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Analysis of Manipulative Media Texts: World Media Literacy Education Experience

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Abstract

The 21st century brought a kind of media explosion: every day more and more people of different ages are becoming involved in interactive multimedia processes (which have been radically influenced by the development of satellite television, the Internet, mobile telephony and smart phones), access to information has become almost unlimited, moreover, in many more formats. As never before, the audience began to spend a significant amount of time on access to new multimedia opportunities, on creation, consumption and distribution of media texts of various types and genres, on interaction in a variety of media environments. Against this background, it becomes clear to a much larger number of people and organizations that media illiteracy can lead to very real negative political and social consequences.

Of course, false news and other misinformation have been around before, but it is now that media manipulations have acquired a truly global scale. That is why audiences of any age need media competency. Numerous studies prove that media education can give positive results in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes in terms of analysis and critical reflection of media and misinformation. At the same time, one should not forget that misinformation originators, groups conducting political campaigns using data from social networks, extremists and agents of the “troll factories” have a high level of media competence. Therefore, citizen’s media competencies alone are not enough: in order to resist media manipulation at a democratic state level, it is also necessary to develop the activities of media agencies of various levels and state structures.

Keywords: media manipulation, media literacy, media education, disinformation, media text, society, audience, analysis.

1. Introduction

As early as in the second half of the 20th century, media education began to focus on needs of an audience living in an ambiguous media environment. However back then it was still not so multimedia and interactive and dealt with autonomous media. Media messages were then created mainly by professional media agencies, which facilitated perception and ideological, ethical and artistic evaluation of media texts. However, the 21st century witnesses media explosion: every day more and more people of different ages are getting involved in interactive multimedia processes (having been drastically influenced by the development of satellite television, the Internet, mobile and smart gadgets), access to information has become almost unlimited and in many more formats. As never before, the audience began to spend a significant amount of time on access to

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new multimedia opportunities, on the creation, use and distribution of media texts of various types and genres, on interaction in a variety of media environments.

The limited number of media channels in the 20th century undoubtedly narrowed the scope of contact and perception of media texts by the audience. Modern social networks have dramatically changed the situation: going online, a person can now filter out things he/she doesn't like and create a comfortable virtual environment, matching one's attitudes (this is where he/she may become a victim of media manipulators, who investigate personal features of an individual and/or organization).

Against this background, more people and organizations are becoming increasingly aware that media illiteracy can lead to substantial negative political and social consequences.

Of course, false news and other misinformation has been accompanying society for centuries, but it is today that media manipulations have acquired a truly global scale. Moreover, false messages can be created not only for the purpose of (political) misinformation, but just for fun for some social groups, from an ironic, satirical or parody perspective.

However, it can be agreed that "in the age of fake news and alternative facts, the risks and dangers associated with illintentioned individuals or groups easily routing forged ... information through computer and social networks to deceive, cause emotional distress, or to purposefully influence opinions, attitudes, and actions have never been more severe" (Shen et al., 2019: 460).

That's why audiences of any age need media competence. Numerous studies (Bulger, Davison, 2018; De Abreu, 2019; Dell, 2019: 619-620; Gallagher, Magid, 2017: 1; Hartai, 2014; Hobbs, 2010; 2011; Jolls, Wilson, 2014; Mason et al., 2018: 1; McDougall et al., 2018; Mihailidis, 2018; Müller, Denner, 2019: 5; Potter, 2012; Potter, McDougall, 2017; Shen et al., 2019; Wilson, 2019) prove that media education does enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes in terms of analysis and critical reflection of media and misinformation. At the same time, one should not forget that the creators of misinformation, groups conducting political campaigns using data from social networks, extremists and agents of the "troll factories" have a high level of media competence. Therefore, educating media literate citizens is not enough: in order to counter media manipulations at a democratic level, it is necessary to integrate media literacy education into the activities of media agencies and government structures (McDougall et al., 2018: 6; Mihailidis, 2018; Müller, Denner, 2019: 5; Wilson, 2019).

