



Media education from the perspective of educational transactional analysis

ABSTRACT: Zbigniew Łęski, *Media education from the perspective of educational transactional analysis*, Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, No. 23, Poznań 2018. Pp. 103–115. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2018.23.06>

Educational transactional analysis is one of the main branches of transactional analysis – a concept, which was developed with psychotherapy in mind. Its tools and clear terminology allow for both theoretical and empirical analysis of many aspects pertaining to the specificity of human functioning in the world of new media. The article shows the possibilities of its application and presents a review of previous theoretical and empirical initiatives that deal with this issue.

KEY WORDS: transactional analysis, new media, human-computer relationship, media education

The concept of transactional analysis (or TA for short) is gaining more and more popularity among people dealing with issues related to education. This theory provides the researcher with clear concepts and ready-made tools. Thanks to its application, we can take a closer look at the specificity of the relationships between particular subjects of the analysed reality and see their life attitudes, observe and identify interpersonal games and many other crucial

elements. It is therefore not surprising that educational transactional analysis is currently one of the main fields of TA, which sees some dynamic development. Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa has a dedicated Research Team for Educational Transactional Analysis,¹ the list of members of which includes the author of this publication.

This article was inspired by the need to organise and systematise the achievements in the field of the use of TA in the analysis of issues related to media education in the last few years. One of the first attempts to combine the proverbial fire with water, which in this case is the theory of transactional analysis created for the needs of psychotherapy, with the subject of human functioning in the world of new media, was the author's article published in 2011. The considerations contained therein indicated the possible areas of using terminology and tools provided by TA in the analysis of the issues of computerisation of the process of education.² At that time, it was mainly a collection of ideas, some of which were verified or used in the following years. Thus, it is now worth taking a closer look at them from the standpoint of the experience gained and evaluate which were successfully implemented, which turned out to be failures that require corrections and reflection, and which are still awaiting implementation.

However, in order to understand the considerations presented in the following part of the article, it is worth recalling the most crucial assumptions of transactional analysis in a brief and general manner, taking a number of issues into consideration. Firstly, it is difficult to summarise the details of a complex concept, which has been developing since the middle of the 20th century in a single article with a limited length. Secondly, there are a number of valuable publications regarding this concept, which should be consulted

¹ Find out more on the Team's website: <http://eat.ujd.edu.pl> [retrieved on: 15.08.2018].

² Z. Łęski, "Zarys problematyki komputeryzacji kształcenia w perspektywie analizy transakcyjnej" [in:] *Analiza transakcyjna w edukacji*, ed. J. Jagiela, Wydawnictwo im. S. Podobińskiego Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 2011, pp. 140-153.

by readers who are more interested in the subject matter presented in the article and want to use TA in their work, including works by the creator of transactional analysis – E. Berne,³ I. Stewart's and V. Joines' handbook *Ta Today: A New Introduction to Transactional Analysis*,⁴ the collective work *Analiza transakcyjna w edukacji* edited by J. Jagieła,⁵ as well as the *Edukacyjna Analiza Transakcyjna* annual published by the above-mentioned Research Team.⁶

Structural analysis is considered to be the foundation for transactional analysis. Without knowing the former, it is impossible to understand most of the assumptions of this concept and to apply it in educational practice or in scientific and research activities. According to its assumptions, each person has three basic Ego states: Parent, Adult and Child. Simply put, the first one of them is responsible for thoughts, feelings and actions, the source of which can be found in parental messages. In this position, we are usually guided by ready-made and proven patterns, norms and rules, as well as feelings related to caring and compassion. The Child, on the other hand, is a state reflecting naturalness, spontaneity, joy, creativity, as well as fear and egoism. The Adult is responsible for actions, thoughts and feelings of an adult – reasonable, logical, analysing, taking constructive decisions, etc.⁷ At any moment we have one of these states, and switching between them is referred to as catexis. It is not possible to catexis two states simultaneously.⁸

³ Cf.: E. Berne, *W co grają ludzie*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 1994.

⁴ Cf. I. Stewart, V. Joines. *Analiza transakcyjna dzisiaj*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2017.

⁵ Cf. J. Jagieła (ed.), *Analiza transakcyjna w edukacji*, Wydawnictwo im. S. Podobińskiego Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 2011.

⁶ The journal is available at: <https://czasopisma.ujd.edu.pl/index.php/EAT> [retrieved on: 15.08.2018].

⁷ E. Berne, *Seks i kochanie*, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw, 1994, pp. 81–82; I. Stewart, V. Joines, *Analiza transakcyjna dzisiaj*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2017, pp. 13–19.

