and first year undergraduate students have serious difficulties in handling information skills from the Internet (Argelagós, 2012; Foo, 2014; Fain, 2011). The skills of information literacy have become a main concern for academics and librarians. In this information-rich environment, information literacy is a critical skill to survive. Ramamurthy (Ramamurthy, 2015) pointed out that insufficient information literacy skills is a global problem. Such skills are important to undergraduate students, they should be able to use information literacy skills effectively and efficiency at the beginning of their university life (Yager, 2013).

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2. Materials and methods

The study included a group of sixty-one first year undergraduate students. All of them enrolled in the first year first semester foundation level information technology module. All participants were assessed by all assessment tools on the first and second week of the module.

Survey is the most simple and common way to assess the information literacy skills (Walsh, 2009). We aimed at evaluating the perception of the information literacy skills of university freshmen. The questionnaire consisted of 23 Likert-type questions. It was adopted by OuYang (OuYang, 2007) and Serap Kurbanoglu's instrument for measuring the perception of information literacy. Each item had a 7-point Likert type scale (1 refers to strongly disagree and 7 refers to strongly agree) (Serap Kurbanoglu, 2006).

The self-rated survey evaluate the actual performance. We used multiple-choice knowledge test and information task to check their actual information literacy skills. We developed 18 multiple choice questions on evaluating the information literacy skills. In addition, we designed an information task to measure their information problem solving skills. The information problem and guided sub-questions are shown in Table 1. All participants required to respond to the information problem and all sub-questions within 90 minutes.

Table 1. Problem and sub-questions of information task

Information problem: What is Web 2.0? Do you think our IT course should make use of Web 2.0 tools for learning? How advantageous would this model of learning be?	
Sub-questions	
Area	Questions
Identify the information needs and sources	1. Think about the information that you need to know or search. 2. List all relevant information sources from Internet. 3. Determine best information source. Why?
Locate information	4. Write down all relevant keywords. 5. Write down search statements with three most relevant web articles or websites.
Evaluate information	6. Evaluate the quality of web articles or websites.
Synthesize information	7. Write down THREE most relevant articles or websites by using APA format. 8. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation to respond to the information problem.

We analyzed the performance on each sub-question by using Diller and Phelp's (Diller, Phelp, 2008) categorization of the performance of information literacy. On each assessment item, the maximum score was 7. One mark should be awarded if the respondent demonstrated limited recognition of the skills, whereas a maximum of seven marks should be awarded if the respondent demonstrated full understanding of a specific skill. To improve the inter-scorer reliability, each script was assessed by two markers and we used the average score of two markers.

To validate all instruments in this research, all questionnaires, multiple choice questions and information problem were sent to experts in Information Literacy for comments.

3. Discussion

Different professional organizations have developed several framework (ACRL, SCONUL) and model of Information Literacy (Big 6 model) for higher education. In 2016, the Hong Kong Education Bureau introduced new Information Literacy for Hong Kong students. It presented eight literacy areas in three categories. It includes (1) effective and ethical use of information from lifelong learning; (2) Generic IL (identify, define, locate, access, evaluate and organize information); (3) Information World (Education Bureau, 2016). This new Information Literacy provides some idea for schools to develop students' knowledge, skills and attitude to use information. With refer to above frameworks and model, this study focuses on solving problems by

using information from the Internet media. We investigated the current situation of internet-based information literacy skills of undergraduate freshmen in author's university. The findings of this study may help educators to develop information literacy course at undergraduate level.

The assessment data can be categorized as perception and evidence-based data (Abdullan, 2010). The perception data can be collected from survey while evidence-based data can be collected from their actual performance. McCulley (McCulley, 2009) identified three major tools for information literacy assessment, including self-rated survey, multiple-choice knowledge test and information task.

Self-rated surveys are used to collect how people feel about their current performance. In terms of information literacy, it assesses the level of confidence of information literacy skills. Serap Kurbanoglu (Serap Kurbanoglu, 2006) developed a 17-item information literacy scale with three main components, which were basic, intermediate and advanced information literacy skills. Ou Yang (Ou Yang, 2007) developed an instrument to assess the developmental and confidence level of pre-service teachers' information problem solving skills on Internet resources. It provided 34 survey items in six categories, including define information problem, search information, process information, organize and present information and regulation.

Multiple-choice knowledge tests include a list of multiple choice questions to measure the actual skills of information literacy. McCulley (McCulley, 2009) pointed out that the knowledge tests provided a starting point to know more about your students' information literacy skills. A number of large scale information literacy knowledge test have been developed, such as Tool for Real-time Assessment of Information Literacy (TRAILS) and Project Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) but they were not able to track changes in information literacy skills of individual students (Fain, 2011). Belie (Belie, 2009) developed the multiple choice test questions for pre-service teachers. This question set included 22 multiple choice questions based on the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers. In a recent study, Boh Podgornik (Boh Podgornik, 2016) developed a new information literacy test for all study programs in all scientific disciplines.

Information tasks provide a comprehensive assessment of individual information literacy skills. McCulley (McCulley, 2009) stated that task performance could assess students how to integrate, how they have learnt and how they have solved the problem. The problem can be any topic. Brand-Gruwel, Wopereis & Walraven (Brand-Gruwel et al., 2009) designed a neutral topic for students to solve. For example, how to handle out-of-date food. Argelagos & Pifarre (Argelagos, Pifarre, 2011) designed some activities on solving information problem with specific topics in different discipline. On each activity, some sub-problems with guidelines were provided.

In order to provide the comprehensive assessment of internet-based information literacy, this study measured skills by using self-rated survey, multiple-choice knowledge test and information task.

4. Results

This section discusses the results of each instrument on each Information Literacy area. Table 2 shows the results of first information literacy area – identify information needs and sources. The participants perceived that they had difficulties in defining information needs (Mean=4.24), but they had relatively confidence on identifying (Mean=4.63) and determining the best information sources (Mean=4.89). On multiple choice knowledge test, more than 60 % of participants got correct answers on this area. On information task, it ranged from 3.96 to 4.24. Results indicated that the participants demonstrated limited skills in identifying information needs and sources. Most participants could write at least two information sources. Over 85 % of participants listed Google as information sources but only 36 % of participants listed academic journal database as information sources. Refer to information task, participants were not able to define the information needs, some low-ability participants wrote down “Web 2.0”onlywhereas high-ability participants could provide more information like “definition of Web 2.0, how to use Web 2.0 tools to enhance teaching and learning, how to communicate with others by using Web 2.0”.

Table 2. Results – identify information needs and sources

Item	Survey		MC correct %	Task	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Define information needs	4.24	1.43	61.9%	3.96	1.22
Identify potential sources of information on Internet	4.63	1.26	69.8%	4.22	1.41
Determine best information sources	4.89	1.09	62.7%	4.24	1.63

Table 3 shows the results of second information literacy area – locate information. The participants had confidence in locating information, especially on limiting search strategy by using different keywords (Mean=5.03) and using advanced Google search (Mean=5.29). However, the participants demonstrated limited knowledge based on the results of multiple choice knowledge test and information task. Refer to the results of multiple choice knowledge test, only 23.8 % and 12.7 % of the participants got the correct answer on limiting search strategy by using different keywords and limiting search strategy by using advanced Google search respectively. It aligned with the results of information task. Most participants did not know how to revise search statement based on initial result. The average number of keywords was 4.37 but many of them used same words on the information problem like “Web 2.0” and “advantages”. It is similar to the results on information needs. It reflects that they have poor performance on locating information but they believe that they can locate information.

Table 3. Results – locate information

Item	Survey		MC correct %	Task	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Limit search strategy by using different keywords	5.03	1.09	23.8%	4.22	1.25
Use of search statement	N/A			4.33	1.59
Limit search strategy by using Boolean Logic	4.30	1.16	49.2%	N/A	
Limit search strategy by using advanced Google search	5.29	1.18	12.7%		
Revise search strategy to retrieve more results	4.86	1.16	27.0%		
Revise search strategy to retrieve fewer results	4.52	1.19	30.2%		

Table 4 shows the results of third information literacy area – evaluate information. The participants perceived that they had confidence in determining the information sources by using different evaluation criteria. The mean score ranged from 4.68 to 4.89. Refer to the results of multiple choice knowledge test, 74.6 % of the participants got the correct answer on determining the accuracy of information sources and around 50 % of participants got the correct answer on other criteria. In addition, the results of information task show that all participants could use at least one evaluation criteria. Most participants used authority and currency as web evaluation criteria. They believed that the professional author with updated information was the most important factor to evaluate the quality of website. In general, the perceived evaluation skills is aligned with the actual evaluation skills. They can evaluate the information sources based on some evaluation criteria.

