

INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

PROBLEMI MEĐUGENERACIJSKE KOMUNIKACIJE ZBOG UTJECAJA DRUŠTVENIH MREŽA

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Abstract

Users of social networks have developed a communication that connects them, but at the same time separates them from other age groups. The frequent use of, primarily, the English language and abbreviations that are common with the younger population, affects the quality of communication. The article will, on the basis of the research, try to prove that there is the gap between younger and older age groups due to the use of foreign words and abbreviations that have had, as a result of a weaker impact of globalization and the subsequent abstraction of globalization, touched the older age groups to a lesser degree. The general hypothesis is: Older and younger age groups have difficulties in communication with each other due to the influence of social networks. The method of research is a survey. The survey will examine both age groups. This article will try to highlight the problem of losing the quality of communication and its original intent, that is, mutual understanding. Understanding is made more difficult because of the special features of communication through social networks which are the result of technological advances.

Introduction

Any communication between people starts with the idea of exchanging views, information and ideas. If we consider the man as the Aristotelian zoon politikon then this is precisely what directs us towards communication because each co-existence of different individuals is impossible without mutual focus of one person to another. The man can not be a

Sažetak

Korisnici društvenih mreža razvili su komunikaciju koja ih međusobno povezuje, ali ih odvaja od ostalih dobnih skupina. Često korištenje, prvenstveno, engleskog jezika i skraćenica koje su uobičajene među mlađom populacijom utječu na kvalitetu komunikacije.

U članku će se na temelju rezultata istraživanja pokušati dokazati jaz između mlađih i starijih dobnih skupina uslijed korištenja stranih riječi i skraćenica koje su, zbog manjeg utjecaja i kasnijeg zahvaćanja globalizacijom, manje dotaknule starije dobne skupine. Generalna hipoteza istraživanja je: starije i mlađe dobne skupine međusobno otežano komuniciraju zbog utjecaja društvenih mreža. Metoda istraživanja je anketa. Anketom će se ispitati obje dobne skupine.

Članak će pokušati osvijetliti problem gubljenja kvalitete komunikacije i njezine prvotne namjene, a to je međusobno razumijevanje. Ono je otežano zbog specifičnosti komunikacije putem društvenih mreža koje su posljedica razvoja tehnologije.

member of society if he or she do not accept these conditions. There are numerous and various reasons that create interference in communication. Examples of difficult communication can be found between different social groups within institutions, in everyday life among family members, that is, in all aspects of social life and in particular, the complicated communication between various groups of people who

differ in biological and cultural features such as gender, age, nationality, religion or regional affiliation. For tolerance between these groups it is essential for the communication to bridge that gap of diversity. The society is structured in countless ways, and an individual is sometimes lost within different relationships. Technique and technology are extremely important in human life. The basic purpose of development and progress of technology is to facilitate human life. Under the influence of technology and globalization, the physical barriers between people disappear, distances vanish and the world seems smaller. However, what happens when different forms of communication, influenced by the development of technology, lose their original purpose and create more barriers between people? Do all the modern means of communication become the reason people are getting more distant? The frequent use of the English language and common abbreviations with the younger population affects the quality of communication. This mode of communication is starting to separate younger and older age groups and create problems in understanding. The article will try to prove, on the basis of the findings, that there is the gap between younger and older age groups due to the use of foreign words and abbreviations by which, as a result of weaker and delayed impact of globalization, the older age groups were influenced to a lesser degree.

The general hypothesis is: Older and younger age groups have difficulties in communication with each other due to the influence of social networks. Communication is a multi-faceted process, which can develop, cease to develop or stop completely /1/. Various media can upgrade or downgrade the communication. Communication becomes specially difficult if all groups do not accept all means of communication, particularly modern forms such as the Internet and communication through social networks. Communication science is trying to raise awareness of the process of communication and thus penetrate the very essence of human communication to make it more efficient /2/. Will communication be more effective if its participants use the same means of communication? Foreign languages, especially English, are becoming a necessity nowadays. It is taken for granted that each person must be able to use it to communicate with other people. What if this is not the case? What about people who, before globalization affected the world ("westernization" referring first of all, to the USA) were left out of the

groups using the English language? It is well known that at the times of ex- Yugoslavia there was a period when in the majority of schools Russian language was taught). How will this group today, mostly elder citizens, communicate globally when the "official" language of the world is English?

