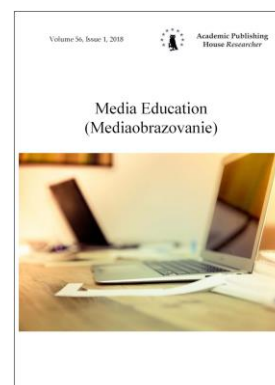




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Structural and Content Features of Russian Research on Media Literacy

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Abstract

Empirical basis of this research includes 103 papers published from 2015 through 2019 in such established scholarly journals as *Media Education*, *Political Linguistics*, *Political Studies*, *Herald of Moscow University. Series 10: Journalism, Media Scope, Political Expertise*, and *Media Linguistics*. Articles sampled were then conveniently divided into two groups: a so-called “media literacy” group consists of 45 papers explicitly dedicated to various aspects of media education and related topics; “indirect” group is comprised of 58 articles dealing with the issues that are not directly connected to media education or media literacy but touch on adjacent notions and processes.

Special attention is paid to the following features:

- specifics of the articles’ authors corps (including their scholarly background, academic degree holders rate, and places of residence);
- content blocks, keywords, and scholarly classifiers of the articles;
- geographical focus and key age objects of the articles;
- structural elements and types of the articles;
- the most popular research methods and definitions of media literacy used by the authors;
- the most often quoted papers and authors.

Two centers of media education research (i.e. Taganrog and Moscow) are distinguished. The most challenging and potentially high in demand aspects of media literacy scholarships are outlined.

Keywords: media literacy, media education, mass media, scholarly journals, research, structural elements, article, state-of-the-art review, Russia.

1. Introduction

In the age of post-truth politics, fake and partisan news, the need for media education and media literacy is quite obvious. Moreover, it is one of the few things we can use to mitigate the consequences of manipulation, propaganda, information overload, and media wars. In this regard, it always pays to evaluate the current state of media literacy research in a certain country. To what extent does it match the growth of the demand for media literacy training? What are the main problems it is facing now? Is it capable of solving them? Does it meet basic standards of international scholarships in this field of study?

Even though attempts to answer these questions are made from time to time, most of them focus primarily on foreign studies. At the same time, Russia is in need of such surveys, too. Further than that, there are at least two reasons why our country may have even greater interest in this type of research.

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Firstly, social and political life itself explicitly requires tools and mechanisms of checking information flaws: unfortunately, the quality of news and media performance in this country sometimes is far from perfect. “Possibilities of political and commercial manipulations of the public are growing in number with the use of a powerful media complex and the latest communication technologies. This trend poses a threat to democracy, which degenerates into a manipulative ersatz that excludes the really free and informed will of citizens” (Korochensky et al., 2019: 393). Disappointingly, all this holds true to Russia, too.

Secondly, compared with Europe and North America, media literacy movement (at least in its political branch) in Russia is still very much in its infancy – therefore, self-assessment is necessary in order to further develop the field. Thus, a kind of scholarly introspection here seems to be quite timely and relevant on both practical and theoretical levels.

2. Materials and methods

Empirical basis of this research consists of papers published from 2015 through 2019 in such scholarly journals as *Media Education*, *Political Linguistics*, *Political Studies*, *Herald of Moscow University. Series 10: Journalism, Media Scope, Political Expertise*, and *Media Linguistics*. Several factors were taken into consideration while choosing these journals. First and foremost, their remits were considered – I picked out those sometimes touching upon issues pertinent to mass media and media education. Journals’ status also played a role: except for *Media Linguistics*, they are on the State Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles list; more than that, *Media Education* is indexed by *Web of Science*. At last, my choice was also built on their geographical spread (apart from Moscow, they represent Saint Petersburg, and regions) and *Science Index* impact-factor.

I believe that scholarly articles published in above-mentioned journals adequately reflect the state of the art in the field of media literacy. One may fairly argue that monographs should also be scrutinized. However, I had two reasons not to do it. My own research experience tells me that in most cases the basic content of the book is preliminary tested in the article format (or – more rarely – vice versa). In addition, to gain access to print and even PDF-versions of monographs is usually much more difficult than to articles.

So, having perused all volumes of above-mentioned journals published from 2015 through 2019, I found 103 papers on the issue under consideration. The main research methods I used to explore them were comparative analysis and content analysis of the texts, abstracts, keywords, and references.

Then I deemed it possible to conveniently divide articles into two groups:

1. A so-called “indirect” group is comprised of 58 articles dealing with the issues that are not directly connected to media education or media literacy but touch on adjacent notions and processes (e.g., but not limited to manipulation, information wars, fake news, post-truth, media consumption etc.).
2. A so-called “media literacy” group (from this point onward, including bar charts and graphs, “ML” group) consists of 45 papers explicitly dedicated to various aspects of media literacy education and related topics.

Fig. 1 shows the way these groups are presented within the seven journals analyzed.

As one can see, *Media Education* published the overwhelming majority of the “field-oriented” articles. On the one hand, taking into account the journal’s focus, it is hardly surprising. On the other hand, and it is oddly enough, such a hot-button issue does not receive much attention of scholars publishing their research at other journals. Of course, some issues related to media literacy were somehow addressed in “indirect” articles as well. However, it seems to me that modern political reality necessitates much more thorough analysis of such issues carried out by scholars from different areas – i.e. political science, social science, philology, philosophy, psychology etc.

3. Discussion

In 2020, A.V. Fedorov and A.A. Levitskaya examined the content of around 600 PhD theses on media literacy education carried out in Russia and other CIS countries from 1960 to 2019. One of the inferences they made was that “traditional for the USSR priority of aesthetically-oriented media education in the CIS countries of the 21st century has been replaced by sociocultural and cultural

studies” (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020: 75). Even though there is still no mention of political science angle, timid drift toward social dimension of media literacy is quite promising in this context.

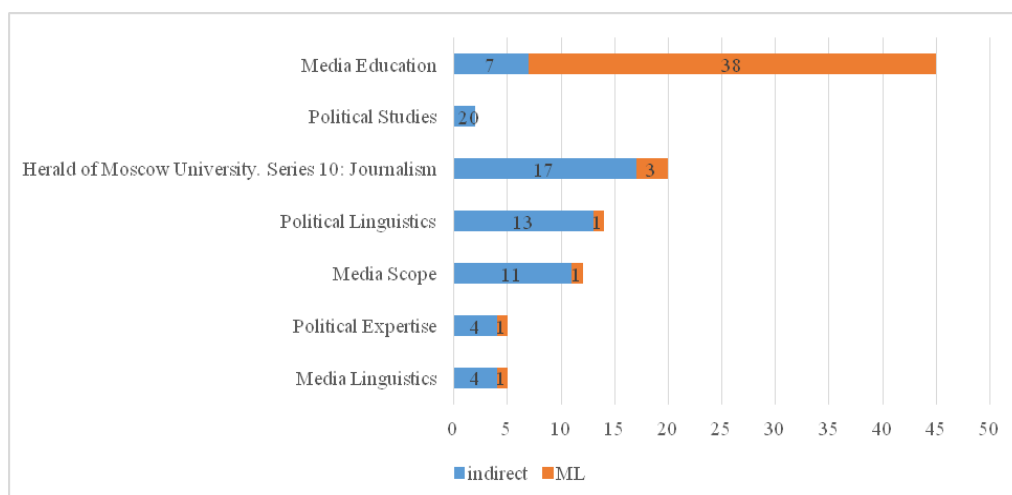


Fig. 1. Allocation of articles between the journals (number of units)

Generally speaking, an article I have just cited as well as A.V. Fedorov’s “Evolution of Russian Scientific Research in the Field of Media Education” (Fedorov, 2009) are perhaps the only attempts to analyze Russian media literacy education scholarship in its entirety. Enormous sample, numerous aspects taken into consideration, and approved forecasts make them an important benchmark for research of such kind. However, not only PhD dissertations may be deemed as a touchstone for the state of affairs in media literacy field. I suppose that papers published in well-established scholarly journals are also indicative enough. In a sense, these two approaches complement each other.

In terms of scope and methods of research, “Leaders of Soviet Film Distribution (1930–1991): Trends and Patterns” (Fedorov, 2020) is of this kind, too. Interestingly enough, despite the very focus of the author (film industry is usually perceived as being a part of entertainment sphere), there are some ideological strands in this article that add a political undertone to this survey.