Table 4. Results – evaluate information

Item	Survey		MC correct %	Task	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Use of evaluation criteria	N/A			4.65	0.81
Determine authority of information sources	4.81	1.23	41.3%	N/A	
Determine currency of information sources	4.83	1.19	55.6%		
Determine reliability of information sources	4.89	1.12	55.6%		
Determine objectivity of information sources	4.68	1.10	47.6%		
Determine accuracy of information sources	4.76	1.06	74.6%		

Table 5 shows the results of last information literacy area – synthesize information. The participants perceived confidence in synthesizing information. The mean score of this area ranged from 4.81 to 5.00. Refer to the results of multiple choice knowledge test, they had difficulties in citing information. Only 31.7 % of participants could make correct citation on all multiple-choice questions. It reflects that they have poor performance on citing information. They had difficulties in understanding the differences between journal title and article title as well as the differences between volume and issues of a journal. In addition, some participants (around 39.3 %) had not used italic font on the journal title. Some of them (4 participants) wrote down the URL only. They had no idea on citing documents by using APA format. Such results contradict the results with the survey. They do not know how to make citation but they believe that they can make correct citation. It reveals that they probably have wrong concepts on citing documents but they think that it is a correct format.

Table 5. Results – synthesize information

Item	Survey		MC correct %	Task	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Determine whether the information retrieved is relevant and sufficient for solving the information problem	4.81	1.15	54.0%	N/A	
Make citations and use quotations within the text	4.83	1.11	31.7%	3.39	1.82
Summarize information obtained from the Internet	5.00	1.06	N/A	5.14	1.01

5. Conclusions

This study assesses the information literacy skills of first year undergraduate students in Hong Kong. Based on the results of different assessment tools, it shows that participants have limited knowledge of information literacy. On the area of identifying information needs and sources, they had difficulties in identifying information needs. On the area of locating information, they believed they had good locating skills but they had difficulties in using advanced search and how to revise the search statement based on the initial search result. On the area of evaluating information, they were weak at determining the authority and objectivity of information sources. On the area of synthesizing information, they had difficulties in citing information. However, we have a small sample size in one module at one university, there is a limitation on the generalizability of the research results. Nevertheless, the result signifies that further support in embedding information literacy skills into a formal university curriculum is essential and important.

Refer to the research results, we should provide more training on each Information Literacy area. On the area of identify the information needs and resources, we can provide more brainstorming techniques to help our undergraduate students to identify the information needs. For example, students can discuss the nature of task and the tasks to do by using online brainstorming tool. In terms of information sources, results showed that most participants identify Google as information source only, we should provide all types of information sources to our students. It includes but not limited to encyclopedia, newspaper database, journal database, Google

Scholar and e-book in university library. In addition, we should provide more training on the electronics database. Faculty members can collaborate with university library. On the area of locating information, results showed that they were weak at formulating keywords and research statements. Students should learn how to formulate keywords other than using the wordings from original problem. For example, students may use online dictionary and thesaurus to define terms and look up the similar or related terms on a topic. In addition, students should learn how to use Boolean logic and how to formulate advanced search statements. In order to help them learn better, instructors should demonstrate the benefits of using appropriate keywords, Boolean search and advanced search strategies. On the area of evaluating information, students should learn how to evaluate the website by using different evaluation criteria and instructors can provide some checklists of web evaluation. In addition, instructors should remind them to link it with the information problem. On the area of synthesizing information, we should introduce the citation format in different type of information sources. The instructor should provide some common errors in citing information. In addition, instructors should ask students to reflect their effectiveness of the whole information problem solving strategy, so that they can understand how to enhance the information problem solving process next time.

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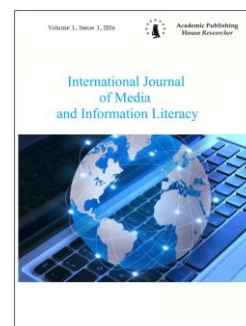
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On the Balkan Route: the Image of Migrants in Bulgarian Online News

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Abstract

This study focuses on the multimodal devices in representing migrants along the Balkan route in Bulgarian online news during the “migrant crisis” of 2015/2016. It reveals a broader sense of the term ‘text’ in describing the migrants including both verbal text and pictorial display of their social activities. They are seen as ‘social actors’ with particular social relationships between them and the people in the countries they pass through. A series of conceptual mappings characterizes the excerpted material: WATER metaphor, COMPETITION metaphor, EUROPE IS A PERSON metaphor, THE CRISIS IS A PERSON metaphor, EUROPE IS A HOUSE metaphor. The visual representation corresponds to the verbal one, therefore giving the reader a sense of objectivity of the news. Mostly the image of the refugees in the news is positive. The poor conditions they live in on their way to Europe are discussed with sympathy and compassion, consistent with Bulgarian foreign politics.

Keywords: media discourse, migrants, multimodality, conceptual metaphors.

1. Introduction

The war in Syria chased thousands of people away from their homes. The ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the famine in Kosovo are also a driving force for asylum seeking. This caused an unprecedented rise in the number of refugees seeking asylum. In 2015 Hungary recorded 764 000 illegal crossings of the border by migrants, which is an increase of 16-times compared to 2014 (see [Figure 1](#)). The top-ranking nationality was Syrian, followed by Iraqis and Afghans. Earlier the same year, extraordinary numbers of Kosovo nationals crossed the Serbian-Hungarian border illegally (see [Figure 2](#)).

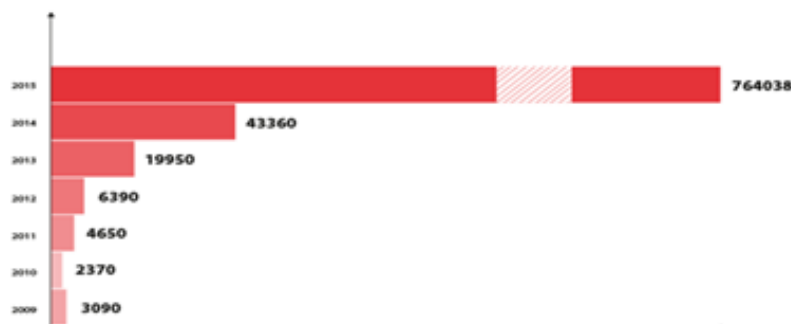
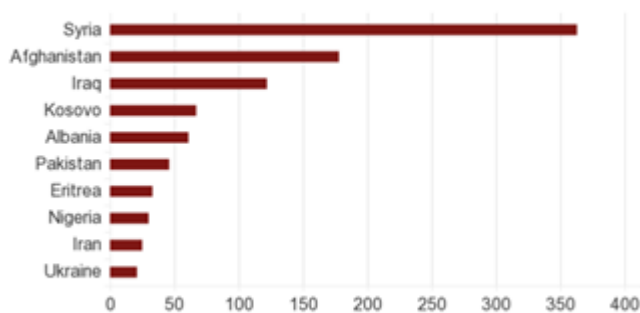


Fig. 1. Frontex. 2016. Western Balkan Route (frontex.europa.eu)

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Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU

First-time applications in 2015, in thousands



Source: Eurostat

Fig. 2. Top ten nationalities applying for asylum in EU (www.bbc.com)

The Balkan route became a popular passageway into the EU in 2012 when Schengen visa restrictions were relaxed for five Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In 2015 more than a million immigrants and refugees headed for Europe initiating a crisis because the countries on their way had to struggle to cope with the influx. The migrants came from Turkey to Greece, passed through Macedonia and Serbia, then through Hungary or Croatia and Slovenia on their way to Germany (see Figure 3).

Migrant route to Germany



Fig. 3. The Balkan route of migrants to Germany (www.bbc.com)

The increased migration caused division among the EU member-states over how best to handle resettling people. Although Germany has had the most asylum applications in 2015, Hungary had the highest in proportion to its population, despite having closed its border with Croatia in an attempt to stop the flow in October 2015. The Balkan route was closed in March 2016. Broadcasters all over Europe commented on the migration and presented it in text, pictures and videos. As the Balkan route passed next to and sometimes through Bulgarian borders Bulgarian TV news discussed in detail the refugees' movement.