Social networks and media as part of the culture

Culture is a system of learned behavior patterns, including technology as well. Contemporary culture presupposes the media as an important part. Media convey cultural values. Culture and the media refer to different levels and meet in different ways. These relations are not one- way or simple: their complex nature depends primarily on the status and complexity of each of the concepts and members and new situations which influence the relationship /3/. In addition to the traditional elements of culture, contemporary ones are as important, especially technology-mediated elements that have successfully infiltrated the culture, namely social networks. They are important in the life of young people and thus have become one of the determinants of culture. The medium is the mediator and the revelation of something /4/. The media are the basic tools of communication in modern times. They unite people and erase the differences. Literacy and machinery have developed aggressiveness, the desire for rectilinear travel towards the goal, efficiently and a global information system is now helping them to become a global trend /5/. Electrically tight, the globe is nothing more than a village. Thanks to the electric media all social groups are now linked /6/. As the Internet and social networks are seen as man's technological extensions it is almost impossible to stay out of it. The man is surrounded by various machines and devices, and becomes their slave. New ways of communication especially the Internet are primarily adopted by younger social groups, and a significant number of older people. The products of modern technology are not in themselves neither good nor bad, their use is essential. If social networks are treated as extensions of the man that he will facilitate communication and understanding with other people around the world, then their use is positive and morally unquestionable. If they are treated as a medium which separates social groups from one another as well as something that serves the unilateral disclosure of private data (for all the more unusual reasons) we want everyone to see, then we must introduce the dimension of morally questionable. New forms of communication

have become available to older age groups. If we try to engage the older age groups in new ways of communication, it certainly will not be achieved without problems. Development of technology has lost its original purpose and it has become a barrier between people and their communication. The number of users of social networks increases, but emphasis is more on "selfbroadcasting", that is, the communication becomes one-way because it is enough for an individual to publish their data and photos online.

The problem of usage of foreign languages

Language is a communication system and as such is an essential element of cultural identity. It consists of words and their forms. One of the fundamental function of language is understanding between people. Languages change over time due to various factors. Today they are endangered because of globalization that is changing them slowly and stealthily. As it has become almost an imperative for an individual to speak at least two foreign languages, native language is being marginalized. Primary schoolpupils are faced with a foreign language at almost the same time when they begin to systematically study their native language. It is undoubtedly true that their adjustment to the modern way of life will be much easier, the question of marginalization of their native language still remains. If a language is viewed as one of the basic features of culture and cultural identity, then the fear of losing the wealth of the native language is quite justified. The society changes the language and shapes it according to different influences so it can be seen as a fragile reality. What is the choice of each individual is how will he use the language, that is, how will he speak. If an individual is given almost absolute freedom in the use of a word, in sentence formation, why is this rational, modern man giving that up? Why does he voluntarily replace expressions of his language with the foreign phrases? Why is it not enough to say that something is "all right", but it has to be "ok"? Perhaps, in the context of the influence of foreign languages, especially English, puritanism as an idea is not to be condemd. It must be recognized that Croatian has adopted and embraced loan words, foreign words and similar expressions from all the languages that have historically been in contact with it. Can the influence of globalization, and through it the English language, be seen as historic? Maybe, if the globalization process is longer if, for example, will last as long as the Turkish rule over Croatia. Croatian language has

three dialects, which make it richer and more varied. Almost every citizen, every day, uses dialectal expressions and words. Why do we then prefer to use words and phrases from foreign languages? So that we are in tune with our time? So that we can fit in this modern world, a world of "blogs" and social networks? All this seems to be more the case with the younger population of people who have been directed towards foreign languages from an early age. It seems that the older age groups are less affected by all these processes, maybe because of different political ideologies with which they lived. The world is open, connected, the boundaries of national states in a globalized world are becoming less important. The opening of the world, advances in technology and communication capabilities, will lead to changes in culture, language, way of life. The question is whether these changes will be positive or negative.

