



Media and information literacy

MEDIA CULTURE

Students - bridges of media and information literacy

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Media literacy - workshop (deductive approach - from general to individual terms)

The concept of communication

If we take into account the fact that the World Health Organization has defined the quality of communication as one of the five skills necessary for a healthy and happy life, and in the spirit of Socrates' efforts to carefully define words before use, it is necessary to define the *concept* of communication. The word communication comes from the Latin term *communicatio*, which means to communicate.

Communication is therefore a term in the social sciences that generally denotes the totality of different forms of connections and contacts between members of society, and in particular the transmission of messages from one person or group to another. That is why communication is very important socially. It enables the connected action of people, which is the basis of all social phenomena.

Many authors deal with the definition of communication. For S. Price, communication is, in short, the individual production of some symbolic content in accordance with some code, which anticipates the reception of that content by other subjects in accordance with the same code. Ch. H. Cooley wrote back in 1909 that the term communication means the mechanism by which human relations exist and develop, and it consists of all the symbols of the spirit with the means of their transmission in space and their preservation in time. Communicologists Paul Watzlawick et al. (1974) consider communication to be a *conditio sine qua non* of human life and social order. A large number of other authors also consider communication to be a





functionally necessary precondition for any social system and a basic social process. Communication is an essential element of human understanding, cooperation and overall action in society, according to Franc Vreg.

But, unfortunately, the term communication is not used unambiguously in the literature. There are a puzzling array of definitions that coincide with other terms such as reaction, interaction, or behavior. It is for these and other reasons that K. K. Reardon begins his study of *Interpersonal Communication* by listing six basic features of human communication. These are:

1. People communicate for a multitude of different reasons.
2. Communication results in intended but also unintended effects.
3. Communication is usually two-way.
4. Communication involves at least two people, who influence each other unequally.
5. Communication happened even when it was not successful.
6. Communication involves the use of symbols.

These features of human communication help us to better understand the very concept of communication. However, in addition to the above difficulties, communication can be defined according to the means used. According to Z. Tomić's *Communication Science*, the means of communication are:

1. *Form* - It represents the way in which something is communicated (speaking, writing, drawing, etc.).
2. *Media* - Means of communication that combine different forms, eg books, as they can contain words, drawings and graphs.
3. *Media* - Technological means of mass communication, eg press, TV, radio, film, Internet, etc.





In *More Than Words*, authors R. Dimpleby and G. Burton (1992) point out that communication has three essential features:

1. *Communication is the process of making a connection between people.* These connections can be between two people, between two or more groups, and between an individual and a group. By their structure, these connections can be direct and indirect.
2. *Communication is an activity.* Even when "passively" reading a book, listening, watching, a person is communicatively active.
3. *Communication is learned.* The human being does not learn to communicate, he learns *how to* communicate in order to meet his needs.

As early as 1976, American theorists enumerated 126 definitions of communication. This number clearly indicates not only the complexity and comprehensiveness of the concept of communication, but also the multitude of subdisciplines and specialist theories that have communication as their subject of research. Aleksandar Bogdanić in his book *Komunikologija* cites the book *The Function of Human Communication: A Theoretical Approach* (1976) by Frank Dance, which offer 15 criteria for classifying definitions of communication. These are:

1. *Symbols or words or speech* (communication is a verbal exchange of ideas);
2. *Understanding* (the process in which we understand others and try to make them understand us);
3. *Interaction, relationship* (these definitions define communication as a relationship, or more precisely as a co-relationship);



4. *Reducing uncertainty* (these definitions focus on determining the cause and / or purpose of communication);
5. *Process* (emphasis is placed on the dynamic nature of communication);
6. *Transmission, transmission, exchange* (in the definitions of this type, the focus is on the category of interchange);
7. *Bonding, connecting* (these definitions understand communication as an integrative process);
8. *Communion* (in the definitions of this type of communication is understood as the act of publishing a message, thus making it common to a group);
9. *Channel, means, method, route, transmitter* (the focus is on the media through which the communication process takes place);
10. *Memory replication* (communication is understood as the process of reviving memory);
11. *Discriminatory action* (communication is understood as a targeted process of changing behavior in relation to the initial incentive);
12. *Motivation* (these definitions indicate the value and meaning of the goal and motives that determine a certain communication situation);
13. *Intention* (indicates the moment of conscious intention to influence the behavior and opinion of the recipient);
14. *Power* (definitions of this type indicate an ideological moment that strategically positions the sender or recipient of the message differently) and



15. *Time, situation* (these definitions indicate the element of time, ie the context in which communication takes place).