2. Materials and methods

This article focuses on the different devices used in the news in order to present thoroughly and vividly the “migrant crisis”. We have chosen TV online news (btvnovinite.bg) as a corpus source as it presents the largest number of news pieces extracted with the key word “immigrant” when compared to other broadcasters, i.e. 24chasa.bg, Novini.bg, nova.bg. The corpus of the study comprises all 381 pieces of news discussing migrants for 7 months (from 15 August 2015 till 15 March 2016) together with the images and video clips. The verbal parts are accompanied by one

to three images and one or two video clips. We, however, do not analyze the whole videos but only the initial still image of the clip. The number of news does not correspond to the number of days because in the peak of the ‘migrant crisis’ there are days with up to 11 pieces of news, for instance on August 26, 2015 there are eleven, as well as on August 30, 2015, ten on August 25 and October 16, 2015, nine on September 7, 2015, etc. Some of the news contain just a headline and a picture.

The corpus was collected and prepared for analysis in three stages as it is suggested by Bateman et al. (Bateman et al, 2004) and Bateman (Bateman, 2014). First, we constructed the multimodal corpus (‘data set’). Second, we annotated (‘tagged’) this set of ‘raw’ data so that it directly supported the aim of our research to reveal the multimodal devices used in the online news to represent the migrants. “Bare data are generally insufficient for effective empirical research because it is difficult, or even impossible to interact with the data in ways that are appropriate for framing and exploring research questions” (Bateman 2014: 241). The third stage involved quantitative analysis and finding patterns using the annotated corpus.

The methodology used is multimodal discourse analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008; Kress, van Leeuwen, 1996/2006; Jewitt, Bezemer, O’Halloran, 2016) which focuses not only on verbal texts but understands “text” in a broad sense and includes all available semiotic resources, such as graphic design and images. The term ‘multimodality’ refers to multiple means of meaning making. According to Jewitt et al., “different means of meaning making are not separated but almost always appear together: image with writing, speech and gesture, math symbolism with writing and so forth. It is that recognition of the need for studying how different kind of meaning making are combined into an integrated, multimodal whole that scholars attempted to highlight when they started using the term ‘modality’ ” (Jewitt et al., 2016: 2). An additional point that is significant to recognize is “not only the need to look at the co-occurrence and interplay of different means of making meaning but also that each ‘mode’ offers distinct possibilities and constraints” (Jewitt et al. 2016: 3).

Following Saric, Felberg Radanovic (Saric, Felberg Radanovic, 2017) we regard the discourse participants as social actors who perform particular actions represented in the texts. Some of them are back grounded, others are fore grounded, and still others are present only implicitly in the discourse. They influence directly or indirectly the representation, thus framing the event.

The multimodal texts in our discourse samples draw on certain social practices, for instance, helping the migrants on their way with food, water, clothes, etc., and are represented by various semiotic means (metaphors, photographs of children in the foreground, etc.). However, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (Kress, van Leeuwen, 1998: 2), this does not mean that visual structures are like linguistic structures. “The relation is much more general. Visual structures realize meanings as linguistic structures do, and thereby point to different interpretations of experience and different forms of social interaction.”

3. Discussion

The studies on the representation of migration in the media increased in number during 2015 as a result of the largescale European refugee crisis. O’Regan and Riordan (O’Regan, Riordan, 2018) explore the portrayal of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants from September to November 2015, in UK and Irish newspapers. Felberg and Šarić (Felberg, Šarić, 2017) investigate the image of migration and migrants in Croatian and Serbian public broadcasters’ online portals during the “migrant crisis” in 2015/2016. These studies witness the same results as two earlier studies, namely Baker et al. (Baker et al., 2008) and Khosravini (Khosravini, 2009), focusing on samples from the UK news corpora. They show that words like *migrant*, *refugee*, *asylum seeker*, *immigrant*, and even the offensive short-form *illegals*, are used fairly synonymously and sometimes increasingly negatively, to describe people who have lost their homes.

In the news pieces considered in the present research the most frequently used lexical items are *migrant*, *immigrant* and *refugee*. Similarly to the abovementioned studies they are used interchangeably in labeling groups of people in the samples. Yet, there are a couple of texts (e.g. bTV: 33) that rely on United Nations’ definition to show that there are considerable differences between the terms.

A *refugee* refers to people who had escaped their countries because of persecution on racial, social or political grounds. *Migrants* and *immigrants* choose to leave their countries due to various reasons, such as studying abroad or looking for a job and better living conditions. Rarely the terms

*emigrant*¹ (bTV: 34), *asylum seeker*² and *foreigner* are used, not in their narrow meanings but rather generally. Sometimes two terms appear in the same sentence:

(1) 'More than 400 000 *migrants* have submitted *requests for asylum* in the EU'³ (bTV: 33)

(2) 'According to Macedonian law system, each *immigrant* who has submitted a request for becoming a *refugee* has the right...' (bTV: 38)

A couple of times they are called by their nationalities, Syrians and Afghans: (3) 'The new comers are mostly *Syrians* and *Afghans*...' (bTV: 39). Twice 'hitchhikers' is used to refer to the refugees: (4) 'The Ministry of foreign affairs recommended that we shouldn't take *hitchhikers* when we are travelling in Greece' (bTV: 34).

Immigrant in most of the cases is collocated with 'illegal':

(5) '...the movement of a big number of *illegal immigrants* and refugees on the roads of the country...' (bTV: 33)

(6) '...the sentence is two years minimum for each *illegal immigrant*...' (bTV: 34).

Another modifier that appears with the noun *immigrants* 'economic':

(7) 'Economic migrants. These are people who leave their country to improve their economic conditions' (bTV: 35).

(8) 'Bozhidar Dimitrov: the migrant influx consists of *economic immigrants*' (bTV: 21).

In this research we use *migrants* and *immigrants* as cover terms for all the groups: refugees, asylum seekers, illegal and economic migrants. The reason is that they all take part in the migration process irrespective of their personal motives.

In an interview of Kinga Gal, a Hungarian politician, the refugees were called *the needy*: (9) 'To be able to help *the needy*, we must make this distinction,' Gal insisted. The substantivized noun is attributed to those migrants who really need international protection and help and they are differentiated from the ones who want a better life and therefore come to Europe.

WATER metaphor

In his study on how the print media, in both the UK and Australia, draw on a number of interpretative repertoires when constructing accounts of refugees and asylum seekers, Parker (Parker, 2015) claims that the most common metaphor used, as a rhetorical device, is the "criminal metaphor". According to Dervinyte (Dervinyte, 2009), who investigates conceptual metaphors and their linguistic manifestations in the British and Lithuanian press articles, the most common source domains include: NATURAL FORCE relating to FLUID and WAR.

The dominating metaphor in our corpus is the *WATER* metaphor (Nedelcheva, 2017). The same tendency is observed in the comparative study of British and Romanian headlines on migration by Neagu and Colipca-Ciobanu (Musolff et al., 2014: 205), which presents *Times* and *Guardian's* attitude to Romanian immigration to the United Kingdom in 2006.

4. Results

Likewise, the movement of people in our corpus is conceptualized as

- a *wave*, e.g. (10) 'the *wave* of refugees from Syria' (bTV: 39);

- a *flow*, e.g. (11) 'the *flow* of immigrants' (bTV: 37);

- an *influx*, e.g. (12) 'the immigrant *influx*' (bTV: 34);

- and even a *tsunami*, e.g. (13) 'The immigrant wave threatened to turn into a *tsunami*' (bTV: 36).

The *WATER* metaphor is further developed mapping the water's typical features on the migrants.

(14) 'Unprecedented wave of refugees drowned Macedonia' (bTV: 36)

(15) 'The immigrant wave flooding the Balkans threatens to turn into a real tsunami. Then the wave spreads in the Schengen area.' (bTV: 36)

(16) 'The wave of immigrants floods Serbia and Hungary' (bTV: 35)

¹'Emigrants' leave their country or region to settle in another. The focus is on the country of origin, e.g. My grandparents are emigrants from Poland.

²This term is further related to the official status some persons can acquire in countries in which they seek asylum.

³All the excerpts are translated by the author.

