

COMMUNICATIVE LITERACY AND MEDIA COMPETENCE IN THE HYPER-COMMUNICATIVE SOCIETY

ALFABETIZACIÓN COMUNICATIVA Y COMPETENCIA MEDIÁTICA EN LA SOCIEDAD HIPERCOMUNICADA

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ABSTRACT

The communicative ecosystem develops and takes place in today's technological society where hyper-communication is prioritized. Within this context, an enormous number of screens broadcast audiovisual contents that shape the recipients' opinion and behavior. The different types of face-to-face and virtual interaction, as well as the media maelstrom, require training and literacy, not only communicative but also audiovisual, aimed at the attainment of a critical attitude through the development of the skills necessary for face-to-face and virtual communication. In this sense, this research intends to justify the interest and need for growth of media competence as a form of autonomous and critical expression. This topic attracts the interest of different national and international organizations and institutions, and is closely related to the media education that should be carried out by trainers and communication professionals.

Keywords: communicative ecosystem, hyper-connected society, literacy, media competence, critical autonomy.

RESUMEN

El ecosistema comunicativo crece y se produce en la sociedad tecnológica actual, donde prima la hipercomunicación; en este ambiente, una ingente cantidad de pantallas difunde contenidos audiovisuales que conforman la opinión y comportamiento de los receptores. Las distintas formas de interacción presencial y virtual, así como la vorágine mediática, requieren de la formación y alfabetización, no sólo comunicativa sino igualmente audiovisual, que pretende el alcance de la actitud crítica a través del desarrollo del conjunto de habilidades necesarias para la comunicación presencial y virtual. En este sentido, la presente investigación trata de justificar

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el interés y necesidad del crecimiento de la competencia mediática como forma de expresión autónoma y crítica. Esta temática centra el interés de diferentes organismos e instituciones de carácter nacional e internacional y guarda estrecha relación con la educación mediática que debe llevarse a cabo por los formadores y también por los profesionales de la comunicación.

Palabras clave: ecosistema comunicativo, sociedad hipercomunicada, alfabetización, competencia mediática, autonomía crítica.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout time, there have been many conceptions of the term “literacy,” and it has been evolving and adapting to the needs present at different times. Its relevance is not questionable, as is not either the right in itself; during the last third of the 20TH century, several authors, such as Roig (1978) or Postman & Weingartner (1969) made reference to the relevance and transcendence of the conception of learning understood as a process conducive to the acquisition and increase of a critical attitude, an idea that has been later expanded by Myers (2011) regarding critical thinking and comprehension enhancement.

These and others have referred to the right directed towards education, both of children and older people, that seeks to eradicate illiteracy; a concept that is understood differently today than how it was understood initially. Currently, and due largely to the evolution of media and information technology, there is a need for the subject, even when being able to read and write, to have the ability to decode information. It is not enough to use the media, comprehension of the information being sent out is required. The presence of multiple formats appearing almost daily causes and warrants the need for continuous learning throughout life. Overcoming digital and technological illiteracy implies evolution of people who have a critical

and reflexive attitude, based on participation and interrelation of citizens.

Especially on the last decades, references have been made frequently to the concept of literacy, a term that encompasses a group of competences linked initially to writing. In the beginning, the acquisition of such skills was assigned, almost exclusively, to school; its scope was of a universal and not homogeneous nature. As indicated by UNESCO (2006), in their Education for All Global Monitoring Report, in addition to the evolution of the concept, different forms of literacy shall be considered, issues that are conditioned upon context and culture.

Social, technological and information changes require literacy as a form of acquisition of critical competences that allow growth of an autonomous citizenry, able to voice their own judgement, free from any possible influence. For that, and as indicated in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2006), an increase in the set of critical competences that allow for expression, exploration, communication and understanding of the circulation of ideas among individuals in technological environments is necessary.

Given this state of constant evolution and change, in which dialogue is the foundation of communication, several authors, such as Pérez-

García & Melaré (2009) or Gutiérrez-Martín (2003) refer to multiple literacy that seeks, on the one hand, to eradicate illiteracy, and on the other, to generate critical subjects. All this is achieved thanks to learning, understood as a process that spans the entire subject's life. Moreover, it is conceived as the acquisition of a set of competences of a universal nature, skills that transcend reading and writing and that encompass other skills considered basic in the technological communication era.

During the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of this century, a movement in support of literacy took place, whose origin can be traced back to mid last century. It was led by Freire around 1970; later, in the decade between 1980-1990, its decrease took place. This drop was led by the lack of interest expressed by public agencies, a situation that is modified at the beginning of this century, reaching today its recovery climax.

