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## Character Analysis in the Media Literacy Education of Students

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### Abstract

Development of critical thinking of the audience in the process of media education is inextricably linked with the analysis of media texts of different types of genres. Character Analysis is the analysis of the nature, motives, ideological orientations, behavior / action of media texts' characters with use a variety of tasks that activate critical and creative thinking of students. As a result, students wrote stories on behalf of the heroes of the popular films of mass success. When the students were of this kind of writing, they sometimes unconsciously penetrated into the author's world of media text and psychology of the character. Practical mastering of media insight typology contribute and creative tasks offering the audience the possibilities to simulate various types of persons in the letters on behalf of the members of the audience of different age, level of education, artistic perception and taste, etc. An indicator of mastering the material can serve as the ability to identify with an imaginary "recipient" having one or another level of media reception.

**Keywords:** character analysis, media, media texts, media education, media literacy, media competence, students.

### Introduction

Development of critical thinking of the audience in the process of media education is inextricably linked with the analysis of media texts of different types of genres. Character Analysis is the analysis of the nature, motives, ideological orientations, behavior / action of media texts' characters with use a variety of tasks that activate critical and creative thinking of students. And here we can find support in the dialogue between cultures [Bibler, 1992; Bibler, 1993, p.27].

### Materials and methods

The main material for this article was the area of the books and articles about the character analysis of media texts. The method of the character analysis implies a number of students of creative tasks. I believe that this kind of work has the correlation with V. Bibler's teaching methodology [Bibler, 1993, p.13-14].

### Discussion

Analysis of the characters of media texts implies a number of students of creative tasks [BFI, 1990; Buckingham, 2003; Semali, 2000, pp.229-231; Berger, 2005, p.125; Fedorov 2004, p. 43-51,

Potter, 2014; Silverblatt, 2001; Silberblatt, 2014, but the cycle of tasks I significantly updated and revised]: literary simulation, theatrical role-playing, art-simulation. These tasks include analysis of the key concepts of media literacy education [*media agencies, media categories, media language, media technologies, media representations, media audiences* etc.].

### **Results**

*Cycle of literary creative tasks for the analyze of media text's characters in the student audience:*

*Media agencies:*

- writing of the text containing justification, as a famous media personalities can be a logo, a brand media agency / firm.

*Media / media text categories:*

- writing of the synopses, where the same stereotypical character acts in media texts of different types and genres.

*Media technologies:*

- writing the plan using a variety of media technologies for the creation of a well-known character.

*Media languages:*

- writing the "shooting script" for media text (eg, for up to 2-3 minutes of screen action film / TV programs, realizable in practice) with two or three main characters (film, radio / television program, computer animation, etc.): camera angles, camera movement, editing, etc.

*Media representations:*

- drafting the story on behalf of the leading or secondary character of a media text: preserving the features of his character, vocabulary, etc. ("identification", "compassion", "co-creation");

- drafting the story on behalf of one of inanimate objects appearing in the media texts, thus changing the narrative perspective in a paradoxical, fantasy-eccentric side;

- inclusion of a media text's character in changing situation (with a change of name, genre, time, place, action media text, its composition: strings, climax, denouement, epilogue, etc.; age, gender, nationality, character, etc.);

- inventing new media text's characters, their dialogue;

- writing the "screening" episode of the famous literary work, with an emphasis on the development of the characters;

- writing the episode from the applications for original screenplay, where the main characters are joined to each other in a sharp conflict;

- writing the original synopsis with an emphasis on the development of the characters;

- writing the original media text (reports, interviews and so on.) for a newspaper, magazine, internet publication of the site with an emphasis on the development of the characters.

*Media audiences:*

- writing the monologues ("letters" in the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines, on television, in the Ministry of Culture, etc.) from various representatives of the audience age, social, professional, educational, and other data at different levels of media insight ("primary identification" "secondary identification", "complex identification," according to the orientation on entertainment, recreational, compensatory, and other functions of media culture, etc.).

In this way the teacher achieves the goal of creative tasks: the audience gets to the lab creating media personalities.

