



Latvia University
of Life Sciences
and Technologies

Improving University Students' Media Literacy Through an ERASMUS+ Blended Intensive Program: A Case Study

Joseph Jack Horgan

Tatjana Sinkus

Inese Ozola



Media Literacy: What is it?

- ◆ Review by Potter (2022, p. 41) of 258 media literacy definitions in 134 articles from the Journal of Media Literacy Education found that definitions most often included the ability to:
 - ◆ read
 - ◆ evaluate
 - ◆ analyse
 - ◆ imagine possibilities
 - ◆ deconstruct messages
 - ◆ recognize patterns
 - ◆ challenge meanings
 - ◆ judge credibility
 - ◆ decipher sender intent
 - ◆ counter-argue
 - ◆ dig for truth
 - ◆ avoid influence
 - ◆ produce messages

Media Literacy: What is it?

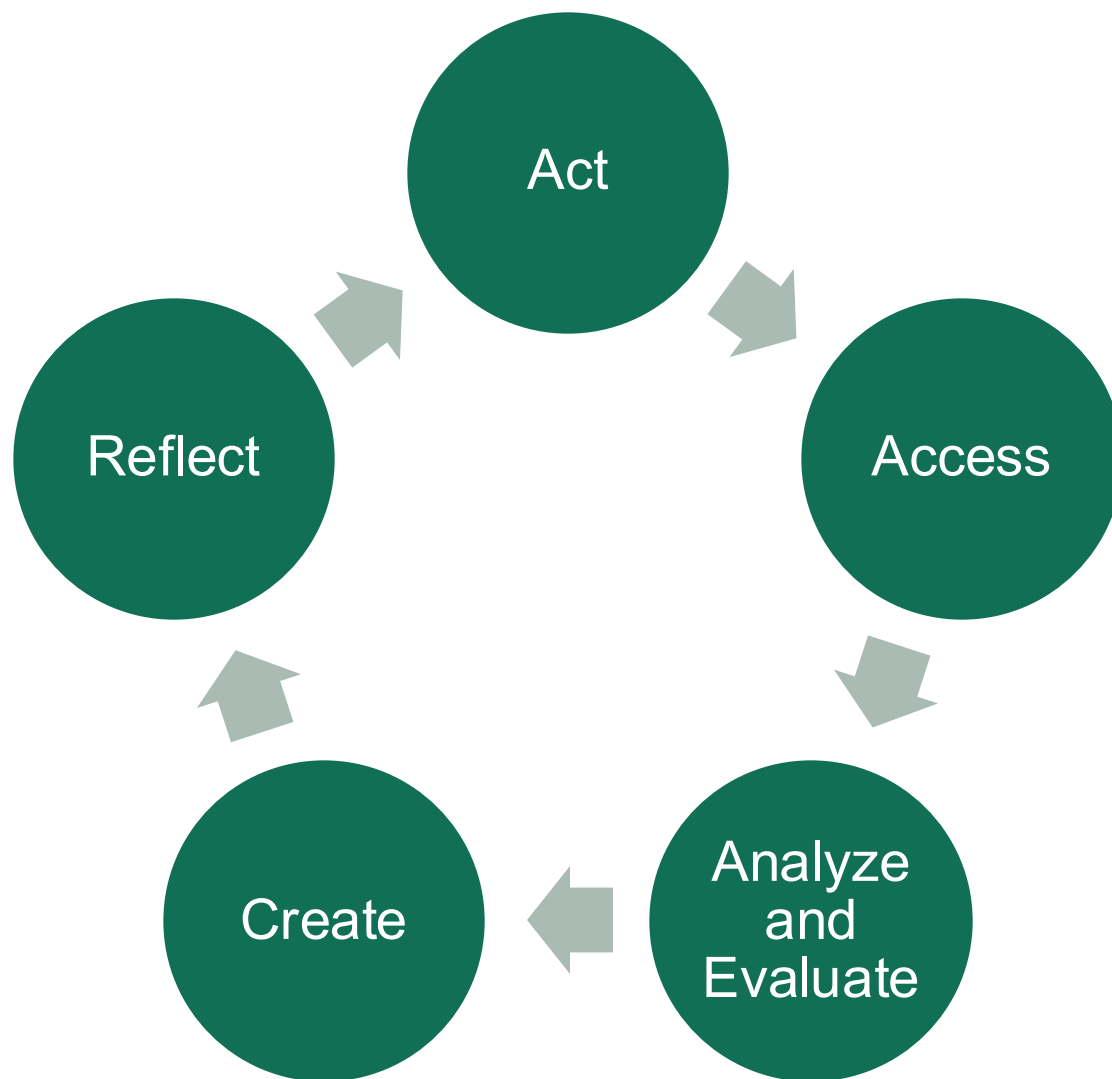


Figure 1: National Association for Media Literacy Education's Definition (NAMLE, 2025)