Communication process

Communication is a form of communication between living beings, therefore, the transmission of messages between communication partners. The process of communication, according to the book *Democratic Communication* by F. Vrega, presupposes the communicative action of (at least two) partners in communication "who are trying to achieve (understanding) in their communicative interaction"

Elements of the communication process

In connection with this understanding of the communication process, we come to the key elements of this process, such as the sender, the message and the recipient of the message. *The sender* is a person who wants to communicate something and is trying to achieve (understanding). So it is the person who sends the message to the other party. It is also called a communicator or source.

A *message* is information or more information, facts or opinions. Thus, a message is a word, letter, movement, body language, view, or any other signal whose meaning can be interpreted. The message can be verbal or nonverbal.

The communication message affects the cognitive (cognizance) and affective (emotional) states of the recipient of the communication message. *The recipient* is the person who wants to understand something. The recipient of the message is implicitly present in the act of communication from the very beginning of the message encoding process.



These three basic elements or a simple model of communication can be illustrated as follows:

P. Kotler in his book *Marketing Management* includes the elements of the communication process: sender, encoding, message, media, decoding, recipient, response, feedback and interference. Kotler connected these elements pictorially as follows:

Communication is the process of "mediating" meaning between living beings. The bearer of the message is the "medium" that is the condition of any communication process. A medium is a 'material' carrier of messages through which information can be transmitted. The choice of media for transmitting information depends on the content, nature and purpose of the message, recipient, speed, distance between sender and recipient, time, personal communication style, etc.

There are two types of communication channels:

1. personal and
2. Indirect.

Personal communication channels involve two or more people communicating directly with each other.

Indirect communication channels transmit messages without personal contact or interaction. They include the media, the atmosphere and the events.

Encoding, decoding and interpretation of a message

To understand the communication process, it is important to point out the meaning of encoding, decoding, and interpreting a message.



Encoding is the process of shaping informative content into a message. So it is a process in which the sender turns thoughts, ideas, concepts, into a message. The most significant moment of this process is the translation of a certain idea or content into an appropriate symbolic equivalent. Encoding is the initial stage of message formation. In the process of encoding, thoughts are converted into verbal (language) and nonverbal signs (body language). A very important encoding factor is the feedback of the recipient of the message.

Decoding is the process of receiving, interpreting, understanding, accepting or rejecting a message sent from a source of information. The decoding process begins the moment the message begins to reach the recipient, which does not mean that the recipient's role began at that point. The process of decoding a message is the most complex phase in the communication process since the reception of the message is influenced by many factors that determine the behavior, attitude or attitude of the recipient towards the received message.

Interpretation of the message is the final stage in the communication process. The recipient decides on the meaning of the message, ie the sent symbols. Despite the sender's efforts to formulate the message optimally, the message is affected by the recipient's ability to receive and interpret. Interpretation is part of the message decoding process.

The elements of encoding and decoding the message can be most clearly illustrated by looking at Shram's communication process. Namely, Professor Wilburn Schram from Stanford University understands the communication process as a situation that is similar to a telephone or radio circuit.



Feedback

The sender sends a message to the recipient decoding it via the accepted communication medium. The sender receives *feedback* on the impact or absence of the impact of the message on the recipient, as the last part of the communication process.¹ Thus, feedback or feedback informs us about the impact of communication on the outside world, and also warns of information distortions on the path from source to destination. Feedback, according to F. Vreg, can be a simple reflex or a complex system of movement based on previous experiences.² If information, in this process of communication, is capable of changing the way we act, we can call it the process of learning.

