



# Media Literacy and Media Messages: Learning to Think Critically

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## REVISION

- 1. What is media literacy?**
- 2. What are some of the issues that media literacy deals with at present?**



## What is media literacy?

“ability/skill to  
search for,  
analyze,  
compare,  
objectively and critically evaluate,  
and pass on  
information and messages from media.”

**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT COULD BE  
INCLUDED IN THE DEFINITION?**



## What is media literacy?

“ability/skill to  
search for,  
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objectively and critically evaluate,  
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information and messages from media.”

**“... also create media content such as articles,  
presentations, posters, abstracts... (the ability to  
target a specific group of people)”**



**What are some of the issues that media literacy deals with at present?**

## The main issues of media literacy:

- uncritical acceptance of facts/ideas/opinions from media – “if it was published in the newspapers, it must be true”
- interpretation of media content as only “right” or “wrong” instead of being open to multiple interpretations
- citizens in the role of passive object, manipulated consumer or voter
- cyberbullying in the social networks (media literacy changes as the technology changes)



**Describe a media literate person.**

## **A media literate person (Niklesova, 2010):**

- can distinguish important information from unimportant
- can recognize hidden meanings, manipulative techniques, inaccurate or incomplete information
- can differentiate a true text or statement from a fabrication or subjective claim, unsupported by facts
- can clearly formulate ideas and record them



## Media in language education

ARE

- a source of authentic language – text, audio, video

SHOULD ALSO

- be a tool for teaching students how to interpret the various layers of meaning in a media message
- develop awareness of mediated (= partially constructed by media) representations of people, places, things, ideas, values as opposed to the reality
- help students think critically.



## Media literacy in language education

The focus is on:

- media representation of communities, societies, cultures
- spreading specific attitudes and values
- influence of media on the audiences' opinions, attitudes, and behavior
- intercultural education



# Framework for analyzing media content (Hobbs, 2011)

## Five Critical Questions

*Core Concepts*

*Critical Questions*

Authors and Audiences

1. Who is the author and what is the purpose?

Messages and Meanings

2. What creative techniques are used to attract and hold attention?  
  
3. How might different people understand this message?

Representation and Reality

4. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented?  
  
5. What is omitted?

## Types of media messages

**MANIFEST:** their function is obvious/clear from the context



## Types of media messages

**LATENT:** they are hidden and therefore tend to be difficult to notice/identify



## Types of media messages

**CUMULATIVE:** frequently repeated, they create new shades of meaning over a certain period of time, they tend to strengthen stereotypes





**What are the manifest, latent and cumulative functions of the following media message?**







## Science. It's a girl thing.

- **manifest:** campaign popularizing science among girls
- **latent:** success in science depends on looks
- **cumulative:** strengthening gender stereotypes

## Denotation and connotation

- **DENOTATION** – refers to the **literal meaning** of a sign. It is the **dictionary definition** of a word – e.g., *snake* – “*any of numerous scaly, legless, sometimes venomous reptiles*”.
- **CONNOTATION** – refers to the **associations** that are connected to a certain sign such as **emotional suggestions** related to a word. The connotative meanings of a word exist together with the denotative meanings. E.g., the connotations for *snake* might include danger or evil.





DENOTATION:  
Blonde Hair  
CONNOTES:  
*Ideal Woman,  
Innocence,  
Looks 'gold'*

DENOTATION :  
Jewellery  
CONNOTES :  
*Extravagance,  
Excess, Glamour,  
Decadence*

DENOTATION :  
Font  
CONNOTES :  
*Dior Logo,  
Brand Name,  
Designer*

DENOTATION :  
Perfume Bottle  
CONNOTES :  
*Looks Jewel-like,  
Buried Treasure*

DENOTATION :  
Word 'Love'  
CONNOTES :  
*Passion,  
Excitement,  
Lust*

DENOTATION :  
Colour Gold  
CONNOTES :  
*Luxury, Riches,  
Expense, Success,  
Shimmering*

Christian Dior  
PARIS

LE FEMININ ABSOLU.

