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Media Education: Capabilities and Constraints

Eman Mosharafa *

Abstract

According to the 'Modality Judgment' model most of the time viewers are not provoked to think critically of media messages especially those disguised in entertainment as critical thinking may interfere with "following the narrative, emotional involvement and the pleasure of the experience." This research paper aims at exploring the average level of media literacy for Egyptian university students and to what extent media education can improve students' reception of media messages and their ability to decode and analyze them.

Sixty students in television drama class at a private university in Cairo participated in this study. Over a period of three weeks, students viewed a number of eight movies that dealt with foreign occupation, injustice, and government corruption. A pre-test and a post-test were used to measure any change in students ability to process films' content, to add their own interpretations and opinions to the actual information, and to make inferences about the real world.

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Additionally, a focus group was conducted on one particular movie, which deals with oppression. The plot took place in a rural village in the twentieth century. The focus group was used to explore students' ability to encode the message of the film and to project this message on present time and place.

Results indicate that class discussions may alter the modality judgment attributed by the students to the drama viewed. This in turn influences their level of interest in instructive dramatic programming and their level of awareness with regard to current political conditions, but not their level of involvement in political issues.

Keywords: Modality judgment, media education, semiotics, epistemic.

Communication is a field that directly touches everyone's life and naturally intersects with other fields. As a result, educating students about communication and society – and enhancing their levels of media literacy – can be challenging. Curriculum material for communication education is of most value when it interconnects theory, research methods, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, politics, concurrent events, and day-to-day interactions. A successful educator is one who can communicate this holistic perspective to students, integrating theory with practice, course with course, discipline with discipline, and most importantly curriculum with life.

According to the “Modality Judgment” model most of the time television viewers are not provoked to think critically of media messages – especially those disguised in entertainment – because

critical thinking may interfere with “following the narrative, emotional involvement and the pleasure of the experience.” This research paper aims at exploring the average level of media literacy for Egyptian university students and whether and if true to what extent media education can improve students’ reception of media messages and their ability to decode and analyze them.

Review of the Literature

Semiotics and Modality

Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and their perceived relationship to how people construct their interpretations of reality. Signs are developed to represent referents, which aid in conversation and understanding among people. If signs or symbols inaccurately represent reality, or are misinterpreted by the receiver, then perceptions of reality can be skewed (Chandler, 2001; Semiotics, n.d.).

The field differs from linguistics in that goes beyond the traditional study of speech as language utilizes the term “sign” more broadly to denote the elements in any message. All forms of communication are considered messages for study, not just speech and written text. In fact “text”, in the field of semiotics, is the term used to define any form of preserved communication produced in any medium (Semiotics, n.d.).

Modality is a concept within semiotics used to denote the way a message is conveyed. It is not the medium in which a message is sent (e.g. speech, print, recorded audio, video, etc.). Both the

structure of the message and the medium it is transmitted in affect the modality of the message. The modality of a message refers more to the sensory experience of receiving the message, be that auditory, olfactory, visual, etc. Messages are often multi-sensory. However, both the method of message creation and the medium in which it is delivered can serve to enhance or diminish various sensory modalities. (Chandler, 2001; Modality, n.d.) The same message could be transmitted a variety of ways and the consequence of these different modalities would affect in each case how the message is interpreted.

Epistemic modality is a subtype of linguistic modality that deals with a participant's degree of confidence in, or belief of the knowledge upon which a proposition is based (Nyuts, 2001). Epistemic modality concerns an estimation of the likelihood that some aspect of a state of affairs is, has been, or will be true (or false) in the context of the possible world under consideration. This estimation can range from complete certainty in the truth of a message, through a neutral stance, all the way to complete certainty in the falseness of the message (Nyuts).

A number of "epistemic moods" or judgment modalities have been identified. Palmer, in 1986, posited five judgment modalities:

- Assumptive mood: Signals belief that a message is based on facts about what is usually the case in such circumstances. The word "will" in the following construction suggests that the event is likely to occur as it usually does. "They will be on holiday at the moment."