According to P. Smith, the sender monitors *feedback* (e.g., whether the recipient changes their behavior, facial expressions, beliefs, or attitudes) so that they can modify or replace the message (i.e., the channel through which it is sent).

Noises in the communication channel

Noise is an important part of the communication process. It is an interference factor in the communication process that interferes with the open and unhindered flow of information from source to recipient, and can occur in the form of psychological, semantic, or mechanical *interference*. C. Shannon and W. Weaver "recognize that external factors can lead to differences between the message sent and received." They illustrate this as follows:

¹ M. Radojković, B. Stojković: *Informacijsko komunikacijski sistemi*, Clio, Beograd, 2004., 32.

² F. Vreg, 1991., 25.



One illustration of the noise in the communication channel is Harris' adaptation of Shannon and Weaver's model that J. Fawkes brings to his work *Public Relations and Communications* published in *The Public Relations Handbook*. The illustrated model clearly indicates how noise can occur in the communication process already from the recipient, through the process of encoding, message, decoding, recipient and finally in feedback, reaction. Fawkes' adapted model looks like this:

P. Smith states that "understanding and knowing the target recipient of a message or audience helps to determine what is relevant to that audience and how they interpret symbols, signs, and words. The message is appropriately 'tuned' or encoded, sent via the media and, if it breaks through all the noise, the recipient eventually decodes it. In the process of careful sending and decoding, therefore, noises, external factors are present which distract or distort the meaning of the message sent, such as other advertisements, poor reception, flashing lights, doorbells, ambulance or police car sirens, etc. "

R. Thomson in his book *People Management* (1998) writing about barriers to effective communication provides a checklist of barriers to communication. According to R. Thomson, these are:

- *Inappropriate language* (Gobbledygook, jargon, acronyms, poor mother tongue, etc.);
- *Information overload* (too much information sent to the recipient);
- *Insufficient information* (not all elements of information to understand the desired message);
- *Different views* (sender and recipient of the message look at the content of the conversation from different points of view);
- *Failure to listen to the message* (insufficient concentration on the recipient's message);



- *Intentional deception* (the sender has hidden intentions or the recipient knowingly conceals something);
- *The recipient's thoughts are elsewhere* (the recipient is thinking about other topics).

Levels of communication

The notion of the level of communication is approached by the authors in different ways. Some use the term level, others types, third types, ways, forms of communication, etc. But regardless of the different terminological approach, these terms, given the quantity of the communication process, time and manner required for feedback, suggest four levels of communication :

1. *Intrapersonal communication*
2. *Interpersonal communication*
3. *Joint communication*
4. *Mass communication*

Intrapersonal communication is a type of communication that a person makes with himself. So, a person communicates intrapersonally when he thinks about something, solves (in his head) a problem, makes a real plan of activities, etc. It is an internal speech during which we address ourselves. Therefore, in this type of communication, the person / subject is both the sender and the recipient of information / messages. Most often, *intrapersonal* communication precedes *interpersonal*, group or mass communication, but it does not have to.

Interpersonal communication is the interaction or interaction of two or more persons face to face, with the possibility of immediate (as opposed to delayed) receiving feedback. Thus, through interpersonal communication we establish relationships with others, get to know them, as well as their relationship to us.



K. K. Reardon lists *seven key features* by which interpersonal communication can be identified. These are:

1. Interpersonal communication includes verbal as well as nonverbal behavior;
 2. Interpersonal communication includes spontaneous, practiced and planned behavior or a some kind of their combination;
 3. Interpersonal communication is not static but developmental;
 4. Interpersonal communication includes direct feedback, interaction and coherence or coherence;
 5. Interpersonal communication takes place in accordance with some internal and external rules;
 6. Interpersonal communication is an activity;
 7. Interpersonal communication can involve persuasion and persuasion.
- Interpersonal communication, as seen, can be verbal and nonverbal.

Nonverbal communication is the primary and dominant communication model. This is confirmed by the research of A. Mehrabian, who found that the message consists of verbal (speech) and nonverbal part (body movements). In this context, he speaks of three levels of the message. The first level is *visual* (how the candidate is trained, whether he is adequately trained and tidy for that situation); the second is *vocal* (vocals, clear sound, voice color) and the third level is *verbal* (it is simply the content of the message). Prof. Mehrabian also determined the percentage of importance of these forms of communication and their impact on the message. Therefore, the value of the visual aspect of the message (body language) is 55%, the voice (as we say) 38% and the verbal (what we say) 7%. So, even after this, often cited research, non-verbal communication dominates.



