

Project idea: Framing as an example of disinformation

Competences: Personal responsibility, analytical skills, judgment

Age group: 12-16 years

Project duration: 90 minutes

Materials required: Digital devices with internet access, audio output, photo/video function (tablets, smartphones), access codes Chat GPT if necessary

Link to the learning module: www.teachtoday.de/en/Project_idea_Framing

Introduction

In an era where we are confronted with a plethora of information on a daily basis, the ability to distinguish “real” news from disinformation is becoming increasingly crucial. Artificial intelligence (AI) and social media have significantly changed the way information is disseminated and consumed. AI-driven algorithms can accelerate the creation of misinformation, and social media provides the perfect breeding ground for its rapid spread. These developments pose serious threats to public opinion and democracy, as disinformation has the potential to influence elections, deepen social divisions and sow distrust. Framing is a common form of deliberately manipulating content.

The fact that we often believe disinformation is essentially human nature itself. As we can no longer process the vast amount of information quickly enough and the complexity is constantly increasing, we look for content that seems familiar to us, because this makes us more inclined to believe it.

Children and teenagers have constant access to information through smartphones and social networks such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. Not only can they receive it anytime and anywhere, but they also evaluate it and relate it to their own content or share it directly in order to interact with others. They are also more likely to trust information that seems familiar to them, corresponds to their image of adulthood or comes close to the ideas set in their family or peer group. The fact that almost any content spreads quickly via likes, shares and comments is not only obvious, but also inherent in the algorithms of social networks.

In order to prepare young people for these challenges, it is crucial to sensitize them to the topic of disinformation and provide them with the necessary knowledge to critically question information.

Objective

In order to understand the mechanisms of disinformation, this project idea exemplifies how framing is used to control the perception of information through the targeted presentation of certain aspects of information. In this way, any information can be placed in familiar frames or even scientifically sound facts can be used for one's own, often dubious, purposes through clever manipulation.

Using the example of a text (news item), a picture and/or an audio collage, the young people understand how framing is used and how they can recognize and analyse such techniques by setting frames themselves and presenting content from different perspectives. By working in teams and reflecting on their experiences, they are enabled to make informed and critical decisions and actively participate in society.



Children and teenagers

- understand what disinformation is and why it is so important to deal with it.
- get to know the method of framing and how information can be consciously changed.
- use the writing conference method to change their own texts/images/audio collages.

Professional and methodological competence

Children and teenagers

- analyze the examples and recognize how information in text, image and sound can reflect different points of view.
- work in teams to create their own works and present them in different ways.
- present their results to the class.

Activity and action competence

Children and teenagers

- share their knowledge on the topic of disinformation and report on whether and where they think they have encountered fake news.
- discuss suitable examples of framing in a team.
- formulate their thoughts on framing and evaluate the team's work.

Social-communicative competence

Children and teenagers

- contribute their creativity to the implementation of the group work.
- take a critical look at the results and challenges and reflect on their personal approach to media.

Personal Competence

Project progress

In order to explore the topic of framing in a variety of ways, the project idea offers three options for creating your own work. Young people can choose between text, image or audio for the implementation. There is an example and instructions for each option.

Note: When implementing the teaching idea, please ensure that you choose the examples in such a way that you do not create or disseminate any disinformation yourself.

Phase description Social form	
Phase 1 Plenum	
The teacher or workshop lecturer starts with the topic of “disinformation” and asks the young people in a short discussion whether they know what disinformation means. If necessary, examples can be asked for by a show of hands.	Background: What is Framing?



<p>The concept of framing is then explained as a way of consciously controlling news. The teacher/workshop leader gives examples of framing in the media, in advertising and in politics. (See background: What is framing?)</p>	
<p>Phase 2 group / partner work</p>	
<p>Participants work in teams and select one of the framing examples for further processing. They can choose between text, image and audio. Together, they look at the examples and discuss which means were used to change the content and perception in each case. Based on the examples, the teams create their own work and modify it to create different perspectives and reactions. To do this, they draft a script in which they first plan a motif or story. In the next step, they consider together how they can change this information and implement it accordingly.</p> <p>Examples</p> <p>A. <u>Text about Lina Mertens</u> The text was created with Chat GPT and is based on the person Greta Thunberg. In the three variants, Lina Mertens (fictional person) is described from different perspectives and creates different images of the person in the readers' minds. The teams analyze the texts and create their own versions. Use our AI experiment kit (https://chat.ki-entdecken.de) for this purpose.</p> <p>B. <u>The image of "running people on the beach"</u> The image of "running people on the beach" was created with image-generating AI and is based on different backgrounds, colors and filters or the respective image descriptions. The individual image elements are supplied so that the teams can experiment with the material themselves in addition to analyzing it.</p> <p>C. <u>The audio recording on Europe</u> The example of the audio recording shows how language, sound and music can change a message. Based on the audio script, the young people can also create their own versions using a smartphone or tablet or record and analyze their own messages as audio.</p>	<p>Examples: P. 5-7 Audio: Download</p> <p>Note: On request, anonymized access for students to use Chat GPT can be provided free of charge.</p>
<p>Phase 3 Plenum</p>	
<p>Sufficient time should be allowed for the evaluation of the results. The teams take it in turns to present their results without comment. The rest of the class classifies the results in terms of content and names the different "frames" that were used. These are then commented on by the respective groups. At the end, ask how the young people think about the topic of framing based on their experiences and evaluate the topic of disinformation together in a discussion.</p>	



Further information

Teachtoday Academy: The Academy's learning content offers further interesting points of reference, for example on the topic of digital democracy. ([Academy Teachtoday](#))

Klicksafe: The EU initiative to promote online literacy has compiled extensive material on the topic of disinformation and opinion when dealing with young people. ([Disinformation, deepfakes & fake news - what do I need to know? \(klicksafe.de/en\)](#))

Technical terms

Framing: The technique of presenting information within a certain framework of meaning in order to influence the perception and interpretation of the recipient. For example, a message can be perceived differently through the choice of words (“climate change” vs. “climate crisis”).