- Declarative mood: Suggests that the proposition is offered as an unqualified statement of fact.
- Deductive mood: Emphasizes that facts not in evidence are being deduced from available information.
- Interrogative mood: Signals that the message sender is attempting to elicit information about the topic of the message from the receiver.
- Peculative mood: Suggests that the message may possibly be true.

In addition to the five judgment modalities posited by Palmer, two more have been suggested:

- Dubiative mood: Signaling that the presenter has reservations about the message being presented (Bybee, 1985).
- Hypothetical mood: Denoting that the message may indeed be counterfactual, but otherwise is possible, as in the statement “I could have died.”

Part of the modality of a message is its “reality status” as determined by the receiver (Chandler, 2001). Hodge and Kress (1998) have equated modality with the importance of a message, its perceived reliability in consistently representing the referent, as well as its accuracy, validity, or truthfulness in the representation. Given the fact that various media offer greater or fewer types of sensory information, Chandler has pointed out that perception of message reality can be based, at least in part, on the type of medium used to distribute a message. Film and television, generally speaking, tend to be

considered to be higher modality media given that they can offer more sensory detail.

Modality Judgment Model of Communication

The modality of a message is not just a function of how the signs are formed or chosen, nor the construction and delivery of the message. According to the modality judgment model of communication, receivers make “modality judgments” about messages that they receive by comparing them to existing knowledge about both the referent and the medium in which the message was sent (Chandler, 2001). For instance, someone watching a TV cooking show would most likely know that a roast cooking in the oven should exude a certain aroma, even though this sensory experience is not available through the television. Therefore, while the viewer may consider the program they are watching to be very realistic, they may judge the modality of the communication to be a somewhat less accurate representation of reality given the lack of certain information transfer. Someone born without a sense of smell however may not be aware of the missing olfactory sensory stimulus that TV cannot provide. As such, they may judge a TV cooking show to be a more accurate representation of reality than would a viewer with a sense of smell. Modality judgments are not consistent from person to person, but instead rely on the persons’ experience (and ability to experience) real world activities as well as their understanding of the medium in which a message is being transmitted (Chandler). The less experience a receiver has had with a real world referent, or with the medium in

which a message is being transmitted, the less accurately they can make modality judgments.

Experience with – and thus understanding of – referents and media can be affected by culture and history. Lacking cultural context, modality judgments may misinterpret the relationship between a message and a referent (Rafferty & Hilderley, 2005). When a message is interpreted at a time significantly after it was created, the receiver may judge the modality differently, either because understanding of the message or medium has been lost, or because time has allowed historians to develop a more holistic understanding of the circumstances surrounding the message (Rafferty & Hilderley).

Understanding what a particular medium can and cannot transmit will help a receiver to more accurately make modality judgments. However, scholars have also suggested that too much experience with, or overreliance on, a particular medium (or program within a medium) can also result in the receiver interpreting medium characteristics as elements of reality, and basing their modality judgments on those (Chandler, 2001). Hodge and Kress (1988, p. 142) have pointed out that different media, and genres within media, “establish sets of modality markers” which can become for some receivers baseline norms for reality. Tagg (1998, p. 99) stated that in these circumstances “the signifier is treated as if it were identical with a pre-existent signified.” Chandler has pointed out that the production methods and conventions of particular media and genre become “naturalized” and audiences begin to accept these shortcuts as

“reflections of reality” rather than modifications of it. This effect of the signifier becoming the signified may be more pronounced in film and television, which have been considered to be both the highest in modality and also the most realistic representations of reality (Chandler).