Abbreviations become mass culture

The use of abbreviations originating from the English language is very common with the younger population. These abbreviations are mostly created if you take the first letters of a phrase or a term if the phrase is complex. For example, the phrase "Oh my God" (Oh my God-when something unpleasant surprises you) becomes OMG, the phrase "Laughing out loud" becomes LOL (if something is really funny), the phrase "What is the point" becomes WTP (when we ask what is the purpose of doing something), the phrase "Roll on the floor" becomes ROFL (when something is hilariously funny), the phrase "For your information" becomes FYI (when we want to inform someone about something). Many abbreviations of the same type are used by young people. We should not forget various abbreviations with an inappropriate content usually offensive terms which will not be included because of their inappropriateness. This type of communication, embraced mostly by young people who use abbreviations and offensive terms, is often a result of communication via social networking sites because they do not need to waste time and space in full- phrase messaging. So, the abbreviations are becoming very practical for young people. Various problems arising from this are associated with the proper use of spelling and punctuation rules and the like. True enough, problems with punctuation partly have the source in very popular SMS text messaging.

Globalization and communication by means of technology

There is hardly a person not affected by any level of globalization. Culture, politics and economics are the areas strongly reflecting globalization. When the new forces break the old structures down that is primarily a source of hope. What is usually called globalization, is one such force /7/. There was a flow of goods and communication between distant places before, but not to the extent and certainly not in such ways as today. Within the process of globalization, borders are lost. The boundaries have crashed, the boundaries of time and space. /8/. How long the globalization will last, remains a question. It may also leave behind the consequences which will not last so long. There is also the possibility of returning to national identity and native language as one of the determinants of this process. Within the process of globalization, we experience modernization. Modernization has affected us so greatly that we can not stay immune to different machines, devices and gadgets that surround us. Is it not normal to want thinner and lighter notebook PCs, mobile phones and similar? Is it not normal to communicate via e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, MSN when they are there? Everything is available to us and it would be unusual not to use them. We are as modern as the "gadgets" we use. We are as literate as the computers we use sophisticated. We are in tune with times if we use modern means of communication. And so it is abnormal if you do not have a profile on social networks. What, specifically, do you need it for? Perhaps to communicate with relatives in another village, city, country ... Or in the same village, city, state, except that somehow you do not have the will to leave your computer, your new best friend.

Effective communication

The society is an abstract ensemble of connections between individuals or communication system which consists of interdependent parts, and it presupposes the mutuality regulated by learned patterns of behavior. One of these patterns is certainly communication. In order for communication to be effective it must fulfill its primary purpose, that is achieve understanding between people, convey thoughts, opinions, ideas and information. Different age groups within society have different ways of communication; there has always been a certain lack of understanding between the generations because of the way of life, different values and a number of other differences.

Perhaps in today's Internet society this is even more visible. While we used to write letters and wait for an answer for days now we can send an electronic mail by a touch of our index finger and we do not need to wait for days to get the answer, we post something on social networks and other people immediately see that, all documented with photos more impressive than the text itself. Social networks are used by young people so that they themselves are news, instead of using them to get accurate news about everything that surrounds them, clearly, not by means of blogs and Wikipedia, where anyone can publish a lie and claim it was a verified information. Lack of critical consciousness transforms youth into a mass subject which can be abused in various ways, which can be dangerous and not at all harmless. The truth is what you create for yourself, objectively valid truth loses its importance and meaning. The goal of using social networks becomes not communication itself, but just "selfbroadcasting". In the end the slogan of a very popular social network "You tube" is "Broadcast Yourself". A large number of elderly people can not use means of modern communication and that, in a way, separates them from younger people. Younger people find social networks a very important part of their everyday life, while to most older people they are irrelevant. Time spent at the computer, for the young as well as the elderly, increases. When you are on line on a social network you feel more alive. When you proudly paste up pictures of your last drinking spree, everyone can see how good you felt and how much fun you had. The problem is that many young people do not come out to daylight from their darkened rooms and "Face" because they do not feel the need to do it.

Methods

Subjects

The study included 300 students and 50 teachers from Krapina High School. Of the total number of students (300), 142 girls and 158 boys were tested. Respondents from teachers group include teachers older than 40 years of age.

