

Chapter 13

Cognitive Approach to Improve Media Literacy: Mind Puzzles

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ABSTRACT

This chapter starts with an exploration of the media literacy literature and its place in the developing 21st century. The literature suggests that media literacy should be considered as one of the capstones for the skills needed for the 21st century citizens. In terms of developing media literacy skills, scholars look at the concept from either cognitive or social perspective, and the review reveals that both of them are closely related to each other. Moreover, the study asserts that cognitive and metacognitive skills play a significant role in developing the media literacy and the skills for 21st century. Then, the chapter presents a city-wide activity done in Bayburt, Turkey. It is our assumption that the case presented here may be an inspiring example for whom may want to explore different approaches.

If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing. - Malcolm X

INTRODUCTION

By adopting the quote of Malcolm X to the internet media, particularly social media, one could easily argue that, "If you're not careful enough, the digital media will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing." That is; the information presented in social media might lead you in an opposite direction. Anyone spending some time in social media can easily confront with the same posting with different titles or the same picture but different captions. Hu-

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Cognitive Approach to Improve Media Literacy

man beings are exposed to a continuous and increasing bombarding by digital media, printed media as well, in our daily life. This is a bombarding of information coming through a number of media channels, such as TV stations, radio channels, newspapers, internet websites, YouTube videos, email lists, social media channels, etc. It is rather challenging to distinguish the truth and hearsay under the bombarding of such a heavy traffic of information. Indeed, the traffic is getting worse and more aggressive with the support of the innovation in technology.

Spencer (2012) talks about 684,478 pieces of content shared on Facebook, in every minute. This information may help us to anticipate the amount of information flow over social media. People, who are surfing on the internet, always confront with lots of information and use or share all these information without actually assessing them. How many of us pause a second before sharing any information being shared by a friend? Very rarely! People usually assume that the information, seen on the internet –for example, their friend’s wall on Facebook –is supposed to be true. Is it really so? What if, that friend has already made the same assumption and shared the information seen on another friend’s wall? Would the content be shared on your wall be harmful to someone else? How frequently do we assess this case?

It has been speculated that the youth are raised in the digital age have been negatively affected by mass exposure of digital media and that they should be protected from harmful content. However, there are many young people playing with digital content and alter it or create new ones. Even if they do not become part of re-creating the content, they help them get spread out through their personal contacts. Therefore, how could the content be spread, if, not created, by youth be harmful to themselves? Well, the discussion in the previous paragraph could be one answer addressing this issue. Still, we need to find a way to overcome this challenge. What should we do, protect or engage? What should be the best strategy?

- To reject the challenge, protect our children from digital media, or
- To embrace it, help them learn living with digital media?

The authors of this chapter definitely prefer the latter and suggest engaging the youth to learn how to cope with emerging and evolving conditions. However, this is exactly where the problem emerges for many people because this new world is under a continuous attack of mass media, both digital and printed –although our primary concern is digital media and an evolving world with the support of technology. No one is really sure what strategy should be followed because we still try to understand the structure and the consequences of the change. This is true to any of us, including even technologically savvy people; it is rather challenging to predict what the future will look like. Moreover, this challenge is not a new challenge; it has been a challenge for the decades since the internet was introduced.

There is another concern that media shapes our lives and takes the control of our actions. Is it really so? If so, how could this happen? In order to reply this *how* question, one should also answer *who* creates media and *what* makes media so powerful? Then, we can put further questions on the table: In order to help 21st century citizens shape their *own lives*, what actions should we take to provide educational opportunities? One effort to achieve this goal would be to provide a better media literacy education (Flew & Smith, 2011; Kamerer, 2013; Potters, 2008). Many agree that providing better media literacy education is a primary goal.

However, it is not an easy task to provide adequate and efficient education for new generations. Many educators trying to educate today’s youth had been raised in a world with comparatively limited technology. Therefore, they are still at the stage of an attempt to understand the change, which has been triggered by technology. Despite the challenge we experience, it is our responsibility to educate today’s

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