One way or another, but it is precisely the problem of media manipulation that has become acute in recent years that has again drawn attention to media education. Media literacy has increasingly become associated with the fight against fake news, and various stakeholders - from educators to lawmakers and media agencies - have contributed to the creation of new resources and media education programs (Bulger, Davison, 2018: 5; Fake news ..., 2018; European Commission, 2018a; 2018b; Friesem, 2019; Gallagher, Magid, 2017; Give ..., 2019; Mason et al., 2018: 1; Müller, Denner, 2019: 5; Haigh et al., 2019; Hobbs, McGee, 2014; Horbatuck, Sears, 2018; Ireton, Posetti, 2019; McDougall, 2019; Murrok et al., 2018; Pradekso et al., 2018; Salma, 2019; Silverman, 2015).

J. Suiter (Suiter, 2016) associates these new trends with the following reasons:

- the synthesis of such often diverse and contradictory phenomena as globalization, the economic crisis, local armed conflicts, the fight against terrorism;
- the emergence of a new media system, dominated by entertainment shows, social interactive networks and information filters.

The merger of these factors strengthens the emotional component of the media, while seriously weakening the credibility of the audience, cast doubt on many state institutions and political values, and created increased skepticism about media and journalism. As a result, the legitimacy of liberal values loses its significance, but doors open for anti-liberal forces, whose populist and nationalist appeals are gaining strength (Suiter, 2016: 25; Pérez Tornero et al., 2018: 230-232).

2. Materials and methods

Materials of our research are academic books and articles on media manipulation, as well as websites. Methodology is based on theoretical framework on the relationship, interdependence and integrity of the phenomena of reality, the unity of the historical and the logical in cognition, the theory of the dialogue of cultures. The research is based on a content analysis and comparative approaches.

The following methods are used: data collection (monographs, articles, reports) related to the project's theme, analysis of academic literature, theoretical analysis and synthesis; generalization and classification.

3. Discussion

A number of researchers (Bulger, Davison, 2018; Gálik, 2019; Gálik, Gáliková Tolnaiová, 2020; McDougall et al., 2018; Wilson, 2019) believe that media literacy/media competence involves the following components:

- *access and dissemination*: the ability to skillfully find and use media information, as well as share valuable and practical media texts (including filtering and managing media content);
- *analysis and evaluation*: the ability to analyze and evaluate media texts based on critical thinking and understanding of their quality, truthfulness, reliability and other components, including from the point of view of potential consequences of impact on the audience;
- *creation*: the ability to create media texts being aware of their aims, target audience and composition;
- *social responsibility and ethics*: the ability to apply the principles of social responsibility, democratic citizenship and ethics to one's own identity, communication, behavior and media activities (McDougall et al., 2018: 7).

Certainly, these components of media competence should be considered in a comprehensive manner, including the framework of topics related to manipulative influences, which significantly complicated the work of modern teachers seeking to convey to their students the value of true facts, especially in those subject areas that have long been used as a propaganda tool (social science, history, literature, etc.).

In the case of addressing such a narrow field of media education as the development of critical thinking regarding media manipulations, it is reasonable to rely on five guiding principles for teaching "How to Know What to Believe": misinformation is pollution; all information is not designed to manipulate; people tend to see what they want in "the media"; news is distinct from most other forms of information; digital forensics skills are obligatory (Adams, 2018: 232-234).

However, we fully agree with D. Buckingham: "Yet there is a broader problem here. Media literacy is often invoked in a spirit of 'solutionism'. When media regulation seems impossible, media literacy is often seen as the acceptable answer – and indeed a magical panacea – for all media-related social and psychological ills. Are you worried about violence, sexualisation, obesity, drugs, consumerism? Media literacy is the answer! Let the teachers deal with it! This argument clearly frames media literacy as a protectionist enterprise, a kind of prophylactic. It oversimplifies the problems it purports to address, overstates the influence of media on young people, and underestimates the complexity of media education. Thus, violence in society is not simply caused by media violence, and it will not be reduced by simply telling kids that movies are teaching them the wrong lessons – or indeed by stopping them watching TV, as some propose. Similar arguments apply to fake news. Fake news is a symptom of much broader tendencies in the worlds of politics and media. People (and not just children) may be inclined to believe it for quite complex reasons. And we can't stop them believing it just by encouraging them to check the facts, or think rationally about the issues" (Buckingham, 2017).