Instruments

The test which was administered was a questionnaire consisting of 17 questions. Most questions were multiple choice questions (according to the Likert-type scale: from "strongly disagree" to "agree completely").

Results

The study showed that 285 (95%) of students use social networks, and 15 (5%) do not use, out of which 54% consider them significant and very important. Only 3% of students consider them completely irrelevant. According to the assessment of students 87.45% of students use social networks and teachers estimated that 78.98% of students use social net-

works, while the percentage of students in testing is 95.00% (Table 1). According to teachers 42.85% of teachers use social networks, and an estimation of the students of teachers using social networks is 36.16%, while this percentage, according to the teachers, shows 42.00% (Table 1). Students often use social networks to communicate (52%), play games (18%) and for education (15%).

Table 1. Percentage of users of social networks of students and teachers of Krapina high school according to their estimates, as compared to the actual percentage of users from both groups (2011).

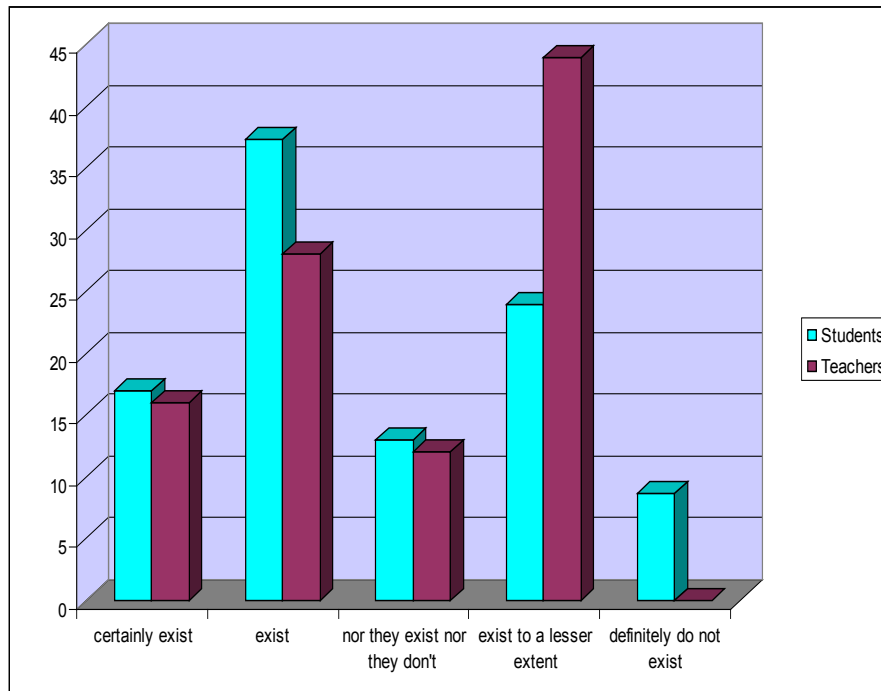
Students which use social networks			Teachers which use social networks		
Estimation of the students	Estimation of the teachers	Real percentage	Estimation of the students	Estimation of the teachers	Real percentage
87,45	78,98	95,00	36,13	42,85	42,00

On inquiry if there are problems in communicating with people older than 40 years due to the use of foreign words and abbreviations 78% of students responded that they exist to some extent, and only 9% that does not exist. On inquiry if there are problems in communicating with people high school age because of the use of foreign words and abbreviations 88% of teachers responded that they exist to

some extent, and no one teacher is not considers that they do not exist. Social networks benefit 21 teachers (42%), and by 29 of them (58%) they are not used. The importance of social networks, teachers evaluated as totally irrelevant (34%) and slightly significant (28%). Only 30% of teachers think that there are problems in communicating with people high school age because of the use of abbreviations and foreign language (Graph 3).