Media literacy in Latvia

- ◆ National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP), Latvia's state media regulator established a "Media Literacy Database" in 2023 which contains more than 200 works of various genre and format related to media literacy either in the Latvian language or specific to Latvia's context (Ministry of Culture, 2023).
- ◆ Curriculum standards designed by the Skola2030 education reform program approved in 2018 – to integrate media literacy into the obligatory primary and secondary education curriculum in the study fields of language, social and civics, technology, and culture
- ◆ Study of 163 first year undergraduate students at Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies who had graduated from secondary school in 2023 or 2024 (after the full implementation of the new curriculum standards) concluded that more training at the university level was required—many students were overly confident in their own media literacy abilities despite being unable to accurately answer basic questions about media literacy fundamentals (Horgan, 2024)

Table 1. Reformed Latvian education standards related to media literacy
(Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 416 of 3 September 2019 "Regulations on State General Secondary Education Standards and Sample General Secondary Education Programs")

Field	Standard
Social and civics	S.O.1.3. Discusses and leads a discussion about justice, the rule of law, and contemporary ethical issues.
	S.O.2.3. Analyzes the media as an instrument of power to assess the influence of individuals and society.
	S.O.6.1. Compares a variety of information sources according to certain criteria, determines their reliability. Summarizes this information and draws conclusions. Uses information obtained from reliable sources for their own learning goals.
	S.O.6.2. Distinguishes forms of scientific knowledge from scientific alternatives, critically evaluates sources, interprets facts, and generalizes theoretical foundations to obtain true information and create new knowledge.
	S.O.6.3. Uses criteria and methods for checking falsified information, analyzes media content and distinguishes facts, recognizes manipulation and the most common logical fallacies.
	S.O.6.4. Analyzes the communication of opinion leaders in virtual (digital) space and time to assess the impact of the chosen communication culture on social processes and individual habits.
	S.O.6.5. Collaborates, acquiring skills to objectively analyze information in communication, forms deductive and inductive judgments, practically explores the importance of perception and evaluation skills in information processing.
Language	VL.O.2.2. Analyzes symbols, images, and verbal means of expression used to reflect events or opinions in various media. Chooses the most appropriate verbal and non-verbal means to create and enrich their texts, justifying this choice with rational and emotional arguments.
	VL.O.2.3. Analyzes language devices (words and their forms, metaphors, comparisons, grammatical constructions, punctuation) in media texts to identify the methods of influence and manipulation tools used in the text. Recognizes misleading perceptions and opinions in the text to determine the authenticity and reliability of information.
	VL.O.2.4. Responsibly, observing ethical norms, engages in communication situations, especially in social media, skillfully using language tools: words, phraseologisms, symbols, punctuation marks. Treats the views and beliefs of the communication partner favorably. Regulates his/her linguistic behavior in order to implement communication goals or change the course of communication if cultural norms of communication are violated.
	VL.O.3.3. Creates scientific style texts of certain genres, for example, oral reports, reports, summaries, reviews, observing the conditions for text creation and the choice of language means.
	VL.O.3.3. Respects copyright and intellectual property rights by accurately citing authors and carefully citing sources.
Technology	T.A.2.2.4. Develops audio files (e.g. jingles, animation or video soundtracks, podcasts, etc.), digital graphic design solutions and videos (e.g. user manuals, advertisements, etc.) necessary for a design solution in an appropriate format and connects them, taking into account the planned communication strategy.
Culture	K.O.3.5. Studies the structure of the cultural field and creative organizations. Gets acquainted with specific professions in this field (exhibition curator, agent of a musical performer or writer, translator, cultural project manager, sound and lighting operator, video operator, director, producer, etc.), studying those working in the profession in person. Plans and organizes the course of their own creative project, cooperates in team building in accordance with the specifics of the chosen and familiarized art form.
	K.O.3.7. Evaluates the implementation of the goals of the creative project and the implementation process, including the impact of the chosen artistic means on the viewer or receiver of the creative work, the work process and the contribution of oneself or each group member to achieving the goal. Analyzes or models how this product will be perceived by others (for example, another generation, community, members of the regional culture).