There are also some state-of-the-art reviews concerning media research in a broader context. Having analyzed main directions and methods of media theories within Russian science, M.I. Makeenko argues that “research approach” is underdeveloped here which, in its turn, results in small number of ingenious theoretical and empirical results. He supposes that “almost all corps of classic foreign texts, monographs, and scholarly articles on media theories are left outside “academic discourse” and those publications that are used by Russian scholars do not necessarily imply “direct appeals to theories under consideration” (Makeenko, 2017: 24).

Similar inference is drawn by D.V. Dunas. He believes that “a kind of terminological, theoretical, and conceptual confusion, desire to disengage from the heritage of Marxism and Leninism, to articulate national identity within foreign academic media discourse are intrinsic to contemporary Russian media studies” (Dunas, 2017: 3).

It should be noted that roughly the same critical evaluations of theoretical and methodological parts of Russian media research are not uncommon (Kuchinov, 2016; Vartanova, 2012; 2015; Vyrkovsky, Smirnov, 2018). Moreover, I can assume that, to some extent, this tendency is true for media education studies as well.

As far as foreign “state of the field” studies are concerned, several aspects are worth mentioning. First of all, such surveys are arguably more popular abroad than in Russia. One of the most prominent reviews of this kind was conducted by W.J. Potter. In 2010, he presented an overview of how media literacy had been treated as an issue in curriculum design within the institution of education, and then how it had been treated as an intervention by parents and researchers (Potter, 2010).

Potter’s article caused enormous controversy. For example, R. Hobbs accused him of omitting much of the innovative work that had emerged in the early 21st century from scholars across the fields of communication, education, and public health. She also thought that Potter

failed to capture the depth and complexity of the field (Hobbs, 2011b). “Potter views current momentum in research and scholarship in media literacy as validation for the longstanding value of the effects tradition ... Adopting this perspective removes more than 90 % of all the most interesting new ideas now emerging from new scholarship on this topic” (Hobbs, 2011a).

To my way of thinking, the very fact of debate on such an “exclusively” scholarly issue is worthy of respect. It allows not only to discuss some controversial aspects and heighten academic interest to the area but to jointly outline prospects of further development of the field. I feel like Russian media literacy scholarship lacks such “positively polemic” discourse.

Significant part of foreign reviews deals with different sides of media education and media literacy as a social movement. It includes (but is not limited to) considerations about curriculum design, teaching, and the assessment of media literacy (Christ, Potter, 1998), reflections on the opportunities and challenges faced by media literacy educators (Cappello et al., 2011), debates within the field (Hobbs, 1998), key obstacles to the development of media education in certain countries (Kubey, 1998) etc.

It is not surprising though that “there is very few research analyzing the development of media education in the CIS countries published in Western European countries” (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020: 65). Instead, western scholars focus primarily on rather broad issues concerning either their own countries or the whole world. The audience with its connection to the field of media literacy is one of them.

In fact, the audience is usually given full consideration within studies on post-truth and fake news. Among other things, the effects of elite discourse about fake news on the public's evaluation of news media are analyzed (Van Duyn, Collier, 2019: 29-31); attempts to evaluate the size of the online fake news consumers are made (Nelson, Taneja, 2018: 3720-3721); and the way audiences grapple with pervasive ambiguity as they navigate their media and communication resources is explored (Wenzel, 2019: 1987-1990). In terms of media education, the latter seems to be of crucial importance. How residents cycle between verifying information and disengaging from news to relieve stress, as well as possible pathways to resolve ambiguity are arguably the most urgent issues in the whole field nowadays.

Quite an interesting attempt to treat media literacy education as a useful lens for teaching students to be more crucial was made by Y. Friesem who described a semester-long undergraduate course designed to deconstruct information disorder in the post-truth era by looking at economics, ideology, and power relations (Friesem, 2019). Needless to say, social, political, and economic environment plays a great role in the way people interact with mass media. However, not only students (be they undergraduate or postgraduate) but more general (in terms of their age and occupation) public needs to be examined in such way, too. Moreover, unlike students, they may not know the first thing about crucial attitude to media messages; hence higher degree of vulnerability to fake news, disinformation, and propaganda.

I guess that one of the most effective tools to counteract negative attributes of post-truth age is fact-checking. In recent years, fact-checking as a main issue of media studies has grown in popularity. Sometimes, it is examined within the context of relationship between media literacy and fake news as one of the challenges that misinformation represents in the Internet era (Lotero-Echeverri et al., 2018: 295-316). Research on journalists perception of fact-checking has also become quite common (Mena, 2019: 657-672). Some scholars go further and aim at exploring the role of information format (print vs. video) and tone (humorous vs. nonhumorous) in shaping message interest and belief correction in the context of political fact-checking (Young et al., 2018: 49-75). Others argue that “strong social connections between fact-checkers and rumor spreaders encourage the latter to prefer sharing accurate information, making them more likely to accept corrections” (Margolin et al., 2018: 196). At last, ingenious attempts to check how fact-checkers check are also worth mentioning (Lim, 2018).

In this context, of crucial importance are explorations on how professionals recommend ordinary people to seek truth in the information age that is faced with overwhelming amounts of information, channels, problems of misinformation, and the spreading of false stories via social media (Berger et al., 2019). Though truth-seeking is one of the primary objectives inherent in higher education, the process for students may be less clear than it may be for trained academics or professors (Arth et al., 2019). On the other hand, not all faculty are trained enough to be able to teach students how to check facts. Sometimes, forward-thinking students, on the contrary, can teach them one thing or two.

Some scholars provide a foundation for evaluating media literacy efforts and contextualizing them relative to the current media landscape (Bulger, Davison, 2018). As we know, media literacy is traditionally conceived as a process or set of skills based on critical thinking. It has a long history of development aligned along the dialectic between protection and participation. Contemporary media literacy tends to be organized around five themes: youth participation, teacher training and curricular resources, parental support, policy initiatives, and evidence base construction. Programs like these have demonstrated positive outcomes, particularly in the case of rapid responses to breaking news events, connecting critical thinking with behavior change, and evaluating partisan content. However, media literacy programs also have their challenges. In general, there is a lack of comprehensive evaluation data of media literacy efforts. Some research (Wineburg, McGrew, 2016; 2017; Metzger et al., 2015) shows that media literacy efforts can have little-to-no impact for certain materials, or even produce harmful conditions of overconfidence. The longitudinal nature of both assessing and updating media literacy programs makes this a perennial struggle.

Because of these challenges, M. Bulger and P. Davison made recommendations for future work in the field: to develop a coherent understanding of the media environment; to improve cross-disciplinary collaboration; to leverage the current media crisis to consolidate stakeholders; to prioritize the creation of a national media literacy evidence base; and to develop curricula for addressing action in addition to interpretation (Bulger, Davison, 2018: 12-14). No doubt, all these steps are rather timely and important. However, as far as Russia is concerned, I would add at least three more. Firstly, practical measures should be taken in order to galvanize professional media community into action in this area – i.e. to see that journalists' code of ethics is observed. Secondly, practice of teaching media literacy needs to be broadened; this applies not only to universities but to schools as well. Last but not least, more state-of-the-art research on media literacy in Russia should be undertaken. It is time to identify what we know (and what we do not) about the field, where the gaps lie, why media literacy might fail, and what the surrounding environment contributes to successful media literate practice.

4. Results

Dynamic of the number of articles sampled is rather amazing. It is visualized on the Fig. 2.

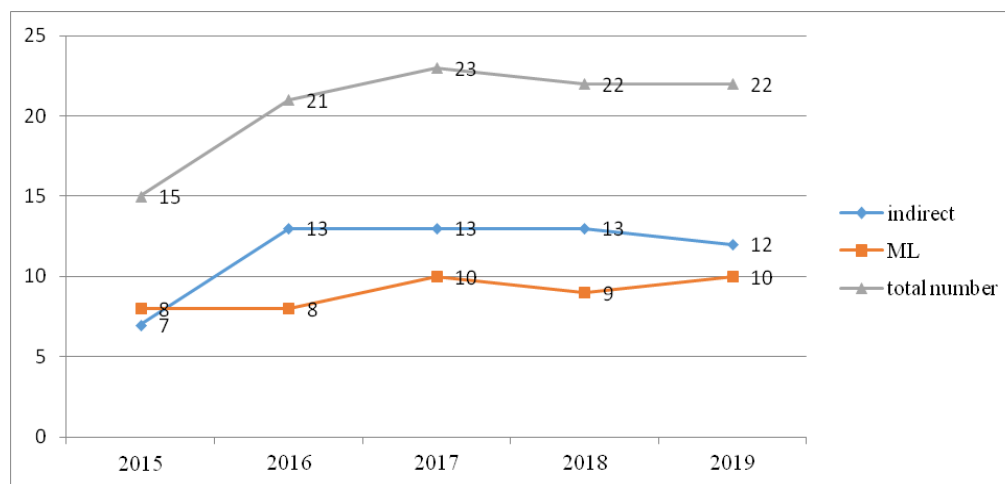


Fig. 2. Dynamic of publishing the articles (number of units)

Contrary to expectations, not a headlong growth but barely perceptible increase of publications' number is observed. Moreover, this increase may well be of random or fluctuating character. That being said, I admit that a kind of slow response effect may take place in this case: it is also conceivable that a surge of interest to the topic has already occurred; however, it has not been yet reflected in a number of articles published.