Currently, the idea of "permanent connectivity" (Serrano-Puche, 2013) reigns in the communicative ecosystem and justifies the need for critical training of the receiver, regardless of their age. There are several reports showing a description of this situation and its analysis from multiple points of view. Despite that, a marked lack of programs that may be applied to the prevailing social reality is observed. Its presence is increasing concisely and gradually, maybe because it is a process whose development prevents the existence of this type of material.

The lack of autonomous conscience adds to an absence of resources, an absence that complicates comprehension of information and conditions the way of thinking and acting of those subjects who limit themselves to reproduce media behavior. They reproduce behaviors that have been observed in the multiscreen

environment and are spread without any type of analysis due to the low or inexistent advance by the receiver of the production and interaction dimension with the audiovisual contents.

Situations as such warrant the intervention of education, which faces an important challenge: the receiver's training, a task that can be undertaken in a simpler way, since there are tools now that were unknown before. The introduction of technologies and new forms of communication in society are not only harmful because they favor the work of formative agents, [sic], on the one hand, they free them from the traditional repetitive work, and on the other, they allow an increase in creativity from the receiver. The correct use and control of the new forms of communication provide a positive added value to the person's life; additionally, they contribute to the growth of the societies of which they are part and in which they include themselves.

The introduction of the new technological resources alone does not lead to the evolution of society, since it is insufficient; thus, it is complemented with the understanding and interpretation of them, as well as of their contents. The presence of these media in different social areas prevents the school from solving exclusively the literacy issue. Thus, this situation leads to an expansion of the formative task to the rest of agents who acquire this task for which they have not been created. It is about creating literate individuals who comprise societies where participation, interrelation and comprehension, both technological and individual, take precedence.

Knowing of the omnipresence of the media and the emergence of different forms of communication, and since the contact with new devices does not imply training, in order to generate critical conscience among

citizens, the receivers' training is proposed. Regardless of age, receivers shall increase the ability to assimilate contents and produce others autonomously and critically. Thus, an improvement in media competency is sought, for, which is described based on six dimensions: language, technology, interaction, production, axiology and aesthetics (Ferrés, 2006). All of them shall be implemented to a greater or lesser extent depending on whether they are digital natives or immigrants (Prensky, 2001).

Literacy and media education: developing critical conscience

Globalization contributes to the development of the media culture and the proliferation of communication as a way of interaction, both person to person and virtual. The appearance and later implementation of the emerging forms of information transmission, as well as the presence of multiple changes occurring, especially during the last years of the last century and the beginning of this century imply a necessary training of the subject. Regardless of age, subjects must develop a series of versatile communication skills, qualities that shall exist in line with the needs stemming from the combination of different languages and forms of communication.

Among other things, these questions justify the origin and presence of competences, especially the media one, a skill that shall be enhanced from the so called media education. This training is conceived as a process centered in media learning and teaching; from these two processes a series of results is derived, based on the knowledge of acquired skills.

Media education is understood as the advance of critical attitude and participation, qualities that favor creativity, especially in young

people (Buckingham, 2005). The intention of this is to train subjects as consumers with the attributes that will allow them to value and interpret the large amount of communication forms. It is assigned or linked to reasoning, which contributes to the inclusion of subjects within society; in this case, the media society where they live.

Once the media influence and repercussion has been established, as well as the ease with which the receivers, especially the younger ones can be manipulated, their education and training is urgent. For that, we propose implementation and increase of educational process based on the analysis and argumentation, basic qualities with which every consumer will attain great progress. Also, the evolution of the characteristics mentioned favors the emission of judgments, whether they are of value or critical.

According to Buckingham (2005), media education is understood as an instrument capable of setting false beliefs straight and with the possibility of fostering in subjects a way to cope with problems, both social and cultural or media-related.

Along the last decades, several approaches to the concept existed and studies emerged from different views that tried to clarify the term. Several papers confirm the need for reflection, more or less deep, and for analysis of the medium developing in the era of globalization.

The inclusion of Internet, in daily life and most environments, has marked a landmark with respect to previous times. The information spreads dramatically and from an issuer to several receivers. These factors justify the need for training of the receiver and the issuer, and the generalization at the time of talking about the inclusion of media in the classroom.

Different communication and media professionals, both in and out our borders, are worried and anxious at the time of confronting the emergent situation. Among these, e.g., Gabelas Barroso (2009) stands out, who makes the institutions responsible for the introduction and integration of new media in the classroom. For the authors, the growth of edu-communication projects requires a combination of factors where the mindset, the ability to unlearn, the political will and the provision of equipment that make possible and favors the advance of the task by education professionals acquire a special relevance.