In fact, a tendency to reduce *media literacy* to *protection from media* is becoming increasingly accepted: "Media Literacy - the ability of audiences to think critically and analyze the manipulative propaganda around them - as a key way to withstand information war, lies, and hate speech" (Copeland, 2016: 2).

In this context, the appearance on the field of media education of new, previously unthinkable actors, such as, for example, NATO, is remarkable.

At the first glance, the media education tasks that NATO aims at, seem quite logical:

- "Enhance general media literacy. The mass media and opinion leaders can play important roles in educating the public about the misinformation activities in online media – by providing analysis of trolling tactics and manipulation techniques, as well as suggesting criteria for identifying organised trolling. Putting trolling in the headlines and encouraging people to share their experiences of being attacked/harassed by trolls would facilitate discussion on how to identify the malicious use of social media and seeking ways to counter it;
- Enhance the public's critical thinking and media literacy. Long-term efforts are required to enhance the public's critical thinking and education on the weaponisation of the media,

particularly online media. Perhaps providing simple user guides for the general public (for example, when opening comment sections) on how to identify trolls would be the first and simplest step towards raising society's awareness of the manipulation techniques utilised in the internet. One solution might be introducing media knowledge and source appraisal in social media to school curricula" (NATO, 2016: 82-83).

However, if one reads the chapters' headings ("Trolling and Russian military strategy", "Russian military strategy and hybrid trolls", "Incidences of pro-Russian trolling", "The possible influence of the content generated by pro – Russian trolls?", "Trolling impact assessment in the perception of Russian-speaking society") of this book, it becomes obvious that all of the media education anti-manipulation activities proposed by NATO have a virtually unambiguous anti-Russian orientation. It is not without reason that on the 106 pages of this book the word Russia (usually in a negative context) is mentioned 585 times (NATO, 2016).

Another problem, in our opinion, is related to the fact that a refutation directed against media manipulative exposure introduces negative information even to that part of the audience that previously did not know about it. As a result, a situation may arise when one part of the audience will believe in a manipulative lie, and the other will receive its refutation, thereby refuting the fakes only widens the audience. "Oddly enough, the fight against fakes is complicated by the fact that people who read and share fakes do not read the online sources where fakes are checked, where an intense struggle is being waged against them. Such sites are read only by professionals. They can be journalists or, again, anti-fake experts who create their own websites. The refutation is focused on the initial appearance of the accusation, that is, it is journalism that appears post-factum, it is utterly tied to the information actions of the opposite side" (Pocheptsov, 2019).

4. Results

It must be admitted that there are significant pedagogical problems associated with how to design media education classes on the basis of media manipulations and fake news. David Buckingham (Buckingham, 2017), in our opinion, rightly believes that to assess the reliability of sources on the Internet is probably much more difficult to do than traditional press and television, although experienced media educators are likely to cope with this task. However, in this case, the assessment of truth and lies will depend on knowledge of the context and content, as well as on the form of presentation of the material. This is especially difficult in conditions where the majority of the audience (both youth and adult) is unlikely to be interested in exposing false political or social information (especially if they did not know about it before).

R. Hobbs (Hobbs, 2017) provides an example of a successful practice of one of the American schools where an English teacher uses the Internet resource *Mind Over Media*, developed by the University of Rhode Island's media education laboratory. This resource includes more than a thousand examples of modern media propaganda on topics related to national and international politics, emigration, crime, justice, media, nutrition, health, environment, and wildlife. This site also offers free lesson plans for studying media manipulation. In this way, secondary school students first encounter the concept "propaganda" and discover its techniques (for example, triggering strong emotions, simplifying information and ideas, addressing specific needs of the audience, attacking opponents), perform creative assignments, learn to recognize manipulation and propaganda, filter out quality information and become more media-competent (Hobbs, 2017).