Perception of Media (Television) as Reality

Human beings are the only creatures that we know of that live in a world beyond the threats and gratifications of their immediate environment. Our knowledge is acquired not from personal experiences, but from a variety of stories (Morgan, 2002). According to Gerbner (2002) there are three types of stories: *How things work*: These are fictional stories that reveal the invisible dynamics of human life. *How things are*: These are stories of the news; they confirm the visions, rules, goals of a particular society. *What to do*: These are stories of value and choice, such as laws and religion. These three types of stories together constitute culture, which is increasingly disseminated by television.

TV has become an essential source in providing individuals with information about the surrounding world, as it proffers to them basic facts about life, people, society, and authority. For, situations depicted in fiction, drama, and news whether in realistic, fantastic, tragic, or comic way presented in fiction, drama, or news offer the best context for the dissemination of values and moral in an acceptable and enjoyable fashion (Morgan, 2002). *Gerbner* has stated that cultivation is some sort of desultory learning that results from the accumulation of exposure to *TV*. And what the viewer sees on the

screen becomes the basis of a mental image that the individual forms about the social practical status of values, population characteristics, and the various cultural standards common by the society's classes, categories, and individuals (Morgan).

Modality Judgment, TV Viewing, and Perception of TV as Reality

In the context of critiquing TV messages, modality refers to the reality status attributed to television programs by viewers. Television has 'weak modality' if the programs aired are perceived to be far from everyday reality while TV is considered to be of 'strong modality' if the programs aired are perceived to be presenting a 'window on the world.' In accord with the cultivation theory and the presence of the 'perceived reality' as an 'intervening variable', in making modality judgments, the more reality you attribute to a message, the more likely you will be affected by it in some way (Hodge & Tripp, 1986).

A number of empirical research support the idea that 'perceived reality' or 'strong modality judgments' enhances cultivation, including Feshback's (1972) widely-cited experiment, in which subjects who were told that the violent clip they watched was from the news showed significantly more aggression than the control group who was told that the clip was fictional. Although cultivation is considered to be a social rather than an individual process, research on the modality judgment has been looked at from both the social perspective and the psychological perspective.

Modality Judgment – Social Perspective. According to Potter (1988), perceived reality is associated with two types of variables, active and attribute. Active variables consist of variables that can actively change over time, such as amount of real life experience with a situation, amount of TV exposure, and one's perception that programming viewed is instructional – or perceived as useful in everyday life. Attribute variables on the other hand are demographic rather than psychographic and can include age, gender, and socio-economic status.

Most cultivation studies do control for a variety of variables be it active variables related to TV viewing such as exposure, genre viewing, concentration and other methods of estimation, or attribute variables, such as sex, age, income, education, minorities, occupations, etc. When comparing studies, using different methods for assessing, results tend to reveal generally similar effect sizes. It is noticeable however that smaller samples and studies, which sensitize respondents by mentioning TV at the start yield somewhat higher effect sizes. Also it was noticed that political ideology is a significant mediating factor (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999).

Modality Judgment – Psychological Perspective. From the psychological perspective, modality judgment is based on the psychological process that the view experiences during and after TV viewing. Busselle, Rayabovolova, and Wilson (2004) have suggested that perception of TV messages as equaling reality is the default approach of most viewers, but this is certainly debated. Various

researchers have suggested five psychological models of how people make modality judgments. Each of the five models of psychological modality judgment consider how viewers process TV messages and relate them to reality based on a variety of psychological frameworks.

Children and Media Literacy

Learning about TV: How viewers process media messages, it is felt, can be addressed at least in part through media literacy. Davies (1997) has noted that perception of TV as representational of reality is a metajudgment that falls within Hodge and Tripp's 1986 definition of modality.

According to Davies (1997). Hodge and Tripp found in their seminal 1986 research that children age nine and older can distinguish between cartoons and films, and films and reality. Cues and characteristics of both the medium and the message help them to identify cartoons as weak modality, allowing the children the opportunity to enjoy such messages without being frightened by monsters or other unreal elements of the programming. Provided with the right kind of cues, this research suggests that even young children are literate enough in the media they consume to accurately judge the modality of the programming they watch.