The idea, being cast from Spain, transcends borders and is shared by different authors who agree when stating that the execution of the edu-communication project is interdisciplinary and transverse. In addition, the project cannot be separated from the existing reality and as such must take into account the current digital situation and the difference between digital natives and migrants; it promotes training that shall be realized from multiple points of view, shared, among others, by García Galindo (1999), for whom it is fundamental to consider, on the one hand, the multiple media and forms of communication existing nowadays and, on the other hand, their relation to the citizenry. Regarding the latter, it includes the training available for the adequate use of media, and in excess highlights its degree of responsibility both when analyzing the information accessed and when new links need to be created between them.

The idea that made reference to the audience as a passive receiver of the omnipotent media has been left behind, the different socio-technologic modifications make reference to the aforementioned demand of receivers able to analyze and produce images and information. For that, it is fundamental “to fortify skills by means

of the practical experience and the exercise of co-learning environments” (García Leguizamon, 2010, p. 87), skills capable of favoring the autonomy for the adequate use of media.

The use mentioned in the previous paragraph goes beyond the cognitive sector to focus on the axiology sector, while at the same time seeking to increase a highly-qualified citizenry, able to discern the values and stereotypes broadcasted by the media and the screens. It revolves around students, but may not be limited exclusively to them; among their objectives are the audience/receivers and the issuers. The education, understood as it's being described, aims at the receiver's training, not only as such, but also as a producer that can do their job correcting any axiological or attitudinal error.

For that, knowledge as a factor that promotes the evolution of producers able to do their work according to suitable ethical and legislative guidelines is fundamental. Regarding the latter, the regulation, compliance by the producers who have to conform themselves to the coercive prescriptions and deontological principles is supported.

At the moment, it is unquestionable, as indicated by, among others, Ambròs & Breu (2011) that the mass media are based on the game of credibility, trying to create dependency and manipulating the logical thought and the capacity of reason of the receiver, and use the images that they complement with the words.

Nowadays, the moving image broadcasted through TV or movie or the Internet is especially relevant. This recent form of communication entails, as presented by Castells (2001) in his work, a new, more interactive procedure capable of transmitting reality instantly and, sometimes, without a chance for comparison. Its immediacy hinders understanding of the information being

transmitted and the issuance of a reasoned judgement; contributing somehow to the validation of the gap established between those who have achieved a high degree of competence, both communicative and audiovisual, and those who have no competence. That is why comprehension and critical interpretation are sought for as a crucial element in the era of information and in the democratic society.

Such approach does not try to “substitute the subjective answers with others who pretend to be objective, nor neutralize the enjoyment of the media through rational analysis” (Buckingham, 2005, p. 125). This point of view intends, as quoted later by the author, “to develop a more reflexive style of teaching and learning, one which allows students to value their own activity as ‘readers’ and ‘writers’ of media text” (Buckingham, 2005, p. 127).

Achieving this objective can be easier if dialogue is encouraged, the basis of communication and fundamental pillar on which dialogic societies increase; constructions that focus their interest in interconnection and understanding, key issues to be taken into account by the educator who, due to current technological changes and evolution, has become a guide. Today, he or she is a promoter of learning that should lead the subject towards reflection and production of new material. This activity, focused in building the subject’s moral personality, shall grow both from the formal and informal education.

Additionally, this task falls to all agents who contribute to their training, because education is not a sectoral task attributed exclusively to the educational institution, but such an undertaking also corresponds to the family and the media themselves (Camps, 2001). The latter demand, as indicated by the author, an education that teaches how to understand them.

Giving citizens the ability to allow them to understand the media, is not a task assigned exclusively to media professionals who resist, on the one hand, limits being imposed on them from outside and, on the other hand, to undertake a formative work. Such imbalance and lack of agreement relate to the responsibility, a principle that media professionals must respect unavoidably and must be supplemented by training traditionally attributed exclusively to educators.

The latter are responsible mainly for the education, thus they should have the minimum knowledge that make them suitable to address the situation in a conscious and real manner. If those responsible for the communication media respect the basic deontological principles at the time of offering information and the teachers have the required knowledge and are up to date, the training task will be easier. If the above assumptions are met, training of the receiver audience would be faster and more efficient. Similarly, the scope of the critical attitude and reflection would move away from utopia to become a verifiable fact. Therefore, it is understood that the work of all of them will tend towards building a democratic and participatory citizenry, dominated by the presence of people who have and develop, on the one hand, ethical values and not only of consumption, and on the other, skills that are favorable to the advancement of technical and communication and media skills; all of them qualities that allow the subject to reach and consolidate said critical attitude.

