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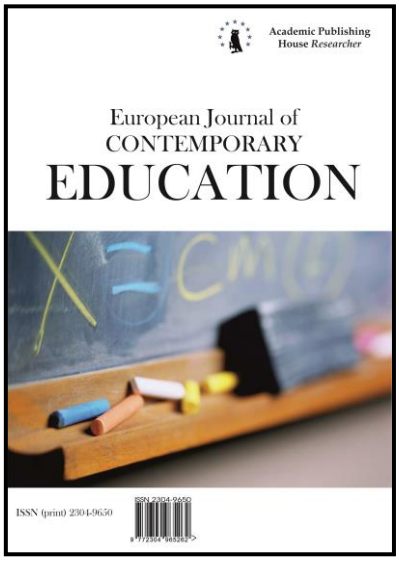

UDC 37

Modern Media Criticism and Media Literacy Education: The Opinions of Russian University Students

Alexander Fedorov [a, *], Anastasia Levitskaya [b]

[a] Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute (branch of Rostov State Economic University), Russian Federation
[b] Taganrog Management and Economics Institute, Russian Federation

Abstract

The authors analyze the results of two universities students' survey aimed at finding out the respondents' media competence levels. The findings confirm a general tendency, that commonly, less than a quarter of the young audience reveals a high level development of the media competence's motivational index. A considerably larger part of respondents, about a half, demonstrates a low level of the motivational index. The analysis of the received data proves that a high degree of the media contact frequency and a high level of media competence's motivational index are not directly linked with an ability level to analyze a media text comprehensively. Nevertheless, the levels of interpretational/evaluation parameters of the audience's media competence to a large extent reflect the levels of their informational and motivational descriptors. Moreover, it turns out that the high level of informational index does not necessarily correlate to the level of media competence's evaluation index. On the whole, the survey shows that media competence of modern students needs to be developed. Therefore, university students (not less that school students) do need media literacy courses.

Keywords: media literacy, education, media criticism, students, Russia, university, survey.

[*] Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: 1954alex@mail.ru (A. Fedorov), a.levitskaya@tmei.ru (A. Levitskaya)

1. Introduction

The students' survey was organized in order to find out levels of the audience's media competence (with emphasis on the synthesis of media education and criticism). Media competence is defined as a complex of motives, knowledge, skills, abilities (descriptors: contact, motivational, informational, interpretation/evaluation, activity), facilitating the choice, use, critical analysis, evaluation, creation and communicating media texts in different forms, types and genres, analysis of the media functioning in society (Ashley et al., 2013; Downey et al., 2014; Fantin, 2010; Fedorov, 2003; Korochensky, 2003; Marchessault, 2014; Myasnikova, 2010; Potter, 2014; Soldatova, 2013; Sourbati, 2009; Sparks, 2013; Tsymbalenko et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2011; Zircon, 2013).

While developing most of the units of questions and assignments we deliberately chose the close form of a questionnaire (so that a question was followed by several options to choose from). This decision is explained by the fact that most students are as a rule not able to provide clear and brief argumentation for their viewpoint on media preferences. Therefore several most probable variants of an answer were offered. Moreover, close questionnaires take less time to fill out for the respondents, and can fit in within the time limit of a class period.

The differentiation of media competence levels is based on the classification of media competence levels (the audience's development in the media culture sphere). According to it, audiences are offered 5 main units of questions and assignments:

- the unit of questions for ascertaining the media competence's contact index level (frequency of contacts with different types of media, media criticism and media literacy texts);
- the unit of questions to determine motivational level of the audience's media competence (genre, thematic, psychological, therapeutic, emotional, gnoseological, moral, intellectual, creative, and aesthetical motives that effect the audience's choice to contact various media texts);
- the unit of questions to discover the informational level (knowledge of terminology, history and theory of media culture, media education and media criticism) of the audience's media competence;
- the unit of analytical assignments to determine the interpretation/evaluation level of the audience's media competence;
- the unit of assignments to ascertain the activity (practical, hands-on) index of the audience's media competence.