Learning from TV and the Internet: Research has shown that there are various learning styles, and that different approaches to education favor the various approaches (Education, n.d.) The three types of learning most commonly identified are: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (hands on). Ideally, effective teaching should incorporate

a variety of instructional techniques in order to address the needs of various types of learners. Technology has been found to be a useful tool in education (Education) and television addresses at least two of the three primary learning styles: visual and auditory. Some children's programming attempts to address the kinesthetic mode of learning by addressing the viewer directly and asking them to complete a task. Multimedia messages, such as those presented via the internet, are able to address all three modes of learning (Education).

Krendl and Warren (2004) have reviewed research on how television can educate viewers in an informal way, when no "educator" is present. They have noted that until recently most research has focused on the effect of TV on households. Three types of learning have been the focus of much of these studies: knowledge acquisition; behavioral performance; and socialization.

Ultimately, Krendl and Warren (2004) conclude that due to the many new forms of media coming into the home – mostly via the internet – that audience use of the media has changed. Consequently, media literacy, learning from TV, and ultimately how the media use is studied by researchers has also changed.

Given television's unidirectional message to typically passive audiences, many studies have focused on intended vs. unintended learning; incidental learning; active vs. passive processing; and retention of messages (Krendl & Warren, 2004). Studies take a variety of theoretical approaches, but tend to focus on the viewer as a passive recipient. Krendl and Warren have highlighted the work of Buckingham (1993, 2000), who has found in a number of studies that power, social positioning, roles, and culture affect how children

interpret the media they consume. Buckingham considered modality judgments as social acts as much as they are awareness of the conventions of the medium. Media literacy and modality judgments may therefore vary from culture to culture.

Media Literacy and Education through Video in the Middle East

Tawfik (2004) performed an exploratory study of media literacy in Egyptian schools. His study found that media literacy was not being taught in the schools at that time but that it should be in order to help children to better understand and interpret the media. As he pointed out, skills used to interpret media messages are not innate, but learned.

Saleh (2009) has found that media literacy education throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is poor at best. This is a concern given that instruction on how to critically assess the media is necessary to developing a media literate general public that can critically consider messages they receive. Saleh found that the gap between media audiences and journalists was growing, contributing to a “digital divide” in the region.

In 2003, Warschauer discussed this concept of the “digital divide” as it relates to media literacy. He focused on a case study of Egypt, with a burgeoning population and a widening gap between middle and lower class communities. Warschauer concluded that the term “digital divide” confuses the important issues regarding media literacy by implying that simply providing greater access to technology will close the gap. Instead, he advocated that more media literacy education is necessary.

Tartoussieh (2009) has pointed out how the Egyptian government, and now “new forms of Islamism” attempt to utilize the media to educate Egyptians in how to be proper citizens. Tartoussieh has referenced studies by Abu-Lughod (1995, 2005) and Seymour (1999) that described how the Egyptian government has presented pro-social messages in various types of programming. In fact, numerous studies have chronicled how the Egyptian government has

used dramatic programming and public service announcements to promote health related messages to the general public (e.g. "Egyptian project combines", n.d.; Elkamel, 1995; Lane, 1997). More recently, according to Taroussieh, private pro-religious organizations have utilized music videos and other media to promote pro-Islamic messages in Egyptian media.

Research Methodology

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1. Instructive drama elevates the level of political interest among the youths.

Hypothesis 2. Instructive drama elevates the level of political awareness among the youths.

Hypothesis 3. Instructive drama elevates the level of political involvement among the youths.

Hypothesis 4. Instructive drama viewing catalyzed with discussion has a stronger effect on viewers than instructive drama viewing with no discussion.

Variables

Independent variables. 1) Instructive drama viewing. 2) Instructive drama viewing coupled with discussion.

Dependent variables. 1) Political interest. 2) Political awareness. 3) Political involvement.

