

**USER IDEAS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONSUMPTION PRACTICES IN
LANGUAGE TEACHING IN MODERN DIGITAL SOCIETY: CHALLENGES,
TRANSFORMATION, GOVERNANCE**

***IDEIAS DO USUÁRIO DE PRÁTICAS DE CONSUMO DE TECNOLOGIA DA
INFORMAÇÃO NO ENSINO DE LÍNGUAS NA SOCIEDADE DIGITAL MODERNA:
DESAFIOS, TRANSFORMAÇÃO, GOVERNANÇA***

***IDEAS DE USUARIO DE PRÁCTICAS DE CONSUMO DE TECNOLOGÍA DE LA
INFORMACIÓN EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS EN LA SOCIEDAD DIGITAL
MODERNA: RETOS, TRANSFORMACIÓN, GOBERNANZA***

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ABSTRACT: Digital technology has become firmly established in everyday life over the last decade. These include digital television, wired Internet and wireless networks. One should pay attention to the ambiguity of digital users' practices and the existing digital gap. This article aims to analyze how users perceive digital technologies and access to different types of information in language teaching. A questionnaire survey is used as a research method to analyze Internet users' perceptions about their perspectives and coping with the digital gap. The article reveals users' perceptions of the digital gap and possible prospects for bridging it. The lack of a high-speed internet connection illustrates the nature of the digital gap by denying users the opportunity to engage in various digital practices: watching videos, listening to audio files, using online applications, redactors and other software.

KEYWORDS: Language teaching. Socio-economic system. Consumers of Internet resources. Digital technologies

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RESUMO: A tecnologia digital tornou-se firmemente estabelecida na vida cotidiana na última década. Isso inclui televisão digital, Internet com fio e redes sem fio. Deve-se atentar para a ambigüidade das práticas dos usuários digitais e a lacuna digital existente. Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar como os usuários percebem as tecnologias digitais e o acesso a diferentes tipos de informação no ensino de línguas. Um questionário é usado como método de pesquisa para analisar as percepções dos usuários da Internet sobre suas perspectivas e como lidar com a lacuna digital. O artigo revela as percepções dos usuários sobre a lacuna digital e as possíveis perspectivas de preenchê-la. A falta de uma conexão de internet de alta velocidade ilustra a natureza da lacuna digital ao negar aos usuários a oportunidade de se envolver em várias práticas digitais: assistir vídeos, ouvir arquivos de áudio, usar aplicativos online, redatores e outros softwares.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino de línguas. Sistema socioeconômico. Consumidores de recursos da Internet. Tecnologias digitais

RESUMEN: La tecnología digital se ha establecido firmemente en la vida cotidiana durante la última década. Estos incluyen televisión digital, Internet por cable y redes inalámbricas. Se debe prestar atención a la ambigüedad de las prácticas de los usuarios digitales y la brecha digital existente. Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar cómo los usuarios perciben las tecnologías digitales y el acceso a diferentes tipos de información en la enseñanza de idiomas. Una encuesta de cuestionario se utiliza como método de investigación para analizar las percepciones de los usuarios de Internet sobre sus perspectivas y cómo afrontar la brecha digital. El artículo revela las percepciones de los usuarios sobre la brecha digital y las posibles perspectivas de salvarla. La falta de una conexión a Internet de alta velocidad ilustra la naturaleza de la brecha digital al negar a los usuarios la oportunidad de participar en diversas prácticas digitales: ver videos, escuchar archivos de audio, usar aplicaciones en línea, redactores y otro software.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Enseñanza de idiomas. Sistema socioeconómico. Consumidores de recursos de Internet. Tecnologías digitales.

Introduction

In addressing the issue of the digital gap, initially it is necessary to address the understanding of the phenomenon of social inequality as a natural and necessary condition for the presence of civilizational culture and the manifestation of spontaneity in social development (GOLOVKO, 2004; GIDDENS, 1998; MATYUKHINA, 2011). Apart from the actual lack of access to digital benefits, there is also a significant difference in the way new technologies are used. Once an Internet access point has become available, problems often arise with Internet usage practices. Thus, practice can be defined as the outward expression of intentions towards the world around us, specific actions carried out by a person. Practices may or may not be conscious, but they are always real and traceable (VOROBYOV, 1988; BAUMAN, 2004; LOPANOVA ET AL., 2020). The individual on a daily basis reproduces most practices, but each individual can make an infinite variety in their performance. In the Russian context, access to digital technologies and related opportunities not only becomes a factor of social inequality, but also reduces the quality of citizens' life by forcing them to use outdated and uneconomical social mechanisms. Among them is

the need to go to any state and municipal institutions in person to receive various information and other services (KILIMOVA, 2003; BARNETT & MORIARTY, 2001; BEREZIN, 2003; SHARKOV & RODIONOV, 2002).