2. Materials and Methods

The following respondents took part in the survey:

- 61 first and second year students of Taganrog Management and Economics Institute (respondents only participating in summative experiment), including 38 young women and 23 young men;
- 59 first and second year students of Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute (respondents, participating both in summative and formative experiments), including 39 female and 20 male students.

The aim of ascertaining the media competence's contact index level: to determine the frequency of contacts of the audience with various types of media. Gained results reflect the degree of respondents' involvement with media culture, media critics and educators' texts. Each respondent was offered to choose an option characteristic of his/her frequency of contacts with different media (press, TV, radio, Internet, etc.).

While determining the contact level we decided to consider the following scale:

- high level: respondent's daily contacts with media texts;
- medium level: respondent's contact vary from several times a week to a month;
- low level: rare contacts with media or total isolation from media.

It is clear that the content of such contacts is affected by media competence's motivational factor. However, according to our hypothesis, such influence is not direct: i.e. single contacts with media do not necessarily mean that a respondent possesses a wide spectrum of media motives and vice versa.

The aim of determining motivational index levels was to ascertain most popular with the audience contact motives (genre, thematic, psychological, therapeutic, emotional, gnoseological,

moral, intellectual, aesthetical, functional) with media texts (including media critics' texts and media educational texts).

While determining the motivational index levels of media competence development, we defined:

- high level as a wide complex of genre, thematic, emotional, hedonistic, intellectual, creative, psychological, aesthetical motives (including: choice of various genre and thematic spectrum, in particular including non-entertaining genres; pursuit for philosophical/intellectual, aesthetic challenge/dialogue with a media text's creators, criticism; identification, sympathy; quest for aesthetical impressions; quest for new information; for proving own competence in various spheres of life and media culture; search for material for study, research objectives, etc.);
- medium level as a complex of genre, thematic, emotional, hedonistic, intellectual, creative, psychological, aesthetical motives, including: the choice of rather varied genre and thematic range, search for study/research materials; however without significant evidence of pursuit for philosophical/intellectual, aesthetical challenge/dialogue with media text's creators;
- low level: narrow range of genre, thematic, emotional, hedonistic, psychological motives, mainly the choice of entertainment genre; pursuit for compensation, for psychological "treatment"; search for suspense, recreation, absence of aesthetical, intellectual, creative motives of contacts with media texts.

Achieved results help us to account for audiences' real preferences, take into consideration concrete media genres and themes, that the audiences are motivated by, and therefore, are considerably affected (morally and psychologically). These findings need to be compared with the written creative assignments, and interviews, in order to more specifically ascertain audiences' self evaluation of preferences and underpinning grounds, as revealed by the research.

At this stage students were offered a list of media genres and functions (press, radio, television, Internet, video games, etc.) to choose the ones they prefer. Respondents were also presented a list of psychological, therapeutical, emotional, gnoseological, moral, intellectual, creative, and aesthetic motives of contacts with media texts. Knowing media genre and functions direction, chosen by the respondents, with high degree of probability we were able to suppose the types of most important motives of contacts with media. For example, if a person prefers entertainment, blockbuster media, he/she is likely to choose the search for recreation, entertainment, suspense, as his/her main motives for media contacts.

Detection of informational index level was aimed at discovering the audience's knowledge of terminology, history, and theory of media culture, media education, and media criticism. Students were asked to answer 22 questions. While defining media competence's informational index levels, we agreed upon:

- high level: more than 75 % of correct answers;
- medium level: more than 50 % of correct answers;
- low level: less than 50 % of correct answers.

Of course, there is a linkage between levels of contact, motivational and informational factors. A person not contacting with media, cannot possess any information about media culture. However, according to our hypothesis, a high level of contact and motivational descriptors of media competence can combine with a low/medium level of informational index and vice versa.

Undoubtedly, a survey based on the multiple choice questions, is always limited by a chance of getting a correct answer unfairly, a guess, not based on real knowledge. Moreover, some respondents might even cheat. Therefore, the results of the tests were validated later by additional individual analytical and creative tasks, and interviews.