So, if these useful anti-manipulation skills are taught at school, then the question arises: will such skills be used outside of school?

One of the most eminent modern researchers in media culture and education, Professor D. Buckingham argues that: "How many people are willing to routinely evaluate the reliability of online sources, or to cross-check information - especially in an age when we have become used to instant access to information? Personally, I am sorry to say that I rarely do this, and I doubt that I could persuade an average sixteen-year-old student to do so either. Beyond this, there is the problem of epistemology. You don't have to be a complete relativist to acknowledge that a given 'fact' can be interpreted in many different ways by different people in different contexts. There are some absolute truths and some absolute falsehoods, but between them lies a very large gray area" (Buckingham, 2017).

In addition to this, it is extremely important to identify why people can easily believe seemingly "fake" news, it should be recognized that, perceiving and evaluating any media text, the audience relies not only on rational thinking, but on intuition, emotions, (latent) desires,

prejudices and fantasies, on the whole intricate and ambiguous ensemble of one's life and media experience. But this experience can be (especially in an adult audience) developed contrary to democratic ideals and views. Most likely, it will be impossible to convince a racist to abandon his views with the help of rational arguments and analysis of anti-racist media texts. Among other things, the cultivation of a critical view of social processes and media culture can develop into total cynicism (supported by conspiracy theory) – a complete distrust of everything and everyone, and especially the media (Buckingham, 2017).

The latter tendency is asserted, for example, by the Knight Foundation study – the number of Americans who trust the media has declined dramatically:

- about 66 % say that most news media don't do a good job of separating fact from opinion;
- more people have a negative (43 %) than a positive (33 %) view of the news media, while 23 % are neutral;
- on a multiple-item media trust scale with scores ranging from a low of zero to a high of 100, the average American scores a 37 (Knight Foundation, 2018).

The Commission on Fake News and Critical Literacy in Schools found that “only 2 % of children and young people in the UK have the critical literacy skills they need to tell whether a news story is real or fake. Fake news is driving a culture of fear and uncertainty among young people. Half of children (49.9 %) are worried about not being able to spot fake news and almost two-thirds of teachers (60.9 %) believe fake news is having a harmful effect on children's well-being by increasing levels of anxiety, damaging self-esteem and skewing their world view. ... the online proliferation of fake news is making children trust the news less (60.6 %). While almost half of older children get their news from websites (43.8 %) and social media (49.5 %), only a quarter of children actually trust online news sources (26.2 % trust websites). Regulated sources of news, such as TV and radio, remain the most used and the most trusted by children and young people. Children are most likely to talk to their family (29.9 %) and friends (23.4 %) about fake news and least likely to speak to their teachers (6.4 %); yet 98.8 % of teachers believe they have the greatest responsibility for helping children develop the literacy skills they need to identify fake news. Children with the poorest literacy skills, such as boys and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were also found to be the least likely to be able to spot fake news. Indeed, half of teachers (53.5 %) believe that the national curriculum does not equip children with the literacy skills they need to identify fake news, and a third (35.2 %)” (Fake news..., 2018: 4).

According to the results of a qualitative sociological study conducted by D.B. Pisarevskaya in February 2015 with people whose socio-political preferences had been known in advance (25 expert interviews with residents of Russia from 20 to 35 years old), four strategies of behavior in perceiving the news were noted:

- to perceive and integrate into one's world outlook only those facts from the news that correspond to the socio-political preferences of the person and therefore are considered reliable (exact correlation);
- not to trust the news in the media fundamentally: “There is no such a thing as objective news”;
- to study news from various sources (including foreign-language ones) in order to get a “slice” of various news and points of view, and then form their own perspective on their basis;
- to try and separate news facts from opinions and trust only facts, but in the absence of a clear separation between journalism of opinions and journalism of facts, this is difficult to do. Also, the very ambiguity of the concept of “a fact” prevents it: with modern technical means available on the Internet you can easily find evidence of eyewitnesses to events, but they may not have the fullness of the picture, and their photo and video materials can be easily edited, remounted or even faked. Journalists and bloggers in reporting texts can distort facts or keep silent about any details” (Pisarevskaya, 2018: 152).

