

Dual Levels of Activeness in Media Literacy: an example of the development of media literacy activities from global media monitoring in Japan.

Asuka Tomaru

In recent years, interest in media literacy has been increasing in Japan. It has been actively developed in the field through the diverse activities of citizens and educators, as well as media organizations. Media literacy is a vitally important ability for living independently in the media society, because media have deeply permeated our daily lives. At the same time, it is also an activity which aims for change in the media and improvement of media systems and regulations in Japan.

In media literacy, the active audiences are positioned as the main agents of social change. However, research that shows what the active audience is has not progressed and this is an important point which this dissertation aims to clarify. In existing research the audience has mostly been presented from fragmented perspectives. This research looks at two different types of the activeness of the audience in order to clarify its role in media literacy. One type is "individual activeness", which is related to the ability of the individual to analyze and produce media. This individual activeness is something which has a big influence on media literacy activities. In the Japanese context, media literacy has developed as a civic activity, not as a part of public education. In the process of establishing and organizing media literacy, the activeness of the audience was demonstrated in various ways. Supporting this kind of media activity is "social activeness".

The subject of this research is to clarify the role carried out by the audience in media literacy activities. It will analyze audience activity from the two perspectives of "individual activeness" and "social activeness" and attempt to clarify what kind of media literacy activities are important in order to reform the media situation in Japan.

The object of analysis in this dissertation is the unique development of media literacy activities in Japan from the experience of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). The GMMP is a world news media monitoring project carried out by citizens on one day, every five years. Eleven Japanese monitoring groups participated in the 2005 project. After the 2005 monitoring project was carried out, image and sound techniques used in the programs were analyzed. Media literacy workshops were then held with the group participants, using texts from Japanese news programs that were part of the project. Additionally, two groups that continued media literacy activities after the project finished were visited and interviews carried out.

The results of the analysis are as follows: from the perspective of "individual activeness", it can be seen that the audience who participated in the media literacy workshops were able to read the media more deeply from having compared the results of the GMMP monitoring survey. In other words, the activeness of the individual did not stop with the finish of the GMMP monitoring survey and a greater activeness was developed in the media literacy workshops. The result of the analysis of the two monitoring groups carried out from the perspective of "social activeness", was that through media literacy workshops, the audience understood the importance of the necessary factors in learning media literacy. These factors forced them to consider how activities should be carried out. The monitoring group members found this appealing and continued to participate. This resulted in developing a place for media literacy learning.

It became clear that the audience has two types of activeness which inherently overlap with each other, and

this dual activeness is mutually motivating. Thus it can be seen that media literacy activities can develop in this way. Consequently, the audience do not merely achieve individual abilities, they also fulfill the role of supporting media literacy activities. These kinds of media literacy activities contribute in two ways towards the aim of reforming the media. Firstly, the audience can achieve autonomy through media literacy activities and in respective media contexts also have the potential to advance initiatives toward social change. Secondly, as part of the process of media literacy activities, a three-way partnership between citizens and media organizations, government and bureaucracy, can be established. This partnership is necessary for improving the Japanese media situation. The case study presented in this dissertation is one step towards the greater aim of media reform. The research focused on the "social activeness" of the audience and through the process of media literacy shows the dynamism of media literacy activities.