For example, student Alena S. wrote the continuation of the famous film adaptation of the fairy tale *Cinderella*, on behalf of the main character. And Andrew Y. wrote stories on behalf of the boxer Rocky...

And we have even more paradoxical, fantastic view, when students wrote a story on behalf of an inanimate object, animal, appearing in the media text. For example, banknotes, passing from hand to hand, the mirror in the personage's room, the car in which the hero pursues criminals, etc. During our classes, students wrote stories on behalf of inanimate characters like the revolver from the gangster film, ocean liner "Titanic", a magic wand of Harry Potter, etc.).

For example, Elena B. wrote this text:

*"Hello! Let me introduce myself, I just played a major role in the film "Perfume" (2006). I - bubble, which first mix all the ingredients of the very spirits that created my brilliant host.*

*I felt every drop that slowly slid down my glass faces. Each of them was great. When I was filled to the brim, it felt very important, the great! It was an incredible feeling! Finally my master opened me to the area where he was to be executed, well, and then you know - the effect was amazing! At this point I realized that I was a star! But, alas, soon had to come down from heaven on the earth: I ended up in the mud, completely devastated, trampled ... And I did not stand-ins, I hope the audience will appreciate my efforts!"*

Many students are attracted by the idea of creating imaginary interviews with well-known characters of media texts (Batman, Shrek, etc.).

And here, for example, the creative work of Catherine F. and Daria K.:

*"- Good day, dear listeners. Daria and Catherine at the microphone of radio station. And today in our weekly column "We have a party," the famous cartoon character Shrek.*

*- Tell me how you managed to win the hearts of millions of girls?*

*- First, I do not wash like normal guys. Only once a month, take a mud bath. Secondly I have a beautiful tan all year round. There are still a lot of advantages...*

*- Do you have any bad habits?*

*- Oh yes! I love picking my nose!*

*- And what is your relationship with your friend?*

*- It is very talkative, it annoys me ...*

*- Do you have a favorite dish?*

*- Yes, I like to eat slugs in their own juice. Fiona - my wife - their delicious cooking.*

*- Tell me, what are your plans for the next season of the cartoon?*

*- I Would like to play in any action movie. But only a major role!*

*- Very laudable desire. We wish you success!*

*- Chao, Peaches!*

*- And we remind you that today our guest star was the biggest and friendly cartoon Shrek. Since you were Ekaterina and Daria. We will meet again!"*

Performance indicators for the creative tasks "The Story on behalf of the character", "Character in an altered situation" becomes the student's ability to identify with the character, understand and verbally recreate his psychology, language, justify his motives and actions. The phrase of student Valeria H.: *"I always empathize characters, put yourself in their shoes, I try to understand why they do so and not otherwise"* is very important in this sense.

For example, this is the results of the creative task called "Letter on behalf of the viewer." Here are some examples of successful works of students, where most clearly palpable creative learning of theoretical material, which was an indicator of the ability to identify with an imaginary viewer-reader-listener, having one or another level of media insight:

By Irina O. "Monologue on behalf of female pensioner over melodramatic television series":

*"Yesterday - even threw wash - I looked TV series. Poor girl, so sweet, kind, and how much grief at her fallen! And this bastard holds the land of this! I like cruelty have not seen! I used it with their own hands strangled ... Poor girl, how to play well as spiritually! Such a sad look, as much heart grasps! (...) I think they still remain together! Oh, such a cute couple ... Oh, I shall live there, when all these series will be shown to the end ... If only all ended well"*

And this is the text of Vlad E. "Letter to the Kremlin on behalf of a well-deserved weaver":

*"Our dear, dear President! I'll start with the main. I looked for the last time a few films and programs on television and say that my indignation is no limit. My husband and me kissed for the first time when I married him. But now so many films show the acts of love! What the moral for the youth? I am normal woman, not prostitute, I and don't like to see "free love" on the screen! Yes, a lot of enemies want to infect our people every dirty trick and pornography. But I know, I'm not alone. Every dog has his day! I beg you, do something! Do not disregard my letter! Sincerely, Anna Ivanova."*