Controlling variables. 1) Gender. 2) Age. 3) GPA. 4) Quality of pre-college education (Public versus Private School). 5) Course (Satellite Channels Versus Drama Production).

Sampling

A number of 60 students studying at The International Academy for Engineering and Media Science participated in this experiment. Participating

students were either enrolled in the Drama Production class 'RTV 400' or in Satellite Channels class 'RTV 313.' Seven students were excluded for missing one (or more) of the films. All the remaining sixty students participating in the experiment were divided into three groups: a control group 1, a video group 2, and a video + discussion group 3 . Students/ subjects were assigned to their correspondent group randomly. The control group watched eight light comedy films. The video groups watched eight films with instructive content, group 3 participated in film-linked discussions.

Experimental Design

The Pretest-Posttest Design was used in this research experiment. While the control group watched eight light comedy films, the other two groups watched two sets of instructive content divided as follows:

A- Movies which deal with injustice/corruption:

- 1- *Sha' Min El-Khouf*; translated: A Bit of Fear
- 2- *El-Karnak*; name of a temple
- 3- *El-Irhab wel Kabab*; translated: Terrorism and Kabbab
- 4- *Teyour El-Thalam*; translated: Birds of Darkness
- 5- *Ya'kobean*; name of a building

B- Movies which deal with foreign occupation:

- 1- *Jameela Abou Hereit*; name of a freedom fighter
- 2- *Omar El-Mokhtar*; name of a freedom fighter
- 3- *Asshab wala Business*; translated: Friends or business

Questionnaire. Subjects of both the video groups and the control group answered a questionnaire constructed of twelve questions.

1-Do you enjoy movies with serious message?

- 2-Are you concerned with political issues?
- 3-Are you concerned with social issues?
- 4-Are you familiar with any of the youth opposition movements in Egypt?
- 5-Are you aware of the risks and sacrifices associated with joining opposition movements?
- 6-Do you belong to a political party or movement?
- 7-Are you involved in volunteer work or charity (other than donations)?
- 8-Upon who lays the responsibility of changing Egyptian deplorable conditions?
The president... The government... The people... The youth... Others...
- 9-Is it possible that you would join a political party or movement someday?
- 10-Is it possible that you would get involved in volunteer work or charity someday?
- 11-Do you think resisting the occupier is worth dying for?
- 12-Do you think resisting injustice/corruption is worth dying for?

Results

A pre-test was used to determine any significant difference within the sample in the level of interest, awareness, or involvement in public activism, due to difference in characteristics, such as the course in which the students are registered, gender, age, type of high school they graduated from and whether it was public or private, and finally student academic performance manifested in their GPA. Results are demonstrated in the following tables.

Table 1

Tests of Within-Subjects Contrast *Interest

Source	Interest	Mean Square	Df	F	Sig.
Course	Linear	.042	1	.722	.384
Gender	Linear	.003	1	.050	.824
Age	Linear	.012	1	.221	.640
School	Linear	.002	1	.035	.853
GPA	Linear	.239	1	4.394	.041

This table shows that except for GPA, none of the variables are correlated with the level of interest in public activism. Historically, more males than females reported interest in public concerns. With more girls getting education, this difference due to gender seems to be disappearing. Genre of high school attended was expected to be an influential factor as private schools are known to provide better education quality than public schools. One explanation for the absence of variance is that the education system in Egypt whether public or private, does not encourage critical thinking or bridge the subjects taught to the various domains of life.

