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Semiotic and Identification Analysis of Media Texts on Media Education Classes With Students

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Abstract

Semiotic analysis of media texts is an analysis of the language of signs and symbols in media texts. This analysis is closely linked to the iconographic analysis. Semiotic analysis of media texts for training purposes based on the semiotic theory of media (Semiotic Approach, Le decodage des medias), grounded in the work of such theorists as R. Barthes, C. Metz, U. Eco and others. Identification analysis is the recognition / identification of hidden messages in media texts, because media agencies often offer simplistic solutions for complex problems. The media educators can use in this area educational games with practical content, aimed at audience understanding how certain ideas, problems can be encoded, camouflaged in the media text.

This article presented the main directions for Semiotic and Identification analysis on media education classes for student audience, including the examples of creative problems and issues associated with this type of the analysis in the context of media education problems, i.e. based on six key concepts of media literacy education: agency, category, language, technology, audience, representation. The author supposes that this analysis of media texts on media education classes can significantly develop media competence of students, including critical thinking and perception.

Keywords: semiotic, identification, analysis, media, media texts, media education, media literacy, media competence, students.

Introduction

The Semiotic analysis of media text (an analysis of the language of signs and symbols in media texts) has the real actuality in the modern world. This analysis is closely linked to the iconographic analysis. Semiotic analysis of media texts for training purposes based on the semiotic theory of media (Semiotic Approach, Le decodage des medias), grounded in the work of such theorists as R. Barthes [Barthes, 1964], C. Metz [Metz, 1964], U. Eco [Eco, 1976] and others. Identification analysis is the recognition / identification of hidden messages in media texts, because media agencies often offer simplistic solutions for complex problems. We can use in this area educational games with practical content, aimed at audience understanding how certain ideas, problems can be encoded, camouflaged in the media text.

Identification analysis of media texts implies a number of students to creative tasks [but I substantially supplemented and revised this cycle of tasks]: literary analytical, role-playing, finesimulation. Each of these tasks includes analysis of the key aspect of media literacy education [media agencies, media categories, media language, media technologies, media representations, media audiences, etc.].

Materials and methods

We use the materials of the classical literature about Semiotic and Identification analysis [Bartes, 1964; Metz, 1964; Eco, 1976]. This analysis of media texts implies a number of students of creative tasks [BFI, 1990; Semali, 2000, pp.229-231; Silverblatt, 2001; 2014; Berger, 2005, p.145; Fedorov 2004, p.43-51; Potter, 2014, Nechay, 1989, pp.267-268, but we substantially supplemented and revised the series of tasks]: literary analytical, literary imitation, drama, role-playing, fine-simulation. Each of these tasks include analysis of the key *aspects of media literacy education, media agencies, media categories, media language, media technologies, media representations, media audiences*, etc.].

Discussion

Researcher and media educator A. Berger emphasizes that the sign from the perspective of semiotics, can be anything that symbolizes or represents something else [Berger, 2005, p.55]. Signs can be divided into image (displays some easily recognizable resemblance to real objects), indicators (situational displays the connection that you can define logical: for example, fire and smoke) and symbols (display conditional values that require special knowledge - for example, the symbolism of flags of different States [Berger, 2005, p.247].

Likewise, the symbol can be any object and any phenomenon. The symbol - a sign, an image embodying any idea; visible, audible rarer phenomenon, which people attach a special meaning that is not associated with the essence of this phenomenon. The meaning of the symbol hints at what is for his sensually perceived appearance. Characters with more abstract sense often represent something that in itself can not be expressed otherwise than symbolic [Bazalgette, 1995].

Problem of a code it is a key in media literacy education. The codes in media literacy education are a set of conventions laid down in a predictable stereotype model. Media animation it is the good examples of encoded media texts. The task of the teacher - explain to students that the codes as ways of understanding the signs, can be considered a system of conventions and customs, the proposed cultural tradition. Culture (in general human sense) can be described as a set of codes. And the phrase "culture shock" refers to a situation when a person is faced with unusual it cultural or social codes" [Berger, 2005, p.60-61].