I also analyzed the authors corps. In total, 103 papers were authored by one hundred and fifty-four scholars. One hundred and four of them were "unique" – this number was calculated by excluding situations when the person authored more than one article.

Data presented on Fig. 3 allow saying that the number of "unique" authors writing on media literacy "directly" is bigger (both in absolute and percentage terms) than number of those creating

“indirect” research. To my mind, that makes perfect sense: the narrower focus inevitably demands the smaller circle of scholars specializing in it.

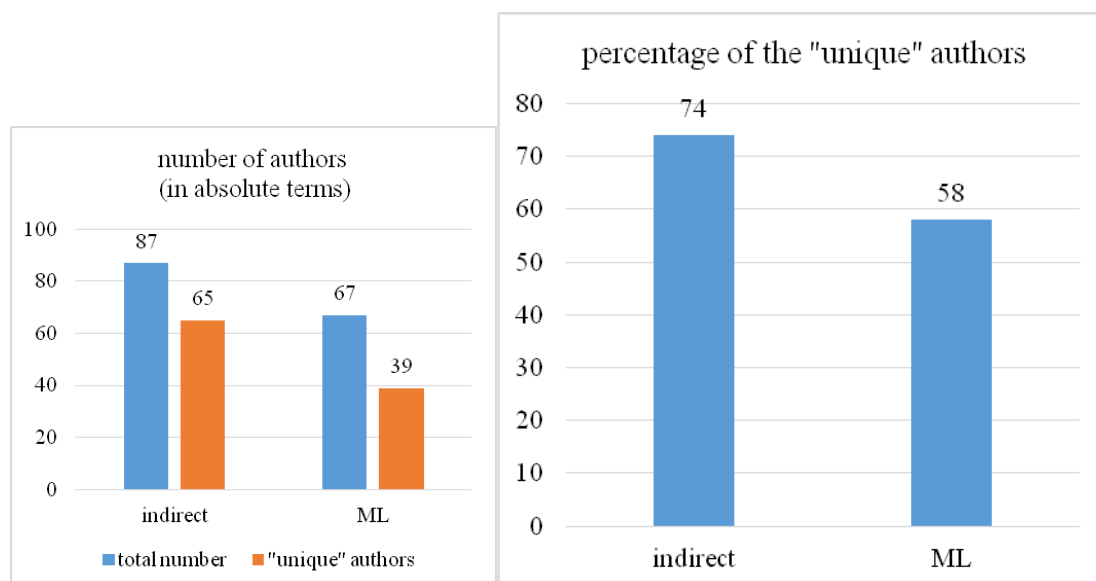


Fig. 3. The ratio of “unique” authors to their total numbers

Academic degree holders rate is also rather indicative. Even though the difference between authors of “indirect” and “ML” papers is not very substantial in absolute terms (see Fig. 4), higher scholarly status of those focusing on media education is more obvious in percentage terms (see Fig. 5).

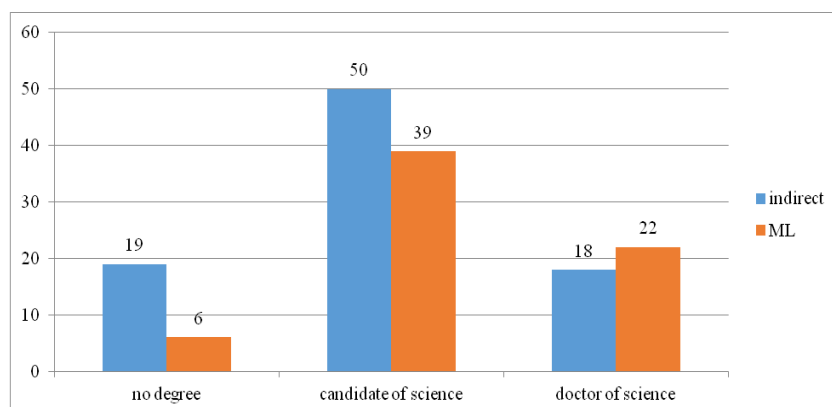


Fig. 4. Academic degree holders rate (number of authors)

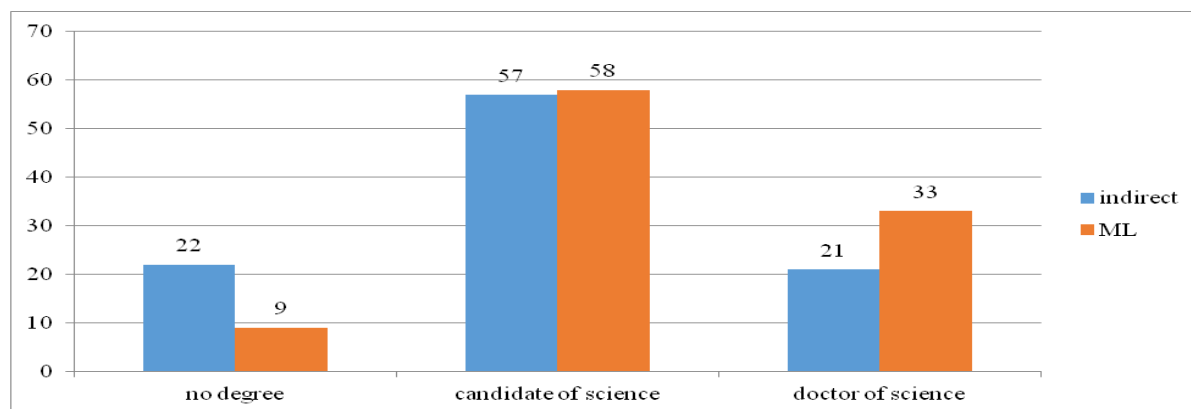


Fig. 5. Academic degree holders rate (percentage)

In this connection, it is also quite interesting to look at academic background of the authors working on ML-related issues. For perception convenience, I divided these data into two groups – i.e. for candidates (see Fig. 6) and doctors (see Fig. 7) of science.

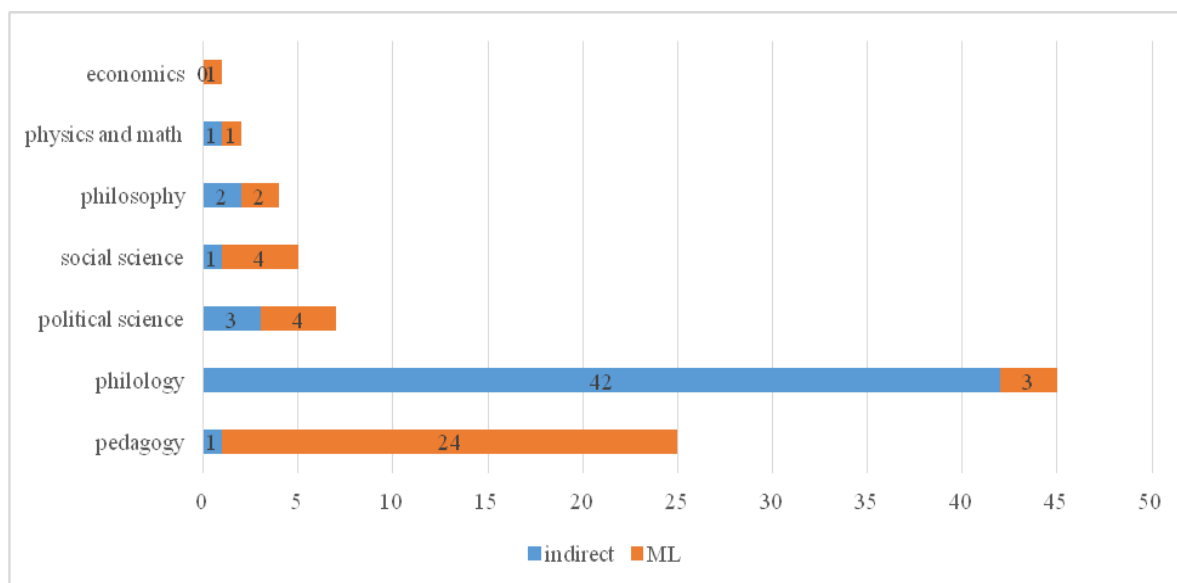


Fig. 6. Authors' academic background: candidates of science (number of authors)