Citizens are often deprived of access to distance education, savings on utility bills, and the convenience of managing their finances. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of action to address it, which contributes to a widening opportunity gap between citizens with and without access to digital technologies. Information and digital inequality includes the difference in levels of development of information communications between countries, regions of the same country, socio-demographic groups, state institutions, between civil society institutions; the gap in opportunities to access information between different social groups (PROKHOROV, 1997; KUZNETSOV, 2004; INOZEMTSEV, 2003; ZARIPOVA ET AL., 2014; SHAKIROVA & VALEEVA, 2016; IVANKINA ET AL., 2017; VALEEVA, KARKINA & STARČIČ; 2018; KALUGINA ET AL., 2018; KVON ET AL., 2019; KARKINA, VALEEVA & STARČIČ, 2021; SOROKOUMOVA & CHERDYMOVA, 2021). When considering the causes of the digital gap, there are many factors of a social, cultural-historical, political, economic, geographical, and national nature. Each can be combined with the presence of the other, but the presence of even one factor can have a significant impact on the level of information accessibility (MAKAROVA, 2002; CHERDYMOVA, 2010; BEREZIN, 2002).

Access to information and communication technologies is still largely linked to the monetary threshold. This means that the level of wealth of citizens primarily determines their ability to access digital technologies. If a citizen is unable to buy an internet-enabled computer or smartphone, run an internet cable or buy a wireless modem, and pay monthly access fees, then digital technologies are closed to them. Therefore, the level of economic development of the state, the current economic situation are interrelated with information and communication technologies and their accessibility to a wide range of citizens (MARKOV, 2003; FEDOTOV, 2002; IVANOV, 2000). The digital gap in its broadest sense should be referred to the socio-economic and other differences between those people who have the capabilities and skills to use digital resources, especially the Internet, and those who do not have these capabilities or skills. It is also worth understanding that the digital gap is defined as a stratification not only between people, but also between states in terms of their ability to receive and use information that is transmitted through new information and communication technologies (CHUGUNOV, 2002; BORISOVA & KHOKHLOVA, 2001; SMIRNOVA, 2017; BAYANOVA ET AL., 2020).

Research Methodology

In the first stage of the study, the organizational stage, the following research tasks arise in connection with the analysis of perceptions of the prospects for the use of Information Technology:

- To analyze basic practices in the use of the Internet;
- To identify possible reasons for not using the Internet.

In the second stage of the study, the analytical stage, a questionnaire was developed based on the objectives of the study, including the following questions.

What, in your opinion, is the Internet?

Do you use the Internet?

If not, why do you not use the Internet?

Please list the reasons of such choice.

What prevents you from using digital technology productively?

How often do you use the Internet?

What kind of Internet do you use? Broadband or mobile?

Are you satisfied with the quality of your connection?

Are you satisfied with the service and connection costs?

What devices do you use to access the Internet: smartphone, laptop, PC, tablet? Which one do you use most often?

How much time a day do you spend online?

Do you use the Internet for your professional activities? In what way do you do it?

Which websites do you open most often? For what purposes?

What are the advantages of the sites you use?

What do you like about them?

Do these sites have any disadvantages that you do not like?

What would you like to fix or improve?

What networks are you registered on? What social networks do you use most often?

What do you usually do when you are on them?

Why do you use these social networks in particular?

What do you like about these networks? What you do not like about these networks or you would like to improve?

How do you feel about online learning?

How do you rate the sales and shopping opportunities online?

What other ways of using the Internet could you add to your arsenal?

The results were also analyzed at this stage.

This question formulation is justified by the logic of the research, which implies identifying the quality and peculiarities of Internet resources' use, identifying the time and material costs of the respondents.