To date, media educators (Bulger, Davison, 2018; Hobbs, 2017; McDougall et al., 2018; News ..., 2019: 35; Wilson, 2019 and others) offer the following practical areas of educational work with news media information:

- establish clear principles for building a media education program;
- create a modular curriculum that has a potential to grab the audience's attention, choose remarkable materials of news and information (including manipulative examples too);
- develop a series of assessment questions and interactive tasks regarding the topics of each lesson;

- create quantitative and qualitative tools for assessing the media competence of the audience;
- treat students not only as consumers, but also as creators of media texts;
- involve news agencies as educational partners;
- cooperate with journalists; engage them in media education courses, both as instructors, and assessors;

- teach the audience to appreciate the quality standards of journalism;

D. Pisarevskaya offers the following recommendations for determining the reliability of news in the press and on the Internet:

- to check the primary source given in the article: is the news still present on the website or has it already been removed, since it contained inaccurate information; whether the news was on fact-checking sites in other languages;

- to check if the piece of news is on other news sites (if it is not there, this does not necessarily mean that it is a fake; perhaps other resources simply have not published it yet. However, you should study the news more carefully and also check whether the news is present on implausible sites);

- to question the reputation of the publication and the author's reputation (whether they published fakes before);

- to check geographical location of the message's author (how far is he from the place of events);

- to check publication address: url, name, location (fake news sites sometimes "disguise" as urls of popular news sites, but a slight difference in url is also possible); general information about the publication (who supports the work of this publication, site; is it neutral or promotes a particular perspective);

- to verify photos and videos (if they are presented as exclusive shots from the scene, it should be clarified whether they have appeared on the Internet before, whether they were processed in Photoshop or similar software. There are various online services that allow you to do this (e.g. TinEye.com).

- to check the correspondence of the headline to the content of the news;

- to identify action verbs and personal pronouns in the headings: is there a call for some action (for example: "Urgently read this news") or personal pronouns (for example: "She decided to share her story");

- to analyze if there are any references to "anonymous authority", which are used for greater credibility: e.g. "Based on many years of research, scientists have established ...", "Most doctors recommend ...", "A source from the closest presidential quarter who wished to remain anonymous, reports ...";

- to see if there are manipulations and pressure on emotions: is the author striving to furnish opinions and emotions as facts and create a certain emotional impression on the audience;

- to examine the quotes and indirect speech: are the citations distorted by being placed in a different context or are somebody's words incorrectly cited;

- to check whether the quantitative data referred to in the article comply with the rules for statistical reporting of information;

- to examine eyewitness accounts on social networks: what eyewitnesses write about the event (Pisarevskaya, 2018: 162-164).

We have adapted and summarized (see [Appendix 1](#)) a set of media education assignments aimed at the factual analysis of media texts (among other things, from the perspective of their manipulative influences) developed by E. Murrok, J. Amulya, M. Druckman and T. Liubyva (Murrok et al., 2018: 37-40) to show the possibilities of their practical application.

Based on the aforementioned, we can agree that the structure and conceptual features of fact checking in media literacy education should be aimed at: avoiding subjective interpretation of information; prevention of manipulating the evidence; elimination of bias when drawing conclusions; preventing allegation of bias (Gorokhovskiy, 2017: 25).

However, in practice this can often be violated by the media educators themselves.

For example, the authors of the textbook for teachers "Media Literacy and Critical Thinking in Social Science Lessons: a Teacher's Guide" at the beginning reasonably state: "In order to form an objective opinion, it is worth analyzing historical facts and collect as much proven and verified information as possible. The source of historical facts is, first of all, historical documents ...

(Primary sources are original sources that do not interpret information. These are research reports, photographs, diaries, letters ... When using primary sources, adjustments should be made for the subjective factor. Secondary sources are provided by intermediaries when information has already been interpreted, analyzed and summarized. These are scientific articles, books, critical analysis, etc. Tertiary sources are compilations, indexes, and other organized sources: abstracts, tables, encyclopedias" (Bakka et al., 2016: 13-14).

