

INTRODUCTIONARY ARTICLE

COMMUNICATION COMMUNITY
IN THE PREFIGURATIVE WORLD

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world, communication goes far beyond the well-known traditional written or spoken forms. For today's digital users, these have become insufficient, as using them, they cannot express their thoughts fully. The youth that has developed its own language, has become more hermetic, but not because it rejects other generations. The reason is the inability of older generations to understand the new ways of communication. Seniors find it challenging to learn how to use new technologies and stay up to date with trends. Although young people are able to understand them, the older generation cannot keep up with the news and stays excluded. The lack of mutual understanding results in weaker bonds. Once again, it is possible to observe ICT as a contemporary key competence essential for an adequate, mutually comprehensible exchange of messages. The best way to connect two generations in this aspect is informal education, especially one focusing on intergenerational activities, which will not only reduce the exclusion of a social group such as seniors but will also let them to develop their critical thinking



skills, which in the age of the Internet are crucial. Bringing up both generations in two different 'normalities' does not make any of them inferior but simply different. Investing in education, the desire for self-development and learning about the culture of different generations will not only open people's minds but will also have a positive impact on the development of intergenerational solidarity and mutual understanding.

Keywords: communication, seniors, key competencies, community, intergenerational learning, languages, informal education

Communication competencies are crucial for the functioning and development of human beings at any age. We can find them in many taxonomies of key competencies, but the significance of communication competencies goes far beyond these classifications and cannot be overestimated in today's world (EAEA, 2006). Without communication competencies – which are the basis for the development of the other key competencies – the others become irrelevant or even useless. The development of modern civilisation, based on the processor, the Internet and communication networks, sets an additional value on them. Technology without competencies becomes a bunch of unused, useless, rusting tools (Ostrowicki, 2006; Stranovská et al., 2018).

Language is also a transmitter of values and a tool for cognition. It is, therefore, a tool for building community, as bonds are formed where similar understandings of reality and similar aspirations emerge in different people. In language, we also ultimately find a reflection of the values of the people who use that language (Everett, 2018; Gadušová et al., 2021).

Thus, language and communication are becoming important elements in the construction of collective identities. With efficient communication, a community will be more cohesive and ultimately stronger than a community mired in the chaos of misunderstandings, arguments and contradictions (Judák, Akimjak et al., 2022; Králik & Török, 2016; Pavlíková, 2017). The second one has to reckon with the consequences in the form of deep crises and ultimate disintegration. In a modern world promoting individuality, this may seem insignificant, but it is important to realise that many basic (even key) goals, societies can still only achieve through collective effort.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION NETWORKS AND ENTANGLEMENT OF DISCOURSES

The separation of sender and receiver in time and space must be considered one of the watershed moments in the communication process. This was made possible by the invention of writing and the emergence and development of the Internet “only” increased the possibilities of mediated communication (Castells, 2009).

The development of communication networks between the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has made communication more varied and in some ways more flattened, simplified, faster and democratic (Crystal, 2006). Flattening should be understood as the co-occurrence of discourses without an imposing or imposed narrative dominating the others. In the virtual world, we are confronted with a multiplicity of diversified messages and discourses, which sometimes additionally open a dialogue with each other through hyperlinks and sometimes even contradict or ignore each other. Freedom of speech (as well as freedom itself) creates many opportunities, e.g. for involvement, participation, decision-making, influence on reality. At the same time, the basic dangers that come with it are the chaos and the progressive mutual ignorance of multiple, confused and unsynchronised discourses.

The decomposition of message statuses has inevitably had to be associated with the undermining of authorities, which has ultimately led to widespread confusion in the world of media coverage. On the one hand, there is a demythologisation, a knocking off of the pedestal, a stripping away of the boundless devotion to authorities of all kinds, while on the other hand, the lack of authorities leads the common man to crossroads without signposts. If different truths opposing each other exist "in the same" space (in this case, digital), which of them is the right one (Krotoski, 2013)?

Previously, the right paths were shown by authorities, who now are missing or suspected of pursuing their own hidden goals and manipulation. In this situation, those discourses and messages that are stronger or appear to be more attractive gain the upper hand. The slogan of "out of the box" thinking takes on a new meaning. Critical thinking is equated with thinking out of the box.

Thinking outside the box, which is the basis of criticism and intellectual maturation for innovation, without the support of authority able to correct erroneous thinking, leads astray. At best, we wander for a long time – the longer the more complex the problems we tackle. At worst – we fall into the intellectual traps of all sorts of prestidigitators, miscreants and real fraudsters who try to present themselves as new authorities for the resistance community.