While working on determining the levels of interpretation/evaluation index we agreed upon the following scale:

- high level: media texts analysis is based on the ability to relate with its author, ability to analyze and synthesize space and time form of a media text; understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of the author's concept in the context of a media text's structure; the ability to correlate emotional appreciation with the conceptual judgment, to transfer this opinion onto other media culture types; to connect a media text with own experience and other people's experience;
- medium level: ability to characterize a media character's behavior and psychological state; using fragments of knowledge to be able to explain the logics of the events in the plot, ability to

comment on some components of a media image; absence of the interpretation of the author's stance (or its simplistic interpretation);

- low level: naive comprehension of a media text, poor knowledge of media language, incomprehensibly expressed opinions, conformity to other opinions, neither interpretation of characters' and authors' positions, nor their evaluation.

We gave to the respondents the choice between three topics for writing assignments:

a) "Audiovisual media text that impressed me",

b) "Audiovisual media text that influenced my self esteem and/or relation to other people",

c) "Analysis of a single episode from an impressive media text".

Respondents had to choose one topic and write a 3-4 page essay. According to Usov (1989), the very choice of the topic can indirectly testify of the interpretation/evaluation index level of a respondent's media competence: option c), as a rule, is chosen by respondents with higher level of interpretation/evaluation parameter. With that, it is logical to suppose that the motivational index level of media competence is considerably linked with the interpretation/evaluation index level. That is, the more varied media contact motives are (including intellectual and aesthetic components), the higher his/her level of media competence's interpretation/evaluation index.

While ascertaining levels of media competence's activity factor, i.e. practical/hands-on skills to create and communicate media texts of various types and genres, we agreed upon the following:

- high level: independent/autonomous skills to create media texts of various types and genres;
- medium level: practical skills of media texts creation with the help of teachers/experts/peers;
- low level: practical skills are deficient.

The audience was offered to do several hands-on tasks aimed at a media text creation (video/photo, layout of a poster, etc.). Noticeably, a high level of activity parameter can combine with a low/medium level of interpretation/evaluation index and vice versa.

3. Results

Table 1. Classification of Contact Index Levels

Levels of contact index	Taganrog Management and Economics Institute students: control group (%)			Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute students: experimental group (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
High	73.7	95.7	82.0	84.5	80.0	83.1
Medium	23.7	4.3	16.4	12.9	15.0	13.5
Low	2.6	0.0	1.6	2.6	5.0	3.4

Table 1 data testify that there is no big difference between the media contact levels of the students in two universities (control and experimental groups). Over 80 % of the respondents show high (daily) level of contact index. However, from the start, we didn't consider the contact index as an ultimate parameter for media competence. Certainly, a respondent never contacting with media, cannot be media competent. Nevertheless, the highest level of contacts cannot guarantee a high level of media competence if a person does not acquire analytical skills.

On the other hand, there are less than 4 % of the students who show a low level of contact index providing evidence that our category of respondents cannot imagine their life without media.

Table 2. Classification of the Contact Levels Index of the Students' Media Competence Development Related to Media Critics' Texts

Levels of contact index	Taganrog Management and Economics Institute students: control group (%)			Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute students: experimental group (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
High	10.4	8.7	9.8	12.8	10.0	11.9
Medium	44.8	43.5	44.2	61.6	45.0	55.9
Low	44.8	47.8	46.0	25.6	45.0	32.2

The Table 2 data indicate that on the whole there is no significant difference between the contact levels with media criticism texts between two universities (control and experimental groups). Less than 12 % show high (daily) level of contact with media criticism texts. On the other hand, students revealing medium contact level comprise from 42.2 % to 55.9 %, so about half of the given respondents category in that or another way (several times a week/a month) do read/listen/watch media critics' texts.

Table 3. Classification of Contact Levels Index of the Media Competence Development Related to Media Education Texts

Levels of contact index	Taganrog Management and Economics Institute students: control group (%)			Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute students: experimental group (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
High	2.6	13.1	6.6	0.0	15.0	5.1
Medium	21.1	17.4	19.6	33.3	20.0	28.8
Low	76.3	69.5	73.8	66.7	65.0	66.1

The data of Table 3 attests no significant difference between levels of contact related to media education texts expressed by the students in two universities (control and experimental groups). On the whole, less than 7 % of them reveal a high (daily) level of contact related to media education texts. On the other hand, there are 19.6 % to 28.8 % of students who manifest medium level, which testifies that nearly one quarter of respondents do address media education texts several times a week/month.