Blended Learning

- ◆ Increasingly popular as an educational tool for throughout the last two decades (Hockly, 2018).
- ◆ Integrates online educational materials with traditional in-person classroom methods.
- ◆ Numerous studies highlight benefits, including improving student motivation, encouraging active engagement, enhancing autonomy and teamwork, establishing new forms of interaction between instructors and learners, increasing flexibility and accessibility, contributing to improved academic performance (Pizzi, 2014), (Sinkus and Ozola, 2022).
- ◆ Also encourages the development of essential 21st-century skills, such as information literacy, problemsolving, and collaborative communication (Hadiyanto et al., 2022).
- ◆ For universities, blended learning offers the opportunity to optimize resources by reducing the need for fully physical classroom space while maintaining the quality of teaching and learning interactions (Chervinska et al., 2023)

ERASMUS+ Blended Intensive Programme

- ◆ At least 15 students
- ◆ At least 3 partner institutions
- ◆ Minimum of 5 days in person
- ◆ Receive European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits at the end
- ◆ enables international students and staff to gain intercultural experience, develop digital and professional competences, and strengthen academic cooperation across institutions (O'Dowd & Warner, 2024)



Research Design

- ◆ Aim: to determine the effectiveness of an ERASMUS+ Blended Intensive Program (BIP) to improve the media literacy of university student participants which took part in spring of 2025
- ◆ Method: case study with 25 bachelor's students from five European countries who took part in the month-long program, with two summatively graded tasks which students completed before and after a week-long series of in-person lectures and workshops at Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU).





Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies

- ◆ Jelgava, Latvia—3998 students as of 2024 (bachelor's, masters, doctoral)
- ◆ Faculty of Economics and Social Development
- ◆ Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
- ◆ Faculty of Agriculture and Food technology
- ◆ Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies
- ◆ Faculty of Forest and Environmental Sciences

Methods and Design

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Design of the Blended Intensive Programme

- ◆ Erasmus+ BIP Project "Media Literacy for Future Leaders"
- ◆ Goals:
 - ◆ Enhance media content creation skills
 - ◆ Develop critical media analysis abilities
 - ◆ Strengthen cross-cultural communication
 - ◆ Encourage critical thinking in professional contexts
 - ◆ Understand AI-generated information
 - ◆ Combat misinformation and manipulation
 - ◆ Foster international collaboration and networking
- ◆ included an online workshop and in-person lectures; workshops; group projects; collaborative tasks; media analysis, cultural and team-building activities; and excursions.
- ◆ Before arriving at LBTU, students participated in an online introductory session which provided an opportunity to meet fellow participants and lecturers, explore key course details, and review the program structure and evaluation requirements

Summative Tasks

1. Social media explainer video about a news source in their country completed before arriving in Jelgava which includes the following:
 1. Ownership (privately owned, publicly owned, state-controlled, or a mix);
 2. Location of the news bureaus;
 3. Languages offered by the media source;
 4. How long the source has been offering news reports;
 5. Target audience for the media source;
 6. Controversies that the media source has been involved in;
 7. An analysis of whether the new provided by the source should be considered trustworthy
2. Presentation at the online international scientific conference *Students on Their Way to Science*, presenting their final work in an online section devoted to the participants of the BIP.
 1. 35 topic choices were offered by to the students who then had to present a theoretical overview of the topic in consultation with one of five advisors who taught in-person sessions of the course.
 2. Students were required to submit an abstract and give a 5-10 minute presentation.

Research Design

1. Pre- and post-testing was used to evaluate student learning in addition to a structured feedback questionnaire:
 1. Please describe two ways to check if news is "fake" or "real".
 2. What two signs could you use to recognize that a content creator is trying to manipulate you?
 3. What are two examples of logical fallacies that you can commonly find in media content? (you do not have to name the fallacy, but you can describe an example).
 4. Please describe two different genres of journalism.
 5. Please give an example of pathos (appeal to emotion) in advertising.
 6. Please give an example of ethos (appeal to credibility) in advertising.
 7. Please give an example of logos (appeal to logic) in advertising.

Students' answers to each of the questions were marked as "correct," "partially correct" or "incorrect" by the course instructors. Blank answers were considered "incorrect."

At the end of the final in-person session, the participants completed another Google Form questionnaire with identical questions to the first one so that results could be compared. The questionnaire also included feedback questions about the course which were also analysed in order to determine students' attitude toward the BIP.