These pieces of news are arranged chronologically here to show how the impact of the migrants' movement is represented in the media. Macedonia is the first country on their way after Greece. The immigrants don't only go there as a powerful *wave*, because of their great number, but they are also able to crowd its villages and towns, thus making the local people invisible. The idea of migrants outnumbering the Macedonian population is expressed metaphorically as *drowning*. Comparing the immigrant wave to a *tsunami* exhibits the great force that is correlated with their movement. Another characteristic of such an enormous wave is that after hitting the shore it spreads over, submerging everything on its way. This is the impression created by the crowds of migrants moving to Central Europe in example (15). Example (16) mentions the subsequent destinations on the route, Serbia and Hungary, which are also displayed as *flooded* by the immigrants.

Not only waves are able to flood the land but also *flows*: (17) '...Washington may have a problem with its international image if they accept only a small number of refugees compared to the flow flooding the European countries.' (bTV: 25)

'Crisis' is an abstract notion and it is identified with the people who cause it, then it is also conceptualized as a wave, stream or flow which can also sweep over and flood: (18) '...Heinz-Christian Strache accused the US and NATO that they had caused the refugee crisis which swept over Europe.' (bTV: 27)

Moving water has considerable force which is used nowadays by people to create energy. However, when this force is uncontrollable it exerts pressure on everything on its way and can destroy it. A number of samples in our corpus describe the migrants as exercising pressure:

(19) 'Skopje and Athens will cooperate to reduce the refugee pressure.' (bTV: 37)

(20) 'The Minister does not expect strong pressure at the borders' (bTV: 35), etc.

On one occasion a quite morbid metaphor is used comparing the Mediterranean to a mass grave: (21) 'Schultz: The Mediterranean is turning into a mass grave' (bTV: 31). This correlation is inspired by the great number of people who lost their lives in the waters of the sea while trying to reach Europe.

According to the International Migration Organization, nearly 300,000 people crossed the Mediterranean in 2015. The Organization keeps an approximate number of the refugees who survived crossing the sea but no corresponding number is found for those who drowned. Therefore, we can find a strong conceptual relation between the Mediterranean and a mass grave.

The WATER metaphor implies a number of mappings, i.e. moving masses of people are dangerous water causing disasters, flows and influxes are not easy to stop as well as moving people, crowds of moving people are able to 'drown' the local population by outnumbering it. Some authors define such metaphorical categorization of social and political adversaries as "parasites" in communication, which determines the "uni-directionality" of metaphorization processes (Musolff, 2014). However the corpus of the present study does not include dehumanizing metaphors such as depictions of immigrants as *parasites*, *leeches*, or *bloodsuckers* that are found in British debates about immigration (Musolff, 2015). It should be noted that this kind of stigmatizing imagery occurs mainly in Blogs than in the British mainstream press. A study of media discourse on migration in Italy regards it as a means of reproducing and maintaining a racist interpretation of inter-group relations (Montali et al., 2013).

COMPETITION metaphor

Sports competitions are another source of metaphorical mapping used in one of the discourse samples:

(22) 'Ralph Jeger, the Minister of Internal Affairs of North Rhine-Westphalia, criticizes on *Handelsblatt* pages: 'In this competition the provinces, municipalities and many volunteers get sweaty and gasp for breath. The heartbeat of all them is 190 beats per minute. And the federal government has pitched in the stands for spectators observing the spectacle and cheering. This is wrong.'" (bTV: 39)

The author draws the picture of a sports competition in details. On the one hand, he introduces the competitors, who have already started the competition, breathing heavily and sweating. These are the people taking part in the social activities related to the coming migrants: organizing camps for temporary settlement, providing food and water, as well as medical aid. On the other hand, he depicts the audience sitting comfortably on their seats at the stand and

shouting just to make the participants in the competition exert themselves even more. This image illustrates the federal authorities who are distant observers of the whole scene.

EUROPE IS A PERSON metaphor

A series of human characteristics are mapped on the descriptions of Europe. Europe is a human being with a heart and a soul; hence, we can draw the conceptual metaphors: EUROPE IS A PERSON; *EUROPE IS A PERSON WITH A HEART*; *EUROPE IS A PERSON WITH A SOUL*, for instance:

(23) ‘The immigrant wave will show how big the heart of Europe is’ (bTV: 24). The big heart is a metaphor for humanity, tolerance and compassion. If Europe has a big heart it will accept the refugees with sympathy and care.

(24) ‘The deepening crisis of immigration threatens to wring the soul of the European Union,’ said Paolo Gentiloni, the Italian Foreign Minister, expressing concern about the possibility of cancelling the Schengen agreements.’ (bTV: 37)

The Schengen agreements abolished many of the EU’s internal borders, giving the right of passport-free movement across the Schengen area. This is the part of Europe considered carrying the Europe’s soul as it entitles every EU citizen to travel, work and live in any EU country without special formalities. However, Schengen is often criticised by nationalists and Eurosceptics who say it provides an easy access for migrants and criminals, especially after the attacks on 13 November, 2015 in Paris, which killed 130 people. With the migrant crisis, all EU states re-imposed temporary border controls. This act was regarded as a step back from the accepted common Schengen rules.

Further on in the same interview Gentiloni elaborates on his metaphor saying:

(25) ‘There is a danger for Europe to show the worst of itself as immigration is concerned: selfishness, taking risky decisions and disputes among Member States... Europe will either rediscover its soul or lose it for real...’ (bTV: 37)

Similarly to the metaphor of having or, on the contrary, not having a heart, losing one’s soul is identified with a hateful and xenophobic attitude to the immigrants. Europe is used in this excerpt in a very abstract way to represent all the people living in the countries situated on the continent of Europe.

In some cases ‘the heart of Europe’ is simply a metaphor for the geographical area of Central Europe, e.g. (26) ‘Thousands continue their way through Serbia to the heart of Europe.’ (bTV: 36) The refugees pass in transit through Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia to reach the countries in Central Europe, mainly Germany, regarding it as the Promised Land.

The corpus contains an instance of a PART-WHOLE metonymy: (27) ‘We have to distribute the responsibility and put it on more shoulders in Europe.’ (bTV: 39) European countries are contiguous with the people that inhabit them. Responsibility is envisaged as a burden that these people can carry on their shoulders. Another interpretation is that the European countries themselves are personified. They are people with shoulders who are able to carry heavy loads.

THE CRISIS IS A PERSON metaphor

Mapping human characteristics on abstract notions engenders a metaphor that personifies the crisis: THE CRISIS IS A PERSON because it has a face, e.g. (28) ‘The world continues to comment on the shocking face of the immigrant crisis and the picture of the three-year-old Kurdish boy’ (bTV: 28). The crisis has a shocking face which is the face of death. The death of the three-year-old Syrian boy of Kurdish background, Aylan Kurdi, who drowned on 2 September 2015 in the Mediterranean Sea shocked the world as the photographs of his lifeless body quickly spread globally, prompting international responses.

An expansion of the metaphor EUROPE IS A PERSON is the metaphor EUROPE IS A PERSON THAT CAN BE THREATENED, for instance:

(29) ‘Europe is currently facing the biggest refugee crisis since the end of WWII’ (bTV: 25)

(30) ‘Andrej Babis defined the migrants as “the greatest threat to Europe” ’ (bTV: 35)

In example (29) the threat is only implied. It requires reader’s knowledge about the world in order to correlate the fact that if someone is facing a crisis that person’s way of living is threatened. Example 30, however, explicitly defines the migrants as the greatest threat to Europe in the words of the Czech Republic’s Minister of Finance, Andrej Babis.

A step further from threatening is killing, hence the metaphor EUROPE IS A PERSON THAT CAN BE MURDERED, e.g. (31) ‘Vaclav Klaus, who was president of the Czech Republic from 2003 till 2013, has already said earlier this week that Europe would commit suicide, accepting the migrants’ (bTV: 27). The Czech politician looks at the mass immigration as an attempt for Europe’s suicide because

of its fundamental threat to the stability on the continent and the member states of the European Union. He warns of the danger and risks posed by artificial mixing of different nations, cultures and religions, which can lead to damaging the present status quo.

EUROPE IS A HOUSE metaphor

Apart from being a person *EUROPE IS A HOUSE*, e.g. (32) ‘I think it’s important for the French to react to what is happening at the door to Europe.’ (bTV: 27) Europe is depicted as having a door and the closest association is with a house as it provides accommodation for a lot of people. If something happens at the door of a house it is in close proximity and is clearly seen and heard. If it is something dangerous then the people in the house should be on the alert.