Table 4. Classification of the Motivation Index of Students' Media Competence Development

Levels of motivational index	Taganrog Management and Economics Institute students: control group (%)			Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute students: experimental group (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
High	15.8	17.4	16.4	17.9	15.0	17.0
Medium	28.9	30.4	29.5	25.7	30.0	27.1
Low	55.3	52.2	54.1	56.4	55.0	55.9

Table 4 data show that a high level of media competence's motivational index development, i.e. a wide complex of genre, thematic, emotional, gnoseological, hedonistic, intellectual, psychological, creative, aesthetic motives (including: choice of various genre and thematic spectrum of media texts, in particular including non-entertaining genres; pursuit for philosophical/intellectual, aesthetic challenge/dialogue with a media text's creators, criticism;

identification, sympathy; quest for aesthetical impressions; quest for new information; for proving own competence in various spheres of life and media culture; search for material for study, research objectives, etc.) is only expressed by 16–17 % of the students (with no significant gender differentiation). And vice versa, a lot more respondents – ranging from 54.1 % (Taganrog Management and Economics Institute) up to 55.9 % (Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute) show a low level of motivational parameter, meaning a narrow spectrum of genre, thematic, emotional, hedonistic, psychological motives, including: the choice of media texts that are of strictly entertaining genres and themes; pursuit of compensation; pursuit of psychological "therapy"; longing for thrill; recreation, entertainment and absence of aesthetical, intellectual, or creative reasons of contacts with media).

Herewith, a deeper study of the findings showed that the students of two Russian universities - Taganrog Management and Economics Institute (further: TMEI) and Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute (further: ACTI) - are attracted by the following genres most:

- comedy – from 77.1 % (TMEI) to 76.3 % (ACTI);
- science fiction – from 55.8 % (TMEI) to 59.3 % (ACTI);
- thriller – from 49.1 % (TMEI) to 40.7 % (ACTI);
- detective – from 45.9 % (TMEI) to 47.5 % (ACTI).

As far as the gender is concerned, it turns out that the number of male students preferring such entertaining genres as science fiction, thriller and a detective story, is somewhat higher than the number of female ones:

- science fiction: 60.9 % of male students and 52.7 % female students (TMEI); 60 % of male students and 59 % of female students (ACTI);
- thriller: 60.9 % of males and 42.2 % of females (TMEI); 45.0 % of male students and 38.5 % of female students (ACTI);
- detective genre: 47.8 % of male students and 44.8 % of females (TMEI); 50.0 % of male and 46.2 % of female students (ACTI).

At the same time, female students prefer a sentimental melodrama genre: 17.4 % of male preferences vs. 42.2 % of female preferences (TMEI); 15.0 % of male preferences vs. 53.8 % of female preferences (ACTI).

The following genres became outsiders:

- musical comedy - from 1.6 % (preferences of students of TMEI) to 5.1 % (ACTI);
- operetta - from 1.7 % (preferences of students of TMEI) to 6.8 % (ACTI);
- opera - from 5.0 % (preferences of students of TMEI) to 11.9 % (ACTI);
- satire - from 5.0 % (preferences of students of TMEI) to 18.6 % (ACTI).

Subsequent talks with the respondents in focus groups showed that modern students perceive opera and operetta as archaic, boring genres; and they appreciate not satire in comedies but pure entertainment (gags, tricks, funny jokes, stand-up comedian acts, etc.).

The answer of the students of two Russian institutes - TMEI and ACTI - to the question about the appealing functions in print/audiovisual media texts, media critics' works, media education literature (in press, Internet, radio or TV), has considerably assisted us to correlate them to previously expressed genre preferences.