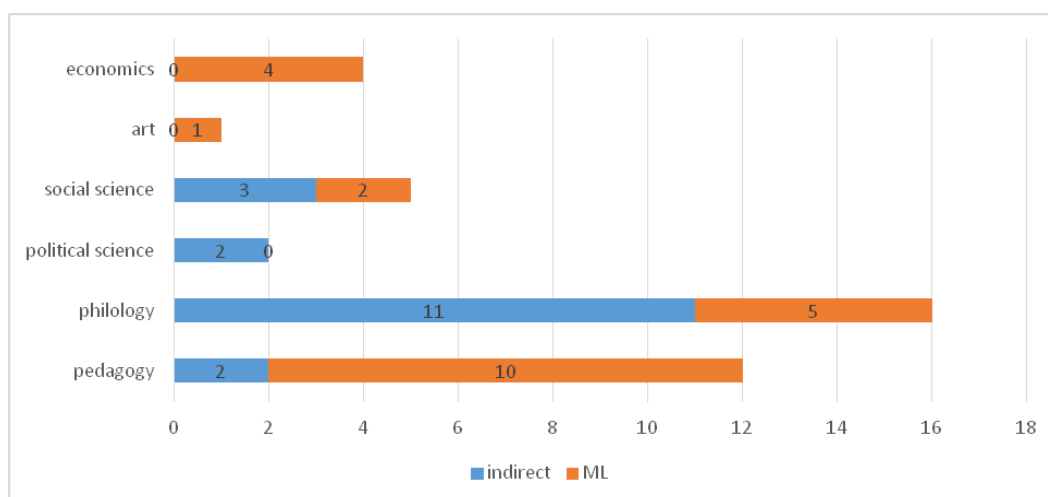


Fig. 7. Authors' academic background: doctors of science (number of authors)

Clearly, philologists – both candidates and doctors of science – primarily touch on “indirect” issues, whereas holders of degrees in pedagogy commonly focus on media education. Partly, it is due to the fact that there are more candidates and doctors of philology among faculty of Journalism at Lomonosov Moscow State University (they make up the bulk of the authors corps of the *Herald of Moscow University. Series 10: Journalism*), while scholars with pedagogical background prevail in “Media Education”.

It is quite revealing that, among representatives of areas other than pedagogy and philology, there are specialists in social science, philosophy, economics, art, and even physics but no psychologists (see Fig. 8). Taking into consideration not an insignificant political part of media literacy, the number of political scientists could also be bigger. It appears that both psychologists and political scientists might contribute much to media literacy scholarship.

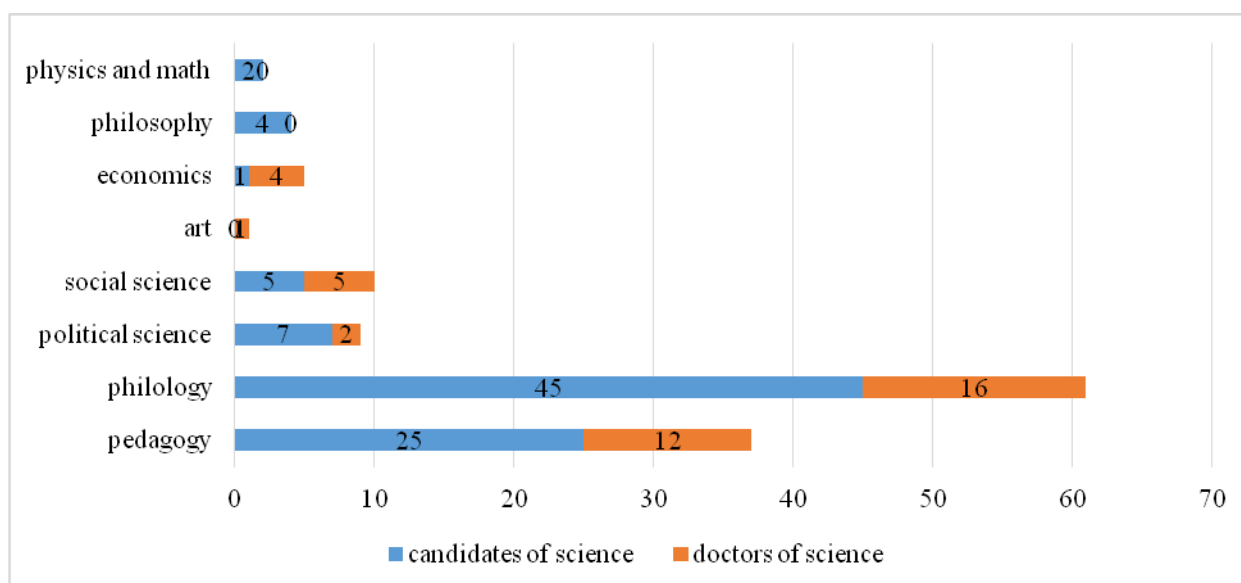


Fig. 8. Authors' academic background: candidates and doctors of science (number of authors)

Obviously, the sample of 103 articles is not enough to draw a global inference. However, I am sure that it allows making general conclusions, the more so because experience I have got verifies these observations in relation to other journals.

Two more aspects concerning the authors corps are also worth mentioning.

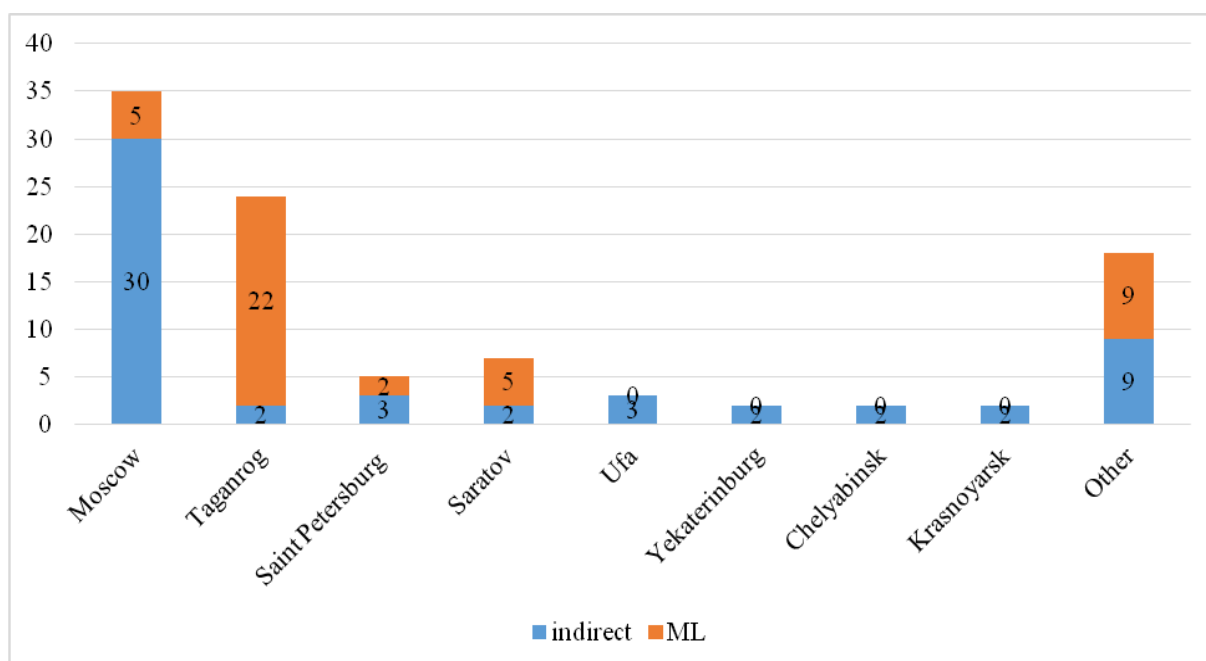


Fig. 9. The authors' places of residence (number of units)

On the Fig. 9, there are cities residents of which authored at least two articles analyzed. Among other reasons, leadership of Moscow can be explained by the fact that many institutions of higher education (e.g., Lomonosov Moscow State University, Higher School of Economics, Russian State University for the Humanities, the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, to name but a few) are situated in the capital of Russia; additionally, three out of seven journals under consideration are published there. Leading position of Taganrog is largely due to the strongest scholarly school of media literacy education existing there and similarly-named journal.

