Влияние ИКТ на отношения в семье современных японцев (на основе опроса японских студентов)

А.А. Борисова

Аннотация. Статья представляет собой анализ ответов, полученных в ходе опроса студентов японских университетов на тему влияния информационно-коммуникационных технологий (социальных сетей, мессенджеров и т.д.) на общение внутри семьи. Респондентов просили ответить, влияет ли активное использование ИКТ на общение с родными, какое именно влияние это оказывает, усугубляет ли общение в социальных сетях недопонимание между старшим и младшим поколением и т.п. Большая часть опрошенных отметила, что является постоянным пользователем различных социальных сетей (ответ «Не пользуюсь социальными сетями» в соответствующем вопросе выбрало 0 % опрошенных) и часто общается с членами своей семьи с помощью ИКТ. При этом ответивших, что среди родственников чаще всего общаются с родителями, было в два раза больше, чем тех, кто отметил общение с братьями или сестрами, что иллюстрирует особенности внутрисемейных отношений японцев. Также было отмечено положительное влияние такого способа коммуникации на общение внутри семьи, так как «можно быстро обменяться необходимой информацией», «укрепляются связи с родственниками, которые живут далеко» и «в сообщении легче написать то, что сложно сказать человеку в лицо». Людей, которые сочли влияние ИКТ на внутрисемейное общение отрицательным, было значительно меньше. При этом многие опрошенные не увидели связи между использованием социальных сетей и отсутствием взаимопонимания между поколениями, ответив, что социальные сети никак на это не влияют, хотя и было отмечено, что сетевой сленг, присущий общению молодежи между собой, может быть непонятен более старшим поколениям. Следует сказать, что при проведении подобного опроса среди представителей другого поколения либо среди молодежи, не являющейся представителями университетского студенчества, результаты могут значительно отличаться.

Ключевые слова: Япония, ИКТ, общение в семье, социальные сети, опрос студентов, молодежный язык.

Автор: Борисова Анастасия Анатольевна, ассистент кафедры японоведения СПбГУ (адрес 199034, Санкт-Петербург, Университетская набережная, д. 11). E-mail: a.borisova@spbu.ru

The influence of the ICT on relationships in the family of modern Japanese (based on the Japanese students' survey)

A.A. Borisova

Abstract. The article is an analysis of the answers received during a survey of students of Japanese universities on the impact of information and communication technologies (social networks, instant messengers, etc.) on communication within the family. The respondents were asked to answer whether the active use of ICT affects communication with relatives, what kind of impact it has, whether communication on social networks aggravates misunderstandings between the older and younger generations, etc. Most of the respondents noted that they were regular users of various social networks (the answer "I don't use social networks" at the corresponding question was chosen by 0 % of respondents) and often communicate with their family members using ICT. At the same time, there were twice as many respondents who noted that they communicated with their parents more often than with other relatives in comparison with those who noted communication with brothers or sisters; it shows the peculiarities of the intra-family relations of the Japanese. The positive influence of this method of communication on contacts within the family was also noted, since "one can quickly exchange the necessary information", "ties with relatives who live far away are strengthened", and "there are things which are easier to write in a message than to say in person". There were significantly fewer people who considered the impact of ICT on intra-family communication to be negative. At the same time, many respondents did not see the connection between the use of social networks and the lack of mutual understanding between generations, answering that social networks do not affect in any way, although it was noted that the network slang inherent in youth communication could be incomprehensible to older generations. It is worth noting that the results of the same survey among representatives of another generation or among young people who are not representatives of university students may differ significantly.

Author: *Borisova Anastasia A.*, assistant lecturer of the Department of Japanology, St. Petersburg State University (11, Universitetskaya nab., 199034, Saint-Petersburg, Russian Federation). E-mail: a.borisova@spbu.ru

Nowadays, information technology is deeply ingrained in the life of almost every family. Many applications help to plan family budget, leisure, managing of everyday life and vacations. Mobile communication and the Internet are used in almost every home; and now it is difficult to imagine everyday life without various electronic devices. In such situation, the role of information and communication technologies (ICT), including various social networks, instant messengers such as WhatsApp or FaceTime etc., cannot be overestimated. Now, the absence of someone's account in any social network is surprising; and the global network plays a leading role in the exchange of various information. It seems that the abovementioned statements can be applied to almost any country in the modern world, and Japan is no exception.

Undoubtedly, the role of communication technologies in the life of modern Japanese, especially young people, is exceptionally large. Much of communication takes place through social networks or instant messengers.