Media educators from a semiotic area argue that the media often seek to disguise the multivalued symbolic nature of his lyrics, and it threatens the freedom of information consumption. Audience, primarily children, too passive in relation to the "reading" of media texts, so the goal of media education is to help students "how to read" media text. So, from this point of view, the main content of media literacy education are the codes and "grammar" of media texts, ie the language of the media, and teaching strategies - learning the rules of decoding a media text, description of its contents, associations, language features, etc. (denotation / connotation).

In this regard, one of the British media educators - A. Hart wrote that the semiotic analysis of media texts should more actively implemented in media education, because new literacy requires students to study the media meta-language [Hart, 2000, p.21].

Material for semiotic analysis in the classroom at the student audience can become not only a product of art house, but any replicated objects - toys, packaging boxes, travel books, magazine covers, etc. Even the style of the students, their non-verbal communication and the plastic is a complex sign systems created by some individuals and "read" the other [Watts Pailliotet at all, 2000].

At the same time media do not reflect reality, but reinterpreted / represent this reality. Analysis of the semiotic theory of media leads to the idea that it is the complete opposite ideological theory of media, because the problem of language emphasizes the media, rather than political or social significance of media text. But semiotic theory's approaches to the analysis of media texts are similar to the theory of media education as the development of critical thinking of the audience, however, without pressure to investigations of the manipulative role of media in society.

Semiotic analysis of media texts is closely connected with the study of the key concepts of media literacy education *media language*. In this sense, media education aims to develop knowledge of the ways in which media texts express his idea, and develop the knowledge, improving skills of textual analysis that can be attached to a fixed or moving images recorded on the medium of sound or any combination of the above. In the critical work is usually done by analyzing the individual images or short fragments of the audiovisual text, offering a detailed account of what actually seen and heard - before moving on to the interpretive comments and express their reaction [Bazalgette, 1995, p.31]. Here, cultural and aesthetic approaches in media education (as well as an approach that focuses on the formation of "critical thinking") in common with the semiotic theory and methods of media literacy education, involving, as already mentioned, reading and analysis skills, as a synthesis of signs and symbols, "codes".

I must admit that in relation to the concept of *media languages* reveals the unity of the Western and Russian approaches (C. Bazalgette, A. Hart, Y. Usov, S. Penzin, O. Baranov and others): they are offer for students a careful perception of audiovisual images and a description of their characteristic features at the initial stage of the analysis of media texts. The audience learns conventional codes of media texts (for example, become "transparent" following codes: objects and phenomena in the media text can be seen through the eyes of the alleged character, and each radio / TV program has its usually constant cover image). And only after that students can make a transition to the interpretation and evaluation of media texts.

Media educators recommend also the training games with the practical content: crop images and photos (the study of plans), shooting a video camera at different angles (the study of the concept of *perspective*), etc. As a result, students' understanding of the language of media includes complex ideas about how certain sets of meanings can be encoded: how to identify the changes of time and place of action in media texts, or can be displayed typical characters and situations [Bazalgette, 1995, p .36]. For example, what is the image code of typical negative characters, and what – of typical positive, or, as a more complicated version – how transform standard media text codes in a parody.

But we can criticize the teaching methodology that focuses only on the development of critical thinking in relation to media manipulation, without attention for another sides of analysis.

Results

These series of *semiotic* tasks for media education literacy classes for students: literaryanalytical, literary imitation, drama, role-playing, fine-simulation.

Cycle of creative literary-analytical and simulation tasks for semiotic analysis of media texts:

Media agencies:

- analysis f famous media agencies' logos with the semiotic point of view.

Media / media text categories:

- analysis of mass media genres from the view of the most common symbols (the Christian cross, the hammer and sickle, etc.).

Media technologies:

- preparing signs and symbols' project technologies in media texts of specific types and genres.

Media languages:

- writing mini-scenarios for advertising media texts relying on signs and symbols;

- reading a short story and thinking over what signs and symbols can be used in its film adaptation;

- analysis of an advertising poster depicting people and advertising text, taking into account all the symbols and signs seen you on this poster.

- comparison of two frames (photographs, drawings), where the same scene is depicted in various ways. Thinking about how to change the angle effects on the perception of the frame, on the understanding of the relationship media text's characters to each other.

Media representations:

- representation of the versions of hypothetical transformations of certain well-known media texts;

- description of media text representations' codes for "supermen", "bad guys", "Cinderella", and other stereotypical characters.

Media audiences:

- analysis of the process of reading /decoding of signs and symbols in a media text for audience of different age and level of education.