Table 2

Tests of Within-Subjects Contrast*Awareness

Source	Awareness	Mean Square	Df	F	Sig.
Course	Linear	.001	1	.016	.899
Gender	Linear	.011	1	.279	.600
Age	Linear	.015	1	.387	.537
School	Linear	.131	1	1.184	.282
GPA	Linear	.045	1	3.422	.040

Again, GPA is the only variable detected to be correlated with the level of awareness. As expected students specialized in mass communication with higher GPA, are better followers of the news and pay more attention to the surrounding events than students with lower GPA. With regard to age, it was expected that older students would be more interested in public realities than younger students. First, older students are expected to be more mature; second, since older students are approaching graduation, they are expected to be more concerned and thus to pay more attention to the political and social conditions around them. The absence of variance might be due to insignificance age difference of maximum two years apart. Also, the assumption that older students are approaching graduation could be incorrect.

Since students were enrolled in the same course; they might be in the same class level regardless of their age difference.

Table 3

Tests of Within-Subjects Contrast*Involvement

Source	involvement	Mean Square	Df	F	Sig.
Course	Linear	.001	1	.292	.591
Gender	Linear	.004	1	2.250	.140
Age	Linear	.000	1	.210	.649
School	Linear	.001	1	.492	.486
GPA	Linear	.014	1	7.761	.007

With regard to involvement, the entire sample recorded a very low level of involvement irrespective of course enrolled, gender, age, school type, or GPA. This is not surprising as Egyptians in general report very low level of civil participation for a variety of reasons that include feelings of despair, alienation, bureaucracy, suppression, and restrictions on individual and group freedoms to lobby or organize.

Table 4

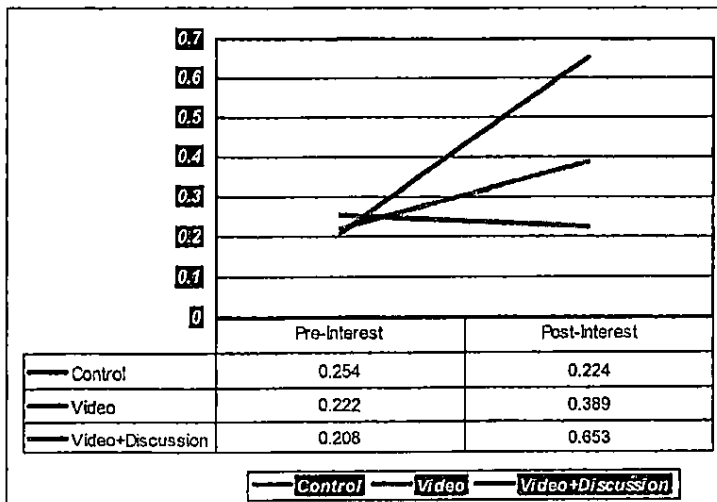
Correlation between Condition and Interest

Condition	Interest	Mean Square	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	Pre-Interest	.254a	.075	.622	.103	.405
	Post-Interest	.224a	.086		.051	.398
Video	Pre-Interest	.222a	.076	.000	.068	.375
	Post-Interest	.389a	.088		.214	.565
Video + Discuss	Pre-Interest	.208a	.074	.000	.059	.357
	Post-Interest	.653a	.085		.482	.824

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: sample=1.50, Gender=1.47, Age=19.03, School=1.43, GPA=1.52.

Chart 1

Estimated Marginal Means of Interest Pre-Post Tests



The table shows a significant change in the interest in dramatic programming with political content or in political issues in general for the two groups who watched meaningful videos in comparison to the control group. The graph shows that the interest level for those who participated in a discussion has risen much higher than those who watched the videos only. The increase in interest level correlated with discussions might be due to the following reasons: Discussions have increased the students' modalities of the content viewed as they connected the content viewed to their actual lives. Discussions helped the students to reflect and think more thoroughly of what they watched and notice things that might have been overlooked by colleagues. Discussion made it more lively and vivid, and thus generally more interesting.

However, it's puzzling why the interest for the control group though insignificantly would decrease. One explanation is that students in the control group were bored doing the post-test as they didn't understand the importance of doing the same test twice.