Results and Discussions

By analyzing the results of the developed questionnaire, one can see that the majority of interviewees (82%) clearly demonstrate how much the digital gap has affected their opportunities, indicating those without which they are uncomfortable. Analyzing the results of non-users (19%), it is clear that such restrictions make them feel uncomfortable, a sense of disconnection from social reality. These practices demonstrate the reality of the digital gap between people who have access to the Internet and those who do not. These are the serious consequences of the digital gap. Despite the seriousness of these inequalities, providing Internet access to all citizens will still not fully eradicate the digital inequality. It seems that having access to the Internet would completely level out the digital gap, but such a conclusion proved to be erroneous. The current digital gap is characterized by serious differences in social practices of Internet technology consumption. They are expressed in the fact that people with broadband access (62% of all users surveyed) have a much greater ability to use it. However, financial reasons prevent some citizens from using the monthly services of ISPs. Now, 32% of the interviewees referred to them. There is a difference in both time and quality of Internet use. Interviewees with high-speed broadband Internet access can use it simultaneously as a family, each for their own purposes, none of whom is disadvantaged in their right of access. In the case of mobile Internet, such practices are not possible without seriously compromising connection speeds. The lack of a high-speed Internet connection clearly demonstrates the nature of the digital gap by depriving users of the ability to implement the following practices: watching videos (movies, TV series, educational videos, etc.); listening to audio files (music, concerts, audio books, sound recordings, etc.); using online applications, redactors and other software; keeping up-to-date with current updates (news, social media feeds, alerts); comfortable using Internet resources of high complexity and content. etc.); use of other Internet features.

Researchers of the digital gap are increasingly expressing the view that it cannot be bridged by having access to the Internet and the technical devices that provide that access. One can assume that training in computer and media literacy will narrow this gap, bringing the situation closer to an environment in which all citizens have equal rights and opportunities to access the Internet. The above-mentioned strategy has its limitations, but now, it is the most adequate in today's digital gap. This is why it is so important to explore this space and identify perspectives for its development. For this purpose, consideration should be given to the existing restrictions on access to the Internet

space. The criteria for the digital gap that would help to determine the existing reasons for not using digital technologies, and more specifically the Internet, from the point of view of those surveyed are: physical access or physical connectivity (82% cited this factor); financial access, that is, the financial ability to purchase equipment, connect to the Internet, and pay regularly (82%); cognitive access or level of computer and information and communication literacy (54%); access to information, ability to access open Internet resources (72%); political access, no political restrictions on access to Internet resources (54%). One should consider the criteria of the digital gap that completely deprive citizens of access to the Internet: physical and financial access. Both have an equal impact on the current information and communications technology situation. The impact of each factor depends on each individual's context and life circumstances, but these factors manifest themselves to varying degrees in all studied cases of the Internet non-use. In order to make the impact of these factors evident for the study, one should study people who use the Internet and therefore are less affected by the above-mentioned factors. The similarity in the socio-demographic characteristics of those interviewed indicates the real impact of the digital gap factors on Internet use practices. This allows for a comparative analysis of the social situation of Internet use. Drawing attention to the criteria of the digital gap, it is found that a proportion of those surveyed who do not use the Internet do not have access to it because of their financial situation. However, when asked if they would like to learn to use the Internet, respondents responded positively. This means that this category of people has bridged the digital gap, is ready to use the Internet, is aware of its possibilities and conveniences, and sees prospects for its use for themselves. As for the rest of the respondents, a part of the respondents do not have the skills to use this network and are afraid to use it (12%), although they have access to the Internet, via mobile devices and via personal computer. This is an indicator of the existence of a cognitive gap, based on a lack of knowledge of the principles of the Internet work and low levels of computer literacy. Such fears can be overcome with the help of a knowledgeable and attentive professional who is willing to take the time to teach people the basics of the Internet.

In addition, among the non-users there were those who not only did not use the Internet, but also denied the possibility of using it in the future for any purpose (3%). A similar approach clearly expresses a complete rejection of the Internet as a phenomenon, which could be the result of various external and internal factors. One can assume that the time-related concerns are based on an observation of the social practices of relatives and acquaintances. A strong fondness for the Internet by relatives and acquaintances may discourage a person from using it, as there is a belief in the difficulty of completing a session, a fear of procrastination and the possibility of becoming addicted to gadgets and the Internet. Such fears can be overcome by organizing time and suggesting the use of the Internet only for specific purposes that enhance a person's quality of life, rather than constant

time spending on social media. Interviewees also sometimes express neutral attitudes towards the Internet, without a clear commitment to using or not using the Internet (3%). People with such attitudes are not familiar with the possibilities of the Internet and are open to learning. Further, when it comes to the purpose of using the Internet by those respondents who would like to learn, the main ones are communication with relatives and friends, using the Internet to expand the range of knowledge in their area of interest, as well as the fulfilment of domestic needs.

Thus, it can be seen that the prospects for bridging the digital gap are quite clear. It should be noted that it is not possible to influence Internet connection rates, nor is it possible to influence the economic situation that determines people's income and expenditure levels. Therefore, one can only refer to the reasonable use of the Internet as the only means to overcome inequality. The essence of the digital gap is not to connect everyone to an online game with realistic graphics, but to realize their real needs that improve the quality of human life. This does not require a high-speed connection of the highest quality; a wired connection of medium speed is sufficient. It will allow users to access most Internet facilities, with the exception of gaming, online television and so on. The user will then have virtually all their needs met at a relatively low cost and have access to almost all social internet consumption practices.