A study of the impact of social networks and instant messengers on everyday communication in the modern Japanese family was conducted within the framework of the project *"Linguistic Evolution in the Context of ICT Development"*, at the Department of Japanese Studies of the St. Petersburg State University. The aim of the study was to find out the impact of communication through modern communication technologies on family relations, in particular, on communication of young people (university students) with members of their families. To accomplish the aim, a survey of students of several Japanese universities was conducted in 2019, and the answers were analyzed comparing the obtained results with the data given in various articles and research works on the related topics.

The works by E. M. Fife, LuA. LaCava, & C. L Nelson [Fife, LaCava & Nelson, 2013], and S. Sultana [Sultana, 2017] are not specifically devoted to the family communication of the Japanese, but the problems described – for example, the growing influence of the SNS on family communications and the dilemmas such as whether to approve parents' requests for becoming 'friends' via Facebook or not – are quite similar to those taken into consideration in the current article. It also demonstrates the relevance of the topic and its significance not only in Japan, but in general.

A survey of the impact of communication technologies on the youth language of modern Japanese was conducted among students of the University of Tsukuba in 2016. All of the respondents, without exception, noted their using one or several instant messengers. Students were asked to choose which social network or messenger they use for communication most often and why. The results of the survey were presented in the article by A. Borisova and N. Issa [Borisova A., Issa N., 2018], where great influence of the ICT was noted not only on development, but also on the wider spread of new words and trends.

In the course of the study, statistical data presented on the Internet were also used, as well as materials from various Internet sites, including blogs, reviews, and surveys. It seems that the wide spread of the ICT and the specific features of its usage by the Japanese can influence not only communication between friends, but also communication between relatives and members of the family.

Methodology of the research

The survey the results of which are to be presented further involved 97 people, mostly students at the universities of Aoyama and Tsukuba, and the Osaka University of Foreign Studies. 83 % of the respondents were younger than 25 years old. 68.4 % of the respondents were female, and 31.6 % were male. Respondents were offered several questions concerning the impact of communication through social networks and instant messengers on their contacts with members of their families. Respondents were to comment on their answers to some questions in order to describe the impact of ICT on communication with their close relatives (or the lack of it) more accurately.

There were the following questions:

- How much time per day do you use social networks?
- Do you use SNS to communicate with your family?

- Whom in your family do you often contact via SNS or messenger?
- What is the main purpose of such contacts?
- Do SNS and messengers affect daily communication with your family members?
- How do SNS and messengers influence daily communication with your family members?
- Do you reply to a message from your family as soon as you receive it?
- If not contacting your family via SNS or messenger, please, explain why.
- Do you think that SNS and messengers have made it difficult for young people to understand the previous generation?
- What will happen to communication through SNS and messengers from now on?

There were multiple choices of answers to some of the questions. The respondents were also asked to give some comments on their answers.

Average use of the SNS per day

In the first question, it was asked how much time per day a respondent basically spends on social networks or how much time per day he or she uses an instant messenger. It is noteworthy that the option "I do not use it at all" was not chosen at all. The results were as follows:

– I use it for 1–3 hours per day – 53.6 %
– I use it for 3–5 hours a day – 32 %
– I use it for 5–8 hours a day – 10.3 %
– I use it for more than 8 hours a day – 4.1 %

Thus, all respondents indicated that they devote a certain amount of time per day to communicate through information and communication technologies. According to the data of an article published in *Nikkei* in 2016, the Japanese, on average, spent just 19 minutes a day on social networks [Nikkei, 2016]. However, these data were given for users of various age groups, not only young people. As for the young users of social networks, according to the data provided by the *"Nippon.com portal. Modern look at Japan"*, in 2019, high school students in Japan (the group of respondents, the closest in age to the object of our study), spent about 3 hours and 37 minutes a day, communicating on the Internet [Nippon.com, 2019]. Such data correlate with the result of our study; and it can be stressed that communication through social networks and instant messengers plays an important role in contacts among young people. It is observed quite often that young people (and those not so young also) walk without taking their eyes off the screen of their smartphones and not paying attention to what is happening around. That is why there appeared a large number of posters and social advertising messages warning of the dangers of the constant use of smartphones in different situations in Japan.

No doubt, this is facilitated by the increasing proliferation of mobile technologies, smartphones that support high-speed Internet and the desire of young people to keep up with the fashion, in other words, to be up to date on all the fashionable novelties and trends – that is exactly the information most quickly distributed through social networks focused on young users.

Specific features of the network communication of the Japanese

For many young Japanese, communication via instant messengers is an integral part of their lives. However, does such an active online life affect real relationships between people – particularly, real life communication with their family members?

To find out, the respondents were offered a question asking whether they communicate with their family members via instant messengers and social networks or not.

91.8 % answered affirmatively.