Table 2 - Assessment of students and teachers of Krapina high school related to the issues of communication between older and younger people due to the use of social networks (2011). - Information for students by grades, teachers' total

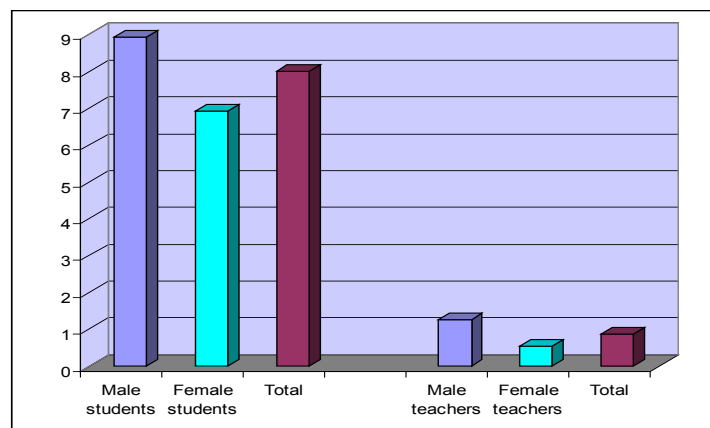
	Students										Teachers	
	1. raz	%	2. raz	%	3. raz	%	4. raz	%	Uk.	%	Uk.	%
certainly exist	15	17	12	15	16	21	8	15	51	17	8	16
exist	25	28	35	43	29	37	23	43	112	37	14	28
Nor they exist nor they don't	15	17	6	7	9	12	9	17	39	13	6	12
exist to a lesser extent	24	27	20	25	20	26	8	15	72	24	22	44
definitely do not exist	9	10	8	10	4	5	5	9	26	9	0	0
	88	100	81	100	78	100	53	100	300	100	50	100



Graph 1 - assessment of the existence problems of students and teachers of Krapina high school in communication between the older and younger people because of the influence of social networks (2011).

Most students (31%), communicate via social networks 1-5 hours a week, 19% of them 6-11 hours a week and 22% of them 12 - 20 hours a week while 21% communicates via social networks less than one hour a week. Of teachers who communicate via social networks 20% of them communicates less than 1

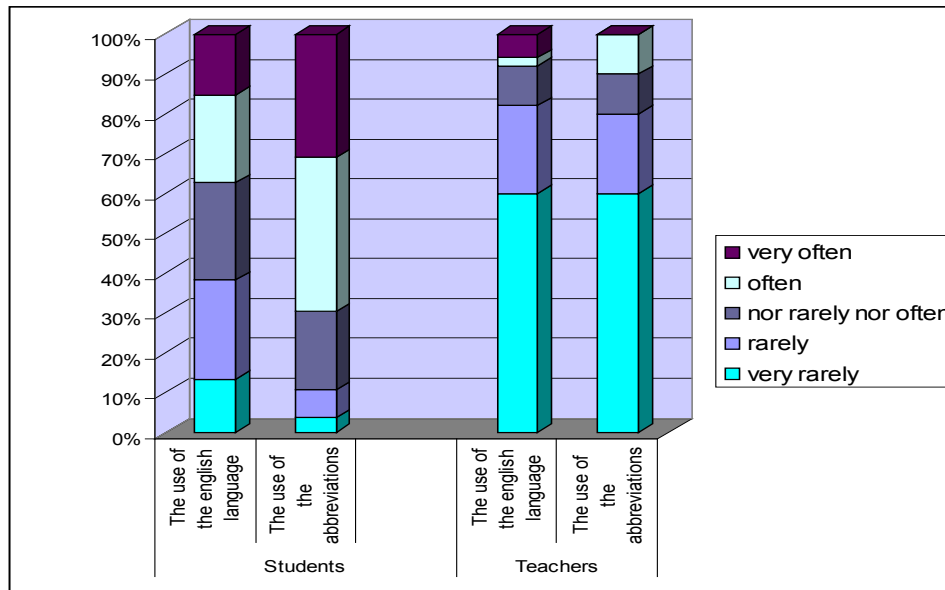
hour per week, 20% of one to 5 hours per week, 2% of them 6-11 hours per week, while 58% do not communicate via social networks. The study showed that a student spends an average of 7.997 hours per week communicating via social networks, a teacher of 0.89 hours per week (Graph 2.).



Graph 2 - Average time communications through social networks (the number of hours per week) for students and teachers in Secondary Schools Krapina (2011).