⁸ A. Pierzchała, *Pasywność w szkole, Diagnoza zjawiska z perspektywy analizy transakcyjnej*, Wydawnictwo im. S. Podobińskiego Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 2013, p. 36.

Of course, the above description is only an outline of structural analysis, and there might be some doubts as to whether it is too simplistic to be able to reliably reflect the functioning of a human being at any given moment in time. This is why transactional analysis is characterised by further subdivisions. We have at our disposal a functional analysis, in which we distinguish between Normative Parent and Nurturing Parent, as well as Free and Adapted Child.⁹ In the second-degree structural analysis we distinguish additional states of Parent, Adult and Child within the main Ego states - Parent and Child, leading us to Adult in a Parent or a Child in a Parent, etc.¹⁰ Recognising the profile of using one's Ego states by an individual provides us with a lot of important information about the sources of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and if a problematic situation occurs, it enables us to take effective diagnostic and preventive measures. In addition, we can also take advantage of the so-called egograms - questionnaires evaluating the functioning of a human being in the Ego states, including ones geared towards functional analysis, as well as ones that take into account second-degree structural analysis.

Another important notion is presented in the very name of the transactional analysis concept, namely transactions. This term was used by E. Berne to describe the unit of interpersonal relations. When establishing a relationship with another person (for example via a verbal or non-verbal message), we send a so-called transactional stimulus. The response to the stimulus is referred to as a transactional response.¹¹ Transactional stimuli and responses take place between our Ego states. Being in the Adult position, we send a message from this level, addressing it to the state of the Adult-Ego-state of the other person, expecting a factual and logical answer. If this

⁹ I. Stewart, V. Joines, *Analiza transakcyjna dzisiaj*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2017, pp. 27-40.

¹⁰ I. Stewart, V. Joines, *Analiza transakcyjna dzisiaj*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2017, pp. 41-55.

¹¹ E. Berne, *W co grają ludzie*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 1994, p. 21.

happens, we are dealing with a complementary transaction, which promotes effective communication and to a significant extent minimises the risk of a conflict situation. Another example of such a transaction is playing (Child – Child), or someone obeying the commands of another person (Parent – Child). However, if the reaction comes out of a different Ego state than the one to which it was directed (or goes to another state), we are dealing with crossed transactions. The transactional response may then be inconsistent with the stimulus and not in line with expectations, which in turn may generate conflict situations.¹²

Transactional analysis also deals with the impact that the messages of people who are important to us and our life experience has on our daily functioning and the decisions we make. This is referred to as life script analysis, or in other words, the analysis of a hidden life scenario – a life programme, which begins to develop from the moment of birth, and in adult life is carried out in a social context by people playing the roles of protagonists, persecutors and victims, seeking partners for complementary and secondary roles. The script covers not only individuals, but also social groups, families or even whole nations.¹³ From the perspective of educational transactional analysis a very interesting issue is the script of the school as an institution. Its analysis may, for example, help in understanding the causes of resistance towards the changes of forms and methods of didactic work used by teachers.¹⁴ The process of analysing the script is an extremely difficult task, which is usually carried out during the psychotherapeutic process. However, in the case of the script, we are also dealing with so-called script drivers, which largely determine the actions taken by an individual (or a group/institution), including:

¹² E. Berne, *W co grają ludzie*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 1994, pp. 21–25.

¹³ M. James, D. Jongeward, *Narodzić się by wygrać*, Dom wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2003, pp. 103–105

¹⁴ A. Pierzchała, “Transakcyjne zakazy i nakazy skryptowe w ukrytym programie szkoły”, *Edukacyjna Analiza Transakcyjna*, 2017, no. 6, pp. 107–117

1. Be Perfect
2. Be Strong
3. Try hard
4. Please (others)
5. Hurry up.¹⁵

Each of the above-mentioned drivers manifests itself in the form of a sequence of actions, which can be observed and analysed, and which can also determine certain areas and ways of our functioning – including in cyberspace.

In transactional analysis, the concept of life positions is invariably tied to the script concept. It refers to our attitude towards ourselves and our surroundings, presenting the possibility of adopting one of the following four positions and the corresponding social interactions:

1. I am OK, you are OK – cooperation (healthy position)
2. I am not OK, you are OK – avoiding (depressive position)
3. I am OK, you are not OK – rejection (paranoid position)
4. I am not OK, you are not OK – helplessness (impasse)

The script of an adult is based on one of the above positions, but the individual does not remain in a given position all the time. Depending on the situation and the relations with the surroundings, this position may change.¹⁶

The last term worth mentioning from the standpoint of using transactional analysis in the field of media education is transactional games. Simply put, it can be referred to as a series of hidden transactions which are supposed to result in psychological benefits for one of the parties. Each of them is a process with a distinct beginning, culmination and an end, and contains a “trap” in which the other party to the transaction is caught. J. Jagieła points out that they usually serve as defence mechanism for people who seek

¹⁵ I. Stewart, V. Joines, *Analiza transakcyjna dzisiaj*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2017, p. 198.