For successful communication, it is necessary to know how to convey your message as an idea or a system of ideas that go from the simplest statements and statements to the most complex thought constructions. Each such message should have its own content and form. *The content of the message* is usually some statements, promises, conclusions, explanations and many other ideas. *The form of a message* is an external expression by which some content is transmitted from the candidate to the voter. Apart from written messages, the most important is the spoken message that is conveyed in words. So it's about verbal communication.

Group communication is communication that takes place within one, two or more groups. So in group communication we, connected with others, understand ideas and opinions, try to establish a common interest, to formulate and try to solve problems that are common to all members of the group.

According to the types of groups, we can divide them into *ordinary, institutional and social*. The basic feature of ordinary groups is that they are rooted in the structure of society, since they belong to them by birth itself, not by inclusion. Such groups are family, tribe, caste, ethnic group, etc. Institutional groups are, according to A. Heywood (*Politics 2004*), part of the government apparatus trying to influence it. The bureaucracy and the military are clear examples of institutional groups. Social groups are founded by people who unite in order to "achieve common, limited goals". If we distinguish these groups by the number of participants in communication, it is evident that they can be larger or smaller. In smaller groups, communication differs from larger ones. Namely, smaller groups can still communicate interactively *face to face*, while in larger groups this type of communication is difficult.



Mass communication. The term mass communication means statements that are publicly and through technical means of distribution, directly and unilaterally transmitted to the general public. So, mass communications include mass media. R. Lorimer points out that "mass media are a subset of mass communications." Mass media Paul Trowler in his work *Communication and Media*, in: M Haralambos and M. Holborn *Sociology*, defines as "methods and organizations by which specialist social groups convey messages to a wide, socially mixed and dispersed audience." This definition, according to P. Trowler, distinguishes *mass media* (communication from one point in the direction of multiple points) from *interpersonal media* (communication from one point to another point) and *networked media* whose flexibility allows permutation of communication between one point and a small or large number of points, in all directions.

From the above and other definitions of mass media, certain specifics can be singled out, which can be seen in the following:

- Mass communication is communication using modern media.
- Mass communications or media, as McQuail points out, transmit information, images, entertainment, symbols to a mass audience. Thus, mass communication must inform citizens about what is happening around them.
- The mass media should educate about the meaning and significance of "facts".
- The media must provide a platform for public political discourse that will facilitate the shaping of public opinion and provide the public with feedback on that opinion.
- The function of the media is to give publicity to state and political institutions.
- The media in democratic societies serve as a channel for advocating political views.



In addition to the above specifics, F. Vreg states the following standard characteristics of mass communication:

1. Mass communication is *organized and institutionalized communication* through communication organizations and with the help of modern technical devices.
2. Communication through the mass media is *public communication*. Mass media messages are public, intended for all groups in the public, and are therefore available for public scrutiny.
3. The message of mass communication is *current*, because it is about communicating current news content. The speed of information transfer is one of the basic features of a mass message.
4. The audience of mass communication is *wide, heterogeneous* and, from the point of view of the reporter, *anonymous*. This means that the structure and content of the communicated message must be adapted to a wide and heterogeneous circle of recipients.

Communication functions

The functions of communication can be viewed through the functions that occur in relation to the content and effects of communication, as well as the effects that they can produce from a time aspect. The most complete, but not the only, understanding of the functions of communication is the analysis of the functions of the mass media.

Harold Lasswell and Charles Wright were among the first scholars to take more seriously the functions and role of the mass media in society. Ch. Wright (1959) in *Mass Communication*, defines mass communication in relation to the nature of the audience, the period of the communication experience, and the nature of the communicator. H. Lasswell, a law professor at Yale, defined three



functions of the mass media: environmental surveillance, the correlation of sections of society in response to the environment, and the transmission of social heritage from one generation to the next. To these three functions Wright (1959) adds a fourth - *entertainment*.

Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard, Jr. they state that in addition to functions, the media could also have dysfunctions - consequences that are undesirable for society and its members. An individual procedure could be both functional and dysfunctional. Accordingly, W. Severin and J. Tankard (2000) expose the functions and dysfunctions of mass communication.

Surveillance

The first function, according to Lasswell, is *surveillance*. It is a function that informs and provides insight into news, events. In performing this function, the media often warns us of expected dangers such as extreme or dangerous weather conditions or a threatening military situation, terrorism. The oversight function also includes news provided by the media that is relevant to the economy, the public and society such as stock market reports, traffic reports, weather conditions, etc.

The oversight function can also cause several dysfunctions, according to W. Severin and J. Tankard. Panic could result in an overemphasis on danger or threat to society. P. Lazarsfeld and R. Merton noted "narcotic" dysfunction when individuals fall into a state of apathy or passivity as a result of too much information to assimilate. In addition, excessive exposure to "news" (unusual, abnormal, extraordinary) can leave many audience members with little perspective on what is common, normal, and regular in society. In an article called *Awareness Overdose*, J. McNair asks, "Are we hooked on so many



healthy short quotes from recorded conversations that we don't care anymore?"

News is often defined by something unusual. When the abnormal or unusual becomes normal and common, attention activity about that news declines frequently, even if it's murder. Following the murders of several foreign tourists in Florida, *New York Times* columnist Russel Baker wrote (September 11, 1993): "This is a sign that Americans are not inclined to kill eight tourists in Florida headlines ... murders, it's the Americans who don't care. "

Corelation

Another function of the medium, according to Lasswell, is *correlation*. It is the selection and interpretation of environmental information. The media often includes criticism and prescribes how someone should react to events.

The correlation is, therefore, the editorial and propaganda content of the media. The correlation function serves to substantiate social norms and maintain consensus by exposing deviant persons, gives status by highlighting selected individuals, and can act as a government check. In performing the correlation function, the media can often prevent threats to social stability and can often monitor or manage public opinion.

W. Severin and J. Tankard believe that the correlation function can become dysfunctional when the media maintains the continuity of stereotypes and increases consensus, hinders social change and innovation, minimizes criticism, imposes majority views on minority opinions that are not broadcast, and preserves and increases power that might should be checked.

One of the often cited major dysfunctions of media correlations is the creation of what Daniel Boorstin called "pseudo-events" or the production of "images"



or “personalities” - mostly a constant phrase of the public relations industry. Products and corporations are given “images,” and individuals have a public “personality” that they have produced by creating “events” forced to media exposure is achieved. Ambitious politicians and entertainers seek exposure to public recognition and acceptance, and corporations seek a respected image and sought-after products and services.

Transmission of the Social Heritage

The transmission of social heritage is a third function in which the media communicate information, values and norms from one generation to another or from members of society to newcomers. In this way, they serve to increase social cohesion by spreading the basis of shared experience. They help integrate individuals into society through continuous socialization when they are completed formally

education, as well as starting it during the preschool years. It has been observed that the media can reduce an individual’s sense of alienation (disorientation) or a sense of lack of roots by presenting a society with which to identify. However, due to the impersonal nature of the mass media, it has been warned that the media contribute to the depersonalization of society (dysfunction). Mass media are inserted among individuals and remove personal contact in communication.

It was also warned that the media serve to reduce the diversity of subcultures and help increase the mass society. It is the realization that, because of the mass media, we tend to speak more and more the same way, dress the same, think the same, act and react the same way. This is based on the idea that thousands of hours of media exposure cause millions of people to accept the



role of models presented by the media. Along with this tendency to standardize goes a warning that the mass media is hampering cultural growth.

Entertainment

The fourth function of mass media - *entertainment*, was added to Lasswell's theory by C. Wright in his book *Mass Communications*. He believes that the content of most media is defined as entertainment, even in daily newspapers if many columns, special articles and texts to fill are taken into account. Media *entertainment* serves to provide a respite from everyday problems and to fill free time. Yet there are those who think that the media encourages escapism, corrupts fine art, reduces public taste, and prevents access to works of art.

Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard illustrate the different functions and dysfunctions of the media as follows.

Table 1. Functional analysis of mass communications according to Lasswell and Wright

Dr. Franc Vreg divided the functions of the mass media with regard to:

1. Functions that are *immanent* to modern mass media;
2. Functions *performed by the mass media*;
3. Functions *arising from human social activities*.

The most important, immanent media function is the informative function. According to F. Vreg, it is the central function of mass media: mass communicators (as professionals) collect information, create it into messages, use communication activities to convey it to mass audiences and enable



understanding of events in society and the world. According to T. Kesić³, a successful process of informative communication requires the involvement of four phases:

1. *distraction,*
2. *acceptance of the content,*
3. *Desired interpretation,*
4. *storing accepted content for later use.*

We will also consider this function of communication through the function of mass media.

The following immanent functions of mass media, according to F. Vreg, are *functions of thought and orientation*. With the help of editorial and journalistic interpretations and comments, the mass media provide an understanding of events, problems, processes in society and the world. With such information, recipients are able to better understand and respond to complex social phenomena. Thus they create a communicative interaction: the acquisition of new information, knowledge, reacts to events, creates judgment and can accept the appropriate message. "In this way, the mass media perform those functions that traditional theorists have described as controlling society and reacting to the environment."

The mass media also have the opportunity to direct organized social action. P. F. Lazarsfeld and R. K. Merton from the function of social action of mass media also defined two (dis) functions:

³ T. Kesić, 1997., 18.



1. *Status Assignment Function* - The mass media assigns status to public issues, individuals, organizations, and social movements. In this way, the authors believe, the media have significant social power in their hands.

2. *The function of imposing social norms* - The mass media can initiate organized social action by exposing relationships that do not coincide with public morality. Thus publicity has the function of forcing people out of a dual morality towards a single one, "which prevents the constant avoidance of a decision."

In *the social functions of the mass media*, F. Vreg includes the "productive" functions of the mass media that contribute to the structuring, integration and development of the system. This function is performed by the mass media, especially the four social media socializers: the press, radio, television and film. In addition to the mass media, other social institutions perform the function of socialization such as the family, school institutions, the Church, political and cultural organizations, various societies, etc. Social functions include *social interaction and integration* that enable the development of social empathy, identification with others, sense of opportunity belonging, establishing contacts, communicative interaction, etc. Also, in the social function Vreg includes both *reactive and entertaining function*. Their role is to release tensions, stresses and through the mass media shocks of modern living and thus triggers relaxation, relief and reaction.

Certain media functions also arise from human *social activity*. These are: *political functions* (establishment of the public, articulatory function, political socialization function, function of criticism and public oversight, legitimation and other functions); *economic functions, cultural function* (belongs to the main functions of the media); *scientific, educational, sports, religious, defense,*



musical and other functions. The mass media pay significant attention to all these social activities in journalism through various specialized newspapers, columns, articles, as well as on radio and television through various shows, programs, all the way to the production of various cassettes, DVDs, etc.

There are four functions of mass communication that it can produce in terms of content and performance. These are:

1. *Informative*
2. *Educational*
3. *Recreational*
4. *Persuasive*

In relation to the effects they can produce from the time aspect, T. Kesić divides functions into:

1. *manifest,*
2. *latent functions.*

The first includes the expected results and activities that are to be achieved through communication, and from the other (latent) functions arise unexpected results, unwanted consequences of communication.

B. McNair also writes about the functions of mass communications. In democratic societies, according to him, there are *five functions of communication media*:

1. The media must *inform* citizens about what is happening around them.
2. The media must *educate* about the meaning and significance of facts.
3. The media must provide a *platform* for public political discourse, which will facilitate the formation of public opinion and provide the public with



feedback on that opinion, because it came from it. This must include providing space for *dissent*.

4. The media must *give publicity* to state and political institutions.

5. The media in a democratic society serve as a channel for *advocating* political views.

In order for these functions to be properly performed, media discourse, speech, needs to be understandable and credible.



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