Abbreviations of the English language in communication via social networks are often used by 39% of the students, and often 31% of students, whereas English often uses 15% of the students, and often 22% (Graph 3.). Abbreviations of the English language in

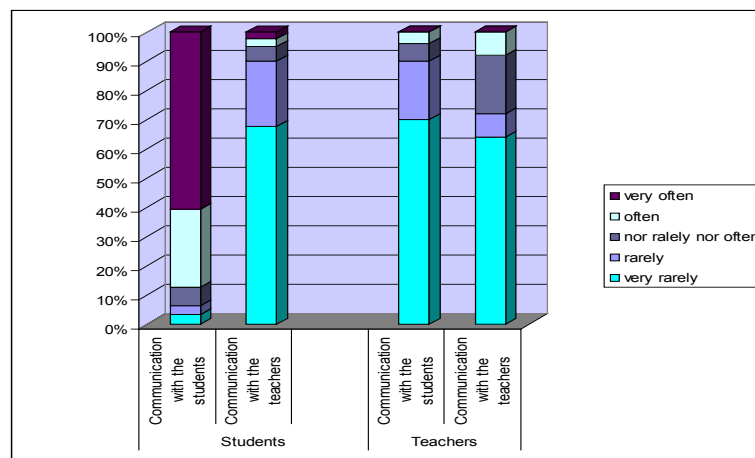
communication via social networks 12% of teachers use very often, and often 10%, while English language teachers use rarely (9%) and very rarely (11%) (graph 3.).



Graph 3. Frequency of use of English and abbreviations for communicating via social networks for students and teachers in Krapina High school (2011).

Students often use social networks to communicate with peers and friends (61%) while only 2% uses it for communicating with the elderly and teachers older than 40 years (Graph 4.). The largest percentage

of teachers uses social networks to communicate with students and younger people rarely or never (70%), but both are rarely used for communication with teachers and older people (64%) (Graph 4.).



Graph 4 - frequency of communication with students and teachers to students and teachers using social networks for students and teachers in Krapina high school (2011).

Discussion

Social networks have an important place in the lives of young people as is evident from the data obtained by research on students of Krapina high school. The probability that this percentage was roughly the same in the whole country is great. As students spend a lot of time sitting at the computer and communicating via social networks, their social contacts become associated exclusively with the computer. A large number of young people, with improved cell

phones, continuously have access to social networks . A large number of young people would rather communicate via social networks rather than physically get out and talk directly. It should be noted how their social networks are important in their life. Teachers are using social networks less frequently and they do not represent an important element in their lives. By comparing these two approaches we perceive a problem in communication between the elderly and youth. The youth mostly uses social networks to

communicate while members of the older age groups are using them for some form of education. "Self-broadcasting" becomes very important to young people - that is, to publish pictures where they were and what they were doing there, probably as a confirmation of identity, while in older age groups that becomes completely irrelevant. Older use social networks to communicate with distant relatives around the world, young people mostly use them to communicate with the same or similar age groups which they can see every day in school, cafes, sports and other activities. Number of friends on social networking sites often exceeds several hundred. However, these are not real friends, those are people you have allowed access to our images. Friendship is a process that involves spending a certain time with other people and some common activities. The importance of social networks in the lives of young people is becoming a worrying fact. Triviality of the issues that preoccupy the minds of young people is obvious. Thus, information or misinformation about the oatmeal consumed by their favorite singer, actor, and the like becomes more important than the actual socio-political events. The Internet is flooded with fake identities: fake bloggers, fake profiles, fake e-mail addresses, fake reviews, fake photos. Thus we get what Lewis Mumford called "a state of intellectual sluggishness and exhaustion that barely differs from the enormous ignorance" /9/. The issue of privacy becomes an issue in a world where man does not exist unless he has a profile on some of the social networks. Creating a profile is not important to older people. Young people, rather than a game or activity in the fresh air, choose 4 walls of their rooms and a virtual world where they can through the games and the like can ride the bike, car and so on. The disturbing fact is that in that way different activities such as games full of violence, pornography and social behavior totally unaccepted become available to them. Dependence on the Internet is becoming a disease of modern life. Using the abbreviation becomes a barrier in communication between the older and younger people because of problems in determining the meaning. Communication abbreviations become popular among young people over the last few years and is conditional on sending text messages and quick writing on the computer while the older generation do not use abbreviations because they are not used to.