Edu-communication contributes, as presented, to achieving and reaching such objective, which allows combining the task inherent to education and communication. As pointed out by several authors, among them Kaplún (1998), this is due to the fact that education and communication are the same

thing and educating is simply communicating. As the author states, education is a process of communication; for this reason, it postulates a communicational pedagogy, based on the premise that communication of something presupposes its knowledge. The author advocates also for a wide use of media resources as ways of teaching and generating active issuers and critical receivers. He defends, hence, edu-communication as a way to involve the different members of society in the process of interaction.

Besides Kaplún (1998), different educators, sociologists and communication theorists focus the interest of their studies on edu-communication, in relation to the cultural environment and the environment in which it takes place. The spaces where both occur cannot be distinguished or studied independently; thus, for example, in school social and cultural relations occur and the members of such institution interact in a plural and sometimes conflicting manner. To this space, the technological [sic] are added, where media are present; as well as the spaces. It is important to refer to models of interpretation and formation of identities based on communication, either in person or online. In these contexts, subjective relationships are carried out, given that reality appears sometimes mediated and is presented to the eyes of the receiver as objective and total.

As can be seen, the different environments in which communication evolves, their versatility and ability to change determine and justify the need to reference the important role of edu-communication. This has a strong transverse and interdisciplinary character that contributes to the scope of the fundamental objective: to prepare the recipient for the understanding and interpretation of the media and of the information they disseminate.

Its main goal should focus on the spread of literacy that “refers to the knowledge, skills and competences that are required to use and interpret the media” (Buckingham, 2005, p. 71). Its purpose converges at a single point: understanding the influence and roles of different media, both the most and less recent ones. It is about getting the audience to be able to demystify the content offered by the text, images and sound in media. This similarity and the relationship established between them caused institutionalized in the early twentieth century of the idea referred to:

The possibility of education for literacy – of which media education can now be considered a part– that extends beyond formal schooling to reach all types of education (Emery & Rother, 2000, p. 91).

The authors mentioned, indicate that education is a process that transcends mere schooling of formal education. This is due, mainly and among other factors, to the fact that the citizenry is in constant contact with such media and thus knows how to use them in any sector. Also, citizens need to understand the meaning of the information transmitted; therefore, and to be able to grasp it, the subject’s training is fundamental so they can acquire the necessary skills that empower them for the development and scope of critical sense in a society bombarded, continuously, by media messages. In order to address the different relationships between them and the education, media education favoring the evolution and implementation of citizens’ literacy emerged. Such training goes beyond the purely technological limits to focus, as Gozálviz & Aragón (2011) indicate, in a responsible and ethical use of media and the more and less recent technology.

Along the same line are the claims made by Area & Ribeiro (2012), who understand

literacy as a goal pursuing the growth in a subject's ability to participate independently and critically. For these authors, it is a right and a need of the citizens pursuing the construction of the digital identity of autonomous citizens. This capability not only promotes the advancement of critical attitude on the part of the subject, but also the exercise of individual freedom, considered as one of the fundamental values on which democratic society stands, where accountable and participatory citizenship rests.

The objectives described transcend academic boundaries and are not intended as a recent situation; they date back to 2004, the year in which the conference creating a European network of communication for educators was held in Belfast. At this meeting, different media of the world met, and despite their focus on the creation of such network since May, it wasn't created until November of the same year. It was then that, despite the economic difficulties, the idea materializes and emerges strongly. Initially, two groups with a common aim -increasing European networks- are born: Media Educ and Alliance for a Media Literacy Europe, which despite their currency and their coming up with a decisive support, their growth and expansion was limited, reaching only a minimum presence over time.

In this situation, the task of literacy acquires an international character and is a concern in Spain and all of Europe; for this reason, a group that wanted to work on the creation of a Charter for Media Literacy was organized in Belfast. This document was ratified in 2006 and with it its objectives, which place the European consensus in the issue of media literacy and the increase in knowledge about media literacy in the different European countries.

The main aspiration revolves around the creation of a network of media educators, supported by different institutions, which seeks securing several commitments, among which are raising awareness among citizens regarding the importance of media literacy and of spreading it, both from formal and informal education. Its aim is for citizens to achieve the skill set that enables them to understand media content. This commitment is linked directly to that which proposes offering the citizens the opportunities required to widen their experiences in the media environment and for the advancement of critical skills. It also aims at having the project to acquire an international value and the possibility to grow the network in Europe. At the same time, they express their desire to be included, as partners or providers, in the euromedialiteracy.eu site, assuming to give a push to the Media Literacy Action Plan and integrate it with the objectives of the Charter.

Despite the uneven impact that media literacy has had in Europe, a slight awareness can be observed, both by those responsible in the government and by the trainers and international agencies. First, a common concern about the need for the citizens to self-regulate in order to control the information to which they have access is perceived in the executives. Secondly, the focus is on the interest that the UNESCO and the European Commission, among others, work towards the implementation of communication literacy.