As Europe is mapped on an object such as a house, then it is a thing that can be destroyed, e.g. (33) ‘If we let all the immigrants in this will destroy Europe’ (bTV: 26). It is not that Europe will be destroyed as a continent, rather the mapping is on the European way of living, culture and standards. Migrants bring their own culture, beliefs and traditions which are different from those of the people in Europe. Inevitably the different cultures will influence each other and the result will be a change in the surroundings and in the standard of living.

Visual representation

The images that accompany various news stories show migrants performing various activities (e.g., resting or being given food). The visual representation corresponds to the verbal one, therefore giving the reader a sense of objectivity of the news.

Following Saric, Felberg Radanovic (Saric, Felberg Radanovic, 2017) we have grouped the images into several types: 1) photographs of groups of migrants, 2) photographs of children (with a parent or families), 3) photographs of politicians, 4) photographs of police forces, and 5) photographs with no people. Each of the groups can be further subdivided to display different perspectives on the scene.

1) Photographs of groups of migrants

Subgroups of this category are:

- photographs of groups of men

-



Fig. 4. bTV: 33

Fig. 5. bTV: 37

In these photographs the men bear very sad, thoughtful expressions (see Fig. 4, 5). There is no eye-contact with the camera. In the first picture they are just looking down deep in their thoughts. In the second picture, however, they look in one direction, focusing on something in front of them which is invisible to the camera. Both pictures represent the psychological state of the migrants, showing how helpless they are in the present situation.

- photographs of mixed groups



Fig. 6. bTV: 33

Fig. 7. bTV: 37

Some of the photographs in this group show migrants having a rest after the long travel. They are either sitting or lying directly on the ground (see [Figure 6](#)). On one occasion they are shown lying on the railways. These representations make them look vulnerable and helpless.

Other photographs exhibit migrants while they are moving. The movement of such a great mass of people justifies their association with a wave. Moving water can bring a natural disaster, big groups of people moving can bring a social disaster to the places they pass through. An interesting detail of this particular photo (see [Figure 7](#)) is the towel on the shoulders of the man in the centre. It creates an allusion with the map of Europe and the stars on the EU flag and it says 500 euro. This message can probably be interpreted in different ways. One of them is to see the migrant as aspiring to the 500-euro banknote. In the EU currency this is the euro banknote with the highest value and among those with the highest value in the world. Such a banknote can provide for a number of people for a certain period of time. It can be regarded as a symbol of well-being in the EU, something which maintains a distinct standard. A standard the migrants aim at.

- close-ups of migrants



Fig. 8. bTV: 39



Fig. 9. bTV: 34

Close-ups present a type of personalization of the people in the picture (see [Fig. 8, 9](#)). They are shown as individuals as opposed to group photographs where faces are either not clearly seen, or the perspective taken is at the backs of the migrants. No matter whether we see their faces or just their posture or way of walking they are depicted as sad, devastated.

- photographs of migrants with no faces



Fig. 10. bTV: 39



Fig. 11. bTV: 36

A common device found in the visuals accompanying the news is taking pictures at the backs of the migrants (see [Figure 10](#)). This is a way to avoid personalization and to achieve a generalized view on the migrants' movement. According to Banks ([Banks, 2012](#)) this technique depicts asylum seekers as "faceless and deidentified". "The anomalous and ambiguous nature of such strangers makes the designation of deviance impossible, but this unknowing allows for the construction of a panoply of feared subjects" ([Banks 2012: 396](#)). Migrants are not represented as individuals but as members of a group (see [Figure 11](#)). Therefore, they are rarely referred to in the news by their names and consequently very few personal stories are told. Logically, the number of migrants appearing in the close-ups is very low.

2) photographs of children

**Fig. 12.** bTV: 38**Fig. 13.** bTV: 37**Fig. 14.** bTV: 39

Another popular device is the exploitation of the images of children to gain a particular impact. Children are very often in the focus of the camera. They are undoubtedly the most vulnerable and defenseless victims of the war and the ensuing migration. In the photographs they are usually depicted in one of their parents' arms, which can be interpreted as protection to a certain extent.

Parents try to make their children feel as comfortable as possible. A father tries to ensure a place for his daughter on the train by helping her enter through the window (see [Figure 12](#)). Another photo shows a father carrying his daughter on his shoulders (see [Figure 13](#)) and still another one represents a father with a little boy in his arms (see [Figure 14](#)). The father is with his back to the camera, while the child is facing the camera, smiling. There is an inscription on the father's T-shirt "Happy end". Probably this is the happy end of their journey and they have already arrived at their final destination.

3) photographs of politicians

**Fig.15.** bTV: 27**Fig.16.** bTV: 25

There are a number of photographs of politicians of different European countries, especially those the migrants pass through but not only: Sigmar Gabriel, Vice Chancellor of Germany ([bTV: 36](#)); Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany (see [Figure 16](#)); Martin Schultz, chair of the European Parliament ([bTV: 31](#)); Victor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary (see [Figure 15](#)); Vaclav Klaus, ex-President of the Czech Republic ([bTV: 27](#)); Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkish Prime Minister ([bTV: 27](#)); Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel ([bTV: 25](#)); Kinga Gal, Hungarian Member of the European Parliament ([bTV: 24](#)); Manfred Weber, German Member of the European Parliament ([bTV: 24](#)), etc.

Our discourse samples contain also interviews with Bulgarian politicians accompanied by close-ups of their faces: Daniel Mitov, Bulgarian minister of foreign affairs ([bTV: 35](#)), Meglena Kuneva, Vice Prime Minister of Bulgaria ([bTV: 31](#)), Bozhidar Dimitrov, a Bulgarian historian and politician ([bTV: 21](#)). Two of them, Mitov and Dimitrov, point out that a difference should be made between refugees and economic migrants, and that Bulgarian borders are not under considerable migrant pressure. Kuneva discusses the cases of human trafficking in which Bulgarian drivers were involved. None of the politicians mentioned is depicted as visiting any of the reception centres. They all discuss migrants' issues from a distance in TV studios or at formal meetings.

4) photographs of police forces



Fig. 17. bTV: 37



Fig. 18. bTV: 36



Fig. 19. bTV: 26

Banks (Banks, 2012) sees these photographs as similar to mug shots, i.e. “images of asylum seekers under apprehension for criminal offences” (Banks, 2012: 396). “The mug shot verifies our stereotypes, prejudices and anxieties, and is depicted as making visible the very essence of the individual. This photographic portraiture is synonymous with the construction of the modern criminal body, providing a mode of representation that imbues the individual with criminal propensity” (ibid.).

Police forces are depicted as antagonists of migrants. In the pictures police officers stay upright as a live barrier in the way of migrants. Sometimes they are very few compared to the number of migrants (see Figures 17, 18). In other cases, they seem extremely heavily armed standing against harmless women and children (see Figure 19). However, the discourse samples in these pieces do not criticize the armed forces in any way. On the contrary, they point out that measures should be taken to stop the immigration flow, e.g. (34) ‘Most of these people come from regions that are not affected by the war. They just want to live a life like ours. I understand them, but it’s impossible. If we let them all in this will destroy Europe’ (bTV: 26).

Considering both the text and the photograph in this sample we can interpret the picture as an illustration of the subtitle: ‘Hungary is determined to stop the flow of migrants passing through the country’. Text and photograph together create the multimodal text that influences the reader with the impression the journalist wanted to create.

5) photographs with no people



Fig. 20. bTV: 39



Fig. 21. bTV: 39

devoid of people are used as a device to draw the reader’s attention to particular objects, metaphors in themselves. The fence with barbed wire (see Figure 20) represents the borders the migrants have to pass and signifies all the obstacles they have to overcome. The building of the German Parliament (see Figure 21) stands for German law system which allows the refugees to be given an asylum in the European Union.

5. Conclusions

Media have the power to influence human thinking and this influence is not negligible. Although we agree with Vicsek et al.’s (Vicsek et al., 2008) position that the interpretation of media information is an active process, in certain cases their influence can be enormous. “In the case of refugee affairs the media can be a more important source of information for many people than personal contacts, especially if there are relatively few persons involved in refugee affairs in the given country” (Vicsek et al., 2008: 105).

The analyzed material presents the migrants primarily in terms of sympathy, exhibiting them as victims of wars and terror or as people who want a better life for themselves and their families. Although the topic about the appropriate terms in referring to the people passing through (e.g., *refugees*, *migrants*, or *asylum seekers*) is discussed a couple of times in the discourse

samples the terms are mainly used interchangeably, the most preferred being *migrants* and *immigrants*.

The migrants are rarely given the floor to speak for themselves, however, information about their social actions and conditions is spread daily and even hourly by journalists.