However, when later in their textbook its authors (Bakka et al., 2016: 13-14) move on to a specific example of the information analysis, they seem to forget about the basic principles of checking and interpreting facts in a media text.

Thus, in the textbook "Media Literacy and Critical Thinking in Social Science Lessons: a Teacher's Guide" (Media literacy and critical thinking in the lessons of social studies: a companion for the teacher), students are asked to investigate how justified in relation to the leader of the Ukrainian nationalist movement Stepan Bandera (1909-1959) the following characteristics: "terrorist", "collaborator", "authoritarian leader", "schismatic" and "only symbol". And here, instead of comparing different sources and points of view, the opinions of authoritative historians and archivists, to study the works of S. Bandera himself, the authors of the textbook offer students only one option: to read the article of the ex-director of the State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine V. Vyatrovich "Bandera: old and new myths" (Vyatrovich, 2009), on the basis of which the students should answer such questions: 1) How and why was the myth created? 2) Who benefited from it? 3) What methods did the author use to debunk the myth? 4) What other methods can be used? (Bakka et al., 2016: 13).

Based on the adapted (Appendix 1) set of media education tasks developed by E. Murrock, J. Amulya, M. Druckman and T. Liubyva (Murrok et al., 2018: 37-40), we will check in what ways the article of V. Vyatrovich (Vyatrovich, 2009) meets the criteria for a balanced verification of facts:

1. Who is the target audience of this media text?

V. Vyatrovich (Vyatrovich, 2009) published in the Ukrainian language, it is clear that it is primarily intended for the audience of residents of Ukraine (although there are also translations of this article into Russian on the Internet).

2. Does this media text allow to draw certain conclusions?

Yes, it does, and the authors of the textbook do this, claiming (in full accordance with V. Vyatrovich's views) that "they have seen in practice the way a negative image of one of the symbols of the Ukrainian liberation struggle is formed and corresponding myths arise" (Bakka et al., 2016: 13).

3. How does this media text make one feel?

The text of V. Vyatrovich is undoubtedly aimed at evoking positive emotions in the audience towards S. Bandera: "It would seem that everything is already clear, and there is not a single nation who would reject such a hero. However, still often Ukrainian authors regarding Bandera lack the courage to draw a conclusion from these facts. But I am convinced that the moment will come when the authors, readers and all other Ukrainians will find enough strength to call a hero a hero. And Bandera will again become a symbol, a symbol of the fact that Ukrainians no longer need to look back at someone, formulating their views on the past or vision of the future" (Vyatrovich, 2009).

6. Did this media text exclude any point of view?

In his article, V. Vyatrovich cites opinions (though without any specific references to any authoritative sources) that are ideologically sharply at odds with his views, however, using the manipulation methods of "juggling cards", he exaggerates and dramatically simplifies the theses of his anonymous opponents, adjusting them to his pre-prepared politically biased answers.

7. What points of view are missing from this media text?

Due to the anonymity of the opinions of opponents, the article by V. Vyatrovich lacks the points of view of authoritative historians and archivists.

8. Do all official names, data, and quotes / opinions in this media text have clear references?

The article by V. Vyatrovich (Vyatrovich, 2009) does not contain a single quote, and the data are not backed up by any links to archival documents and authoritative historical research.

9. Are the images, statistics, and symbols consistent with the contents of the media text?

There are no images and statistics in the article of V. Vyatrovich, although there are verbal symbols that correlate with the content.

10. *The name of this media text is... (neutral, causes an emotional reaction, difficult to answer).*

The title of V. Vyatrovich's article ("Bandera: Old and New Myths") may seem neutral at first glance, however, from the very beginning, the author's explicit calculation for the audience's emotional reaction is revealed.

11. *The name of this media text ... (corresponds to its content; does not correspond to its content; difficult to answer).*

The title of the article as a whole corresponds to the content, based on the author's task to refute the myths created by the anonymous opponents of V. Vyatrovich.