All the above work collectively discussed are compared. Indicators of assignments: the ability to decode media messages, read and generate signs and symbols (including performing creative tasks for the replacement of individual components of a media text).

Cycle theatrical game-creative tasks for semiotic analysis of media texts: Media agencies

- presentation of media logo in the form of pantomime.

Media / media text categories:

- presentation of media genre in the form of pantomime.

Media technologies:

- practically implementation (in small creative groups, armed, for example, digital video camcorder) to certain media technologies relying on a particular symbolism of the text;

Media languages:

- preparing pantomime based on the symbolism of specific images;

Media representations:

- role game: "press conference" with "domestic or foreign authors of media text ("writer", "director", "actors", "operator", "composer", "artist", "sound engineer", "producer", "designer"), questions are asked with a bias in the semiotic analysis of media texts;

- role game: "international meeting of media criticism" is that discuss various aspects related to the semiotic analysis of media texts;

- role game: an advertising campaign in the media.

Media audiences:

- preparing pantomime symbolizing various audiences' emotional reactions to media texts.

In fact, the role game creative activities complement and enrich the skills acquired by the audience during the literary-analytical gaming workshops. They activate improvisational, plastic ability, associative, critical thinking. The disadvantages of some of the role-playing works can probably be attributed quite a long stage of preliminary preparation of the audience who want to get into the role of "author", "journalists", etc.

Graphic-cycle simulation creative assignments for the semiotic analysis of media texts in the student audience:

Media agencies:

- transformation of a logo of some well-known company, the rationale for the changes made in the design, symbolism.

Media / media text categories:

- preparing of pictures, posters, collages, reflecting the stereotypes of the genre or media relying on certain symbolism.

Media technologies :

- creation (supported by modern computer technology, for example, Power Point) of media project associated with the sign system of media texts.

Media languages:

- analysis of the frame (photos, posters) from the point of view contained therein signs and symbols. Manufacturing clippings figures or objects depicted in photographs or posters, testing different options for the location of these clippings in the "frame"; reflecting on the fact whether the changed attitude of the characters and objects after a reshuffle, and how it has affected the meaning of signs and symbols;

- create of a different subjects on the basis of the same image containing characters and symbols (with a change in their shape and elements).

Media representations:

- creation of an advertising billboards / posters for own media texts (variant: posters / prints for professional media texts) with the help of photo collage, with additional drawings or based on their own original drawings with an emphasis on signs and symbols;

- creation of a drawings, comics and collages with some symbols on the subject of works of Russian and foreign media culture (using text and image clippings from old newspapers / magazines);

- creation a diorama scenes from c media text using any symbols.

Media audiences:

- creation of pictures or draw comics, symbolizing the different audiences' emotional reactions to certain media texts.

All results of students' creative works are discussed, comparing their advantages and disadvantages, the authors of creative works have the ability to answer questions from the teacher and the audience regarding the signs and symbols, etc. The main indicator for these works: the abilities of students to convey their impressions of the media text in sign, symbolic form.

The cycle of creative activities aimed at developing students' skills for semiotic analysis of a particular media text. Of course, the educator ca use creative, game, heuristic and problem tasks, significantly increasing the activity and interest of the audience. Heuristic form of the class, in which students are offered several false and true judgments, greatly facilitates the analysis of the problem and is the first step to subsequent gaming and problematic forms of media texts discussion.

Students try to find the conventional codes of: 1) typical characters of media texts (Cinderella, Superman, Villain, King, Spy, etc.); 3) typical feelings' expression (hunger, thirst, fear, joy, etc.); 3) typical media text' place (reach house, poor house, bar, restaurant, office, etc.).

The next series of works in the classes are a *group discussions about media texts from the perspective of semiotic analysis.* There can be used the following problem of creative tasks:

- comparison and discussion about articles, books, containing a semiotic analysis of media texts;

- preparing essays devoted to the semiotics of media texts of different types and genres;

- review about the media texts' specific (for media text of different types and genres), drawing on semiotic analysis.

- group discussions (with the help of problem questions of the teacher) about semiotics of media texts.

The logic sequence of creative tasks comes from the fact that the critical analysis of media texts' semiotics begins with an introduction to the works of media critics (reviews, theoretical articles, monographs, devoted to the semiotics of media culture) in which the audience can judge the different approaches and forms of this type of work.