In the Spanish context, slight modifications are detected; especially over the first decade of this century, a marked deficit of media literacy is observed, among the options available to Spanish students. The origin of this type of education comes hand in hand with the provisions from UNESCO that are reflected in the General Organic Law of the Educational System (LOGSE, per its acronym in Spanish). This law

compiles the first traces extending from the 1980s until the last years of the 20th century. Despite this, its introduction in the education institution is not uniform nor institutionalized, there are isolated pockets that in the last years of the last century and the beginning of the current cultivated this kind of education.

The situation can be characterized by a strong lack of coordination by the various state and autonomous institutions, which do not support in a clear and strong way this type of training, a statement that is based on the lack of momentum of LOGSE, a law that has not ensured that media literacy is disseminated and has acquired an important value among the entire school population.

The technological advancement seen in the current situation, results in a greater degree of concern when observing how the citizens, lacking knowledge, must cope with the growing need, as stated by Cope & Kalantzis (2009), to understand it and participate through creation and innovation. It is therefore necessary to establish a favorable connection between the so-called "educated school" and "popular school" towards the understanding between the first, which houses knowledge, and the second focused on communication media and technologies. The purpose and objective pursued focus on "the development of the ability of citizens to live in an axiologically plural society or the acquisition of democratic coexistence and mutual respect habits" (Margalef, 2010, p. 30). These objectives are reflected in the LOGSE, which highlights the idea that school is erected as an institution where the acquisition of knowledge and critical capacity are encouraged.

Achieving the goal requires an education that includes the media in the education system; its incorporation is essential, as they are conceived as agents of socialization which

transmit, among others, values that influence decisively the receiver. The incorporation of the media and its study from the educational institution must transcend the technological and must relate to a complete literacy, understood as the capacity for discerning reality from fiction. It is an education that promotes knowledge and the development of activities, based on the interpretation and understanding of information contents that foster interaction among students. All this should be transferred to society at large and should encourage growth of a participatory and plural citizenry. In following Gómez-Galán (2011), literature shall be worked, from the classroom, as a way of learning words and, also, to be presented as a means for getting to know the surrounding reality that trains the audience to handle the media and decode their contents, turning it into a subject that can be communicated, both on site and online. Consequently, it is very important that media literacy includes each and every agent that is part of the communication and learning process so that media literacy provides skills for work through media but also with them. Thus, reference is made to the axiology dimension mentioned by, among others, Ferrés (2006) when clarifying the dimensions of competences, or Marqués (2000), when referring to digital literacy as a way to acquire competences in the information society.

Despite not being a central topic, there is a marked link that can be established between literacy and citizenry since "attention must be paid to the moral issues linked to media literacy" (Buckingham, 2005, p. 165). All this because among other things, "media do not only transmit information, rather their messages transmit lifestyles" (Cabero, Martín & Llorente, 2012, p. 65). In other words, concrete ways of life that favor an increase in life in common and the functioning of any democratic society based

on interaction among individuals and cultures. Thus, training must prepare for respect of different opinions presented and the increase in communication and issuance of judgements of both value and critical.

Literacy vs. Communication

In this sense, both media education and literacy entail forms of acquiring critical conscience that pursue the analysis of the role of communication, where democratic societies are based.

Its origin dates back to life in society and has become more complex as time goes by and according to the apparition of needs, acquiring finally a determining value in a media society, where they achieve climax since it is ascribed to personal relationships and is linked to virtuality.

One of the most immediate interrelationship forms that allows interaction between the subjects is communication, whose evolution materializes thanks to dialogue, which is based on knowledge and language comprehension.

Similarly, decoding is another essential element for the development of the communication process that takes place preeminently in the screen and digitalization society, a space where the reading and writing skills are insufficient. Due to the technological progress and the presence of a large amount of images, whether they are static or moving, the needs increase. Among the main, are the one related to acquiring the ability of the receiver, to decode and understand information.

The progress and scope of such skill is not limited, exclusively, to adolescents, rather, it should happen at society level in each of the individuals lacking it. The advancement of communication skills favors autonomous learning and makes possible the search and

selection of information that is presented in different formats.

On the other hand, “the communication objectives that shall be presented in the teaching-learning process must contemplate the development of skills in line with the new communication and training needs demanded by society” (Prado, 2001, p. 24).