The analysis of students' answers demonstrates that the most popular function of media texts is a recreational one: 60.7 % of TMEI students (at that this function is 20 % more popular with female respondents than with male ones) and 52.5 % of ACTI students (without significant genre difference).

Then follow:

- information-communicative function (46.0 % of students' answers in TMEI; 28.8 % of students' answers in ACTI, no big gender difference);
- aesthetical, artistic function (41.0 % of TMEI students, with females prevailing by 23.9 %; and 44.1 % of ACTI students' preferences, with female answers prevailing 21.3 %).

Gender differences are visible in the answers about other functions of media texts:

- analytical function: 60.9 % of male TMEI students vs. 15.8 % of female students; 35.0 % of male ACTI students vs. 28.2 % of female students;

- ideological, political function: the function is popular with 39.1 % of male TMEI and 26.3 % female students, while in ACTI – 15.2 % of male vs. 28.2 % of female students;
- aesthetical function: in TMEI it is favoured by 30.4 % male and 18.5 % female students, while in ACTI this function is popular with 20.0 % of male respondents and 10.3 % of female ones;
- advertising / commercial function: 4.3 % of male and 15.8 % of female TMEI students; 30.0 % of male and 15.4 % of female respondents in ACTI marked this function.

Let us bear in mind that the analysis of genre motivation showed that on the whole, entertaining media texts ranked from 45.9 % to 77.0 %, that correlates to popularity of the recreational function with the surveyed audience. The smallest number of votes (1.6–1.7 %) of both universities' students was collected by the regulatory-corporation function of media texts. We have expected that because our survey group was not a media-related major, but comprised of future managers, economists, lawyers, and teachers who are not very keen on professional backstage of media industry.

Answering the question of what main psychological, intellectual, creative, aesthetic, etc. motives of the students' contacts with media critics' works, are, revealed the following leading motives:

- pursuit to access new information – 82.0 % (preferences of TMEI students, with female students' answers prevailing 13.0 %) and 67 % (ACTI students with female answers prevailing by 26.9 %);
- search for entertainment, recreation - 60.7 % (TMEI students, with 20.7 % more female answers than male ones) and 52.5 % of ACTI students, without significant gender differentiation;
- search for aesthetical, artistic impressions – 44.3 % (preferences of TMEI students, with female voices dominating by 22.3 %) and 41.1 % (preferences of ACTI students, with female students dominating by 21.3 %);
- longing for spending one's free time - from 29.5 % (TMEI students with female voices exceeding male ones by 12.6 %) to 32.2 % (ACTI students with no big gender difference).

On the whole, the students' aspiration for entertainment and recreation (60.7 %) and relaxed way of watching/listening media (29.5 %) correlates to students' preferences of entertaining media genres and functions.

The less number of students' voices was received by:

- aspiration for improving one's skills in media literacy – 2.6 % (TMEI students) and 1.9 % (ACTI students);
- pursuit of developing one's knowledge in media education - 4.4 % of TMEI students and 3.2 % of ACTI students.

To sum up, the low motivation of students to gain knowledge and skills in the field of media literacy was something we had expected because the survey was conducted with 1-2 year students who had never taken a media education course.

Table 5. Classification of the Informational Index Levels

Levels of information index	Taganrog Management and Economics Institute students: control group (%)			Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute students: experimental group (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
High	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Medium	55.3	52.2	54.1	51.3	55.0	52.5
Low	44.7	47.8	45.9	48.7	45.0	47.5

The detection of the information index levels of TMEI and ACTI students' media competence development was conducted with the help of a test. The testing procedure with the developed questions (see Appendix) had some vulnerable spots. On the one hand, the test format contains the opportunity of guessing (intuitive or logic – by eliminating most ambiguous answers) the right answer with the probability of 25 %. On the other hand, during the testing there might have occurred cheating or prompting by some participants. However, the test results were verified by

the finding of focus groups and face-to-face interviews that to a large extent facilitated the clarification and validation of students' competence levels.