And this is the text of Daria K.: "Letter to the Minister of Culture" from the pensioner":

*"On behalf of the older generation of Russian citizens write you my opinion on the state of culture in our country. Cinema, television, press clearly aimed at the corruption of children and youth: no positive ideology, only betrayal, fighting, murder, etc. And most importantly: these films and TV programs teach young people how to kill, cheat, rob, that is all that it takes to become a criminal. We also demand a ban frank sex scenes! And how many cram advertising!"*

*Nerves can not stand! Is it possible that all this advertising will be on one channel only? Please, help! "*

As seen from these creative works, students quite successfully coped with the task. Suffice it to compare the above monologues fictional characters with real letters viewers that have been published in the Russian press. Coincidences are obvious, sometimes even textual. Therefore, students who wrote these texts, not bad learned to navigate the typology of perception, right caught some characteristic tendencies inherent in the mass media insight (focus on recreational, compensatory function of media culture, the prevalence levels of "primary" and "secondary" identification with media texts, the desire to see them improved model of reality, etc.). This kind of creative tasks developed imagination, fantasy audience, its ability to "get used" to the image of a fictional character (in this case - "the writer").

As a result, the whole complex activities of a creative nature is in addition to the knowledge and skills acquired in previous lessons audience: students develop cognitive interests, fantasy, imagination, associative, creative, critical, individual thinking, media competence. The knowledge and skills connected with the concepts of the courses of literature, culture, world culture, music, and others. The audience learns the deeper concepts such as "perception," "empathy", "identification", etc.

My study showed that a large part of media insight student audience is at the level of "secondary identification" ("identification with the character of a media"). Oral group discussions, individual interviews, written work showed that the audience with a level of perception is able to give moral characteristics of the character, to justify the motives of characters' actions, highlight the main conflict (or more conflicts) plot.

Analysis of the characters of a particular media text can be with gender-based description of representation in a media category: characters' age, race, clothes, physique level, profession, hobby, marital status, social status, temperament, facial expressions, gestures, vocabulary, value orientation (ideological, religious, etc.), actions, methods of conflict resolution, etc. Students can to name the conventional codes of typical characters of media texts: *Cinderella*, *Superman (Hercules, Hero)*, *Cully (Ivan the Fool)*, *King (Ruler)*, *Beauty & Beast*, *Outsider (Loser)*, *Villain or Maniac*, *Spy (Scout)*, *Traitor*, *Vampire*, *Victim*, etc.

I used also the special discussion topic of media characters' influence on the behavior of the audience. For example, American scientists studied the effects of the behavior of young viewers, depending on the presence of films viewed episodes of violence. Within 7 days scientists measured the levels of aggression, the analysis of which led researchers to the conclusion that the negative impact of these tapes [Parke, et all, 1977, pp.148-153]. However, in my opinion, others sociological concepts look more convincing: there is no direct cause-and-effect relationship between viewing violence screen stories and crime. But media violence have, of course, a great impact in terms of stimulating aggressive tendencies faced by people with unstable or mental disorders, with a weak intelligence, criminal and / or drug-dependent environment ...

No doubt, after watching an action movie about gangsters vast majority of young viewers will not rob the shop and pull money out of the pockets of passers-by. Everything is so. But whether all of young people have ironically attitude toward the portrayal of violence on the screen? In our opinion, here it is necessary to think ... Thoughtless, fun, exciting, and well! - Consumption of such media texts leads other teens to that bloody entertaining spectacle is not only desirable, but almost the only favorite media topic [For more details: Tarasov, 2005; Fedorov, 2001, 2003; 2004, 2006; Fedorov, 2000; 2005]. Young people with this thinking mode can be in the stereotype circle: if funny or shoot it is great, if the characters overwhelmed by serious problems it is boring. As a result, young audience can blunt in their personalities such a natural feeling of compassion for human pain. But I agree with S. Freud wrote that "*culture should mobilize all its forces to put a limit aggressive primary human urge to slow down their displays by creating the necessary psychological reactions*" [Freud, 1990, p.29] ...