As can be deduced from the above, comprehension and correct decoding of information requires literacy, especially communicative, which is the base of audiovisual and media learning. This learning favors the achievement of growth of different skills that make possible the attainment of educational/communicative needs required in today’s society. A large amount of multimedia contents circulates in said space, contents that must be understood by the subject in order to favor interaction among the people who coexist in the same media context. This coexistence can be on site or online and its scope requires evolution of among others, the communicative competence, a skill that makes reference to the increase of a fluid communication and, also, to the use of multiple tools and materials available to the user especially now. Communication literacy intends to reach a citizenry capable of communicating and interrelating in the current dialogic society.

Communication literacy in today’s society

Current communicative systems focus their interest on interaction with the rest and justify the existence of a more creative and responsible citizenry, i.e., of critical and autonomous subjects that increase the ability that allows them to act freely and committed to the values on which a democratic media society is supported. Based on this statements

and as expressed by Aguilar (2008) in the title of her work, we live in a society where the new languages and new literacy are the raw material of democracy. Although the author refers to Mexico in her research, the results of the study can be extrapolated to almost any country where the technology inclusion in education conditions are surging. Among others, these reasons certify a need for control and knowledge of writing and of different communication forms.

For this reason, inclusion of audiovisual contents in the classroom as well as its work in the different curricular areas is privileged. Despite being contents that have a transversal character and are not limited to a single subject, acquiring an interdisciplinary character, they obtain an essential value as an element that allows communication and understanding and interaction among ones and the others. They favor communication referred to on site and online environments and to all spaces in total which, due to the emergence and consequent implementation of the most recent media and technologies, become main protagonists.

In this circle, communicative competency evolves based on linguistics and with the interlocutor's interaction ability; in its advancement it interferes with a series of situational factors and the different means at hand. Thus, it is determinant and fundamental to support literacy that requires implementation of such abilities both in instructors and students. Beyond the technical knowledge acquisition, the implantation of cognitive and axiology abilities that favor the comprehension, evaluation and emission of judgments or autonomous and critical opinions is urgent.

The scope and emission of these judgments must be built on the dominion of

media and iconic mediation, since, as stated by Perez-Tornero (2000), we are witnessing a situation labeled as hypermedia, an environment where learning and correct use of media is urgent, in addition to a substantial change. In this situation, not only is the use of new forms essential, but also of the different contents sent out in multiple formats. Following Livingstone (2004), the idea is linked also to the intercultural and political character, i.e., to the total of channels that enable social participation; an activity that can grow if they minimum skills that let an individual interact with others in the technological society are attained, where the media and the contents derived from the first have an influence on the audience. The exponential proliferation of technological devices coincides with the early use of the same, especially by the younger ones and it entails the necessity that the communicative competence be developed favoring the creation and issuance critical judgement, while it opposes elimination of social inequalities, allowing the eradication of the digital gap.

Notwithstanding, in the information society of traditional communication forms, linked to the press and the different ways of writing, new languages come up, among which the iconic takes on a special relevance. The situation warrants the need, already confirmed at the beginning of the century by Pérez-Tornero (2000) when referring to the need for change from the notion of linguistic competence towards the semiologic one. This is all due to the fact that, both the most recent languages and the diverse forms of communication are "powerful persuasion and knowledge dissemination industries" (Pérez-Rodríguez, 2004, p. 85), that acquire relevance and transcendence similar to the one acquired by the printing press back in

the day. There are not only these unpublished languages, Pérez-Rodríguez alludes to the importance of the new spaces, among which the virtual environment stands out by allowing interaction miles away in real time.

All this favors communication, which not always evolves horizontally through, for example, the incipient social networks or the different media used to communicate directly. This typology favors the interaction and the possibility of emitting messages, both synchronous and asynchronous.

It is completed with the so-called vertical communication, normally associated to the emission of formal messages that respond to the fulfillment of commands. Both form the base of the dialogic social architecture, based on participation.

Technological and social evolution contribute to the advancement of communication, as a form of interaction in the global knowledge society. This nourishes both from instrumental communication, which values culture and its understanding, and from the social one, centered in the values being disseminated; also "it recovers dialogue and participation as central axes" (Gumucio, 2004, p. 25), all that aimed at attaining a world where multiple voices converge. Said convergence is possible due to the presence of multiple forms of interconnection and exchange of information that, frequently, transmits knowledge and disseminates values that are not always real.

The situation warrants the need to plan "flexible and open discursive practices" (Prado, 2001, p. 28), e.g., activities favorable to the advancement of interpersonal communication and constructive and autonomous learning. On the other hand, it favors that the subject is updated as to the social situation at each moment. Discourse analysis requires a vast

linguist knowledge, a knowledge of the code that allows to interpret it, and of its social component. On the other hand, it makes possible the construction of knowledge based on the different languages and their understanding.