Classes, developing skills for semiotic analysis of media texts aimed at training sound & vision memory, the stimulation of creative abilities of the individual, improvisation, capacities, critical thinking, the ability to apply this knowledge in new pedagogical situations, etc.

The main stages of this cycle are as follows:

- identification and consideration of the specific content of a media text, with maximum brightness for signs and codes;

- analysis of signs and codes of media text: how they are manifested in the development of conflicts, characters, ideas, and audio-visual, spatial and time series, etc.

A discussion using problem-test questions. For example: "What are the known media texts you can compare this work (the basic codes, symbols)? Why Are? What they have in common?", etc.

Methodical implementation of these steps based on the cycle of activities dedicated to the analysis of media texts' specific. However, as experience shows, it is necessary, first, to go from simple to more complex: first choose to discuss, analyze on the plot, signs and codes of media texts. And secondly - aim to take into account the genre, thematic preferences of the audience.

Indicator of the ability of the audience to semiotic analysis of audio-visual, spatial and temporal structure of media texts is the ability to multi-layer shaped semiotic understanding of the world as separate components, and work as a whole.

Questions to the study of the basic approaches to semiotic analysis of media texts in the classroom [Buckingham, 2003, pp.54-60, Berger, 2005; Fedorov, 2004 p.43-51; Fedorov, 2006, p.175-228]:

Media agencies:

Is the agency "branded" symbols and codes in its logo? If so, why? What are the codes denoting a particular company, the most common?

Media / media text categories:

How conventions and codes appear in different types of media texts?

Media technologies:

How technology affects the signs and symbols in media texts?

Media languages:

What are the grammatical "rules" set by the media? What happens when they are violated? What are the effects of choosing certain forms of language media?

How is the use of language becomes clear and generally accepted?

What visual images can be used to convey concepts such as love, horror, terror, spy? How can portray feelings and other phenomena?

Media representations:

What are the codes for the representation of *Cinderella, Superman or Villain* in the popular media texts?

Media audiences:

Can the same codes and symbols perceived differently by the audience? Why Are? This if the cycle of *identification analysis* tasks:

Cycle of literary analytical creative tasks for identification analysis of media texts in the student audience:

Media agencies:

- analysis of key headlines on the front pages of various newspapers; based on the identification analysis try to draw conclusions about their political and genre orientation;

- analysis of the situations related to the closure or prohibition of a particular media source (newspaper, magazine, film, internet site, etc.), a media company for / against this or that politician;

- analysis of the media presentation levels of the social, political, national and religious groups in different broadcasting company; analyze the reasons for this.

Media / media text categories:

- analysis of media texts of different genres and conclusions about what genres' specific most commonly used for manipulative impact on the audience.

Media technologies:

- analysis of media texts and conclusions about what is manipulative techniques impact on the audience the most commonly used.

Media languages:

- analysis of media possibilities to use different forms of language to convey ideas or values. *Media representations:*

- View television news for the detection of the presence / absence of manipulative effects;

- comparison of several points of view (eg, professional journalists, political scientists) about the events reflected in the messages and of the media texts;

- selection of thesis, in your opinion, truly reflecting the views of the authors of a media text;

- analysis of media texts, draw a conclusion (confirmed concrete examples) on how media can artificially create pseudo-events.

Media audiences:

- analysis of media text from the perspective of the audience for which it was intended;

- analysis of the reasons why the audience usually chooses / buys media texts.

Cycle of creative role game for identification analysis of media texts:

Media agencies:

- role game: the meeting the producers of media agencies for the developing a system of manipulative impact on the audience, which will be used by them during the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Media / media text categories:

- role game: the essay on the topic of how to create a pseudo-events in a television or radio program in the next issue of the newspaper.

Media technologies:

- role game: technology of hidden messages in any media text.

Media languages:

- role game: choosing of the audiovisual language for the future media text, which must include placement (implicit advertising of any products).

Media representations:

- role game "Actors": students play a roles similar to the plot of a media text ("parents and children", "detective and witnesses of crime", "teacher and student", etc.). Work is proceeding in groups of 2-3 people. Each group prepares and implements in practice its game project. The teacher acts as a consultant. The results are discussed and compared. Students try to play their roles so that put their gestures, facial expressions hidden subtexts and meanings.

