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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA TEXTS AS A TOOL FOR STUDENTS' MEDIA LITERACY: A STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL MODEL

Abstract: *the article examines the transformation of the media consumption structure of the student audience under the influence of the digital environment: the news agenda is shaped not only by editorial offices but also by platforms, recommendation algorithms, and users, while hybrid formats make external signs of credibility unreliable. It is noted that existing approaches describe media literacy as a list of competencies and rarely offer a reproducible procedure for working with a text. The aim is to systematize existing approaches and propose a structural-functional model of critical media text analysis for university practice. Based on publications from 2003–2025, the protectionist, competency-based, and critical-constructivist approaches are identified. A four-block model of analysis is proposed – origin and channel, factual basis, discursive means, and algorithmic environment – with a decision rule for each block and a criteria-based assessment scale. The conclusion is drawn that the model translates media literacy into a step-by-step procedure; empirical approbation constitutes the prospect for further research.*

Keywords: *media literacy, media education, media competence, critical thinking, media text, fact-checking, media consumption, digital media environment, student audience.*

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КРИТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ МЕДИАТЕКСТА КАК ИНСТРУМЕНТ МЕДИАГРАМОТНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ: СТРУКТУРНО-ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ МОДЕЛЬ

Аннотация: *в статье рассматривается изменение структуры медиапотребления студенческой аудитории под влиянием цифровой среды: новостная повестка формируется не только редакциями, но и платформами, рекомендательными алгоритмами и пользователями, а гибридные форматы делают внешние признаки достоверности ненадёжными. Отмечено, что существующие подходы описывают медиаграмотность как перечень компетенций и редко предлагают воспроизводимую процедуру работы с текстом. Цель – систематизировать подходы и предложить структурно-функциональную модель критического анализа медиатекста для вузовской практики. На материале публикаций 2003–2025 годов выделены протекционистский, компетентностный и критико-конструктивистский подходы. Предложена модель из четырёх блоков анализа – происхождение и канал, фактологическая основа, дискурсивные средства, алгоритмическая среда – с правилом решения по каждому блоку и критериальной шкалой оценивания. Сделан вывод, что модель переводит медиаграмотность в пошаговую процедуру; эмпирическая апробация составляет перспективу исследования.*

Ключевые слова: *медиаграмотность, медиаобразование, медиакомпетентность, критическое мышление, медиатекст, фактчекинг, медиапотребление, цифровая медиасреда, студенческая аудитория.*

Introduction.

The audience has ceased to be a mere recipient: a repost or a screenshot of someone else's publication have become elements of the news agenda, while the selection of what a reader sees is governed by recommendation systems oriented towards engagement rather than accuracy. In one and the same interface a student meets texts produced by an editorial office, a press service, an anonymous channel or a generative model, and the markers that once helped to orient oneself no longer differentiate

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reliably – which is why media literacy is turning into an infrastructural condition of public communication.

Russian media education treats media competence as a set of motives, knowledge, skills and abilities enabling interaction with media, with critical thinking at its core [4; 5]; activity-based technologies prove more effective here than lectures [6]. Anglophone research shifts the emphasis from protection to participation: media education unites analysis and production, literacy is tied to convergence [7], media, information and digital literacies converge [8], and literacy grows level by level with the complexity of messages [9].

Recent studies take practices as their object: project-based activity forms professional competencies [2], the ideas of school graduates about the social role of the media remain everyday [1], and assessing a digital tool requires measurable criteria [3].

The review reveals a gap: the pedagogical tradition describes the composition of media competence, journalistic research describes the media environment, yet the intermediate link – a reproducible procedure for analysing an individual text with assessable results – remains underdeveloped. Two research questions follow: which limitations of the existing approaches become evident in a hybrid digital environment, and what procedure can operationalise critical analysis? The aim is to propose a structural-functional model of critical media text analysis suitable for university practice; the novelty lies in converting theoretical approaches into a procedure of four blocks, each ending with a verifiable decision.

Materials and Methods.

The study is theoretical and review-based. Its material comprises publications on media education, media literacy and journalism issued in 2003–2025, including the journals Znak: problemnoe pole mediaobrazovaniia and Voprosy teorii i praktiki zhurnalistiki; ten sources met the criteria of scholarly relevance, availability of the full text and presence of DOI or EDN identifiers.

Theoretical analysis was used to compare the approaches along three dimensions – object of analysis, purpose attributed to media literacy, unit of analysis proposed to learners; generalisation served to formulate their limitations. Modelling

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was used to build the model: four requirements were derived from the limitations and matched with a block, questions and a decision rule, and the rubric followed from the same requirements. The model has not been tested empirically; the example below is illustrative.

Results and Discussion.

Three approaches to media literacy. The sources allow three approaches to be distinguished; they differ in their answer to the question of why an audience needs media literacy (Table 1).