¹⁶ I. Stewart, V. Joines, *Analiza transakcyjna dzisiaj*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2017, pp. 154–155.

support and recognition of their own value, but at the same time do not believe that they can receive it in a sincere and open way.¹⁷

How can the issues described above be related to the field of media education? At this point it is worth mentioning the research carried out at the end of the 20th century by B. Reeves and C. Nass. In a number of experiments, they demonstrated that in contact with the media (primarily with a computer), humans tend to behave in a way that is similar to how they behave in typical interpersonal relationships. In the book, where they published results of their research and their conclusions, they wrote about assigning attributes that we used to treat as typically human to achievements of technology. It seems that a direct quote of the authors' work is fitting here: "Human reactions show that the media are more than just tools. When treated politely, media can invade our personal space, can have a personality that matches our own, can be team members and activate gender stereotypes. They can evoke emotional reactions, require attention, threaten us, impact our memory and change the notions of what is natural. The media are full participants in our social and real world."¹⁸ At the first glance, such a point of view seems to be highly debatable and controversial. However, if we take a closer look at the practice of our daily contact with new technologies, it is hard not to admit that the authors were right – after all, many people tend to get angry at their computer, tell it to hurry up or express their gratitude for a job well done. Do we express similar emotions towards other tools we use? B. Reeves and C. Nass write about the "personality of the media." Of course, the devices do not have intrinsic personalities. However, it is often the case that the user actually assigns some personality traits to them at the moment when they use them, in some way projecting their expectations or fears onto them. The ranks of educated people include those who

¹⁷ J. Jagieła, *Gry psychologiczne w szkole*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Nauczycieli, Kielce, 2004, p. 121.

¹⁸ B. Reeves, C. Nass. *Media i ludzie*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw, 2000, p. 294.

cannot imagine life without technology and those who approach it anxiously. It would seem that age may be the main determinant of such attitudes, but is it really? In the light of the need to answer such questions, the concepts of transactional analysis described above may prove (and prove) to be extremely useful.

An article was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, which served as a kind of inspiration for writing this paper. The author took a closer look at the possibilities of taking advantage of the concepts of transactional analysis in research related to media education, namely the analysis of the relational character of human - new media relationships, which were also cited in this paper. Since, according to the research by B. Reeves and C. Nass, we attribute some personality to computers, maybe we also attribute some structure of Ego states to them? And, as already mentioned, TA offers us tools called egograms for studying these relations. Perhaps the way we treat new media depends to some extent on our dominant script drivers or life positions. Perhaps the presence of a computer in our environment may determine the emergence of new, specific transactional games. During the few years that have passed since the publication of that article, theoretical studies and several research initiatives have emerged, which to a small extent allow us to dispel some of the above doubts. In 2016, a monograph by the author of this article entitled *Duch w maszynie... Kim jest dla nas komputer? Charakterystyka relacji w języku analizy transakcyjnej* was published in print, containing conclusions from studies, in which an attempt was made to analyse the structure of the Ego states assigned to the computer by the user, using a number of tools, including a properly matched adjective egogram by J. Jagieła.¹⁹ The study group comprised 196 subjects. The conclusions drawn were surprising to some extent. It was expected that there would be dependencies between the purpose and use of computers and the Ego states assigned to the

¹⁹ Z. Łęski, *Duch w maszynie... Kim jest dla nas komputer? Charakterystyka relacji w języku analizy transakcyjnej*, Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobińskiego Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 2016, pp. 115-123.

devices. It was also expected that the devices would not be given the full structure by the respondents. It was assumed, for example, that people who use these devices mainly for work would primarily assign them the Adult state, and those who mainly play would most probably go with the Child. Meanwhile, it turned out that regardless of the time, purpose or method of using the devices, the respondents assigned them structures that largely correspond to the ones they themselves have. It could even be said that there was a clear tendency to “humanise” machines.²⁰ This confirms the conclusions resulting from experiments by B. Reeves and C. Nass.