None of the students questioned demonstrated the high level of media competence development's information index (which was assigned as 75–100 % of correct answers to questions related to terminology, history and theory of media, media culture, media criticism and media education). About 52–54 % of surveyed students showed a medium level of the information parameter (without significant gender differences between the respondents). 45-47 % of the students revealed a low level of media competence's information index that is they were able to give less than 50 % of correct answers. Herewith, the minimal number of correct answers (less than 40 %) was received to the questions connected to the knowledge of media specialists' activities, media educators, media theories, and a media text production stages.

Completing a phrase "Media criticism is ..." from 65.6 % (TMEI students) to 69.5 % (ACTI students) could choose a correct answer out of four suggested. Preliminary conversations with students in focus groups showed that without multiple choice options they, as a rule, found it hard to give a definition to media criticism. Still, we should note that even having a correct answer as one of the options, one third of the students could not detect it.

Completing a sentence "Media culture is...", from 85.3 % of TMEI students to 89.8 % of ACTI students were able to choose a correct answer out of the four given options. However, as focus groups had previously revealed, without ready answers to choose from, students were at a loss.

Completing a definition for media education, from 77.1 % of TMEI students to 83.0 % of ACTI students could choose a correct answer. But again, the same question in focus groups was difficult for the participants.

Finishing a phrase "Media perception is...", 72.1 % of TMEI students and 69.5 % of ACTI students chose the correct option. As before, they had difficulty giving this definition without suggested answers in focus groups.

Completing a phrase "Media language is..." 91.8 % of TMEI students and 83.0 % of ACTI students surveyed could choose the correct answer out of the four provided. Nevertheless, preliminary conversations with students in focus groups showed that without multiple choice options they, as a rule, found it hard to give a definition.

Completing a definition for media competence, 62.3 % of TMEI students and 59.3 % of ACTI students chose the right answer. 64.0 % of TMEI students and 52.5 % of ACTI students were able to differentiate a correct answer while completing a sentence "Media text is...".

Matching a "story line" with its definition, 62.3 % of TMEI students and 47.4 % of ACTI students recognized the correct answer out of the four offered options. 72.1 % TMEI and 67.8 % ACTI students gave the correct answer continuing the phrase "Manipulative influence of media is...".

When answering a question about the workplace of a media critic, 72.1 % of TMEI students and 67.8 % of ACTI students gave the correct answer. We should remember that the latter and all of the above listed questions raised problems when they were asked in focus groups with no multiple choice options. Therefore, the students' choice during a test is more likely a result of logical comparison of the suggested options for choice (the so called "test-wiseness"), but not of the real knowledge. Moreover, a test's major weakness is that it promotes guessing (one can get 25 % by choosing all "a"s or "b"s , etc.). So it should be stressed, that the test results have been balanced with other forms of research.

Answering the question about the job of a media teacher, 37.7 % of TMEI students and 50.8 % of ACTI students got the right answer. Choosing a surname of a researcher who had introduced the media theory concept of the "global village", only one third – 37.7 % of TMEI students and 37.3 % of ACTI students chose the correct answer. While in focus groups none of the participants could remember the name of Marshall McLuhan as its author.

Looking for a term not related to media culture, media criticism or education, 70.5 % (TMEI students) and 72.9 % (ACTI students) were able to choose the correct answer.

However, identifying skills, not related to media culture, media criticism or education, only 14.8 % of Management and Economics Institute, and 27.1 % of ACTI were able to choose the correct answer out of the four options. Another rather low result was shown by the choice of the media-related "wrong sentence": only 34.4 % of TMEI students and 50.8 % of ACTI students could identify the correct answer.

While answering the question, which of the following theories of media is based on the idea of strong, direct impact of a media text on the audience, the impact that provokes immediate reaction, only 34.4 % of respondents from TMEI and 32.2 % of ACTI students chose the correct answer (inoculatory approach). Answering the question, which of the suggested media theories is based on studying sign systems, only 39.4 % of TMEI students and 52.5 % of ACTI students surveyed identified semiotic theory as the correct one.