The choice of particular semiotic means implies that some others are ignored for particular reasons. These devices influence the reader; for instance, the WATER metaphor creates the effect of generalization, which was additionally intensified by referring to people by using numbers. Extensive use of numbers is a distinguishing feature of our corpus. On the other hand, when the personal stories of certain migrants are told together with close-ups of their faces the effect of personalization is achieved.

The analysis shows that the photographs accompanying the news follow the verbal context and in most of the cases the migrants are presented as groups. When the photographs display individuals, they are representatives of very general categories, e.g. families with children or separate persons whose fate is viewed as common for all the people around.

We claim that the positive representations of the migrants in our corpus relates to Bulgarian official foreign politics and the positive image of Bulgarian politicians who appear as illustrative models of Bulgarian people (e.g., as humane, compassionate, responsible, willing to help the migrants) in contrast to the negative image and decisions of other countries (e.g., Hungary for erecting a wall, Macedonia and Serbia for not collaborating in logistics, etc.).

The news items in our corpus constantly shift the focus of attention between the migrants' movement and living conditions and the politicians discussing their fate. Although in the periphery of the Balkan route, Bulgaria was afraid of having to shelter large numbers of people. In the period of the migrant crisis, the politicians appeared more often in the media justifying the need for strengthening border controls.

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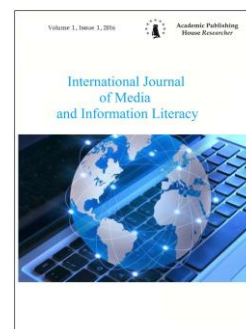
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Approaches to International Media Literacy: Cultural Habits of Thought

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Abstract

The media have become so pervasive throughout the globe that the ability to decipher messages conveyed through the media has become a 21st century survival skill. Indeed, in 2011, participants in the First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (in which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO – is the lead partner) issued a Declaration, in which they affirmed that Media and Information Literacy is a “fundamental human right.” International Media Literacy focuses on what members of the media literacy community can learn from one another with regard to media literacy principles, concepts, programs, and strategies. Media literacy scholars apply those strategies that most effectively approach the study of media and media presentations in their cultures. Within this context, it can be useful to identify the media literacy principles, concepts, and approaches that are most effective in particular cultures. Further, it can be useful to consider other media literacy approaches that might offer a fresh perspective into that country’s media and media presentations.

Keywords: media literacy, media education, UNESCO, cultural habits, thought, people, students.

1. Introduction

In his seminal work *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...And Why*, Social Psychologist Richard Nisbett made the startling pronouncement that that people from different cultures *think* differently. Nisbett asserts that cultural factors such as Geography, History, Religion, Language, Social Practices (i.e. rules of conduct) – and media presentations – contribute to a culture’s distinctive Habits of Thought. These Habits of Thought influence a culture’s *Worldview*; that is, its fundamental understanding about the nature of the world. As an example, Nisbett cites a historical instance in which the topography of Greece has influenced its relationship with the outside world:

“The ecology of Greece, consisting mostly of mountains descending to the sea favored occupations...that require relatively little cooperation with others. The Greeks had the luxury of attending to objects, including other people and their own goals with respect to them without being overly constrained by their relations with other people. A Greek could plan a harvest, arrange for a relocation of his herd of sheep, or investigate whether it would be profitable to sell some new commodity, consulting little or not at all with other people This might have made it natural for the Greeks to focus on the attributes of objects with a view toward categorizing them and finding the rules that would allow prediction and control of their behavior. Causality would be seen as due to properties of the object or as the result of one’s own actions in relation to the

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object. Such a view of causality could have encouraged the Greek assumptions of stability and permanence as well as an assumption that change in the object was under their control” (Nisbett, 2003: 34).

Indeed, a culture’s Habits of Thought can even affect a person’s primal dispositions, such as sensory perception. For instance, researchers have recently discovered that the Jahai, rain-forest foragers on the Malay Peninsula, have a highly developed sense of smell, in part because their very survival has depended on this manner of perceiving and understanding their environment. The study concludes, “Sensory perception is as much about the cultural training of attention as it is about biological capacity.” (Luhmann, 2014) Thus, understanding a society’s Habits of Thought can furnish considerable perspective into a culture.

2. Materials and methods

This article focuses on identification of the media literacy principles, concepts, and approaches that are most effective in particular cultures. Further, it can be useful to consider other media literacy approaches that might offer a fresh perspective into that country’s media and media presentations.

3. Discussion

International Media Literacy

The media have emerged as one of the social institutions that reflect, reinforce, and shape cultural Habits of Thought. This relationship between media and culture is the foundation of International Media Literacy analysis. Media Literacy is a critical thinking skill that is applied to the source of most of our information — the media. This discipline offers a range of strategies that enables individuals to make independent and informed assessments about the information conveyed through print, film, radio, television, and the Internet. In addition, this area of study approaches media programming as a text that reflects, reinforces, and shapes cultural attitudes, behaviors, values, preoccupations, and myths. In this regard, the study of Media Literacy can furnish perspective into our global environment.

International Media Literacy is founded on the following theoretical principles:

- *People from different cultures construct media messages differently*
- *People from different cultures interpret media messages differently.*
- *Understanding a culture’s distinctive Patterns of Thought can provide insight into its media presentations.*
- *By extension, a culture’s media presentations can furnish perspective into its distinctive Patterns of Thought.*

Asian vs. Western Habits of Thought

In *The Geography of Thought*, Nisbett provides an extended comparison of Asian and Western cultures as an illustration of the relationship between Media and Culture.

In summary, the essential differences between these two cultures are as follows:

“East Asians live in an interdependent world in which the self is part of a larger whole; Westerners live in a world in which the self is a unitary free agent. Easterners value success and achievement in good part because they reflect well on the groups they belong to. Westerners value these things because they are badges of personal merit. Easterners value fitting in and engage in self-criticism to make sure that they do so; Westerners value individually and strive to make themselves look good. Easterners are highly attuned to the feelings of others and strive for interpersonal harmony; Westerners are more concerned with knowing themselves and are prepared to sacrifice harmony for fairness. Easterners are more likely to prefer controversy and debate; Westerners have faith in the rhetoric of argumentation in arenas from the law to political science.” (Nisbett, 2003: 76-77).

The distinctive Habits of Thought of these two cultures appear in its media presentations—specifically, through the following narrative elements:

Plot

A plot is a planned series of interrelated actions that result from conflicts between opposing forces. The storylines typically found in the narratives of these two cultures reflect the Worldviews

of these two cultures: while Western plots generally focus on *Explicit Content*, Asian storylines typically feature *Implicit Content*.

Explicit Content is a term that refers to the significant events and activities in a plot that are displayed through visible action. A handy way to understand this concept is that Explicit Content answers the question, “What is the media presentation about?” In response to this question, an individual will relate only the most important events in the story; otherwise, the answer might be as long as the program itself.

Implicit Content refers to those elements of plot that remain under the surface:

- What are the *motives* behind characters’ decisions and actions?
Motive answers the question *why* the characters behaved as they did?
- What are the *connections between events* that occur in the plot?
- What are the *connections between the characters* that occur in the plot?
- Are the *consequences* for characters’ actions made clear?

Western cultures operate according to a Worldview in which the world is governed by straightforward rules, which are used to control their environment. Nisbett explains: “*European thought rests of the assumption that the behavior of objects—physical, animal, and human — can be understood in terms of straightforward rules...Westerners have a strong interest in categorization, which helps them to know what rules to apply to the objects in question...*” (Nisbett, 2003: 162).

As a result, Western plots tend to emphasize dramatic (and easily identifiable) events such as violent scenes, special effects and sexual encounters. Moreover, Western narratives reflect its belief in a world delineated by Absolute categories. Thus, in American police dramas, no context is provided that provides insight into drug pushers: they simply appear as criminals and villains.

Finally, Western plots often overlook the *consequences* of events that were depicted in the narrative. To illustrate, at the conclusion of the film *Die Hard* (1988) protagonist John McClane (Bruce Willis) emerges from a building that has been decimated, with considerable loss of life, during the course of the narrative. But rather than reporting to the authorities to consider the extent of the damage and assign responsibility for the devastation, John simply ducks into a taxi with his wife and heads home to celebrate Christmas.

