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CHARACTERISTICS OF CYBERSOCIALIZATION OF THE DIGITAL GENERATION

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Abstract. The phenomenon of cyber-socialization of the digital generation drew researchers' attention in the late twentieth followed by another "wave" of information and technological progress. It was established that a dramatic change in the amount of information, ways of its transmission and storage, made it possible to move to a qualitatively new stage of evolution – cyberevolution which generated a new demand for new needs, motivation, goals, attitudes in a person, as well as new forms of interaction and activities directly related to the development of Internet technologies. Nowadays, the Internet is not only a new technology that has no spatial boundaries and time frame. It's a dynamic sector of cyberspace, which is an accelerant for the appearance of new forms of life, new fundamental changes in social structures in the society. At the same time, the Internet is a specific factor in the sociocultural development of the younger generation – personal socialization in cyberspace. Through the description of various opportunities and threats of the world wide web, the author of the article reveals the significant psychological peculiarities and aspects of digital generation mentality: active behavior in cyberspace; creation of artificial reality; preference for gamified communications and computer games; fragmentation and a lack of overall context in consciousness.

Keywords: Internet technologies, information revolution, cyberspace, cybersocialization, clip thinking, digital generation.

ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА КИБЕРСОЦИАЛИЗАЦИИ ЦИФРОВОГО ПОКОЛЕНИЯ

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Аннотация. Феномен киберсоциализации цифрового поколения обратил на себя пристальное внимание исследователей в конце двадцатого века после очередной «волны» информационно-технологического прогресса. Установлено, что резкое изменение объемов информации, способов ее трансляции и хранения, позволило перейти человечеству на качественно новый этап эволюции – киберэволюцию, в ходе которой у личности появились новые потребности, мотивы, цели, установки, а также новые формы взаимодействия, виды деятельности, непосредственно связанные с развитием интернет-технологий. Сегодня Интернет – это не только новая технология, которая не имеет пространственных границ и временных рамок. Это активно развивающийся сектор киберпространства, являющийся катализатором появления новых форм бытия, новых кардинальных изменений социальных структур в обществе. При этом Интернет представляет собой специфический фактор социокультурного развития подрастающего поколения – социализация личности в киберпространстве. В статье через описание различных возможностей и рисков всемирной глобальной сети Интернет, автор раскрывает существенные психологические черты и особенности мышления цифрового поколения: активное поведение в киберпространстве; конструирование искусственной реальности; предпочтение геймифицированным сообщениям, компьютерным играм; фрагментарность, отсутствие общего контекста в сознании.

Ключевые слова: интернет-технологии, информационная революция, киберпространство, киберсоциализация, киберэволюция, клиповое мышление, цифровое поколение.

In recent decades, the "wave" of information and technological progress has increased rapidly, and it's a sign of another information revolution.

As a rule, two main approaches are used in the analysis of the concept of "information revolution". The first one is the actual. It indicates that "information revolution" means only the latest scientific and technological revolution, which brought fundamental changes of the society associated with the development of digital technologies. The second one is chronological, related to the number of information revolutions that mankind has faced.

The main idea of chronological classification of the information revolution was proposed by the economist P. Drucker under which such first revolution in the history of mankind resulted from the invention of written language, the second one – from the book's appearance; and the third one from a series of inventions: telegraph, telephone, radio, television. The advent of the computer marked the beginning of the fourth revolution - modern information and technology revolution [1].

Philosopher A. I. Rakitov defined five information revolutions in the history of mankind. According to the author, the first information revolution in the history of mankind was associated with language introduction, the development of oral speech. The second information revolution was connected with the invention of written language. The invention of printing caused the third information revolution. The fourth information revolution aimed at electrical equipment usage

for high-speed and mass distribution of all kinds of information and knowledge. And the fifth information revolution was associated with the creation of high-speed computing devices – computers and transcontinental communication networks [2].

Meanwhile, futurologist O. Toffler identified three "waves" in the development of the society: agricultural (conversion to farming), industrial (transition to classical capitalism) and information (transition to the society based on knowledge) [3]. D. Bell, a sociologist, the author of the theory of postindustrial society, used the division of three information revolutions in his works. According to his definition, the information society describes the specific nature of the post-industrial stage of human development, in which information and its access becomes the basis for social structure identification [4, p. 330].

It is important to note that in the 1980s, some researchers (T. Maurice-Suzuki, D. Robertson, I. Hayashi), suggested that the historical process is a complex information and cultural phenomenon. For example, D. Robertson introduced information revolutions with the help of qualitative and quantitative parameters, namely, quantitative standards of mathematical theory of information. Taking into account the interdependence of civilizational and informational processes, the scientist postulated that "civilization is information", and also determined the levels of information measurement at different stages of social development [5].

For our part, we believe that the dramatic change in

the amount of information available to the active part of the society, ways of its transmission and storage, made it possible to move to a qualitatively new stage of evolution – cyberevolution, directly related to the development of the world wide web. Nowadays, the Internet is not only a new technology that has no spatial boundaries and time frame. It is also a new information space, and for many people – the environment of their daily lives. The modern Internet is characterized by numerous and diverse resources and services: websites, search engines, online TV, Internet radio, blogosphere, social networks, Internet environments, e-mail, chat rooms, online stores, online games, electronic payment systems, Internet advertising, etc.

Currently, the Internet is a dynamic sector of cyberspace, which is an accelerant for the appearance of new forms of life, new fundamental changes in social structures of the society. At the same time, the Internet is a specific factor in the sociocultural development of the younger generation.