Choosing the correct phrase (out of 4 options) connected to media criticism, 19.7 % of TMEI students and 18.6 % of ACTI students were able to find it. Answering the question about what media critic's writing about television, only 16.4 % and 23.7 % (students of TMEI and ACTI, correspondently) identified the right person. When doing the assignment to re-arrange the stages of an audiovisual or print media critic's text in the logical sequence, only 39.3 % of TMEI and 23.7 % of ACTI students coped with the task.

Table 6. Classification of the Interpretation/evaluation Index Levels

Levels of interpretation/ evaluation index	Taganrog Management and Economics Institute students: control group (%)			Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute students: experimental group (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
High	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Medium	76.3	73.9	75.4	76.9	75.0	76.3
Low	23.7	26.1	24.6	23.1	25.0	23.7

Exposure of the interpretation/evaluation index levels was conducted through the assignments related to the analysis of various media texts.

As a result (Table 6) it turned out that none of the respondents demonstrated a high level of interpretation/evaluation index. The high level presumes a media text's analysis based on the ability to relate to its author, analysis and synthesis of the space and time form, its understanding, interpretation and evaluation of the author's concept in the context of a media text's structure; the ability to correlate emotional perception with concept opinion, to transfer this opinion onto other genres and types of media culture, to relate a media text with own experience or experience of other people.

The medium level of media competence development's interpretation/evaluation index assumes the ability to characterize characters' behaviour and psychological state on the basis of rudimentary knowledge; the ability to explain the logic of the events sequence in a plot; the ability to dwell on some components of a media image; lack of an author's stance interpretation (or its simplistic interpretation). The medium level was demonstrated by 75-76 % of students without a significant gender difference in both universities.

The low level of interpretation/evaluation parameter presumes a naive, realistic perception of a media text's story line, unawareness of media language peculiarities, inconsistency, confusion of opinions, dependency on peer influence; simplistic interpretation of characters' positions and the author's stance. This level was shown approximately by a quarter of respondents in both universities.

Table 7. Classification of Activity Index Levels

Activity index levels	Taganrog Management and Economics Institute students: control group (%)			Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute students: experimental group (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
High	28.9	34.8	31.2	25.6	30.0	27.1
Medium	55.3	56.5	55.7	56.4	60.0	57.6
Low	15.8	8.7	13.1	18.0	10.0	15.3

The identification of activity index levels was realized in the course of analysis of their assignments targeted at creation and communication of media texts' various forms and genres.

On the whole (Table 7), the high level of the activity index (practical skills to create a media text) was demonstrated by 27-31 % of students. With that male students prevailed by 5 % approximately.

The medium level of activity parameter (hands-on skills to create a media text with the help of a teacher/specialist/other people) was revealed by about a half of the students, with male respondents outnumbering female ones by 1-4 %.

The low level of activity index (inability to create a media text or unwillingness to do it) was shown by 13-15 % of students, with female students prevailing by 7-8 %.

4. Discussion

Validness of our findings can be proved by the research results of Moscow sociological group "Zircon" under the title "Current state and perspectives of media literacy of the Russian citizens based on the national monitoring of media behavior (2009-2013)" which was initiated by the Ministry of Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation and used the volume of 1600 respondents (representative sample). The surveys were held annually in five stages from 2009 to 2013. As reported by "Zircon", on average, over 80 % of Russian population watch television (i.e. contact with television media texts) daily (Zircon, 2013).

If we address the survey results of teenagers' Internet contacts, held by the research group headed by G. Soldatova in 2013 (1203 teenagers aged 12-17 were questioned, living in 58 Russian cities with the population of 100 thousand people and more, from 45 regions and 8 federal areas), we'll see that Russian teens somewhat surpass both adults and university students as far as the frequency of contacts with media texts is concerned. 89 % of teenagers use Internet daily (Soldatova, 2013). Similar findings were gained by other Russian (Tsymbalenko et al., 2013), British (Ofcom, 2013) researches of teenagers' media behavior, and others media researches (Fenton, 2009; Garcia-Ruiz, Ramirez-Garcia, Rodriguez-Rosell, 2014; Hammer, 2011; Hermes et al., 2013; Holt, & Von Krogh, 2010).