12. *The author of the media text ... (has a biased position; the position is neutral; difficult to answer).*

The text of the article clearly shows that its author has a biased pro-Bandera ideological position.

13. *Are the facts in this media text separate from opinions?*

The facts in the article by V. Vyatrovich are not separated from his opinion and are presented in a distinctly manipulative manner.

14. *Is this media text balanced in terms of opinions, links, and sources?*

The article by V. Vyatrovich is far from balanced: the author gives only points of view that are convenient for his criticism, while they are anonymous and are submitted without any reference to any historical sources.

15. *How reliable are the statements made by the experts cited in this media text? (a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "not trustworthy at all", and 10 – "fully trustworthy").*

The article by V. Vyatrovich does not provide a single alternative opinion of an authoritative expert. As for the opinion of the author himself, in view of his obvious bias and manipulateness, in our opinion, it may not be considered fully credible.

16. *Does this media text have a clear "hook" for the audience?*

Yes, the hook is clearly visible in the text of the article to attract the attention of the audience; it was stated by the author in the introduction: "Anniversary dates bring back old Soviet clichés (terrorist, traitor, collaborator) to life. In the case of Bandera, new stereotypes are added to these stamps - a destructive politician, a schismatic, an authoritarian leader" (Vyatrovich, 2009).

17. *Are numerous political figures mentioned in this media text?*

There is no numerous mention of politicians in this article.

18. *Is this media text focused on the achievements / activities of one person?*

Yes, this article is about one person.

19. *Is the author's point of view supported by facts?*

The facts in the article by V. Vyatrovich are presented only through the prism of his opinion, without reference to authoritative sources and archival materials.

20. *Express your attitude to the following phrase: "This is an objective, balanced media text" (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, difficult to answer).*

Of course, the biased and subjective text of V. Vyatrovich, for the reasons described above, cannot be considered balanced.

21. *Given your answers above, how would you rate this media text? (1 – completely implausible, 10 – completely plausible)*

An article by V. Vyatrovich may look plausible only for an audience that is not capable of critically evaluating the manipulation techniques used by the author and a priori having pro-Bandera views.

And although the authors of the textbook quite prudently write that "when we talk about an outstanding historical figure that is important for a certain people, nation, country, then you should not recklessly trust the media, both from countries seeking to level out the significance of this figure, and those that they only call for worship" (Bakka et al., 2016: 13), in practice they themselves act contrary to their own advice and, as we have proven above, actually force students to accept a single, biased viewpoint.

Thus, we have identified another problem of media education related to the disclosure of false information: the political bias of some media educators themselves, who in fact do not resist fake media messages, but also contribute to their propaganda among the mass audience.

5. Conclusion

It has been proven by numerous studies (Bulger, Davison, 2018: 5; Fake news ..., 2018; Friesem, 2019; Gallagher, Magid, 2017; Mason et al., 2018: 1; Müller, Denner, 2019: 5; Give ..., 2019; Haigh et al., 2019; Horbatuck, Sears, 2018; Ireton, Posetti, 2019; McDougall, 2019; Murrok et al., 2018; Kačínová, 2018; Petranová et al., 2017; Pradekso et al., 2018; Salma, 2019; Silverman, 2015; Šupšáková, 2016) that initiatives to increase media literacy, including educational programs involving journalists, reduce the vulnerability of the audience to media manipulation and misinformation. The development of critical thinking and analytical skills is a key component of successful educational activities. A media competent audience is more likely to reveal misinformation, which gives hope for the effectiveness of media education programs (McDougall et al., 2018: 7).

It is remarkable that some researchers (Copeland, 2016: 2) even propose to popularize media education by introducing its elements into television talk shows and entertainment programs, for example, when hosts discuss relevant news issues with celebrity guests.