Numerous socio-pedagogical and psychological researches of S. Bondarenko, M. S. Bitukova, V. V. Zhilkina, O. A. Maksimova, A. V. Mudrik, V. A. Pleshakov, J. Really, J. Palfrey and K. Gasser, J. Tapscott and E. Williams, etc. are dedicated to the study of socialization peculiarities in cyberspace of digital generation [6; 7; 8; 11; 12; 13].

The concept of “cybersocialization” was introduced by V. A. Pleshakov at the beginning of 21st century. Cybersocialization means “local process of qualitative changes of personal consciousness structure, resulting from human socialization in cyberspace, virtual and motivating Internet environment, affecting the process of communication with virtual agents of socialization occurring on the Internet (primarily in the process of e-mail correspondence, forums, chats, blogs, teleconferencing, and online games)” [6].

New needs, motivation, interests, goals, attitudes appear in a person in the process of cybersocialization, as well as new forms of interaction, activities directly related to cyberspace. A. V. Mudrik has written the following on this subject: “Internet Resources are new cultural means influencing not only the vital activities of present-day people but also personality formation and his/her higher mental functions” [7, p. 78].

A fundamentally new artificial digital environment was created due to wide distribution of the Internet. Along with the traditional environment of real, natural social relations, a parallel “digital environment” is formed, and it’s impossible to imagine our modern life without it. In this regard, S. V. Bondarenko understands cybersocialization as the process of an individual’s entry into the information society through its adaptation to the environment, as well as the assimilation of experience, values and roles for successful functioning in this society [8].

The generation whose active socialization takes place in the digital environment, is characterized as the “digital generation” (otherwise they are called as “Z” generation, millennial or network generation, “Next” generation).

Consider the most significant psychological features, thinking peculiarities of the digital generation. Digital generation differs from other previous generations by more active behavior in cyberspace. Such terms as “new technologies” or “future technologies” that were used by previous generations, are considered to be present for “Z” generation. The Internet ranks first as a source of meaningful information, a way of reality understanding for the digital generation. As noted by J. Tapscott and E. Williams, “instead of passively absorbing the products of mass culture, the members of networked generation spend time searching, reading, researching, identifying, cooperating and organizing (anything from MP3 music files to protest action). The Internet makes life a constant mass cooperation that digital generation is crazy about. They cannot imagine their life where citizens do not have any tools for critical interpretation, exchanging their points of views, clarifying, identifying or unmasking deceit. If their parents have been passive recipients of information,

young people are active creators of media content and feel passionately about interaction” [9, p. 73].

Video games play an important role in digital generation’s lives. A computer game for digital generation is a special virtual world where they feel like heroes capable of doing much of what is forbidden in real world. Like any drug, the virtual world creates vivid and attractive images, involving a person into cyberspace. Thanks to the constructed reality, a person is able to escape from the daily routine and plunge into a virtual world where it’s possible to live out your dreams and illusions into reality.

Digital generation represents lazy visual learners. They understand the image better than the words. They are brought up surrounded by demotivators, infographics and peers’ photos. They don’t remember their friends’ phone numbers. They hardly ever use the landline. They prefer gamified messages rather than telephone conversations. In addition, new generation does not like to deal with text messages which are not understood as letters in their traditional sense. As V. I. Kurbatov writes: “It’s a certain signature, generally accepted in the format of information interaction; it isn’t mentality in its traditional sense, but rather some drafts of thought with various references to texts or hypertext. Virtual thinking is not only textual, it is also hypertext <...>. Hypertext is a new way of thinking in language reflection. Hypertext is subject to numerous transformations, movement, and its content interpretation in different ways. Hyperlinks give an opportunity to structure information in “pieces” which are connected to each other and on the other hand are relatively independent” [10, p. 69-70].

The lack of a common context in digital generation’s minds does not allow them to get the whole pattern here of the world. The new generation’s mentality is fragmentary and the judgments are superficial. Their consciousness is structured in such a way to process information in small pieces, so-called “clip thinking” – the process of reflection for many and varied properties of objects without considering the relations between them, characterized by the fragmentation of the information flow, the full diversity and high rate of incoming information with frequent switches between certain parts and fragments of information.

Nowadays the epithet “clip thinking” is becoming more negative. Despite the fact that the information is given in small doses, individual fragments, it is generally a kaleidoscope of alternating information and it’s more difficult to understand, systematize and realize it. Recently, there have been many ideas of clip thinking as a reply to an increased amount of information. So, from Kutuzov’s point of view, “a person with clip thinking isn’t able to analyze, identify causality, his consciousness is formed by parts that are not connected to each other. Deep thought process is replaced by visual stimuli, constantly changing each other, like switching remote television channels. Such consciousness prefers bright visual images to understanding the text” [11].

Thus, clip thinking can be called simplified, because it does not allow a person to be holistic, deep in his personal thinking. This thinking is formed as a skill to quickly surfing different sites, clips – a kind of surfing in cyberspace. The purpose of such surfing is not filtering and understanding information, but getting new information. In turn, the understanding of new information in cyberspace isn’t deep but is done superficially. The human brain, to a certain extent, is in an oppressed state. And only those brain areas that are responsible for short-term memory, making quick decisions are involved in this process. In another way, this phenomenon is called “digital dementia” – a violation of brain functions; the loss of a person’s ability to think systematically.

Currently, the younger generation began losing the need to learn reading, writing, thinking independently, formulating their position, expressing their own opinion. It’s possible to hear such phrase from teenagers: “I do not know how to retell this or that event or phenomenon. I can’t remember messages, they are all stored in digital memory and the like...”. So, the Internet should not be the only significant

source of information for the younger generation, but only a way to examine the reality. It is very important to define the goals of information technologies usage, to regulate the time of interaction of the younger generation with virtual reality, to carry out practical actions to transform the information received for effective interaction with our reality.

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