Results

Table 1. Pre- and post-test results: student counts of incorrect, partially correct, and correct answers (n = 25)

Question #	Incorrect/no answer		Partially correct		Correct	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
1	0	1	7	2	17	21
2	0	1	8	3	16	20
3	16	6	6	4	2	14
4	6	5	5	6	13	13
5	11	2	2	4	11	18
6	14	4	2	0	8	20
7	16	6	1	1	7	17
Total (all 7Qs)	63	25	31	20	74	123
Mean $\pm$ SD per student	n/a				2.96 $\pm$ 1.25	4.92 $\pm$ 1.15

Results

Table 2. Amount of students who performed better, the same, and worse on the post-test questionnaire compared with the pre-test

Question #	Worse	Same-	Same+	Better
1	8.3%	4.2%	66.7%	20.8%
2	12.5%	4.2%	58.3%	25%
3	4.2%	33.3%	4.2%	58.3%
4	29.4%	8.3%	33.3%	25%
5	0%	8.3%	29.4%	58.3%
6	0%	16.7%	33.3%	50%
7	4.2%	20.8%	25%	50%
Total	8.3%	14.9%	35.7%	41.1%

Table 3. Student ratings of the BIP: relevance of topics and overall satisfaction (n = 25)

Survey item	Mean	Median	Min	Max
Relevance of topics covered in the BIP	4.28	4.0	3	5
Overall satisfaction with the BIP	4.28	5.0	2	5

Results

Table 4. Students' perspectives on the most valuable BIP benefits

BIP benefits	Students' comments
Media literacy & misinformation	"I can now recognise fake information in the media." "Media fallacies – I did not think that way before and now I can recognise fake in the media." "Sessions about digital media, the credibility of news, podcasts, misinformation, disinformation and malinformation... all are very useful."
Critical thinking	"The critical thinking session was fun and interactive." "I liked the philosophical approach to critical thinking." "Critical thinking – even though it was tiring because of the lack of English." "The philosophical approach explained quite well what work you can and should do by yourself."
Rhetorical techniques in advertising & marketing	"I liked learning what pathos, ethos and logos mean." "Sessions on Tuesday to recognise commercials (pathos, ethos, logos) – rhetorical techniques in advertising and marketing." "It was interesting because I had never learned about these before."
Podcasting & digital-media skills	"I got some good sources that I can use if I would like to make a podcast." "Digital Media in Modern Society: very important, especially in a cross-cultural context like this BIP." "I liked learning about radio stations."
Collaborative learning & interaction	"All sessions were useful as we had to work with our colleagues, other students." "The sessions were actually useful and we had an opportunity to communicate a lot." "I really liked the classes we had on Tuesday—very interesting and understandable."
Teaching quality & engagement	"Teachers explained everything very well." "The sessions were very interactive and explained everything effectively." "The classes were very engaging and interesting (for example the fake-profile activity)." "All of the sessions fit perfectly with the theme of the program."
Community media & citizen journalism	"For my personal perspective, the whole program is very useful. But the section <i>Community Media and Citizen Journalism as Key Components of the Democratic System</i> gives me more insight."

Conclusions

- ◆ BIP can be seen an effective way to improve university students' media literacy which can be seen through improved results on pre- and post-tests as well as the generally satisfied attitude of the participants towards the course.
- ◆ Those interested in organizing a BIP on media literacy and critical thinking skills might consider including rhetorical devices and logical fallacies, as these were areas where students showed significant growth.
- ◆ Great care should be taken when discussing journalistic genres, as in this case a concerning number of students ended with an overall worse understanding than before the course.

Limitations

- ◆ Limited number of students can take part in any given BIP project, and although much of the participant costs are covered, participation can be prohibitively expensive for some.
- ◆ Organization of a BIP on any given subject is dependent on the staff available at the partner institutions and whether there are experts willing to participate.
- ◆ A limited number of students in just one BIP were researched
- ◆ Pre- and post-test included only seven questions out of the many different media literacy skills that could be tested.
- ◆ Rating of pre- and post-test answers as “correct,” “partially correct,” or “incorrect” could be subjective depending on a lecturer’s individual understanding
- ◆ Different levels of English language of different students might also have affected their understanding of certain questions.

- ◆ Despite limitations, a BIP course can be recommended to improve university student media literacy.
- ◆ Future work should be done by testing a wider variety of media literacy indicators and also develop other types of blended learning opportunities that a greater number of students can access and benefit from.



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Thank you!

Paldies!

Dziękuję!

شكراً

Takk!

Grazie!

Děkuji!

Дякую!