In this context, it is interesting to find out the percentage of so-called “local” authors – i.e. those whose residence matches address of the journal they publish their own articles in.

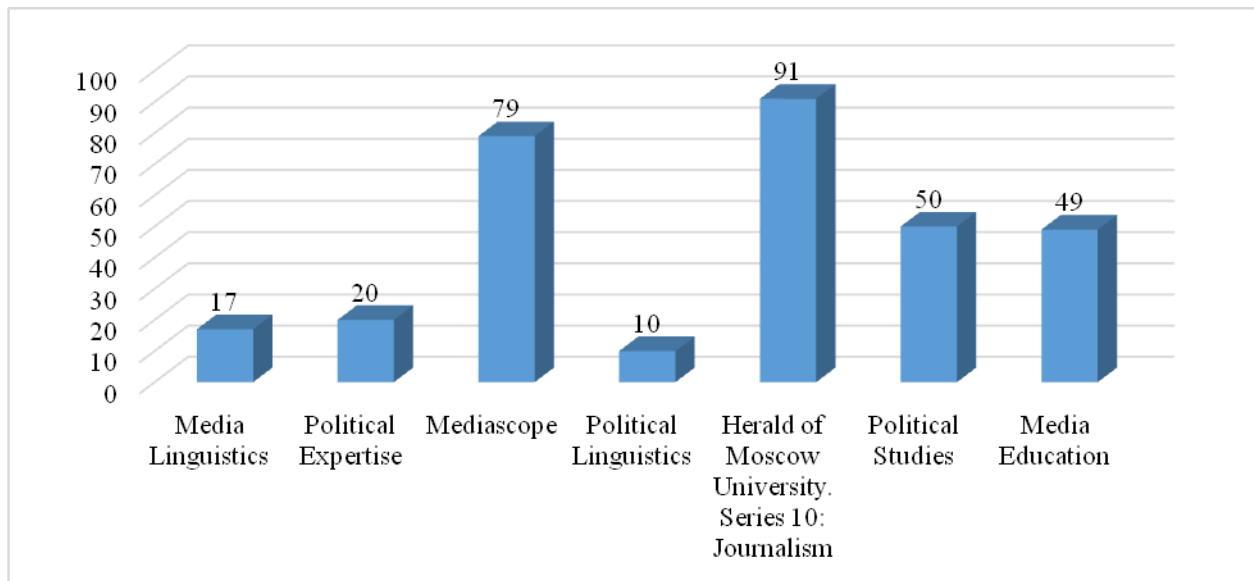


Fig. 10. Correspondence between the authors’ residence and journals’ places of issue (percentage)

As things stand now, nonresidents prevail in *Political Linguistics*, *Media Linguistics*, and *Political Expertise*. Again, it is fair only for articles selected for analysis. I have to admit, if all articles (no matter if they are about media or not) of the journals were considered, the final distribution might be different. However, data presented on Fig. 10 are helpful to understand where chances to find papers of the authors from provincial cities are higher.

The most important thing, though, is the focus of the articles. The whole variety of aspects touched upon was split into several blocks. Taking into account the difference in content of articles belonging to “indirect” and “ML” groups, the blocks were generated separately – for each of two groups.

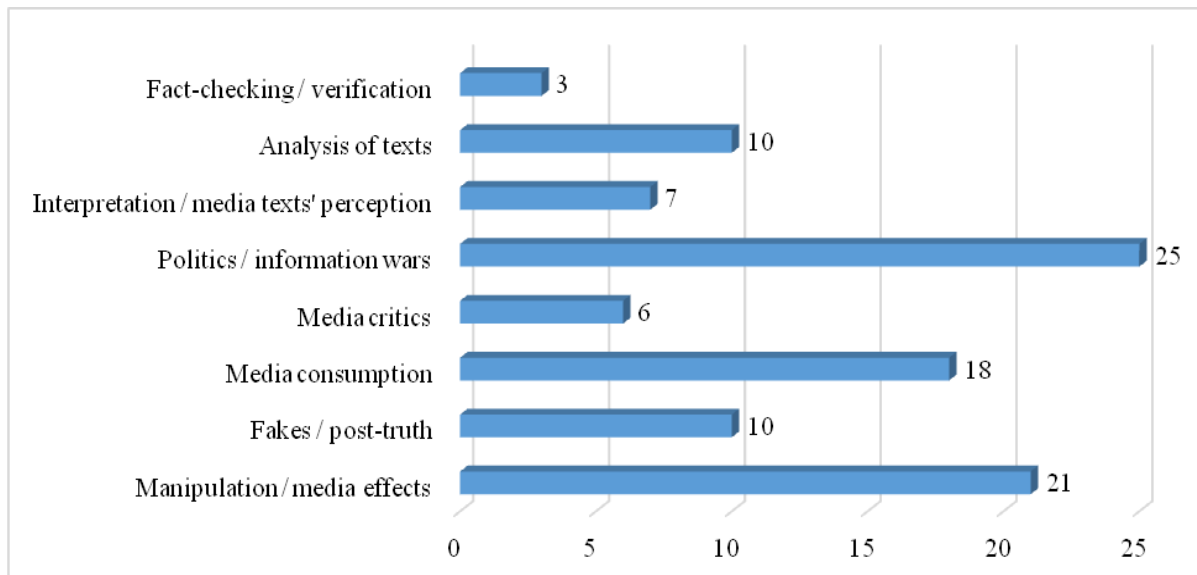


Fig. 11. Content blocks of “indirect” articles (% out of all articles analyzed)

As the Fig. 11 shows, a large portion of “indirect” articles deal with either political aspects of information warfare or ways to manipulate public conscience (25 % and 21 % respectively). Fully realizing the differences between manipulation and just media influence, in this case I decided to combine papers on such issues under one roof as quite often they were treated simultaneously –

within the same article. Contrariwise, despite the clearly manipulative nature of fakes and post-truth, papers centered around these phenomena were singled out of manipulation into separate block, because there were many cases when fake news and post-truth politics were considered on a standalone basis.

Surprisingly, fact-checking / verification became the least recently addressed issue. In other words, compared with other content blocks, ways to withstand multiple media manipulations attract scholars' attention less frequently, although it would seem to be a sphere where science could really benefit everyday life.

Even more surprisingly, fact-checking / verification issue has not been treated in "ML" group articles at all!

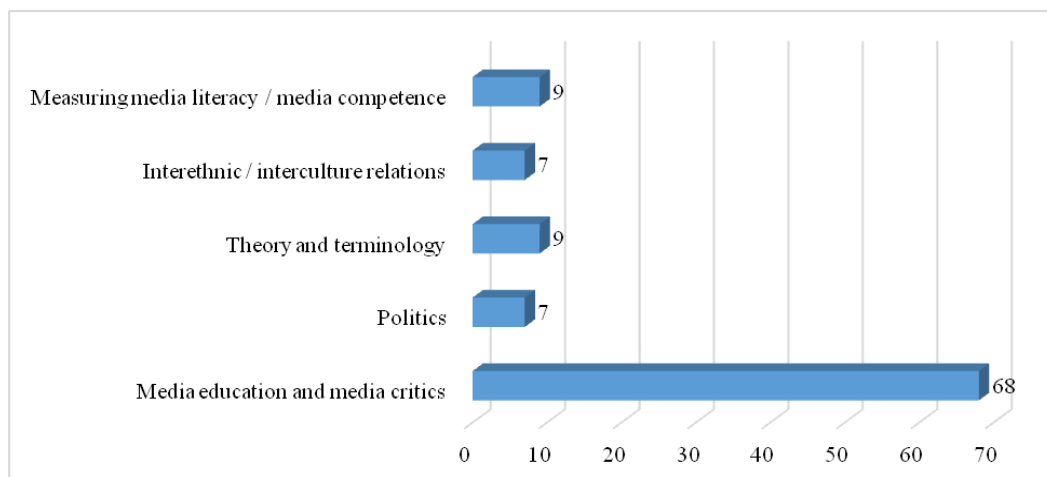


Fig. 12. Content blocks of "ML" articles (% out of all articles analyzed)

Articles on different aspects of media education and media critics lead there by a wide margin. An emphasis is primarily made on specifics of teaching media literacy to various categories of learners. Besides, certain theoretical and terminological aspects are discussed, attempts to measure the maturity level of media competences are made, and the role of media education in harmonization of interethnic and intercultural interaction is shown.