8.2 % answered that they do not communicate with their families using the ICT.

Respondents who gave a negative answer to the question were asked to comment on their choice; and the following variants were received:

– There's enough communication in real life.
– My family members don't like social networks.
– I don't like being contacted anywhere and anytime.
– There are no young people of my age among my relatives.
– I don't even talk on the phone with them.
– Parents prefer emails and telephone calls.

Many researchers note that the Japanese are often limited by different frameworks of conventions and traditions, not only at work, but also at home. For some Japanese, for young people especially, their life online is a way to relax, to escape from the surrounding reality, giving them some freedom to express their opinion, even if they are hiding in the network under a mask. That is why the blogosphere is exceptionally developed in Japan; and it is the blogging and reading activities that Japanese most often prefer on the Internet. In addition, the Internet is often used for entertainment. It can be assumed that communication with the family falls under the category of 'serious' conversations, when one has to use the appropriate style of communication and writing that is not quite fun. This is perhaps one of the reasons why young Japanese are not in a hurry to add their relatives as friends in social networks [Rocketnews.24, 2017]. The abovementioned statements coincide with the results of a study conducted by Eric M. Fife, LuAnn LaCava and C. Leigh Nelson. That study focused on privacy on Facebook and in family communication. As the researchers note: "They [young people] seemed comfortable with their ability to prevent and/or appropriately respond to privacy issues when they developed, by untagging photos, limiting family access, or engaging in other practices related to the technology platform. Second, they felt more comfortable managing turbulence in those situations where they had face-to-face or other forms of regular contact with family members, enabling them to communicatively manage those situations shortly after they arose. When participants felt, they lacked either technological or relational power, they tended to report feeling more vulnerable" [Fife, LaCava & Nelson, 2013, p. 118].

At the same time, everyone is well aware that any information posted on the network can be seen by a wide range of people, even if there are restrictions on viewing. It is a probable explanation of the modesty of the Japanese in social networks. Many of the Japanese reluctantly post their real photos, ask their friends not to tag them on group photos, limit a circle of friends who can see a certain type of information. According to the students' survey that took place in 2016, most of its respondents were using the LINE messenger, since it is the most popular one in Japan. It has the

biggest number of registered users; and, therefore, other applications are simply not needed, according to the students' comments. "Everyone is registered there, it's very convenient," was the most frequent answer.

Facebook takes the second place. Almost half of the respondents noted their regular use of the network. In addition to the usual comments about connecting with friends who are far away and looking for useful information, some respondents noted that they use Facebook to communicate with those they trust. For some respondents, it was important that they could express themselves through that social network; and there were also comments about using Facebook for formal or business correspondence.

Most of the respondents that mentioned the use of Skype associated it with taking online lessons and chatting with friends abroad [Borisova, 2018].

Thus, each of the abovementioned instant messengers was used in a certain situation or even within a certain group of people. Based on these comments, it can be concluded that social networks in which it is necessary to register and create a page with personal data, hobbies, etc. not only make the users think over more carefully their manner of communication, but also somehow control their circle of friends, unlike the aforementioned LINE, where it is difficult to understand the true identity of a person because of short messages. In an article written by Kinjo Shinichiro "How the 'Shy' Japanese are using Social Media", the author declares that using a social network can tell a lot about the account owner. "For example, a young woman and student who lives in the rural areas of Japan will use MIXI, a businessman will use Facebook or LinkedIn, and a student in Tokyo or a young man will use Twitter" [Kinjo, 2011]. A kind of practical approach to the use of communication technologies among the Japanese may be noted: depending on the purpose of communication, the Japanese choose different methods and channels [Social Media lab, 2020].

In general, speaking about the use of social networks in Japan, a noteworthy paradox can be identified: with all the abundance of advanced technologies, including ICT, in their everyday life, the Japanese are quite wary of social networks, where one needs to enter personal data for registration. According to statistics, the majority of the Japanese users prefer the Japanese platform for communication LINE (more than 36 million users). Twitter is used by 30 million users. Also, the MIXI network is quite popular (approximately 25 million users) [Travel Voice, 2017]. Despite such a large audience, network users manage to preserve the desired privacy, since MIXI pages are not displayed, for example, in Google global search, and, for the registration there, one needs to receive an invitation from an already registered user, while those who want to register must be 18 years old and above. Recently, a rapid increase in the popularity of Instagram can be seen. Currently, more than 27 million Japanese users have already been registered on this network. This process seems to be quite natural, since even the users of the network themselves point out that every new generation of Internet users starts with new social networks, making them popular [Borisova A, Issa N., 2018, p. 90].