Does this mean that we should not give in to doubt and restore authority? Therefore, once again, the old Confucian principle that knowledge without thinking is useless and thinking without knowledge is dangerous comes true. The equalization of discourses on the web results in a hit on the most intellectually poor, who have not received an appropriate education (lack of knowledge) or the educational system has not developed in them the key competence of a critical approach, rationality and inquisitiveness (lack of thinking). It can be said that the most prone to seduction become the ignorants or the thoughtless (Radulović et al., 2022). The latter follow new authorities that seem overly attractive and gain power over minds, like the hubristic bagpiper of Hamelin. The former succumb the Dunning-Kru-

ger effect, becoming cannon fodder for all sorts of tinfoil hats, flat-earthers, reptilians, anti-vaxxers (Keyes, 2004).

Appeals to governments to invest in education systems are like wasting one's breath. We cannot count too much on the authorities to come to their senses and start investing in education. This is especially true when cynical people come to power who put the immediate political interest of the party above the public good. Investing in education, just as in health care, science or generally public services, requires appropriate moral competence, in the form of putting the interests of the national community above those of narrower social groups. Furthermore, well-educated citizens (with knowledge and thinking) are a natural threat to social troublemakers, populists and all sorts of cranks. The authorities will have not much use for such people, as they will not be easily influenced by social engineering or political manipulation (Reykowski, 2020).

When you cannot rely on power-obsessed, cynical politicians, you have to start with yourself and your immediate environment, i.e. with informal education. This is done primarily through communication. Falsified messages will not help build bridges of understanding between communities, but there are mechanisms that can assist us in informal education and the promotion of rationality. Grassroots movements and building social capital on informal groups, including the use of intergenerational solidarity, have always been such a proven way. The problem is the low level of social capital in countries where radicals or political crooks come to power (Lasinska, 2013).

DIGITAL AND GENERATIONAL LANGUAGE CONFUSION

The media must attract attention in order to exist. The ones who are not interested will remain "distracted" (McLuchan, 2001). They will not be aware of the content of the messages at all. Media beyond the interest of the public may just not exist. Meanwhile, nothing attracts an audience like a sensation. In order to achieve this, it is sometimes necessary to provide "tall" information. Properly prepared, erroneous or simply manipulated news is duplicated, somewhat like a deaf phone call, and begins to live its own life. Without any authority, it is difficult to separate the false from the true, the fake news from the report. In a networked world, it is above all the most colourful pundits who attract the attention of the crowds and create themselves into authorities (Tkáčová, Al-Abisová et al., 2021).

Messages that are legitimate and disenchanting can seem dull and "pedagogised". After all, the pursuit of pleasure is the primary motive for many audiences to interact with the media. Following the thought of Jose Ortega y Gasset (1930), Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz or even the concepts of the Frankfurt School, it is worth being cautious about media messages of any kind. What astonishes and shocks will naturally attract the attention of the

masses. What is complex, sophisticated and demanding –needs people with the right preparation, because only such people are able to show patience and find pleasure in the cognitive effort. In order to read cultural codes properly, one needs to know them well. One needs to have preparation in the form of an appropriate media education, or to challenge oneself cognitively and exceed one's limitations, and for this one appropriately developed hubristic needs and cognitive curiosity are needed (Kozielecki, 2000).

The diversity of discourses, as well as the intellectual challenge in its very content and form, can itself be a major obstacle. Frequently, the very form of the message, the language, the specifically worded message put us off from further exploration. We then slide along the surface of meanings. We are afraid to look further because the title itself is clearly uninteresting or we fear that the content will not be understood. It is a waste of time to read in a language that remains incomprehensible. Titles are often misleading - they create sensations and controversies that turn out to be completely unjustified. Often, after reading an article, it can be found that the content of the text implies the opposite of the title, which was intended to encourage reading. Often, after reading an article, it can be found that the content of the text implies the opposite of the title, which was intended to encourage reading. This is a trap for non-media-savvy readers who after reading the titles try to justify their position in discussions. This is especially dangerous when there is a combination of a lack of media education and underdevelopment of critical thinking.

Another challenge is posed by the idiolects of the ascending generations, especially youth and young adults. The language of seniors and the middle generation does not pose much of a problem for other generations, as it is based on a common vocabulary and generally accepted norms. The trade languages may be an exception, but, similarly to dialects, they have a limited range and their use is basically only within specific, well-defined groups, for whom the use of a dialect, idiolect or trade language is also part of group identity building (Tkáčová, Pavliková et al., 2021).

Considering the communication behaviour of those born into the digital world, there is a gap between young people and older generations in the use of communication patterns and language.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION TURNOUT OF GENERATIONS

The different approaches to language and culture are the result of the influence of many causes at the same time. Although some of them are beyond our control, it is worth becoming aware of their significance so that we can at least prepare ourselves for the inevitable consequences of functioning in a complex communicative reality.

Above all, it is crucial to realise that older generations in a prefigurative/fast change/ fourth wave culture are at a distinct disadvantage in

comparison to younger generations. According to Margaret Mead's concept (1970), rapid change, characteristic of rapidly developing civilisations, pushes seniors to the margins of social life. As time goes by, older people face the danger of being marginalised so significantly that their physical existence is threatened (Murgaš et al., 2022). They play a diminishing role in society, cease to shine with wisdom, have difficulty using modern technologies and become a symbol of stagnation and a passing world for younger generations. Their role may even be burdened with negative stereotypes: loss of health, uselessness, parasitism (as recipients of social benefits), the ballast of the health care system (Marcinkiewicz, 2016).

