# Students' Awareness about "News" Concept

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In recent years, news literacy has become one of the concepts that have been emphasized to enable information users to be critical of the news they have acquired from different environments and has become one of the important methods for fighting against fake news. News literacy is defined as the ability to use critical thinking skills to assess the credibility and reputation of a news item obtained from newspapers, magazines, television, or the Internet (Digital Resource Center, n.d.). However, when it comes to news literacy knowledge and skills, it is extremely important to understand the perception of news, as well as the extent to which individuals can distinguish news from opinions or advertisements. Accordingly, the research question addressed in this study can be defined as; "Are students able to distinguish news from opinion, fact, advertisement, or media?".

The research[1] was carried out on undergraduate students with a quasi-experimental design method. For this purpose, the first-grade level students of Hacettepe University Department of Information Management were examined during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic years. In both years, the students were informed about the details of the study and those who wanted to participate the research voluntarily were included. The experimental group consisted of students who agreed to participate in the pre-test /post-test processes and 3 hours of a "what is news literacy?" training. The control group consisted of students who agreed to participate only in the pre-test / post-test. In 2017-2018 academic year, 32 students (experimental group: 20, control group: 12) and in 2018-2019 academic year, 38 students (experimental group: 16, control group: 22) participated in the research. In both years, the research design process was applied in the same way. This study focused on the pre-test and post-test performances of the experimental group students.

The purpose of the pre-test was to determine the level of knowledge and skills of the students included in the research before they were trained to distinguish the given concepts. We asked four questions to determine the knowledge of students in terms of defining news and their ability to figure out the differences between news, opinion, advertisement, or media. Pre-test was some sort of a baseline study, in which the knowledge levels of students before having the training aimed to be revealed.

After the pre-test, students in the experimental group received three-hours of "what is news literacy?" training. In the content of the training, the concept of "news literacy" was presented to the students and the definitions of news literacy, news, opinion, advertisement, and media were given along with some examples. The fact that news literacy has become a necessary literacy skill in today's information habitat was emphasized. After the training, the three-question post-test was administered to both experimental and control groups. The questions in the post-test were similar to those in the pre-test, aiming to assess students' ability to distinguish the given concepts.

The pre and post-tests were conducted online via Google Forms. In both tests, some true /false questions were included on distinguishing the definitions of concepts such as news, opinion, advertisement, media. One question asked students to marking the correct response that met the news definition among six content examples including columns, advertisements, and refutations. An open-ended question was directed to the students to help us understand how students define the news in their own words.

Preliminary findings showed that students in both groups can be considered successful in distinguishing the definition of news. However, it was also seen that they tend to perceive the columns as news, among other examples.

## References

Digital Resource Center. (n.d.). *Glossary: The language of news literacy*. Retrieved January 10, 2019 from
   http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/glossary-language-news-literacy

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[1] Results presented in this paper are part of the Ph.D dissertation of İpek Şencan, carried out under the supervision of İrem Soydal at the Department of Information Management, Hacettepe University. The thesis titled "News Literacy Curriculum: Content Design and Evaluation of its Effectiveness" can be available at http://bby.hacettepe.edu.tr/akademik/ipeksencan/isencan_PhD_web_2.pdf