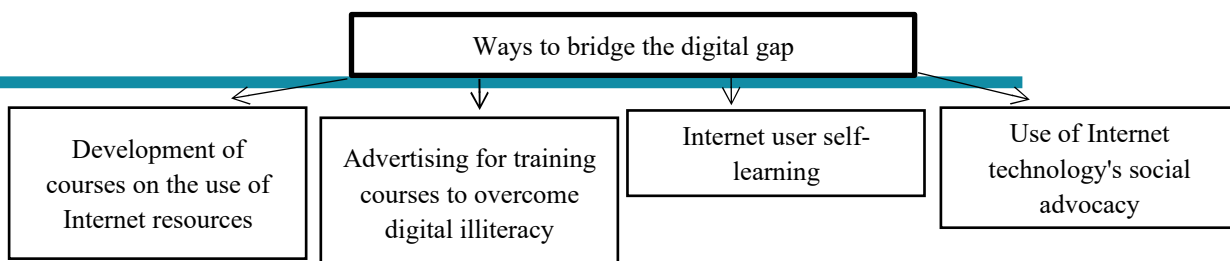


Figure 1. Ways to bridge the digital gap

The following conclusions can be drawn from the survey that it is possible to bridge the digital gap partially by implementing the following principles: active advertising of computer literacy training courses; social promotion of teaching of relatives and friends to use the Internet, the actualization of the problem of digital gap among citizens; self-training in Internet use. (Figure 1) Minimum quality Internet connection to implement basic social practices of Internet consumption.

To be able to address the digital gap, all segments of the population need to be able to access the Internet; if equal physical access to digital benefits is obtained, then the digital gap can be addressed. It is also worth noting that, over time, it has become clear that the digital divide is more complex and multifaceted than the lack of physical access to the Internet.

The development of an information, networked society, the emergence of intuitive access devices that do not require specific knowledge, are all shaping new practices of Internet consumption. It is these practices, namely how, for what and how the Internet is used, that should be seen as the concept of the digital gap.

As a result, overcoming the digital gap has led to social practices of Internet consumption that reflect not only the existence of the gap, but also its qualitative characteristics. These include the characteristics of the ISP's Internet communications, the quality of connectivity, the speed of access, the cost of providing access. All these characteristics show the extent to which the digital gap is pronounced in the real life of Internet users. Even when it is present, many users cannot access, for example, media files because of low speed access. Some solution to this problem is mobile access. However, it also has its limitations. Mobile internet is not always accompanied by high speeds, availability anywhere in the city, or uninterrupted connection. In addition, the size of the screen and other parameters of the device can affect the quality of information received on the Internet connection.

Conclusions

When talking about ways to bridge the digital gap, one can turn to the levels of the digital gap for a full understanding. The digital gap is the lack of actual access to digital technologies and the Internet in general. These include a lack of physical access and a lack of financial access to the Internet. To solve this problem, measures need to be taken to expand mobile coverage, develop technology, expand the areas where broadband Internet is present, reduce the cost of the Internet, as well as the cost of access facilities: computers, laptops, mobile phones, and so on. Once the network is physically available and financially accessible, the digital gap will be bridged.

Summarizing the above-mentioned, one should highlight the existing ways to bridge the digital gap. Based on the views expressed by non-users, one can see that the main obstacle for them is the monetary barrier. Nevertheless, one should note that the economy segment of the digital market has grown manifold in recent years, offering a large number of devices at low cost. Purchasing such a device for relatively little money would allow people to use the possibilities of at least the mobile Internet. This would be a step towards bridging one type of digital gap. This conclusion can be drawn on the basis of the fact that working people can usually afford such a one-off expenditure, as well as paying for mobile Internet, which amounts to about two to three hundred rubles monthly. The mobile Internet cannot, of course, offer all the possibilities of digital technology, but it can overcome the barrier of social contacts, content sharing, and use of banking functions, geolocation and other basic needs of internet users. All the more so, app shops for

smartphones and tablets offer a variety of programs that enhance the user's quality of life through various functions.

Thus, analysis of social practices of Internet consumption has confirmed the existence of a digital gap. One can clearly see that differences in social practices of Internet use are based on the type of connection and are closely related to its speed and quality. This is a key digital barrier. By analyzing social practices of Internet consumption, prospects for bridging the digital gap by leveraging existing connectivity can be highlighted. The identified perspectives will allow users to adapt over time to changing conditions and digital technologies and fully experience all the opportunities that the Internet offers.

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