In many developed countries where awareness of the problem is emerging, there are attempts to overcome negative stereotypes. This is done through:

- social advertisements to draw attention to the problem of marginalisation of seniors;
- activities of non-governmental organisations that support the social welfare system;
- informal education (at third-age universities, cultural centres, art centres, senior clubs).

However, it seems that there is still a lack of vision, strategies to deal with the problem of marginalisation of seniors and, above all, adequate system solutions at the level of state structures, i.e. an adequate senior citizens policy. However, it seems that there is still a lack of vision, of strategies to deal with the problem of marginalisation of seniors and, above all, of adequate systemic solutions at the level of state structures, i.e. an adequate senior policy. It is as if politicians are not aware that solving the problem of marginalisation of seniors is first and foremost the state's duty towards its citizens and has a deeply humanistic dimension, but should also be decided by practical reasons. Marginalisation is the loss of knowledge and experience of older people who, due to their age, have many developed game plan that are timeless and universal.

Adolescents, on the other hand, find themselves perfectly at home in mediated communication. Technology is becoming, according to the thought of Marshal McLuhan, a message in itself. What is a barrier for older people - the use of smartphones, memes, TicTok, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram or emoticons - for the younger generation is becoming as natural as breathing. New technologies enable the use of new means of expression to reveal the same emotions as before. However, the new form is already illegible to older generations. To understand it properly, they would have to learn it anew.

Young people are "born with a keyboard in their hand". Their everyday life is closely linked to mediated communication. Therefore, the fact (which, incidentally, also inspires many memes) that they spend a large part of their lives in front of a monitor should not be surprising. And this,

in turn, means that over time the possibilities and limitations of technology naturally (sic!) give rise to the creation of a new language.

Similarly to ordinary language, both sender and receiver need to use a common code so that the communication process can take place at even a basic level. On the other hand, in order to read the message properly, with nuances, contexts, properly deciphered presuppositions, implicatures and word games a very good cultural background is needed. This means deep immersion of sender and receiver in a common world of values, norms and acceptance of certain patterns of linguistic expression. Young people, who create their own idiolect, operate with a specific set of memes referring to their common cultural background, become an exclusive, hermetic group, which can only be entered through a community of experiences and usus. The meme, which is a screenshot from one of the films in which Leonardo DiCaprio raises a glass of champagne towards the viewer, may arouse weariness and disgust in representatives of the older (even well-educated) generation. For representatives of the younger generation, it is a normal expression, something that can only be adequately expressed with this image. Those who use emoticons and memes know well what they are talking about. Sometimes it takes a little longer to formulate a message online because we lack the right meme (or emoticon) to convey the nuances of a statement.

SUMMARY

In such a situation, how is dialogue between the generations possible? It seems that the 60+ generation and the generation of digital teenagers are unable to communicate, stuck in different experiences, using different means of expression.

What can unite different backgrounds and generations is a deep desire to communicate in the Buberian sense. We often come at the communication process with a whole range of unjustified implications and presuppositions. In intergenerational contact, which appears when “distant” ephemeral generations meet, this problem is particularly relevant. The chance to get rid of stereotypes and verify perceptions will exist when, above all, we have more willingness to verify them than to confirm them. People should therefore be taught first and foremost how to get rid of the natural desire to confirm hidden hypotheses in intergenerational contact. This can be best done by developing key competences in the form of communication skills and critical thinking, but also by organising ‘opportunities’ for intergenerational meetings.

It seems essential to be provided with knowledge about the culture of the generations (Judák, Hlad et al., 2022; Rychnová et al., 2022). Contemporary history will certainly make it possible to understand the experiences and values of the world in which the oldest generations lived and the

generations that directly influenced them, as the experience of parents and grandparents must have indirectly shaped the ascending generations of the time (Kondrla et al., 2022).

Whereas, in order to understand younger generations, it is necessary to gain an insight into their communication patterns and thus reach their norms, values, perceptions, perspectives. Rejection because of the mentioned earlier “unsightliness” is the worst possible strategy. This is not so different from the approach of the conceited ignorant, for whom subjective aesthetic categories become the basis of judgement. It involves the necessity to make a cognitive effort, insight into the culture and humility. A desire for new cultural experiences and humility characterise open minds and will depend on whether or not seniors age successfully (which is another reason to care for seniors and to shape senior citizens policy appropriately). This cognitive effort diminishes naturally with age- learning new things is increasingly difficult, as is memorising. The cooperation of the younger generations is therefore even more necessary. This will result in a generationally strengthened cultural capital, based on strong intergenerational relationships and intergenerational solidarity.

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