One reason for this type of resolution is a response to the audience’s desire that the protagonists live “happily ever after.” One formulaic conclusion in Western media is the Wedding; this scene contains the implicit promise suggests that the remainder of their lives will be free of the conflicts (including romantic problems) found throughout the film. This implied promise presumes that virtuous characters can assert control over their environment.

In contrast, in Asian culture, events are understood within the context of the total environment in which actions take place. While Western cultures operate according to a Worldview in which the world is governed by straightforward rules, Asians see the world in terms of *context* and *relationships*. Nisbett explains, “*Asians... attend to objects in their broad context. The world seems more complex to Asians than to Westerners...Understanding events always requires consideration of a host of factors that operate in relation to one another in no simple, deterministic way*” (Nisbett, 2003: 162).

As a result, Asian plots typically emphasize Implicit Content, in that meaning is derived from the total environment of the narrative, as defined by: 1) relationships between characters; 2) context; 3) relationship between events; and a focus on consequences. To illustrate, according to Michael Puit and Christine Lowe, Evil doesn’t appear in the form of a demonic character in Asian stories, but instead is a State of Being, originating in the relationships that we fall into in the course of our daily lives (Puit, Lowe, 2017).

Because these elements are often interrelated, Asian plots are generally more complex than their Western counterparts. Nisbett observes, “*European thought rests of the assumption that the behavior of objects — physical, animal, and human — can be understood in terms of straightforward rules...Westerners have a strong interest in categorization, which helps them to know what rules to apply to the objects in question...*” (Nisbett, 2003: 162).

Finally, the conclusion of Asian stories are not as definitive as their Western counterparts. As Nisbett observes, “*Under the best of circumstances control of outcomes (is) difficult.*” (Nisbett, 2003: 19). Consequently, the conclusions of Asian narratives devote considerable attention to the

obstacles that the characters will face as an extension of the conflicts that appeared throughout the narrative.

At its worst, Western plots are mere celebrations of action, featuring car chases and needless sexual and violent scenes. However, in Western tales, plot can be used to *reveal* characters and themes; during the course of the narrative, events reveal the inner nature of principle characters. Similarly, Asian stories rarely feature the engaging plot conflicts typically found in Western narratives in Asian media and critics regard the lack of action as a deficiency, as opposed to a shift in focus.

Characterization

In *A Handbook to Literature*, William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, describe Characterization as “The creation of images of imagination persons so credible that they exist for the reader as real...” (Thrall, Hibbard, 1960: 356-359). In addition, the characters may be regarded as the embodiment of cultural values. Indeed, the heroes and heroines who appear in media presentations heroic figures often prevail in media entertainment programming because of their adherence to the values that are esteemed within the culture. As Sir Galahad proclaimed in a poem by Lord Alfred Tennyson, “My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure.” (Tennyson, 1869).

In this way, characterization furnishes considerable insight into the Habits of Thought with regard to Western *Individualism* and the Asian adherence to *Collectivism*. As political scientist Mushakoji Kinhide observes, Individualism “is grounded in the belief that man can freely manipulate his environment for his own purposes.” (Nisbett, 2003: 75). Nisbett elaborates as follows:

- Each individual has a set of characteristics, distinctive attributes. Moreover, people want to be distinctive — different from other individuals in important ways.
- People are largely in control of their own behavior; they feel better when they are in situations in which choice and personal preference determine outcomes.
- People are oriented toward personal goals of success and achievement; they find that relationships and group memberships sometimes get in the way of attaining these goals.
- People strive to feel good about themselves; personal successes and assurances that they have positive qualities are important to their sense of well-being.
- People prefer equality in personal relations or, when relationships are hierarchical, they prefer a superior position.
- People believe the same rules should apply to everyone — individuals should not be singled out for special treatment because of their personal attributes or connections to important people Justice should be blind.
- They...control events because they know the rules that govern the behavior of objects.” (Nisbett, 2003: xiii).

In Western media presentations, heroes are powerful figures who take control of the world of the media presentation, often against great odds. They are unique individuals who distinguish themselves from those around them, either by their appearance, talents, and accomplishments.

In contrast, Asian societies operate according to the principle of *Collectivism*. Collectivism is based on the belief in the community as a way to achieve a just society. As a result, Asian heroes are generally depicted as selfless figures who contribute to the common welfare, often sacrificing themselves for the good of their families. Indeed, there is no word for “individualism” in the Chinese language; the closest Chinese approximation is “selfishness.” (Nisbett, 2003: 51). Nisbett explains, “*The (ideal) individual works not for self benefit but for the entire family. Indeed, the concept of self advancement, as opposed to family advancement, is foreign to cultures that are steeped in the Confucian orientation.*” (Nisbett, 2003: 15).

Structure

Structure refers to the planned organization of a piece of literature. Contrasting the structure of the media presentations of these two cultures reflects differences with respect to their assumptions about *stability vs. change*. As discussed earlier, Westerners believe in the controllability of the environment, on the basis formal rules of logic, where Easterners see change as the natural course of events. Nisbett explains: “European thought rests of the assumption that

the behavior of objects – physical, animal, and human – can be understood in terms of straightforward rules... Westerners have a strong interest in categorization, which helps them to know what rules to apply to the objects in question... For Asians the world is seen much more in terms of relationships than it is for Westerners, who are more inclined to see the world in terms of static objects that can be grouped into categories.” (Nisbett, 2003: 162).

As a result, in Western media presentations, agents of change are regarded as villainous or, at least, threatening to the established order.

The formulaic structure of Western programs is: Order/Chaos/Order. At the commencement of the story, the world exists in Harmony. Soon, however, this state of Order is disrupted by an intrusion of some sort, such as a crime or romantic entanglement. The remainder of the story, then, focuses on the *restoration* of order.

In contrast, Asian stories tend to operate in a cyclical fashion. Far from being a threat, change presented as part of the natural order of thing and is welcomed as a part of life. As Nisbett observes, “Moving in endless cycles – is the basic pattern of movement in the Tao.” (Nisbett, 2003: 14).

Thus, although the Quest is a motif common to the literature of both cultures, the ultimate source of meaning in Eastern narratives is to be found in the *journey* as opposed to its *realization* in the conclusion of the story. As Nisbett explains, “Confucianism like Taoism is less concerned with finding the truth than with finding the Tao – the Way – to live in the world.” (Nisbett, 2003: 15).

Theme

According to Thrall, et. al, a theme is “the central or dominating idea in a literary work... An abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in person, action, and image in the work.” (Thrall, Hibbard, 1960: 486). Thus, a culture’s Habits of Thought are frequently conveyed through the themes expressed in its media presentations. Examples of themes commonly found in Asian programming includes the following:

- *Yin-Yang* is a life principle in Asian cultures founded upon the notion of *duality*. According to *A Personal Tao: a guide to understanding Taoism*, “We encounter examples of Yin and Yang every day. As examples: night (Yin) and day (Yang), female (Yin) and male (Yang).” (Tao). The goal of Taoism is to achieve a balance of Yin and Yang. In that regard, Asian media programs often dramatize the complications and unhappiness caused by imbalances in life, caused by the excesses and deficiencies of Yin Yang.

- *The Doctrine of the Golden Mean* is a principle in which the goal of life is “To be excessive in nothing and to assume that between two propositions and between two contending individuals, there is truth on both sides.” (Nisbett, 2003: 15). Thus, media programs often dramatize the ongoing struggle to remain constant, stable, and centered in a world characterized by change.

- Nature stories focus on the *Relationship between Human Beings and Nature*. Taoist teachings recognize humans as products of Nature who are susceptible to natural impulses, failings, and wonders. In addition, narratives involving Nature can be interpreted as allegories about the human condition.

Setting

Setting refers to the physical background against which the action of a narrative takes place. The following cultural distinctions, as identified by Nisbett (Nisbett, 2003), influence how their audience members look at Setting.

- *Habits of organizing the world*, with Westerners preferring categories and Easterners being more likely to emphasize relationships.

- *Patterns of attention and perception*, with Easterners attending more to environments and Westerners attending more to specific objects, and Easterners being more likely to detect relationships among events than Westerners.

- Preferred patterns of *explanation for events*, with Westerners focusing on objects and Easterners casting a broader net to include the environment.

In Western films, television programs, and on the computer screen, the most important characters and events appear in the foreground, while the secondary elements remain in the background. Nisbett explains, (Westerners are) relatively blind to changes in objects in the background and to changes in relationships between objects, (whereas) Easterners pay relatively more attention to the background than do Westerners. (Nisbett, 2003: 93), Easterners and Westerners...behave in ways that (are) qualitatively distinct. Americans on average found it harder

to detect changes in the background of scenes and Japanese found it harder to detect changes in objects in the foreground.” (Nisbett, 2003: 191-192).