- role game: interviews with "character" and "creator" of media texts.

- role game: "international meeting of media criticism" is that condemn various aspects related with hidden meanings, codes and subtexts media were analyzed;

- "legal" role game: the process of "investigation" of media text characters' crimes; the "court hearing" about the hidden meanings and subtexts code media sphere and media texts.

- role game: study on advertising media text, which incorporated certain hidden meanings and subtexts code.

Media audiences:

- role game: the experts debate on the topic of how the audience reacts to the manipulative media exposure.

Graphic-cycle of a simulation creative tasks for identification analysis of media texts: Media agencies:

- create a comic book, a series of drawings on the theme of how the media agency is developing a system of manipulative impact on the audience, which will be used by them in political elections.

Media / media text categories:

- create a comic book, a series of drawings on the theme of how the media agency creates a pseudo-events in a television or radio program in the next issue of the newspaper.

Media technologies:

- create a comic book, a series of drawings on the theme of how the author selects the most efficient technology, in order to lay the hidden messages in the media text.

Media languages:

- create a comic book, a series of drawings on the theme of choice of the audio-visual language for future media text, which must include placement (implicit advertising of any products).

Media representations:

- create advertising billboards own media texts (variant: posters to professional media texts) with the help of photo collage with additional drawings or based on their own original drawings; in an attempt to lay the image data some hidden meanings;

- create a cartoonist with a "double bottom", that is veiled meanings and codes.

Media audiences:

- Create draw comics on the topic of the audience reaction to the manipulative media exposure.

After executing the above creative tasks is a contest of comics, drawings, posters, collages students discuss their advantages and disadvantages, etc.

The main indicator of the work: the ability of the student in the non-verbal form to create a text with hidden codes.

Group discussions and media text reviewing. There can be used the following problem of creative tasks:

• comparison and discussion reviews (articles, books) professional media criticism, and journalists;

• preparation of essays on the subject of the identification analysis of media texts;

• group discussions (with the help of problem questions of the teacher) about media texts with an emphasis on identification analysis;

• written students' reviews to specific media texts of different types and genres with an emphasis on identification analysis.

The general scheme of a debate:

media educator' introduction (the goal - to give brief information about the creators of media texts, remind their previous work that the audience can go beyond a particular product, refer to other works of these authors, if there is a need to dwell on the historical context of the events or do not touching the artistic, political, ideological, moral, and other assessments of the author's position, and, of course, not retelling the plot of the work), that is, on the installation media insight;
group "reading" of media text (communicative phase);

- discussion about a media text with a focus on identification analysis, conclusions.

Discussion about media texts begins with a relatively simple for perception mass (popular) culture works with the following steps:

- selection of the episode, in which you can decipher the hidden meanings, connotations;

- analysis of data episodes (attempt to understand the logic of the author thinking - in a complex, interconnected development of the conflict, characters, ideas, sound and vision, etc.);

- identification of the author's concept and its evaluation.

In the discussion about media texts takes into account the basic techniques of manipulative influence of media on the audience:

• "orchestration" - psychological pressure in the form of constant repetition of certain facts, regardless of the truth;

• "selection" - the selection of certain trends - for example, only positive or negative, distortion, exaggeration (understatement) data trends;

• embellishment of the facts;

• "sticking labels" (eg, guilty, offensive, etc.);

• "transfer" - the transfer of any qualities (positive, negative) to another phenomenon (or person);

• "evidence" - a reference (not necessarily correct) to the authorities in order to justify an action, or that slogan;

• "folksy game" including, for example, the most simplified form of information presentation.

When identification analysis of media texts with students using a variety of instructional methods:

• "sifting" of information (a reasoned selection of true and false in the materials of the press, television, radio, etc., clarification of information by comparison with the actual facts, etc.);

• critical analysis of the purposes, the interests of "agency", that is a source of information.

The discussion can be concludes with the test questions, affecting the utilization of the audience received skill analysis skills (for example: "What are the known media texts you can compare this work? Why? What do they have in common?", etc.).

Questions for identification analysis of media texts in the classroom at the student audience [Buckingham, 2003, pp.54-60; Silverblatt, 2001, pp.42-43; Silverblatt, 2014; Fedorov, 2004, pp.43-51; Fedorov, 2006, p.175-228.]:

Media agencies:

Whether there is equal access by all to the possibility of open / establish a new media agency?

