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Online-activity as an indicator of cybersocialization

The results of the study of mutual understanding in social networks are interesting in terms of the potential of cyber-socialization. The object of current study is computer-mediated (CM) communication. In order to explore the features and conditions for the appearance of mutual understanding in virtual communication, we chose synchronous textual dialogic communication in social networks and programs-messengers, which modern person uses on daily basis. Psychologists define mutual understanding as understanding and even acceptance of goals, motives, character traits of interlocutors. Also, researchers see mutual understanding as the coordination of individual understandings of the object of communication, in other words, the united views of the interlocutors on what they are talking about. Understanding of the other means, although always partial, a perception of thoughts and of complex of feelings, following the motives of actions and realizing personal values.

We invited 68 people to fill up a questionnaire, answering a few general questions about mutual understanding. After analyzing their answers, we have compiled a popular definition of this term: *Mutual understanding is the ability of interlocutors during the communication process to perceive and to understand each other's point of view, to respond to them adequately and eventually to come to an agreement as a result of communication.* [1]

Following Social Information Processing Theory (SIP) [4] we believe that when nonverbal signals are unavailable, communicators are able to adapt their relationships and communications so that signals remain available through the channel they use. With experience, users can learn how to encode and decode emotionally colored messages using a specific channel.

According to respondents' answers, the Internet communication differs from the face-to-face one by the following aspects:

- lack of non-verbal behaviour (intonations, options of voice, facial expressions);
- freedom (impunity);
- ability to write something that you cannot express face-to-face;
- distance between respondents;
- having time to think (you'd think and write better, smarter).

Further study has shown that simple messages, the ability to paraphrase and explain what has already been written, the synchronization of message transmission [2], as well as a respect for the interlocutor and his opinion, critical thinking, the ability to create your own Internet content are important conditions in which mutual understanding can grow[3].

For this part of the experiment a special questionnaire was developed. Experimental research was carried out in natural conditions, usual for the participants, given the fulfillment of requirements of the experimenter. The participants in pairs solved a task by communicating through a social network or program for messaging.

Also, the test methods “Communicative level of manager” and “Diagnosis of motivational orientations” were used in the experiment aiming to measure the communicative competence of the participants, the presence of special skills for conducting a directed conversation and also for measuring the motivational aspect of communication. At this stage 198 18-35-year-old subjects were involved. Correlation analysis has shown that prolonged intervals between partner replicas reduce the motivation of the interlocutor to communicate with him. This proves that in both the asynchronous (according to A. E. Voiskunsky [2]) and synchronous SMS communication, the length of the interval between replicas inversely correlates with the curiosity of the communicants regarding the conversation. It was also found that respondents seeking to reach a compromise in conversation usually respond faster to the message of the interlocutor. Additionally, it was found that the loss of a sense of time (when the communicator ceases to watch the clock and does not know for how long the conversation lasts) positively correlates with the understanding and a good

impression from the conversation. During an enthusiastic conversation, human attention is focused on the process of communication and on the interlocutor, and the time passes imperceptibly.

An emotion of astonishment and a sense of discomfort in the interlocutor through unexpected messages correlates negatively with a good impression and mutual understanding in conversation. In addition, communicants with extensive experience and wide outlook on communication in social networking, perceive the interlocutor more adequately and create such communication terms in which mutual understanding develops and the experience of both communication partners improves. Respect and trust in a communication partner, a positive attitude towards him, the ability to determine his mood and predict his behavior correlate directly with understanding and a contentment with conversation.

The online activity of Internet users turned out to be connected with an impression of conversation and understanding, in particular, the indicators of critical thinking had the strongest link with them. [3]

The results of the main part of the study contributed to the development of a socio-psychological training for students. Its title is “Training for smart online communication”. The purpose of this training is to develop communication skills and critical thinking techniques that promote effective online communication. Exercises offered to the participants on training concerned the increase of students’ online activity, especially its components, such as the creation and distribution of creative media content and the critical perception of information from the Internet. Also, students performed exercises on the use of active listening techniques in CM-communication and tolerance to the delays of the partner's messages on CM- communication. In addition, the training aimed to build respect and trust to the interlocutor, because the attitudes of communicators increase mutual understanding and promotes effective problem-solving. These qualities were pre-measured among the participants with the redesigned questionnaire “Diagnostics of the level of media culture of children and youth”. Three groups of 18-23-year-old agents participated in the study of the effectiveness of the training program. The experimental group attended the

training; for the first control group a placebo-training was organized (with exercises that were mostly entertaining and did not concern the development of the above-mentioned qualities). The second control group did not attend any trainings. The participants from three groups took part in re-measuring of their qualities and skills in two weeks after the beginning of the experiment.

The comparison of the results of the tests of the three groups of students showed that attending the “training of smart online communication” leads to an increase of students’ indicators of media creativity, for example, the participants began to create different media works (texts, images, comments etc.) and distribute them on the Internet more actively. Indicators of critical thinking – selectivity of perception and cognitive activity – also increased. Interestingly, after the training students began to set lower marks for the frequency of their use of active listening techniques. This may be explained by the fact that the training contributed to the awareness of the importance of these techniques (paraphrasing, clarification, translation, summarization, etc.). However, strengthening the skills of using these techniques requires more time and exercise, so the participants could only have realized the lack, and therefore give themselves lower scores.

We also measured emotions that the students had experienced during Internet communication in general and when there had been large pauses in synchronous CMC in particular. Students that went through the “Training of smart online communication” became more tolerant to the prolonged intervals between replies of the interlocutor, experiencing less negative emotions than they did before the training.

Thus, the study of socio-psychological conditions for mutual understanding in online communication has shown that the creation and distribution of own creative products in the virtual space, the critical attitude to the information that can be found on the Internet and the tolerant attitude to the behavior of the online companion, in particular, to prolonged pauses between replicas, are the conditions that promote mutual understanding in online communication and that can be influenced by socio-psychological training. In

our opinion, the formation of the habit of using active listening techniques and the competence in their application is also important in increasing mutual understanding online, but it takes longer time and is a promising direction for further research and development.

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Кришовська О.О. «Онлайн-активність як показник кіберсоціалізації»

Ключові слова: онлайн-активність, взаєморозуміння, комп'ютерно-опосередковане спілкування, соціальні мережі.

Крышовская А.А. «Онлайн-активность как показатель киберсоциализации»

Ключевые слова: онлайн-активность, взаимопонимание, компьютерно-опосредованное общение, социальные сети.

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