4. Results

International Media Literacy Analysis

International Media Literacy Analysis is an extension of the discipline of Media Literacy, focusing on ways in which media literacy principles, concepts, programs, and strategies can enhance cultural understandings. As discussed above, identifying a culture’s Habits of Thought can influence how its media communicators produce programs, as well as how its audiences make sense of media content. As Nisbett observes, “If Asians pay more attention to the environment than Westerners, we might expect that they would be more accurate in perceiving relationships between events.” (Nisbett, 2003: 95).

Once audience members from one culture understand how media communicators from another culture convey meaning (and why), that audience can learn to interpret its content and identify media messages.

To illustrate, New York Times columnist Nick Bilton (Bilton, 2018) relates the following example, in which the adoption of Japanese emoji (icons representing different emotional responses) by American adults led to a case of misinterpretation on the part of its Western audience: *“I recently had to sit my friend down for a modern-day digital intervention. It wasn’t that he was using his phone at dinner, or that he was hitting “reply all” on e-mail threads, or leaving unnecessary voice mail messages. No, this was much worse. A few weeks ago my friend, Michael Galpert, who is 30-year-old and is founder of SuperCalendar, a personal assistant Web site, lives in New York City and was visiting the West Coast for work. I set him up on a date with a friend who lives in Los Angeles. The first date went well and the two decided to see each other again. When Michael returned to New York, he and his new romantic interest started text messaging, and, as you often do if you are of a certain tech-savvy set, were communicating via emoji. As my colleague Jenna Wortham explained this year, emoji are the cartoonlike and more elaborate cousins of emoticons – those combinations of colons, parentheses and other punctuation that can convey expressions like a smile or a wink). The woman Michael was courting would type sweet nothings to him using emoji icons – a lady dancing, high heels or a martini with an olive – and this is where things went awry. Michael would respond with the “thumbs up” emoji, a hand that looks as if it belongs to an inflated cartoon character. When she would text “I’m excited to see you,” followed by a pink heart, Michael would respond with a thumbs up. The woman confided to me and a friend that she believed that based on his use of emoji, Michael was clearly not interested in her and just wanted to be friends. “It’s like he’s saying ‘Hey, dude’ or ‘Sure, bro’ when he sends me that emoji,” she told me. “It’s not cute.”*

As Greg Marra, a Facebook product manager, explained, *“We discovered that in the Asian culture, the expression on an emoji face isn’t necessarily what conveys emotion. It’s the context (emphasis mine) of where that face is located.”* In contrast, in the United States, the emotion on the face tells the story, not the surroundings.

Thus, Bilton observes that in Asian cultures, an emoji face in dark clouds would show that someone is sad and having a bad day, whereas a face on a beach with the sun glaring means that he/she is happy. Further, Marra points out that “stars for eyes could mean something completely different in Asia than using dots for eyes.”

Bilton concludes his anecdote as follows: “As for Michael, things didn’t work out with the woman he was inadvertently insulting. But he said he learned a lesson along the way. ‘I’m no longer using the thumbs-up emoji,” he said recently. “I’ve switched it out for the star emoji” (Bilton, 2018).

Thus, once the audience member learned to incorporate the *context* of the emoji into the interpretation of the message, he was better equipped to identify the intended media message. And conversely, media analysis can serve as a way to better understand another culture and its distinctive Habits of Thought.

A related Line of Inquiry involves applying the media literacy analysis strategies characteristic of another culture to the media presentations of one’s *own* media presentations as a way to furnish new perspectives into this programming.

An incident that occurred on the set of the Showtime cable series *Homeland* in 2015

illustrates this Line of Inquiry. For the first episode of its fifth season (entitled *Separation Anxiety*), the Art Director was asked to construct a set depicting a Syrian refugee camp. The backdrop of the set was a large wall, inscribed with Arabic graffiti. Because the graffiti was simply intended as Background, its content was overlooked by the show's producers. Amin explains, "The content of what was written on the walls ... was of no concern. In their eyes, Arabic script is merely a supplementary visual that completes the horror-fantasy of the Middle East, a poster image dehumanising an entire region to human-less figures in black burkas and moreover, this season, to refugees".

However, the slogans were designed and positioned by two street artists and activists, Heba Amin and Caram Kapp (Amin, Kapp, 2015), who had been approached to work on the set as freelance employees in Berlin, where the series was filmed. The graffiti included the following statements:

- This show does not represent the views of the artists."
- "Homeland is NOT a series
- Homeland is Racist
- Homeland is a joke, and it didn't make us laugh
- #blacklivesmatter
- Freedom ... now in 3D'
- Homeland is watermelon (which is slang for not to be taken seriously).
- The situation is not to be trusted

Amin and Kapp released the following explanation on the Internet: "*Given the series' reputation, we were not easily convinced, until we considered what a moment of intervention could relay about our own and many others' political discontent with the series. It was our moment to make our point by subverting the message using the show itself... We think the show perpetuates dangerous stereotypes by diminishing an entire region into a farce through the gross misrepresentations that feed into a narrative of political propaganda. It is clear they don't know the region they are attempting to represent. And yet, we suffer the consequences of such shallow and misguided representation*" (Amin, Kapp, 2015).

Thus, using "Setting" as an example, once Western audience members understand how Asian media communicators use the entire environment to convey meaning (and why), Western audiences can look beyond the foreground of the screen to gain additional understanding of media presentations produced in their own culture. As Reporter James Poniewozik observes, "...As the graffiti stunt proves, the little details, the way a culture is presented on screen, can be as important, and damaging, as the big political picture." Poniewozik continues, "Homeland" often uses scenes in which crowded streets in the Middle East and the Islamic...stand for a kind of alien, unintelligible chaos, a teeming welter of noise and dust and veils in which danger can lurk anywhere. Arguably, this kind of small detail is the greater problem with "Homeland" and other American dramas set in the region: the tendency to use the signifiers of a culture – clothes, music, street urchins, unfamiliar writing – as a kind of spicy Orientalist soup of otherness. Even in a well-intended drama, if you approach another culture as set decoration, in which the alien appearance matters more than the content, you risk sending a subtle but strong message: this is a terrifying, unknowable land where everything goes squibbly" (Poniewozik, 2015).

5. Conclusions

The media have become so pervasive throughout the globe that the ability to decipher messages conveyed through the media has become a 21st century survival skill. Indeed, in 2011, participants in the First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy (in which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO – is the lead partner) issued a Declaration, in which they affirmed that Media and Information Literacy is a "fundamental human right." (Declaration..., 2011).

International Media Literacy focuses on what members of the media literacy community can learn from one another with regard to media literacy principles, concepts, programs, and strategies. Media literacy scholars apply those strategies that most effectively approach the study of media and media presentations in their cultures. Within this context, it can be useful to identify the media literacy principles, concepts, and approaches that are most effective in particular cultures.

Further, it can be useful to consider other media literacy approaches that might offer a fresh perspective into that country's media and media presentations.

The following Lines of Inquiry can be applied to the study of media across cultures:

- *Applying a country's preferred media literacy principles, concepts, and approaches to interpret media presentations produced in that country.*
- *Considering other media literacy approaches that might offer a fresh perspective into that country's media and media presentations*
- *Analyzing the "habits of thought" in media presentations can provide insight into cultures in transition from one stage of cultural sensibility to another.*
- *Considering whether the approaches commonly employed in one country could be applied to the analysis of media presentations of another culture in order to provide perspective into that culture.*
- *Considering whether media literacy approaches employed in other countries might provide fresh insight into the media presentations of one's own country of origin.*

Although the immediate focus of this article is a comparative analysis of Asian and Western Habits of Thought, this discussion is intended to serve as a model for the comparative Media Literacy analysis involving other cultures. Media literacy scholars Sara Gabai and Nudee Nupairoj ("The Buddha's Media Literacy Teachings"), Pardeep Rae (Indian Vedic Pedagogy: Media Literacy) and Mourad Teyeb, Ali Miladi, and Mouna Msaddak (Tunisian Media and Information Literacy Project), among others, currently are examining the relationships between their cultures and media literacy analysis.

Beyond cheerleading the efforts of my colleagues, I encourage the media literacy scholars in other cultures to further our understanding of media as a cultural barometer.

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