Table 5

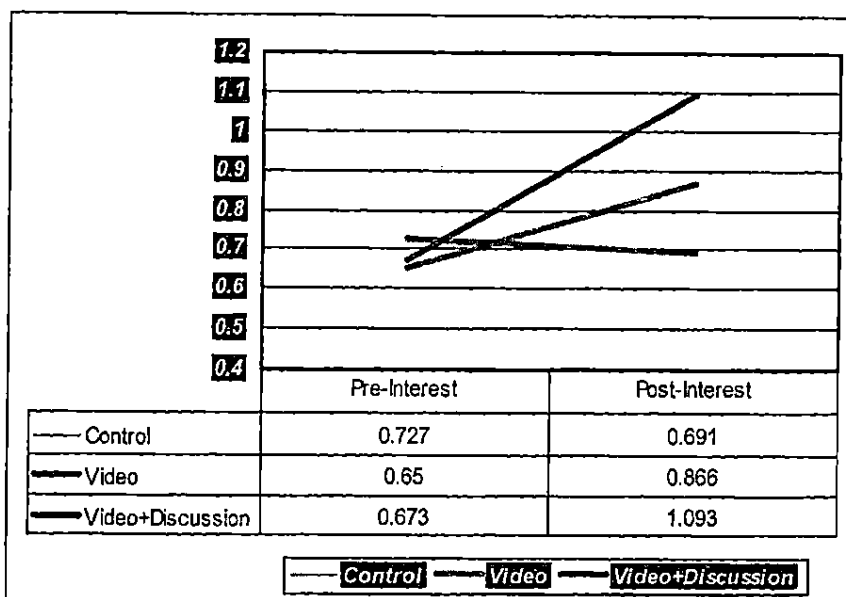
Correlation between Condition and Awareness

Condition	Awareness	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	Pre- Awar.	.727a	.065	.233	.595	.858
	Post- Awar.	.691a	.065		.560	.821
Video	Pre- Awar.	.650a	.066	.046	.517	.783
	Post- Awar.	.866a	.066		.734	.998
Video + Discussion	Pre- Awar.	.673a	.064	.000	.544	.702
	Post- Awar.	1.093a	.064		.965	1.222

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: sample=1.50, Gender=1.47, Age=19.03, School=1.43, GPA=1.52.

Chart 2

Estimated Marginal Means of Awareness Pre-Post Tests



The table shows a significant difference in the level of awareness between the two subject groups and the control group. The graph shows a significant difference between those who participated in a discussion and those who watched the videos only. This confirms previous studies which concluded that discussions promote learning. Interaction enhances the decoding of the message thus the viewers' analysis of the programming content. Discussions enhance the way viewers construct their interpretations of television world versus real world, which in turn improve their modalities, thus their awareness.