Conspicuous is the fact that, unlike in the "indirect" group, there are not so many papers on political strand of media literacy. However, I believe that (just as fact-checking) this is one of the most pressing issues nowadays because media literacy may well be deemed as a key factor of political culture formation.

Thematic features of the articles are confirmed by the results of keywords' analysis. Having brought together all keywords used in 103 articles, I selected those of them that were mentioned at least twice. Aggregate numbers of cases each of them was used in keywords sections stand before the words in [Tables 1](#) and [2](#).

Table 1. Keywords used in "indirect" articles (number of cases)

20 mass media	3 digital generation
13 media text	3 euphemism
11 political discourse	2 the English language
10 media discourse	2 impact
8 media consumption	2 disinformation
8 fake	2 identity
7 media linguistics	2 interpretation
7 manipulation	2 information technologies
5 manipulative	2 information
5 social networks	2 click bait
4 audience	2 lexical item
4 journalism	2 lie
4 the Internet	2 media education

4 media literacy	2 mediatization
4 news	2 German media
4 post-truth	2 online news
3 Internet media	2 generation Z
3 media competence	2 political communication
3 media critics	2 verbal influence
3 news outlets	2 Russia
3 news consumption	2 mass media language
3 television	

Fully compliant with the logic of dividing articles into two groups, such broad keywords as “mass media”, “media text”, “political discourse”, “media discourse”, “media consumption”, and “fake” appeared to be the most in-demand among authors of “indirect” research.

Table 2. Keywords used in “ML” articles (number of cases)

30 media education	4 mass media
17 media literacy	4 pupils
17 media competence	3 model
10 media	3 society
7 media text	3 students
7 media critics	2 English-speaking countries
6 students	2 interethnic tolerance
6 media culture	2 criteria of media competence
5 Russia	2 critical thinking
4 CIS	2 education
4 mass culture	2 synthesis
4 school	2 Uzbekistan
4 university	2 educational program

As one might expect, more field-specific “media education”, “media literacy”, “media competence”, “media critics”, and “media culture” took places on the top of keywords’ rating in relation to “ML” articles. Also of note is the fact that there were forty-three keywords used more than once within the “indirect” group and only twenty-six – in “ML” papers.

On the whole, allocation of articles according to their content and keywords correlates with the way they are distributed in terms of scholarly classification codes. It should be noted that different journals may use different classifiers. Universal Decimal Classification, State Classifier of Scientific and Technical Information, and codes of State Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles are just most commonly used of them. Having combined adjacent rubrics, I have got the following proportion (see [Fig. 13](#)).

Notice that sometimes certain rubrics are used a kind of by default. For example, almost all articles run by *Media Education* fall into “Public Education. Pedagogy” while papers published, say, in *Herald of Moscow University. Series 10: Journalism* are usually attributed to “Mass communication. Journalism. Mass Media”. However, even given such to a large extent “automated” distribution, final results seem to be quite indicative.

The [Fig. 13](#) shows that the majority of “indirect” articles refer to either journalism and mass media or linguistics and philology whereas “ML” publications – to pedagogy and education. At the same time, there are only seven papers that are “political” by their nature. In my view, this fact is another confirmation that such perspective has not received due regard of academia so far.

When it came to “ML” articles, I also analyzed their geographical focus. For instance, when it was about specifics of media education in our country, it fell into block “Russia”, if it dealt with, say, the US or Canada – into “Far abroad” group. Every time there was no clear territorial orientation, I marked the paper “not applicable”. As a rule, research considering some general issues without apparent reference to exact territory ran into “N/A” class.

Researchers, predictably, addressed the Russian practice and experience of media education most commonly. Quite surprisingly, far abroad appeared to be slightly more popular than Russia’s neighboring countries. Perhaps, the reason is that media education itself was born in the West – so, European and North American countries’ experience is still perceived as a benchmark.

It is also rather interesting to divide papers along age groups they are focusing on. For example, if the paper contained results of questioning students, it fell into “Youth / students” group; if it discussed media education at schools – into “Pupils”, etc.

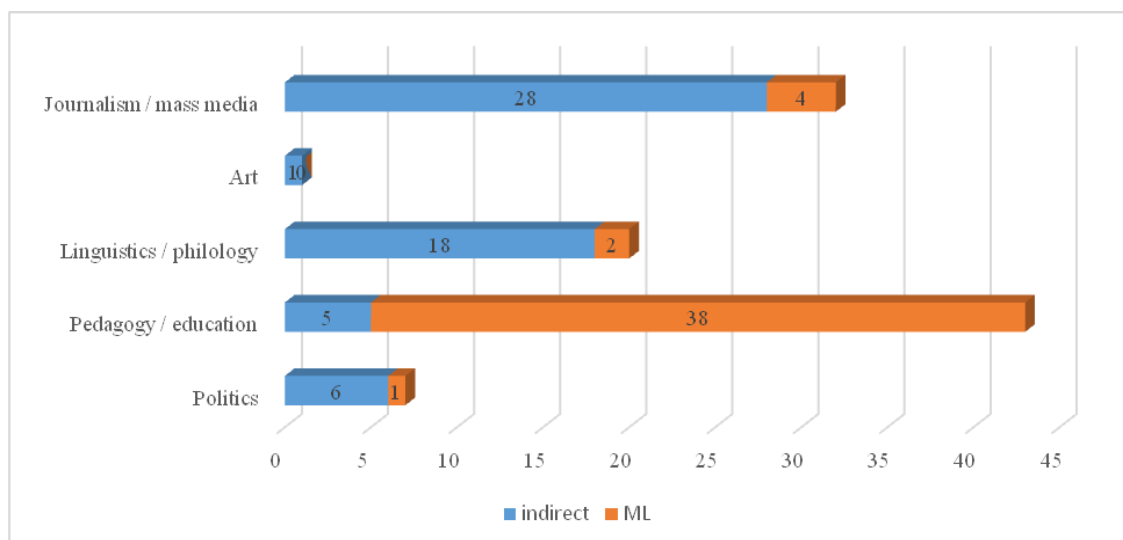


Fig. 13. Scholarly classifiers of the articles (number of units)

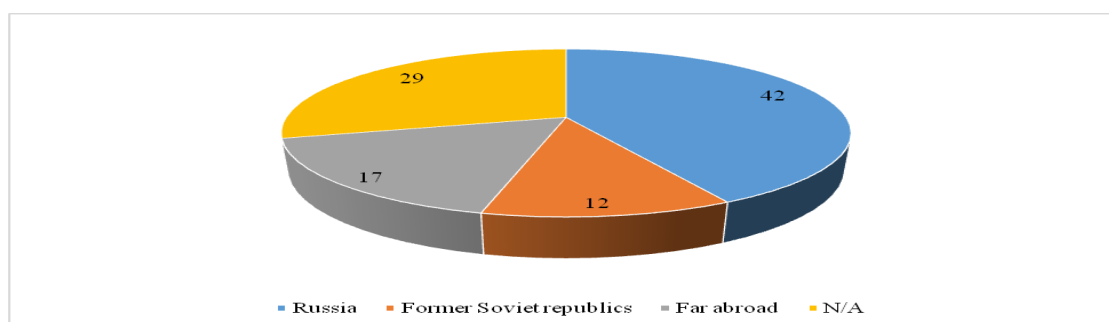


Fig. 14. Geographical focus of the articles (% out of all “ML” articles)

More than a third part of articles did not contain any references to age – in most cases, general issues were considered there. Running second to this were students and youth, third – pupils, and only fourth – grown-ups. Pre-school children have never been mentioned in this context. Personally, I find such age focus rather reasonable as top-priority efforts to form media competence should be aimed at younger generations first. However, older people need it too. Consequently, his age group deserves scholarly attention as well.