*Questions to the analysis of a media text characters in the classroom with students* (some of the questions is available at: BFI, 1990; Semali, 2000; Silverblatt, 2001; Berger, 2005; Usov, 1989; Fedorov, 2004, p.43-51; Fedorov, 2006, p.175-228., however, this cycle of questions substantially supplemented and revised):

*Media agencies:*

Can the media characters depend on the theme / genre / political, etc. orientation specific media agencies? If so, how?

*Media / media text categories:*

What are the similarities and differences heroes of tragedy, drama and melodrama?

*Media technologies:*

Does the image of characters depends from the media technologies? If so, how?

*Media languages:*

As exaggerated facial expressions and gestures of the characters associated with the genres of comedy, musical, science fiction?

How the authors of media texts can show that their character has changed?

Can you remember the episodes of media texts, where the events narrated / seen through the eyes of a character? Is there such episodes are times when the proposed point of view helps to create a sense of danger or surprise?

How certain items (including clothing of characters, etc.) are represented in most stereotypical stories (*Cinderella, Superman, King, Beauty & Beast, Loser, Villain or Maniac, Spy, Traitor, Vampire, Victim, etc.*). What tell us these things about the characters, their lifestyle, their relation to each other?

*Media representations:*

What is the image mode of characters' family, class, gender, race, etc. in the popular media texts of different genres and countries?

What political, social and cultural sentiments are reflected in the views and actions of the characters of the media text? Are there visible signs of deviant behavior, sexism, anxiety, conflicts, etc.?

How characters of the media text can express their views on life, ideas?

What are the psychological relationships between the characters in media texts, the reasons for their actions, the consequences of these actions?

That the characters have learned as a result of a media text story?

At what stages and how it reveals the conflicts between the characters in this media text?

Who is an active element of action in this media text: male or female character? What actions make these characters? There is a need for the presence in the story of the female character?

Are there any links between secondary storylines that help to understand the world, the characters and themes of media text?

Should the creators of media texts portray negative characters as the embodiment of evil? Is it really straightforward life itself?

What do you think about the final logic of the characters development in this media text? Which would you prefer finale? Why Are?

*Media Audiences:*

What about the character N.? Whether it arrives? Could you do the same as the character N. in this or that situation?

What makes you sympathize with one character and condemn others?

What is the contribution of each character of a media text in your understanding of the protagonist?

Can change your sympathy for the characters in the course of the action in the story of a media text?

What qualities, character traits you would ideally like to find the hero / heroine? Can one of your favorite character called active?

Can the reaction of the audience to extend / terminate the life of serial media characters?

## **Conclusion**

As a result, students can write stories on behalf of the heroes of the popular films of mass success. When the students wrote of this kind of texts, they sometimes penetrated into the author's world of media text and psychology of the character. Practical mastering of media insight typology contribute and creative tasks offering the audience the possibilities to simulate various types of persons in the letters on behalf of the characters of different age, level of education, artistic

perception and taste, etc. An indicator of mastering the material can serve as the ability to identify with a character.

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### **Анализ персонажей медитекстов в процессе медиаобразования студентов**

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**Аннотация.** Развитие критического мышления аудитории в процессе медиаобразования неразрывно связано с анализом медиатекстов различных видов жанров. Анализ персонажей медиатекстов – это анализ характеров, мотивов, идеологических ориентаций, поведения/действия персонажей медиатекстов с использованием разнообразных задач, которые активируют критическое и творческое мышление учащихся. В результате, студенты могут писать рассказы от имени героев популярных фильмов массового успеха. Когда студенты пишут такого рода письма, они проникают в авторский мир медиатекста и психологию персонажа. В практическое освоение медиавосприятия через типологию вносят свой вклад и творческие задачи, предлагающие аудитории возможности моделировать различные типы персонажей в письмах от имени персонажей разного возраста, уровня образования, художественного восприятия и вкуса, и т.д. Показателем усвоения материала может служить способность идентифицировать себя с персонажами.

**Ключевые слова:** анализ персонажей, медиа, медиатекст, медиаобразование, медиаграмотность, медиакомпетентность, студенты.