Their adaptation to that is flowing slowly and with difficulty. The official way of communicating, for

example, in the workplace in official communications, where the precision and complete explicitness is important, abbreviations are not used. Communication problems due to the abbreviation detect younger and older, this percentage was 51% in young and 30% in the older group. Perhaps the difference in the percentage derived in part from the rebellion of young people who are prone to claim that they are not understood by the older or increased tolerance and attitudes of older age groups. Communicating with elderly people to young people is not a necessity, especially not through social networks. Older people remain outside the circle of the "networked". The average time young people spend communicating via social networks imposes a number of questions. How much time remains for any high school activities, assuming that sleeping takes about 8 hours, in school and on their way to and from school 8 hours? How much time is left if you spend 5 hours a day on social networks? How much time is left if you spend more? Let us add to that a certain number of hours spent watching television. What does the young man turn into? In the passive recipients deprived of physical activity and creativity. Creativity is expressed in the selection of photos that will look best on social networks and even setting up photos and posing for everything to be more attractive. Only 2% of students use social networks to communicate with the older that is data which proves the hypothesis that networks alienate one group from the other. If it is so easy to communicate with people of his own age by social networks, why is it so difficult to include in the elderly? All this suggests that the gap will further widen. The data collected shows that students more accurately assess the social habits of communication networks of their own age group, while to them it is difficult to estimate the same habits of their teachers. Time spent communicating via social networks only with younger leads to segregation by age group, which is a prerequisite for a deeper misunderstanding between different generations. The reasons stem from different living conditions, different value systems, rules, social skills and the like. To the elderly is the fact that young people spend so much time on social networks such as strange as it is surprising that the younger think elderly can live without them. Communication problems due to social networks exist, which are aware of both young and older. Older people often "blamed" the social network for the following communication problems: creating a false picture of the people and

the world, the dependence on the virtual, physical inactivity, excessive openness to intimacy, problems with spelling and grammar, lack of contacts based on open direct communication, false representation, possible misuse of information, alienation, loss of time. The students of third and fourth grades are critical to social networks and use them less. They cite problems almost identical to teachers: problems in verbal expression in live communication, problems with language and grammar, creation of a false identity, loss of time, lack of direct contacts, physical inactivity, not showing emotions, addiction to the virtual. Students of first and second classes are less critical, although they state most of the problems as well as students of third and fourth grade. However, most of them almost do not notice any problems and spend more time on social networks. Why 95% of young people every day for several hours uses social networks if they are aware of problems that occur because of their use? Do they want to fit into patterns of behavior imposed by modern society produced? Is it better to be involved in social networks and communicate with them, have hundreds of friends, rather than be excluded from the global culture mediated by social networks. Number of users of social networks is increasing day by day. Therefore we can only assume the further course of this process. Will this be a scenario where people will reject the long hours of sitting at the computer and chat with virtual friends and start over an open communication, or will it be a scenario where they will spend more time

with social networks that will create a completely socially deprived individuals, alienated from the outside, from the real world. In this world, it will be difficult to avoid all the dangers of Internet, data abuse, invasion of privacy, lack of socializing with people, physical inactivity, a people false image of themselves and others, loss of ability stacking complex sentences, depending on the Internet and social networks and many other problems. These problems will likely become self-evident, and we'll get used to them as we are accustomed to the omnipresence of computers in our lives, no matter how scary it sounds.

Notes

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- /3/ Lipovčan, Srećko. Mediji - druga zbilja, Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, Zagreb, 2006.
- /4/ Ibidem
- /5/ Alić, Sead. McLuhan - najava filozofije medija, Centar za filozofiju medija i mediološka istraživanja, Zagreb, 2010.
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- /7/ Dahrendorf, Ralf. U potrazi za novim poretkom, Delta-kont, Zagreb, 2005.
- /8/ Ibidem
- /9/ Keen, Andrew. Kult amatera, Fraktura, Zaprešić, 2010.