Table 1

Research approaches to media literacy and their limitations

Approach	Core propositions	Limitation
Protectionist	Media are a source of risk; education protects the audience from manipulation	Assumes a passive audience; fails where users produce content themselves
Competence-based	Media literacy is a set of motives, knowledge and skills that can be diagnosed	Gives a list of outcomes but no procedure for a concrete text
Critical-constructivist	Analysis and production are inseparable; literacy grows in activity	Requires operationalisation: without fixed steps all depends on the teacher

The differences are practical. The protectionist logic presumes that a true text can be recognised by external features of the channel, yet native advertising, a press release published as news or a comment torn out of context make such a check insufficient. The competence-based approach answers what should be formed, but not how to do it in class. The critical-constructivist approach fits a student audience best, yet needs an operational core – actions that can be performed and assessed. The same conclusion follows from professional practice [2; 3].

A structural-functional model of critical media text analysis. The model unfolds the critical-constructivist logic into four blocks, designed according to four requirements: R1 – applicability to any type of text; R2 – each step ends with a verifiable decision; R3 – the environment that delivered the text is taken into account; R4 – the result is assessable by criteria known in advance.

The first block, origin and channel, establishes who the author or publisher is, what interests are attached to the text, when it was published and which primary source

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it refers to. The second, factual basis, checks the attribution of quotations and the primary data behind the figures cited. The third, discursive means, registers the relationship between headline and text, the framing of the event and the selection of experts. The fourth, algorithmic environment, considers how platform formats and engagement metrics affect the selection and presentation of material, and how □ersonalization narrows the set of texts available to the reader (Table 2).

Table 2

Blocks of media text analysis and typical audience errors

Block	Key questions	Typical audience error
Origin and channel	Who is the author? When was it published? What is the primary source?	Judging by the recognisability of a logo or by the design
Factual basis	Where do the figures come from? Who said this and when? Is there a document?	Accepting statistics without a source and without checking the date
Discursive means	Does the headline match the text? Whose positions are absent?	Reading the headline instead of the text; treating an illustration as evidence
Algorithmic environment	Why did this text appear in the feed? What does the format aim at?	Perceiving a personalised feed as a picture of the world

Each block ends with one of three decisions: to pass, to verify or to reject, which makes the result observable. A hypothetical example shows the scheme at work: a post claims that prices have risen and cites «official statistics» without a link. In the first block the channel proves anonymous and the post undated; in the second, the figures have no source; in the third, the headline asserts a conclusion absent from the body text; in the fourth, the high engagement rate suggests a format designed for sharing. The decision is to reject, and each step rests on a feature of the text rather than on an impression.

Assessment rubric and conditions of implementation. Each block corresponds to a criterion described at three levels (Table 3). The rubric does not assess whether the conclusion coincides with the teacher’s; it assesses whether it is grounded in the features of the text.

Table 3

Rubric for assessing the results of media text analysis

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Criterion	0 points	1 point	2 points
Origin and channel	Author, publisher and date are not established	Author and date are named, affiliation is omitted	All parameters are established, the interests are characterised
Factual basis	Figures and quotations are accepted without checking	The absence of a source is noticed, but no verification follows	The primary source is found or its absence is documented
Discursive means	The text is retold without analysis of language	Evaluative lexis or framing is noticed in isolation	Headline, framing, voices and visuals are analysed systematically
Algorithmic environment	The origin of the text in the feed is not considered	The platform is mentioned without consequences for the content	The influence of format, metrics and personalisation is explained

Three conditions for implementing the model follow. First, analysis should be conducted on texts from the current agenda, since it is the encounter with an ambiguous text that forms the skill [6]. Second, it should be combined with productive activity – writing one's own text and reflecting on it – which follows the logic of project-based learning [2]. Third, students' own media consumption should become an object of reflection. The teacher acts as a mediator who maintains the procedure; the main risk is the simulation of criticality, when ready-made labels replace analysis, and the fixed sequence of blocks reduces it.

Discussion. The proposed scheme does not introduce new components of media competence; it changes their arrangement. Fedorov's model specifies the composition of competence [4], Potter's describes the levels at which literacy grows [9], Buckingham insists on the unity of analysis and production. The present model answers a narrower question: what exactly should a student do with a text so that the declared competencies become observable. It is close to Koltay's argument about the integration of literacies [8]: the fourth block belongs to digital and information literacy. The limitation is clear: the model formalises the procedure but does not guarantee its application beyond the classroom, and since everyday ideas about the media are formed before university [1], it works best within a systematic course. The prospect of further research is empirical testing of the model.

Conclusions.

1. Research on media literacy has developed three approaches – protectionist, competence-based and critical-constructivist; in a hybrid digital environment the first

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two are insufficient, since they assume a passive audience or amount to a list of competencies.

2. The proposed model converts media literacy from a declarative set of competencies into a step-by-step procedure of four blocks – origin and channel, factual basis, discursive means, algorithmic environment – each ending with a verifiable decision to pass, to verify or to reject.

3. The model is applicable to news, advertising and user-generated texts, and the rubric allows the results of analysis to be assessed by criteria known in advance.

4. The theoretical significance lies in the operationalisation of media literacy with respect to an individual text; the practical one, in the use of the model and the rubric in media and pedagogical courses. Empirical testing remains the prospect of further research.

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