The comparative analysis of the students' answers in two Russian universities – Taganrog Management and Economics Institute and Anton Chekhov Taganrog Institute - to the question about the frequency of their contacts with media texts showed that on average, over 80 % of students (82.0 % in TMEI and 83.0 % in ACTI) contact with media on a daily basis. On the whole, the findings verify the results of many sociological surveys (Fedorov, 2003; Myasnikova, 2010; Zircon, 2013; Ofcom, 2013), held in different years. The level of media contacts is very high, while entertaining genres dominate in their preferences. Male respondents to a larger degree than female prefer action/thriller genres, female respondents tend to favor melodramas.

At the same time, as far as we know, neither in Russia, nor in other countries, a research of audience's (including students') contacts with media criticism was conducted. Comparative analysis of students' answers testifies the degree of demand for print and audiovisual media critics' texts: without a significant gender difference, it turned out that from 9.8 % (TMEI students) to 11.9 % (ACTI students) have such contacts daily. Another 42-55 % students read/listen/watch media critical text several times a week/month. Still, as we had anticipated, there are young people in both universities who rarely or never contact media critics' messages: ranging from 32 to 47 %. Focus groups conversations showed that the respondents in the first place, contact with texts of popular but "amateur" media bloggers (who review latest films and computer games, videos, etc.), because these texts are easier and more understandable for them than texts of media professionals.

As far as the research of audience's contacts with media literacy texts, we also have not found the previously done similar surveys in Russia or elsewhere. Before conducting a survey, we took into account that the first or second year students had not studied any media literacy course yet, therefore a percentage of respondents who contacted media education texts on a regular basis would be very low. However the findings corrected our initial expectation: there is a demand for that kind of media texts. It turned out that 5.1 % (ACTI students) to 6.6 % (TMEI students) contact with media education texts daily. From 19.6 % to 28.8 % of students try and do that several times a week/month. However, as we had anticipated, the vast majority of young people - from 66.1 % (ACTI) to 73.8 % (TMEI) never have anything to do with media literacy texts. Focus group

discussions showed that the respondents, in the first place, read the texts related to technical, computer learning aids, and do not differentiate between media education and computer literacy.

Our research has affirmed the tendencies, that had been revealed in previous researches (Ashley et al., 2013; Downey et. Al, 2014; Fantin, 2010; Korochensky, 2003; Marchessault, 2014; Myasnikova, 2010; Sparks, 2013; Potter, 2014).

Noticeably, a high level of motivational index is demonstrated, as a rule, by less than a quarter of young audience. Whereas a considerably larger number of respondents - about a half - has a low level of motivational parameter.

Our research findings proved that the high frequency of contacts with media and high level of motivational index are not directly linked with the high level of comprehensive media texts analysis. Although the information and motivational index levels of media competence are reflected on levels of interpretation/evaluation parameter.

We have also acknowledged a tendency that a high level of media competence's information index does not necessarily correspond to an equally high level of evaluation index. Therefore, awareness of media terms, theory and history of media culture and media criticism does not automatically foster analytical skills related to media texts.

The high level of media competence's information index was not demonstrated by a single student of two universities surveyed that is characteristic of non-media studies departments. We have found that half of respondents have a medium level of information index, that is they do have some knowledge about media terminology, history and theory, gained through self education or/and family education.

As far as the activity levels of media competence development are concerned, our analysis has shown that they are rather similar to previous survey results (Fedorov, 2003; Myasnikova, 2010; Soldatova, 2013; Zircon, 2013; Wilson et al., 2011; Tsymbalenko et al. 2013; Sourbati, 2009), when a high level of this parameter was indicated by around a quarter of a similar age group respondents (with male respondents slightly exceeding female ones).

5. Conclusion

In summary, we can draw a conclusion that our research demonstrates that modern students' media competence in several parameters (motivational, information, interpretation/evaluation, activity) needs to be considerably elevated. The development of the media competence's above mentioned parameters, in our opinion, is possible in the course of media education. Therefore, university students (not less than school students) need to take media literacy courses. In that case we can only speak about significant advancement of the UNESCO concept (Wilson et al., 2011) about the synthesis of information and media literacy.

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