The publication mentioned in the above paragraph is an example of the use of structural analysis. The conclusions demonstrate the phenomenon of projecting a similar structure of Ego states onto the machine as people use themselves, but says very little about the relationship between humans and new technologies. To this end, it would be necessary to analyse the transactions, which would make for a much more difficult task. To some extent it was undertaken by A. Pierzchała in articles: “Rodzic, Dorosły, Dziecko – jak można opisać komunikację na forach internetowych z punktu widzenia Analizy Transakcyjnej”²¹ and “Po dwóch stronach ekranu, czyli wirtualne relacje interpersonalne w perspektywie analizy transakcyjnej.”²² The author made an attempt at a qualitative analysis of posts on on-line discussion forums in terms of identifying the areas of the self, from which the participant started the interaction

²⁰ Z. Łęski, *Duch w maszynie... Kim jest dla nas komputer? Charakterystyka relacji w języku analizy transakcyjnej*, Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobińskiego Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 2016, pp. 63–65; 111.

²¹ A. Pierzchała, “Rodzic, Dorosły, Dziecko – jak można opisać komunikację na forach internetowych z punktu widzenia Analizy Transakcyjnej” [in:] *Oblicza internetu. (Re)de niowanie sieci*, ed. M. Sokółowski, Wydawnictwo Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej w Elblągu, Elbląg, 2010, pp. 104–119.

²² A. Pierzchała, “Po dwóch stronach ekranu, czyli wirtualne relacje interpersonalne w perspektywie analizy transakcyjnej” [in:] *Bezpieczeństwo dzieci i młodzieży w przestrzeni wirtualnej – teoria i praktyka. Prace naukowe GWSP*, ed. Ewa Golbik-Madej, Gliwicka Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości, Gliwice, 2016, pp. 117–128.

and the characteristics of the type of message sent (a total of 506 posts were analysed). Adult turned out to be the dominant state, apart from the forum devoted to politics, where the Parent clearly won, and the forum for singles, where transactions were most often started from the level of the Child.²³ However, these studies focus on transactions between users, carried out thanks to new technologies. Communication in cyberspace has its own specificity and is significantly different from communication in the real world. It is much easier to express emotions, get angry or create statements that we would never say in "the real world." This was pointed out by P. Wallace in *Internet Psychology* at the beginning of the 21st century.²⁴ However, the question of the specificity of the transaction between the user and the computer remains open. We are still waiting for interesting research initiatives and the resulting publications.

Other concepts present in transactional analysis discussed in this publication include life script and positions. So far, only a single article analysing the impact of the script on the use of computers from the theoretical standpoint was published in print;²⁵ However, a monograph by the author of this paper, which deals with this particular issue, among many others, is being published. In the light of the research carried out for the purposes of this publication (394 people aged 14-29 took part in the study), no significant relationships were observed between such variables as the emotional attitudes towards new media, self-assessment of the respondents'

²³ A. Pierzchała, "Po dwóch stronach ekranu, czyli wirtualne relacje interpersonalne w perspektywie analizy transakcyjnej" [in:] *Bezpieczeństwo dzieci i młodzieży w przestrzeni wirtualnej – teoria i praktyka. Prace naukowe GWSP*, ed. Ewa Golbik-Madej, Gliwicka Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości, Gliwice, 2016, p. 124.

²⁴ P. Wallace, *Psychologia Internetu*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2005, pp. 147-206.

²⁵ Z. Łęski, A. Pierzchała, "Życie w grze czy gra w życie. Rola skryptu życiowego w kształtowaniu postaw graczy" [in:] *Edukacja międzykulturowa w warunkach kultury globalnej. Od rozważań definicyjnych do praktycznych zastosowań*, N. Dębowska, M. Walachowska, N. Starik (eds.), Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bezpieczeństwa, Poznań, 2014, pp. 55-63.

ability to use them or their purpose and the frequency with which they use them, and the users' dominant script drivers or their life positions. It should be stressed, however, that the respondents were representatives of the young generation, for whom computers and the Internet constitute both a part of their everyday life, as well as a necessity. Therefore, this topic is still open for further research in other age groups. It is worth mentioning that the above mentioned research has brought a very interesting conclusion regarding the classification of the so-called Generation Y and Generation Z. The obtained results cast a shadow of doubt on the above division. The representatives of Generation Y (older respondents – born between 1985 and 1999) do not differ from the representatives of Generation Z (younger people – born in 2000 and later) neither in terms of the Ego states structure, nor in terms of script drivers or life positions. There were also no significant differences in the manner, purpose and frequency of use of new technologies. It should be stressed that so far there have been no reliable research papers on this subject, and opinions on the above mentioned generations and differences between them were shaped primarily on the basis of assumptions and theses published on popular websites.