Table 6

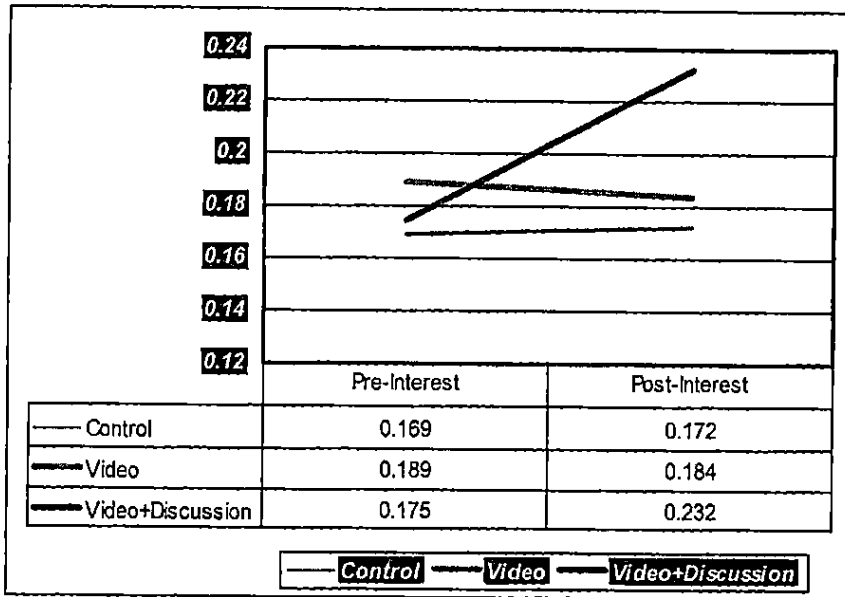
Correlation between Condition and

Condition	Involvement	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	Pre- Invol.	.169a	.059	.204	.051	.287
	Post- Invol.	.172a	.057		.058	.286
Video	Pre- Invol.	.189a	.060	.158	.069	.308
	Post- Invol.	.184a	.058		.068	.300
Video + Discussion	Pre- Invol.	.175a	.058	.079	.050	.279
	Post- Invol.	.232a	.056		.119	.344

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: sample=1.50, Gender=1.47, Age=19.03, School=1.43, GPA=1.52.

Chart 3

Estimated Marginal Means of Involvement Pre-Post Tests



Whereas the table shows no significant difference in the level of involvement between the experimental groups and the control group, the graph shows a trend of increase in level of involvement for the group who watched videos coupled with discussion. This result is unusual because the majority of cultivation studies concluded that television viewing is not capable of changing audience attitudes or behavior. The graph shows that the presence of interpersonal communication accompanying the reception of television messages, may alter –by strengthening or weakening- the effect of television on the viewers. In this particular experiment, discussion strengthened the reception of the messages decoded in the dramatic programming as viewers reported a change in their attitude manifested in their willingness to be more involved in political/social activism.

Discussion

Modality is the understanding of how media messages shape our visions of the world and our sense of ourselves. The way in which the message is delivered affects viewers' projection of its reality, which in turn leads to different interpretations of the message. Results show that class discussions raised the level of attention and interest among viewers as well as the retention of the messages. Conversation and interaction among the viewers improved audience estimation of the likelihood that some aspect of a state of affairs is, has been, or will be true (or false) in the context of the possible world. Overall, students showed better ability in encoding and projecting the messages of the content viewed on present time and place. This shows that a media literacy class can change a typically passive audience into a very active one and their ability to think thoroughly and critically of what they watch.

To be a critical viewer is to be able to analyze and evaluate media message received in a variety of forms. Instruction on how to critically assess the media is crucial to developing a media literate general public that can vitally consider messages they receive. Media messages are constructed in a complex process that involves making numerous choices and decisions. Media messages especially those disguised in entertainment content are the hardest to detect. Messages have economic and political purposes and contexts. Television and satellite channels may appear to enter the home at no cost, but we all know this is not true. Any meaningful critical discourse about media

messages must explain the mechanism of mass media industries and ownership patterns and the concepts of market economics and advertising (R. Hobbs, 1996). Awareness of the economic and political contexts in which films, television shows, and news are produced is essential part of media literacy. Classroom discussions proved successful in sensitizing viewers with regard to subtle choices made by the message makers which would have otherwise gone invisible. This study is important as it shows that critical viewing doesn't come naturally to the process of watching television. It is a learned skill and behavior.

The ability to review, critique, and digest information created and disseminated by media has become increasingly essential in a superhighway-driven information age. Media literacy acts like a vaccine against manipulation and propaganda. This doesn't mean that media literacy is an invitation to doubt all information presented in the media. The goal is to equip the youth with tools and skills that give them insight and allow them to make sense of the world around them. Media literacy is a necessity for being an effective citizen in a modern democratic society. In spite of its importance, media literacy is not taught in Egyptian schools nor universities. Egyptian youth, like their counterparts, urgently need to acquire critical viewing skills in order to effectively filter all the media messages they are bombarded with. This study calls on the ministry of education to develop a comprehensive media literacy plan to be implemented in all schools and higher educational institutions.

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