The growth of communicative competency in the most recent media contest is faced with different obstacles that shall be overcome in order to achieve critical literacy, i.e., integration of different tools through which knowledge is built, and the creation and production of messages in the current society.

At pedagogical level, from the last decades of the past century and during the first years of the present one, we have a relatively significant amount of papers in which, the acquisition and implementation of the communicative competency, as well as the rest of abilities that enable the receiver to understand the media and their contents are analyzed from different points of view.

Existing literature lacks practical activities that can be applied to citizenry, at the time of training it to communicate effectively and to understand the variety of media as well as its contents. In spite of the existence of some *e-learning programs*, they are not too many and the fact that the circumstances change continuously makes their presence, application and effectiveness difficult.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

When becoming aware of the situation, the main challenges towards literacy and acquisition and development of competences by the citizenry --the current media ecosystem-- are described. After a long and arduous process, we witness the recognition of literacy from the UNESCO and the European Commission, which acquires special importance in the area of academic training and learning throughout the entire

life. Literacy is conceived, nowadays, as the acquisition of abilities and as the forging and attainment of the values that allow the subject to train individually, while at the same time he is being trained for a life within society.

In the current ecosystem, where the technological sector predominates, the reflection and critical ability acquires special relevance. It is also worth highlighting, as indicated before, the need for the subject, in addition to being able to search for information, to process and transform it into knowledge. For it, the mastery of different media and technological resources is required, one that makes possible the communication in the hypermedia environment, and interaction of digital natives and immigrants.

All this justifies the advance of the communicative competency as an ability that transcends the linguistic aspect, placing itself at the same level as an ability assigned to a discipline, and similarly to an attitude that is linked cross-sectionally to the total disciplines and must be cultivated with the purpose of contributing to the growth of a scope where active, collaborative participation predominates.

The current technological framework makes possible the statement affirmation regarding new forms of learning and socialization; additionally, its immersion in the society and the fact that they condition the audience emphasizes and at the same time warrants its necessity. Literacy is propounded as a form to understand the surrounding social reality that must be developed in the citizenry; it is considered a task that falls to both the public powers such as the Audiovisual Media State Council or to the companies and that also interests the associations of viewers.

In the circle described above and limiting the term literacy, it is necessary to focus in the media referred to consumers, media audience, and their knowledge. Among other objectives, it focuses its interest in the improvement of the subject's skills until obtaining a judgment between what is real and what is created; its final goal is the evolution and it evolves around the scope of critical attitude. Among the challenges that are attributed to it are the acquisition of basic communicative competences, those that favor the advance of a subject capable of analyzing the media environment and of establishing an interrelation and a contact, both face to face and virtual, with the other members of it.

Given the situation in which it takes place, it is a tool of unmeasurable value that supports favoring enhancement of the subject's mind. This activity can grow from the educational institution and different organizations, like, for example, media observatories or media workshops offered at different independent communities. Through multiple media, reaching people who improve media autonomy, those who are able to act critically before the media is an aim.

In relation to this, it is inferred that the role of the literacy trainer is focused on the receivers' training and also on the information producers, i.e., the journalists. These last ones have to acquire and increase their sense of responsibility, which results in the performance of higher-quality journalism. All that, and independently of who it refers to, emphasizes the importance of the educating task. Following Martens (2010) in the area of the training task, the fact that the educators can translate media knowledge and skills into educational strategies acquires a significant meaning. With the purpose of facilitating reaching the goal there are different studies including recommendations directed to the work inherent to public powers,

and also to the work developed by the families. Thus, as evidenced in the Recommendations of the Andalusian Audiovisual Council for Media Literacy (2012), the first are asked, among other goals, to implement continuous education programs for teachers in order to contribute to the holistic training of this group. On the other hand, the Council considers basic that the authorities guarantee inclusion of media competences in the curriculum and in the different courses. It is basic to have the resources and materials required for the evolution and the fulfillment of such task.

As to the familiar surroundings, its implication in the training in media competences is indispensable; all this in order to contribute to eradicate the intergenerational digital gap. Media Literacy is a matter of producers, those who are encouraged to promote the production of contents oriented towards this line, in order to favor participation of the citizens. Also, and to complete their task, they are offered compliance of the self-regulation and co-regulation codes. The actions mentioned are aimed, mainly, towards the protection of minors both from the information, and from the broadcasting of any type of licentious images broadcasted by different media and screens.

The work of the educational institution that shall contribute to the correct advance of the curricula and shall foster, together with the system, the acquisition of knowledge by the minors, in particular and of the audience in general adds to the activities referred to above. Although these matters do not guarantee success nor the holistic training of critical receivers, are considered indispensable and basic.