However, for all that, media literacy “cannot be treated as a panacea. Media literacy is just one frame in a complex media and information environment. At issue is not simply an individual’s responsibility for vetting information but how state-sponsored disinformation efforts and our everyday technologies influence the information we see and how we interact with it. The extent to which media literacy can combat the problematic news environment is an open question. Is denying the existence of climate change a media literacy problem? ... Can media literacy combat the intentionally opaque systems of serving news on social media platforms? Or intentional campaigns of disinformation? It is crucial to examine the promises and limits of media literacy before embracing it as a counter to disinformation and media manipulation” (Bulger, Davison, 2018: 6).

This is why the following questions are so important:

- Can media education be successful in preparing the audience for contacts with fake media texts?
- What social strata groups do media educators need to focus on? What new media education initiatives need to be developed?
- How can media education media literacy programs help people understand that they often overestimate their ability to evaluate false media texts?
- Can a fact check in (news) media texts be appropriate in a person’s daily contacts with the media?
- How can an audience committed to misinformation and propaganda can sow distrust of the media and create hostile media texts?
- How can politically engaged media educators promote fake, ideologically biased media texts among a mass audience?

That is why only if every person (with the help of a media teacher or on their own) will study the key concepts of media education (i.e. representation, audience, ideology, etc.) and develop a balanced and unbiased analytical thinking in relation to modern media texts (including news), it will be possible to avoid both the false binary “real vs. fake” and the dangers of hypercynical distrust of all media (McDougall, 2019: 42).

Moreover, we concur with Buckingham (Buckingham, 2017) that, so far, the development of human media competence, unfortunately, has not been supported by the media agencies, which are often far from willing to truly inform citizens and promote democracy. Declaring that in a free economic market media regulation is impossible (and false information – among other things – often brings financial profit), media agencies hold the individual consumer responsible for contacts with media texts. Such an approach can serve as the basis for state regulation of media and government statements about its support for media education (which often remain declaration only). In any case, pedagogical approaches (of media education) are not enough, we need a conscious strategy for reforming the media sphere. In addition, one must also take into account the multidirectional activity of Internet users who are not members of any traditional media corporations (Buckingham, 2017).

In this context, we agree with J. McDougall (McDougall, 2019: 42-43): instead of developing media competency rating scales, media education should teach the audience to apply in practice the media researchers' and media educators' tools; media education should be based on dynamic interactive approaches and cooperation of education and media culture actors; the traditional

media educational topics should be complemented by practical exercises of the analysis of social networks and Internet information, in particular, regarding commercial and political exploitation and manipulative influences.

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Appendix 1

Questions for the media text analysis regarding its manipulative techniques and false information

1. Who is the intended audience for this media text?
2. Does the wording of the message suggest certain conclusions? (Yes, No, Don't know).
3. What kind of emotion does this media text evoke? (Positive, Neutral, Negative, Don't know)
6. Did this media text miss any points of view? (Yes, No, Don't know).
7. What points of view may be missing?
8. Do all names of officials, data and quotes/opinions have clear references (Yes, No, Don't know).
9. Do the style, images, statistics, and symbols correspond to the content of the media text (Yes, No, Don't know).
10. The title of this media text... (is neutral; provokes an emotional response; Don't know).
11. The title of this media text... (corresponds to the content; Doesn't correspond to the content; Don't know).
12. The author(s) of this media text... (shows bias in what he/she/they says; Authors' position is neutral; Don't know).
13. Are facts separated from opinion in this media text? (Yes; No; Don't Know).
14. Is this media text balanced in terms of opinions, references and sources (Yes, No, Don't know).

15. How credible are the statements made by the experts cited in this media text? (1-10 Scale, where 1 – Not credible at all, and 10 – Extremely credible).
16. Does this media text have an explicit attention hook? (Yes, No, Don't know).
17. Are multiple political figures mentioned (Yes, No, Don't know).
18. Does it focus on achievements/activities of one person (Yes, No, Don't know).
19. Are the statements in this media text supported by facts (Yes, No, Do not know).
20. Rate the following statement: "this is an objective media text" (In this definition, objective means "balanced, unbiased") (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree).
21. Considering your answers above, how would you rate this media text? (1 – It is not credible, 10 – It is credible, etc) (adapted by authors, based on: Murrok et al., 2018: 37-40).