Dior

J'adore



# The red flags of health fraud

# REDUCE THROUGH LISTENING

by EDWIN L. BARON

## EASY NEW METHOD

HELPS YOU DEVELOP A DISLIKE  
FOR FATTENING FOODS... HELPS  
YOU REDUCE YOUR CALORIC INTAKE  
WITHOUT THE NEED FOR WILL POWER!

**PLAY THIS RECORD DAILY AND  
WATCH YOUR POUNDS MELT AWAY!**

A SELF-IMPROVEMENT SERIES RECORD





# The red flags of health fraud

NEW WEIGHT LOSS SOLUTION



"This miracle pill can  
Burn Fat FAST!"



DR. OZ

[LEARN MORE](#)

The advertisement features a 'before and after' comparison of a person's abdomen. The 'before' image on the left shows a large, protruding belly, while the 'after' image on the right shows a significantly flatter and more toned abdomen. A large, curved arrow points from the 'before' image to the 'after' image. Below the images is a quote from Dr. Oz, a portrait of him, and a prominent orange button with the text 'LEARN MORE'.

## The red flags of health fraud

- **fast results** and no restrictions on diet, exercise, or lifestyle
- **easy fixes** to obesity or impotence
- **promises** to cure untreatable diseases
- expressions connoting **mystery**, such as *hidden ingredients*
- the use of *all natural* therefore *safe*
- **testimonies** from unknown physicians alias actors
- product **endorsement** by sportsmen
- the *before/after comparison* (adjusted with Photoshop)
- sense of **urgency**: *limited availability, act now*
- **no-risk** guarantee with money back



## EVIDENCE-BASED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

ProCon.org website: <http://www.procon.org>

- addresses selected **controversial** topics by listing pro- and con-arguments
- is based on **unbiased** and **objective** sources of scientific information
- thus **debunks** some of the common myths related to the topic



ProCon.org:  
Promoting critical  
thinking, education,  
and informed  
citizenship.

PLAY 1:47 Intro Video

Listen

## Is Obesity a Disease?

Micro Site



The debate over whether or not obesity is a disease grows as obesity rates and the cost of treating obesity-related conditions increase in the United States.

Proponents stress that obesity is a disease because it is caused by genetics, biological factors, or illnesses that cause weight gain, including hypothyroidism, Cushing's syndrome, and polycystic ovary syndrome.

Opponents argue that obesity is not a disease because it results from a person's chosen lifestyle, eating habits, and environment (i.e. residential location, social circle, economic status, etc.). [Read more...](#)

Did You Know?

Pro & Con Arguments

Top Pro & Con Quotes

Background

Video Gallery

Comments

- Obesity Home
- Featured Resources
  - 1. Did You Know?
  - 2. Pro & Con Arguments
  - 3. Background
  - 4. Video Gallery
- Projects
  - 5. Top Pro & Con Quotes
  - 6. Comments

Obesity ProCon.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit website that presents facts, studies, and pro and con statements on questions related to whether or not obesity is a disease.

- 7. US and Global Obesity Levels: The Fat Chart
- 8. Portion Sizes: How Big or Small Should They Be?
- 9. Find Your Body Mass Index (BMI)
- 10. Adult Obesity Rates in the

### Did You Know?

1. Between 2005-2006, experts estimated 67% of the adult US population [18] to be either overweight or obese.
2. Mississippi had the nation's highest obesity rate at 34.4%, with Colorado having the lowest at 19.8%, according to a July 2011 report

### Is obesity a disease?

I'm Pro  
because...

I'm Con  
because...

Share:

Email

f 37

t 30

g+ 3

in 5

t Share

p 11

http://wibi... Copy



## CONCLUSION

Media literacy:

- valuable **enhancement** of critical thinking skills
- reading, writing, speaking (presentation and discussion) **skills**
- successful language learners are **media literate**
- **media representation** of groups of people, communities, nations, and races as opposed to the reality

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