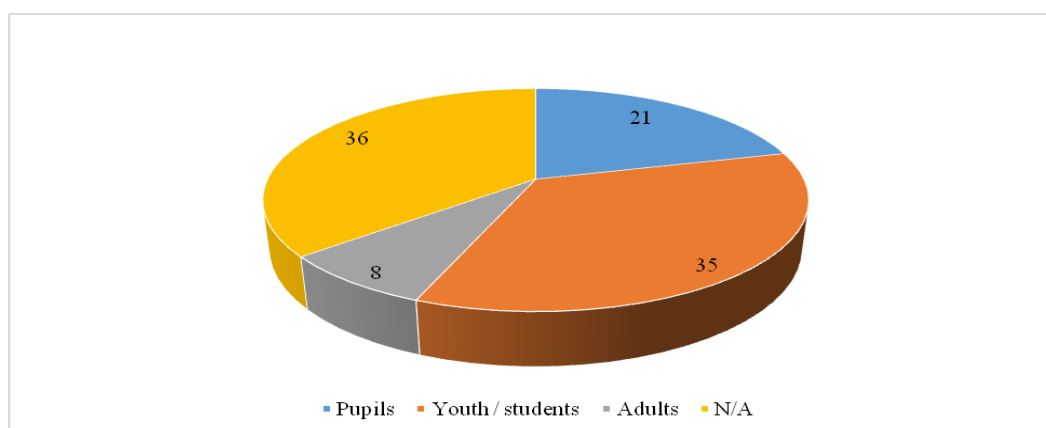


Fig. 15. Key age objects of the articles (%)

One of the most important features of an article is its structure. While analyzing this aspect of the papers selected, I bore in mind generally accepted tradition to divide the text into such sections as introduction, literature review, purpose and objectives of research, hypothesis, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion. Sometimes, articles did not have one (or more) of the parts mentioned but there was the relevant content itself: for example, “literature reviews” was not separated as a certain element; however, in fact the author analyzed his or her colleagues and predecessors’ findings. That was why here I divided papers not into “indirect” or “ML” types but according to the way aforementioned segments were presented: “section” means that there is a separate unit within the article; “in the text” implies that, even though the relevant content does exist, there is no special unit in the paper.

What do the data presented on Fig. 16 mean? Above all, those scholarly journals do not always place exacting demands on the papers’ structure. Far be it from me to assert whether it is good or bad, I just acknowledge the fact that only two elements out of eight – introduction and conclusion – are present in more than a half of articles. Literature review, methods, and results hurdle a 50-percent barrier only if counted together with “in the text” content. At last, hypothesis, discussion, and purpose / objectives seem to be rather exotic than common practice.

As against some other peculiarities analyzed above, structure-related observations may well be generalized beyond the sample: in one way or another, it is fair for all the articles published by the journals (no matter what they are about). Moreover, my research experience tells me that this is true for other editions as well. Again, refraining from making any evaluative judgments, I just suppose that lack of attention paid to structural elements of an article may be one of the main obstacles Russian scholars encounter while trying to become integrated into the world scholarly community. In many foreign journals, hypothesis formulation and discussion are often compulsory elements of research. That being the case, discussion is understood there to be not only an analysis of scholarships on the topic, but more a reflection on some controversial issues, virtues and drawbacks of your own research (with an emphasis on the latter), and prospects of its further development.

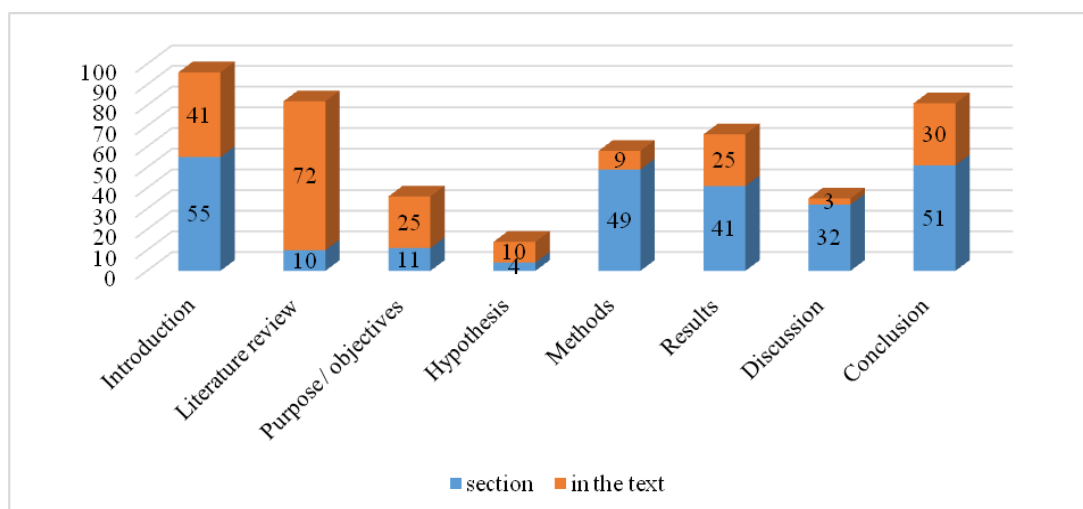


Fig. 16. Structural elements of the articles (% out of all cases)

It seems to me that, in foreign science, much more attention is paid to methods. As far as our sample is concerned, such sections occur in about a half of cases and sometimes are of “ceremonial” nature, which aggravates the situation. To illustrate, let me bring forward results of analysis of the papers’ methodological bases.

Having summing up all references to any of research methods, I have got the following setup (numbers denote how many times certain method was mentioned in all 103 articles):

- 13 questionnaire survey
- 11 content analysis
- 9 generalization
- 9 synthesis
- 8 classification
- 7 comparative analysis

- 5 theoretical analysis
- 4 discourse analysis
- 4 focus-group survey
- 3 analysis of scholarly literature
- 3 analysis of social surveys' results
- 3 data collection
- 2 analysis
- 2 linguistic analysis
- 2 online survey

What does this list imply? Obviously, so-called general scholarly methods (i.e. synthesis, analysis, comparison, generalization etc.) and research tools of human and social sciences (questionnaire and focus-group surveys) prevail. Only content analysis, discourse analysis, and linguistic analysis may pro forma be ascribed to specific methods used primarily within communication and media studies. Several methods at once generate doubts as to whether they are research methods in a strict sense (e.g., classification, theoretical analysis, analysis of scholarly literature, social surveys' analysis, data collection, cognitive linguistics, political linguistics, reviewing, critical re-evaluation, and some others).

It is also specific that (apart from methods) approaches, theories, and paradigms are barely referred to. Generally speaking, I found only two cases of using a theory – uses and gratification theory.

To my way of thinking, this can be an indication of either “ritualization” of methodological section of articles (sometimes one and the same wording could migrate from paper to paper) or insufficient methodological competence of some authors. Anyway, the methods-related sections of articles seem to be one of the most problematic and challenging parts of the papers analyzed.

Besides, I also paid attention to whether “ML” articles' authors used any definitions of media literacy (or, at least, explained what they meant by that) or not. As this phenomenon is relatively new for the Russian science, I deem it rather important for the authors to clarify what media literacy denotes within the framework of a certain study. In total, 45 “ML” papers contained only six explanations how an author understood media literacy or whose definition he or she drew on. To be clear, quite often authors used some definitions but only in rare cases they articulated which of them they actually preferred and why.

I believe that such practice of defining media literacy “by default” requires correction too because sometimes the term may be used in different meanings and this, in its turn, hobbles scholarly communication in the field.

To a large extent integrative towards all other aspects of the articles is their type. Initially, I took as a basis an approach of S.V. Chugrov who distinguished theoretical, empirical, state-of-the-art, polemic, popular scientific, and book review kinds of articles. Later, however, I decided to substitute an essay and abstract work for popular scientific type (as there were no examples of this kind).

Let me briefly explain what each of these types means. Theoretical articles, as a rule, consider some general issues pertinent to media literacy and education; empirical ones usually contain results of so-called “practical” research (i.e. polling, questionnaire, experiment etc). State-of-the-art papers describe the current situation in media education field in a certain country. Polemic publications involve their authors' discussion with scholars having opposing views on the issue. Opinion of a book published earlier is given within the review format.

Lastly, two more types I added myself. Essay is understood here as a piece of writing on a media-related subject when scholars present their ideas arbitrarily, i.e. without formulating a clear purpose, making references, reviewing literature etc. Abstract papers are usually made up of listing approaches, definitions, and classifications existing on a matter, but the author's point of view is not articulated at all. To some extent, abstract papers look like state-of-the-art ones; however, there is no clear goal to thoroughly analyze the current situation – instead, the author just mentions certain scholars' positions on an issue.