The concept of transactional games in the context of media education seems to be an extremely interesting issue. The emergence of new media may have triggered the emergence of new games between users; for example, a classic game “my thing is better than yours” may now concern a smartphone, and it seems to be often observed between users of devices of different brands and vendors. There is also the question whether do we have a greater tendency to initiate games with other people than in the real world while communicating in the cyberspace. It is also worth noting that there are probably also games that are directly related between humans and the medium. It is not difficult to imagine a user who deliberately manipulates the difficulty level of a computer game or educational software in order to prove that they are good at something or, on the contrary, that they are not able to do something. Unfortunately, this topic still awaits both the theoretical and empirical studies.

To summarise the considerations presented in this article, it is worth referring directly to the issues of media education. Undoubtedly, we are currently dealing with significant shortcomings in this field, both among the younger and older generations. This is indicated not only by the observations of the surrounding reality and our functioning in the world of media, but also by the results of studies related, for example, to the safety of children and young people on the Internet, which are carried out on a regular basis by many individuals and organisations (such as NASK.)²⁶ Perhaps a better understanding of the specificity of our contact with new media is the key to increasing the effectiveness of educational and preventive activities in this area. In this context, transactional analysis gives researchers a great opportunity. At the same time, as this article shows, the potential of TA remains untapped. There are still not enough empirical initiatives to meet both the opportunities offered by this concept and the needs generated by modern times and the dynamic development of new technologies. In conclusion, it is to be hoped that this text will become an inspiration and encouragement for many researchers to draw upon transactional analysis and, with its help, try to better understand the specificity of human functioning in contact with new technologies.

Bibliography

- Berne E., *Seks i kochanie*, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw, 1994.
Berne E., *W co grają ludzie*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 1994.
Jagięła J., *Gry psychologiczne w szkole*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Nauczycieli, Kielce, 2004.
James M., Jongeward D., *Narodzić się by wygrać*, Dom wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2003.
Łęski Z., *Duch w maszynie... Kim jest dla nas komputer? Charakterystyka relacji w języku analizy transakcyjnej*, Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobińskiego Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 2016.

²⁶ Pokolenie 3.0. w świecie wirtualnym i realnym – raport z badań NASK. <https://www.nask.pl/download/1/447/Nastolatki30NASK.pdf> (retrieved on: 16.08.2018).

- Łęski Z., Pierzchała A., "Życie w grze czy gra w życie. Rola skryptu życiowego w kształtowaniu postaw graczy" [in:] *Edukacja międzykulturowa w warunkach kultury globalnej. Od rozważań definicyjnych do praktycznych zastosowań*, N. Dębowska, M. Walachowska, N. Starik (eds.), Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bezpieczeństwa, Poznań, 2014.
- Łęski Z., "Zarys problematyki komputeryzacji kształcenia w perspektywie analizy transakcyjnej" [in:] *Analiza transakcyjna w edukacji*, ed. J. Jagiela, Wydawnictwo im. S. Podobińskiego Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 2011.
- Pierzchała A., *Pasywność w szkole, Diagnoza zjawiska z perspektywy analizy transakcyjnej*, Wydawnictwo im. S. Podobińskiego Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 2013.
- Pierzchała A., "Po dwóch stronach ekranu, czyli wirtualne relacje interpersonalne w perspektywie analizy transakcyjnej" [in:] *Bezpieczeństwo dzieci i młodzieży w przestrzeni wirtualnej – teoria i praktyka. Prace naukowe GWSP*, ed. Ewa Golbik-Madej, Gliwicka Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości, Gliwice, 2016.
- Pierzchała A., "Rodzic, Dorosły, Dziecko – jak można opisać komunikację na forach internetowych z punktu widzenia Analizy Transakcyjnej" [in:] *Oblicza internetu. (Re)de niowanie sieci*, ed. M. Sokołowski, Wydawnictwo Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej w Elblągu, Elbląg, 2010.
- Pierzchała A., "Transakcyjne zakazy i nakazy skryptowe w ukrytym programie szkoły", *Edukacyjna Analiza Transakcyjna*, 2017, no. 6.
- Pokolenie 3.0. w świecie wirtualnym i realnym – raport z badań NASK*. <https://www.nask.pl/download/1/447/Nastolatki30NASK.pdf> (retrieved on: 16.08.2018).
- Reeves B., Nass C., *Media i ludzie*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw, 2000.
- Stewart I., Joines V., *Analiza transakcyjna dzisiaj*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2017.
- Wallace P., *Psychologia Internetu*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań, 2005.