Do you know who owns this or other companies that produce, buy and sell media / media texts? If so, how, in your opinion, the particular owner can influence the media texts produced by his agency?

Opinions of which social, ethnic, political, religious groups most widely represented in the texts of media agencies N? Opinions which groups are the minimum? Opinions which groups are excluded? Why Are?

What kind of event media agencies seek to reflect in its products primarily what typically seek to exclude?

Is it the agency determines the target audience for a media text?

Can the agency "create" the audience?

Does media agency try to imbue for you the concrete ideas?

What are the challenges for the author, when he creates a media text about a political issue? *Media / media text categories:*

On what parameters need to evaluate media messages (political, social, moral, philosophical, artistic, etc.)?

How conventions and codes are shown in different types / categories of media texts? *Media technologies:*

As media technologies are manifested in different types / categories of media texts associated with manipulative functions?

Media languages:

How to use various forms of media language to convey ideas value "hidden" codes? How is the use of language becomes clear and generally accepted?

Media representations:

Do you know some typical hidden meanings in a media text?

Do you believe that all media representations are truth? How the authors of media texts are trying to achieve their "authenticity", "documentary"?

Can the media artificially create pseudo-events? If yes, please give specific examples.

Can be engaged, biased position of the authors of media texts? If yes, please give specific examples.

Is it possible to absolute objectivity for creators' views creators in media texts? As media represent certain social groups? Are these perceptions are accurate? *Media audiences:*

Why the audience takes some media representations as true and reject others as false? Do media representations affect our view of certain social groups or issues?

Can the media to influence the development of political processes in the society? If so, how?

Are the media violate the individual rights of citizens? If yes, in what cases?

As (for whatever reason) the audience usually chooses / buys media texts?

As the choice of audience affects the strategy, style, and content of media texts?

Do the strategy, style, and content of media texts to understand their audience?

The audience understands, interprets, evaluates media texts? What does this mean?

What is the typology of perception and evaluation of media texts audience?

What are the causes of mass success (or lack of success) of a particular media text?

What is the role of gender, social class, age and ethnic origin in the media perception of the audience?

What is the main purpose of this media text? To what extent has achieved this goal? What kind of reaction the audience awaiting its creators?

Conclusions

The author did the review of the features of the Semiotic and Identification analysis of the functioning of the media and media texts in society on media education classes in the university. The author also provides examples of creative tasks and issues associated with this type of analysis in the context of media education problems, ie based on six key concepts of media literacy education: agency, category, language, technology, audience, representation. The author thinks that the analysis of the functioning of the media and media texts in society on media education classes can significantly develop media competence of students, including critical thinking and perception.

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УДК 37

Семиотический и идентификационный анализ медиатекстов на медиаобразовательных занятиях со студентами

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Аннотация. Семиотический анализ медиатекстов — это анализ языка знаков и символов в медиатекстов. Этот анализ тесно связан с иконографическим анализом. Семиотический анализ медиатекстов для учебных целей, основан на семиотической теории медиа, разработанной такими теоретиками, как Р. Барт, К. Метц, У. Эко и др. Идентификационный анализ — это идентификация скрытых сообщений в медиатекстах (так как медиаагентства часто предлагают упрощенные решения для сложных проблем).

Медиапедагоги могут использовать здесь образовательные игры с практическим содержанием, направленные на понимание аудиторией того, как в медиатексте могут быть закодированы, замаскированы некоторые идеи, проблемы. В этой статье анализируются основные направления для семиотического и идентификационного анализа на медиаобразовательных занятиях в студенческой аудитории, в том числе - на примерах творческих заданий и вопросов, связанных с этим типом анализа в контексте проблем медиаобразования, т.е. на основе шести ключевых понятий медиаграмотности (агентство, категория, язык, технологии, аудитория, репрезентация). Автор предполагает, что идентификационный анализ медиатекстов на медиаобразовательных занятиях может значительно развить медиакомпетентность студентов, в том числе их критическое мышление и восприятие.

Ключевые слова: семиотический анализ, идентификационный медиа, медиатексты, медиаобразование, медиаграмотность, медиакомпетентность, студенты.