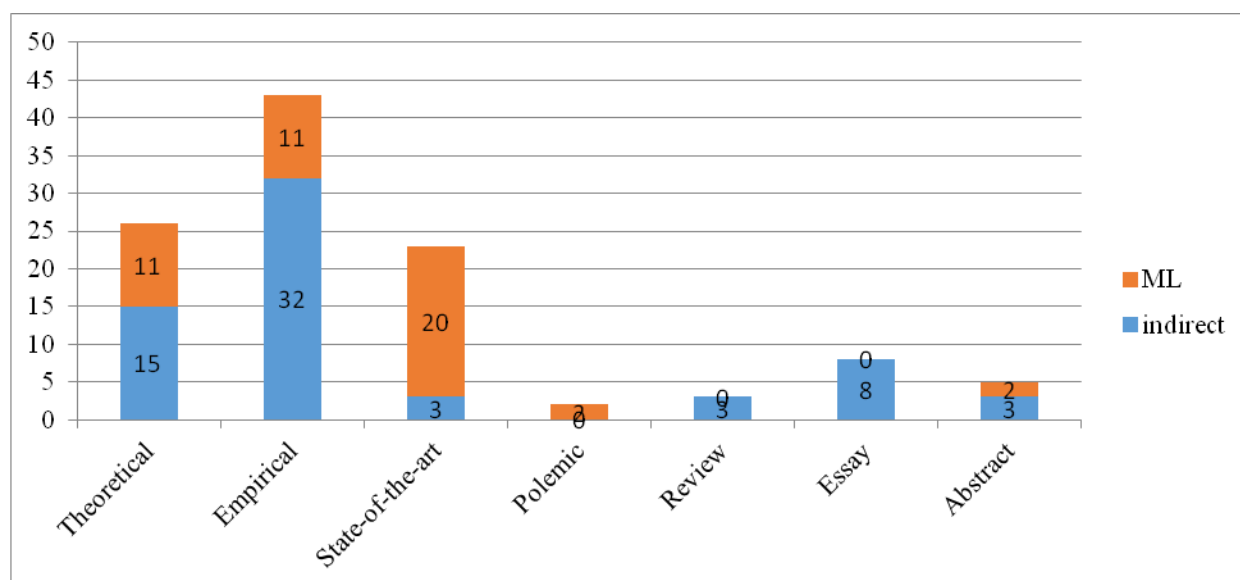


Fig. 17. Types of articles (number of units) (The fact that total number of units is a bit bigger than a total amount of articles is due to the situation when some papers were coded as having features of two types simultaneously)

Data presented on a Fig. 17 show predominance of empirical papers over all other types. Worthy of separate attention is that state-of-the-art articles take the third place (being not far below theoretical publications). Moreover, the bulk of them fall into the “ML” group. I suppose it may be due to the fact that Russian media education scholarly tradition is still lagging behind the European and North American ones – thus attempts to generalize foreign experience in this sphere seem quite reasonable.

Notable about this breakdown is tiny quantity of polemic stories. More than that, both of them were a kind of borderline, i.e. referred to two types in almost equal measure. Put differently, one of their parts contained indirect dispute with other scholar(s) while another bore the marks of state-of-the-art review. At the same time, polemic texts are much more common in the Western scholarships, let alone the rule of debating within discussion sections. One way or another, I find such type of articles not only interesting and ingenious, but essential to further development of the whole media education field of Russia.

Last but not least, literature and scholars most frequently cited. Having selected publications and authors that had been mentioned in references at least twice, I have got the following results (Table 3).

It makes sense that the number of Russian authors and publications cited at least twice in both cases (“indirect” and “ML” articles) is more than foreign ones. Besides, twofold preponderance of the number of foreign authors and publications cited in “ML” articles (82 persons compared with 45 in “indirect” papers; 40 and 19 publications respectively) is also striking. I believe that the reason of such ratio may be the same – a lag in the experience of development of Russian media education; hence the desire to make references to world renowned scholars (whereas this is not so crucial for “indirect” research).

Table 3. The most frequently cited authors and publications (number of cases)

	“Indirect” articles (58 items)		“ML” articles (45 items)	
	Total number	Lay out	Total number	Lay out
Foreign authors	45 persons	3 persons – 6 times each; 2 persons – 5 times each; 2 persons – 4 times each; 12 persons – 3 times each; 26 persons – 2 times each.	82 persons	1 person – 15 times; 1 person – 13 times; 1 person – 8 times; 1 person – 6 times; 1 person – 5 times;

				2 persons – 11 times each; 2 persons – 7 times each; 4 persons – 4 times each; 12 persons – 3 times each; 57 persons – 2 times each.
Russian authors	103 persons	1 person – 23 1 person – 12 times; 1 person – 11 times; 4 persons – 8 times each; 2 persons – 7 times each; 5 persons – 6 times each; 9 persons – 5 times each; 6 persons – 4 times each; 25 persons – 3 times each; 49 persons – 2 times each.	90 persons	9 persons – 10 times each; 15 persons – 5 – 9 times each; 9 persons – 4 times each; 12 persons – 3 times each; 45 persons – 2 times each.
Foreign publications	19 items	4 items – 3 times each; 15 items – 2 times each.	40 items	1 item – 7 times each; 1 item – 6 times each; 1 item – 5 times each; 1 item – 4 times each; 5 items – 3 times each; 31 items – 2 times each.
Russian publications	45 items	1 item – 6 times each; 1 item – 4 times each; 12 items – 3 times each; 31 items – 2 times each.	80 items	1 item – 7 times each; 2 items – 6 times each; 1 item – 5 times each; 7 items – 4 times each; 21 items – 3 times each; 48 items – 2 times each.

If exact names of the most often quoted authors are to be mentioned, within “indirect” articles they are:

among foreign scholars: T.A. van Dijk, N. Howe, W. Strauss (6 times each), M. McLuhan, J. Baudrillard (5 times each);

among Russian scholars: E.L. Vartanova (21 citations), A.P. Korochensky (12), J.M. Dzyaloshinsky (11), A.V. Kolesnichenko, M.M. Nazarov, A.A. Tertychny, A.V. Tolokonnikova (8), D.V. Dunas, T.S. Cherevko (7).

Within “ML” articles they are:

among foreign scholars: D. Buckingham (15), W.J. Potter (13), R. Hoobs, L. Masterman (11), A. Silverblatt (8), C. Bazalgette, U. Eco (7);

among Russian scholars: A.V. Fedorov (124), I.V. Chelysheva, A.A. Levitskaya (40), G.V. Mikhaleva (20), N.I. Gendina (18), A.V. Sharikov (14), A.P. Korochensky (13), J.M. Dzyaloshinsky (11), E.V. Muriukina (10), N.B. Kirillova (9), I.V. Zhilavskaya (8), E.L. Vartanova (8).

As one can see, Moscow residents prevail among most frequently cited authors within “indirect” articles, while representatives of Taganrog media education school of thought (plus scholars from some other regions) dominate among most often quoted authors within “ML” papers. To a large extent, it can be explained by so-called specialization of leading scholarly journals mentioned above.

5. Conclusion

Those were the main structural and content features of the articles sampled. Taking all the aforesaid into consideration, the following inferences may be drawn.

At first, there are two prominent scholarly centers of media education research in Russia. Taganrog research team headed by A.V. Fedorov is the most influential and acknowledged of them. “Media Education”, a specialized journal of the field, is published by scholars belonging to this center. Wider range of issues is considered within Moscow cluster of media-related research (mainly faculty of Journalism Department, Lomonosov Moscow State University, led by E.L. Vartanova). “Herald of Moscow University. Series 10: Journalism” and “Media Scope” journals are published there.

Not only a spectrum of issues analyzed but also the angle they are explored from differentiate these two lines of media education research in Russia. Media educational and media critical approaches are more popular within the first of them, whereas analysis of linguistic ways to affect public conscience and peculiarities of media consumption by different social groups are emphasized within the second one. Basically, such a notional division may be extended to the whole corps of articles.

At second, content analysis of articles induces me to believe that methodology is one of their gravest flaws. Such sections are few and far between and, even if they are present, methods are mentioned in there that were not necessarily used de facto. Preponderance of general scholarly principles, the fact that a range of methods is mentioned “automatically” and migrates from one text to another forced me to record some kind of ritualization when it comes to writing methodological parts of research.

In most cases, there are no strict requirements for the articles’ structure. Such elements as hypotheses, discussion, purpose, and objectives may be found much more rarely than other inalienable parts of research. Along with methodological weakness, this is arguably one of the main hindrances on Russian scholars’ way to world media education community.

Lastly, at third, it is hard to ignore that, contrasted with highly popular pedagogical and linguistic approaches, political science perspective on media literacy to a significant degree takes a back seat. It is not because there are only a few political scientists who focus on these issues; the bigger problem is that political aspects of media education do not attract much scholarly attention. However, it is a fact of life that political science angle becomes to be of vital importance: the scale and consequences of politically motivated manipulation of public opinion explicitly require thorough scholarly interpretation. In particular, there are still no solid and convincing explanations of media effects’ limits, factors of their performance, their political ramifications, and – most crucially – ways to counteract them. I think these are possible directions Russian media literacy research should further develop in.

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