Also, the prevailing social reality determines the impossibility and aggravates the extent of difficulty at the time of assuming the influence that the powerful media exert

on the receiver; this is a reason that justifies the pressing work of the diverse agents whose activity grows for the sake of reaching a critical receiver, a subject that has the ability to respond creatively and independently. It is about "the citizens being able to have a sufficient and wide knowledge about the factors that condition the development of the media industry" (Perez-Tornero, 2005, p. 25). As indicated by the author, this leads to the expansion of liberties, both individual and social, and is closely related to responsible work that is inherent to deliberative democracy referred to by Aranguren, who considers it as the basis for understanding and interrelation of any dialogic society. All these factors, justify the importance of this work and its direct link to literacy as a means to take part in the debates and the ability to express opinions. Its implementation is possible thanks to the improvement of communicative competences, based on the dialogue, the mass media and participation.

In the same line of literacy and theoretical research, we agree with Cope & Kalantzis (2009) when they present their Multiliteracies pedagogy as a manifest arriving at a time of world change, a modification taking place in the communication sector which by extension should take place also in the education sector.

The aforementioned study focuses its interest in the need to teach beyond mere memorization. On the other hand, the authors think that school is not the universe where knowledge is concentrated, since, learning situations take place wherever contact and communication occur. These reasons justify the need that have an influence on the fact that the pedagogy being promoted aims at attaining a flexible culture that is able to innovate. A culture that goes beyond the laws of the market, and at the same time favors the diversity that surpasses representation to focus on transformation and

change. Thus, it is fundamental, as stated by Buckingham (2005), not only understanding but processing media contents, since this depends largely on the motivation level developed by youth. This last fact is directly linked to the time that young people are exposed to these media, which varies between two and four hours, according to the reference source. On the other hand, and along the same line, it should not be forgotten that at early ages, especially after 4 or 5 years, children do not make a difference between reality and fiction and neither are they able to select what they like. It will be necessary to wait until they are 11 or 12 years old so they can distinguish the ideological impact offered by the media and their potential effects, both positive and negative.

In spite of these empirical data, practice differs from theory, since based on what several research studies propose, the analysis and the emission of judgments on the part of the minors does not take place until adolescence, a fact that justifies the need of acquisition of competences by the student body. A need supported by Lemish (2012), when he confirms that childhood is identified with a social and cultural construction, within the context of a concrete period in which the influence of media and its contents is essential and decisive. The audiovisual contents exert a special influence on the audience, mainly among youngsters who develop a minimum level of moral and critical advance. Thus, we propose media literacy as an element upon which critical conscience must be built. This type of literacy is conceived as a method that favors participation in the culture and in the citizenry and is supported on the legislative issue that aims to palliate any deficiency referred to the producers and, also, to the consumers.

As observed, literacy must take place at a general level, both in teachers and students,

young and old, within the academic sector and at a social level, since, as pointed out by Salomon (2009), when one talks about television, media citizenry the allows the growth of a high degree of literacy is able to assure the permanence and support of the quality and the rules and principles linked to the increase of a democratic and equal society.

The importance of the deontological codes, the co-regulation and self-regulation are additional to the relevance and transcendence of the coercive issues; all of which are defined mechanisms and which contribute to the scope and maintenance of media order.

The theme goes beyond national and European borders and acquires world-wide character; according to González-Cortés (2011), this is owed to the fact that correct media literacy is a fundamental topic for the development and scope of intercultural communication and coexistence.

Therefore, the need of a media sector that fulfills its tasks according to ethical principles and in compliance with current legislation, is supplemented by the need for a competent citizenry that is able to understand the information and to act responsibly and independently; subjects with enough experience to decode audiovisual messages and understand their meaning.

Media literacy, based on the advance of media ability, causes different challenges; it focuses especially on pursuing a citizenry able to manage within the media context, an activity that is simultaneous to the exploitation of all its potential. It alludes both to local and global issues, since all of them shall be linked to responsibility and active participation.

In summary, this research concludes by reinforcing the value of literacy as a means

upon which critical personalities shall be built, individuals able of emitting independent judgments not linked to any exerted influence from the media, whether conscious or not. Thus, reference is made to the task of the people in charge of the media, and the consequent need for them to be literate. The objective of this paper: literacy as base for the increase of critical conscience and the construction of an autonomous and participative citizenry, has concerned different agencies and institutions throughout the last years. In this sense, this concern goes back to the turn of the century and it comes up hand in hand with the European Commission, whereas, at national level, it concerns different groups and researchers who work for the advance of critical and literate minds.

In general, and based on what has been presented here, all the studies focus their interest in the diagnosis, which entails the essential base upon which the set of strategies that serve as tools to develop critical conscience among citizens shall be designed and created.

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