Algorithm: A set of rules or calculations used by computers to solve problems or perform tasks, such as the distribution of content on social media. For example, algorithms determine which posts are displayed to users on social media platforms.

Content Creator: Individuals or organizations that create and publish digital content to inform, entertain or engage an audience. This can take the form of texts, videos, images, podcasts and other media. This includes, for example, video creators, bloggers, podcasters and influencers on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and blogs. They regularly create content that often appeals to a specific target group. This can be both individuals and companies.

Background: What is framing?

Framing refers to the “framing” of information in a specific meaningful environment, which can influence the perception and decisions of the recipient. This phenomenon helps us to cope with the daily flood of information by allowing us to emphasize certain information and ignore others.

Content creators & media use framing on a daily basis by promoting certain interpretations and evaluations by selecting and emphasizing selected aspects of reality. Examples of framing range from the choice of words to the portrayal of public figures in different lights. Greta Thunberg, for example, is described on the one hand as the heroic and selfless fighter on behalf of the environment who founded Fridays for Future, while on the other hand she is a pitiable teenager who is controlled by her parents like a puppet and instrumentalized for political purposes.

Another example shows the negative connotation of the choice of words when talking about refugees in the media. The metaphor of masses of people is often used here: Refugee stream, refugee wave, etc. In contrast, the political discourse on the changing climate uses the terms “climate change”, “climate protection” or “global warming”, which tends to trivialize the threat.

In media such as newspapers, television, the internet and social media, framing influences how news is presented, which aspects of an event are emphasized and how viewers should interpret what is happening. Media can promote certain interpretations through the selection of topics, the way they are reported and through linguistic nuances.

Framing is used in advertising to present products or services in the most positive light possible and to influence purchasing decisions.



Politicians and political organizations use framing to reinforce their messages, weaken opponents and shape public opinion:

Framing is used strategically to give a positive connotation to certain ideas or laws. Although framing is unavoidable - we can't not frame - media professionals are expected to promote a diversity of frames and be transparent with them in order to strengthen people's media literacy. Framing becomes questionable when it is deliberately used for manipulation and/or political propaganda.

Example 1: Framing in Text

Lina Mertens – The voice of a generation in the fight for the planet

Lina Mertens, a courageous young girl, has inspired the world with her passionate commitment to environmental protection. With her determined commitment and her ability to attract global attention, she has moved an entire generation and motivated them to take action. Lina shows us how powerful the voice of youth can be and calls us all to take responsibility for our planet. Her selfless actions and heroic efforts are a shining example of how each of us can make a difference. Lina Mertens fascinates not only with her determination, but also with her ability to unite people of all ages worldwide for the urgent cause of environmental protection.

Lina Mertens – The controversial voice of youth

Lina Mertens, the young environmental activist, divides public opinion. While many celebrate her as a heroine and role model for young people, others see her as a figure who polarizes and spreads inexperienced views among the public. Lina has managed to attract media attention and spark a debate about the role of youth in politics. Her methods, school strikes and demonstrations, have not only generated support, but also criticism and controversy. In a world searching for solutions to climate change, Lina is at the center of a storm of admiration and criticism, a living example of how young voices can shape the discussion.

Lina Mertens – The face of a manipulated movement

Lina Mertens is a symbol of youth environmental activism in the eyes of many, but behind the scenes there are concerns about the authenticity of her movement. Critics argue that Lina is less a driving force and more a figure controlled by media and political interests to promote specific agendas. This perspective paints a picture of a youth unwillingly thrust into the spotlight, embraced by a machinery that exploits her naivety to influence global environmental policy. Her speeches, though powerful and emotional, are seen by some as carefully orchestrated messages aimed at effecting political change that serves the interests of specific groups. This view questions the freedom and independence of Lina's activism and sheds a critical light on the complexity of relationships between media, politics and youth activists.

Example 2: Framing in pictures

In all three cases, the images created with AI show the same group of young people running on the beach. The different backgrounds create different perceptions and moods in the viewer. You can download the images in large format here: https://www.teachtoday.de/en/Project-idea_framing





Picture 1: Beach vacation



Picture 2: Running people in front of an erupting volcano



Bild 3: Party vibes in Mallorca

Example 3: Framing in audio

The short audio example for Europe shows how the same message changes with different voices and sounds. The “neutral” example was created with the AI. You can download all audio examples from the website: www.teachtoday.de/en/Project-idea_framing



Work sheet 4: Framing

Before beginning your own project: read, watch and listen to the examples.

1

Choose a format.

2

First of all, think about the topics you would like to work on and think about them:

- a. from which angle you can present the story (text)
- a. how to create the image differently in order to change the information in it (image)
- b. how an audio example can be changed by voice, background noises etc.

3

Discuss the ideas as a team and decide on a product.

4

Develop a script, a storyboard or a sketch.

5

Then implement the idea together:

- a. You can use Chat GPT for the story.
- b. For the picture you can use Copilot (Dalle), Dreamstudio (Stable Diffusion) or Midjourney, Fobizz.
- c. You can record an audio file with a tablet or an iPhone.

Notes:

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Work's title: Project idea: Framing as an example of disinformation

Name of the rights holder of the work: Teachtoday, eine Initiative der Deutschen Telekom

Author: Helliwood media & education

Assigning a work to a URL: <https://www.teachtoday.de/toolbox>

Format: Several formats

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Version: 1.0 | May 2024