The peculiarities of communication with the family via SNS

The same regulations of communication can also be applied to the family members. Based on the comments received, it can be concluded that, in some cases, the younger generation of the Japanese intentionally tries to limit their online communication with relatives. In this sense, a comment about the absence of relatives close in age is indicative: it seems that the respondent

emphasized in such a way a significant gap between his or her own generation and the generation of parents. It was observed that, unlike communication with other young people, communication with older relatives on social networks does not take place very often. This may also be due to the fact that the older generation does not always understand the rules of social networking adopted among young people; it incorrectly uses the specific vocabulary adopted in online communication, which causes some embarrassment [Rocketnews.24, 2017]. On one of the Internet portals on the development of the youth language in Japan, the importance of the correct use of words and expressions of the youth language is emphasized: "If you use your favorite words thoughtlessly, not knowing their true meaning, the person you are talking to will not be of high opinion of you. It would be better to check the way of usage in order not to make a floater" [Wakamono kotoba, 2020].

Also, noteworthy, there is a desire of some respondents to limit their communication with relatives to real life only, as well as the reluctance to communicate at any time and in any situation, which is quite often inherent in social networking.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents noted that, one way or another, communication in social networks, as well as through instant messengers, was carried out.

The following questions were addressed to those who gave an affirmative answer to the question about communication with their relatives through the ICT.

The additional question was: whom exactly in the family do they most often communicate with through social networks and instant messengers (it was possible to choose several options). The received results were as follows:

– With parents – 87.8 %
– With brothers and sisters – 42.2 %
– With grandparents – 3.3 %
– With other relatives – 6.7 %

The large gap between the respondents who noted that they most often communicate with their parents through the ICT, and those who answered that they most often communicate with brothers and sisters is obvious. It could be considered that communication with younger people of similar age should occur more often than with representatives of the previous generation; this is especially true for contacts through communication technologies. However, such a gap seems surprising at first glance only. In fact, there are several important reasons for such a difference in the number of responses. The first reason is that the birth rate is steadily declining in Japan, and, in the 90s, that is, during the period when most of the respondents were born, the birth rate did not exceed 10 per 1000 persons. Thus, many young people are the only child in the family; and they simply do not have an opportunity to communicate with the relatives who are close in age. However, even if there are several children in a family, there are peculiarities of communication between brothers and sisters in Japan. It is necessary to explain this specificity of family relations between siblings.

Francis Fukuyama noted that, in Japanese families, the bonds between parents and children (in other words, vertical ties) are often much stronger than those between brothers and sisters (horizontal ties). Fukuyama even cites an example for the fact that there is a situation where brothers and sisters do not know each other's phone numbers [Fukuyama, 2004, p. 294]. Developing his thought, one can say that modern siblings do not add each other as friends in social networks.

The specific feature of the Japanese traditional family was a strict vertical hierarchy, where all members of the house unconditionally obeyed the head of the family. As a rule, the eldest son was declared the heir. In Japan, it was considered normal if the younger brothers left the family nest and founded their own households as soon as the older brother began to fully manage the house. Naturally, the relationship between father and sons (especially the eldest son) was much closer than between brothers. The brothers generally could not maintain relations with each other, although recognized the authority of the elder brother. It seems a probable explanation for a certain estrangement between older and younger brothers and sisters inherent in Japanese families.

A small percentage of those who indicated frequent communication with grandparents via social networks could be explained by the fact that the older generation is not so active in using the global network, in comparison to younger people, but, according to the statistics from 2019, 73.9 % of the population from 60 to 69 years old and 46.7 % of the population over 70 years old were Internet users, which is not so little [Statista, 2020, Internet]. On the other hand, most of the elderly population in Japan, even those using the Internet, do not use social networks. According to the data from 2016, only 13.7 % of the population aged 65–69 used LINE. Among the population over 70, there were only 9.2 % of such users [Emarketer, 2016].

Those who chose the option "communicate with other relatives" left a comment "communicate with a spouse". Such a comment was given by two respondents, and both were over 25 years old. This can be seen as a confirmation of the tendency of the Japanese to enter into marriage at an increasingly later age (the Japanese now marry usually about thirty years old, on the average). Representatives of the younger generation prefer the answer "communicate with parents" or "communicate with brothers and sisters".

As for the question on which communication with family members takes place via the ICT, the answers turned out to be quite predictable (it was also possible to choose several answers).

65.6 % of respondents answered that they communicate on everyday topics / have small talks.

37.8 % of respondents answered that communication through network occurs when it is necessary to make a request or to give an instruction.

32.2 % of respondents answered that they exchange various information with their families via social networks and instant messengers.

24.4 % of respondents use SNS to share photos.

17.8 % of respondents use social networks and instant messengers in case they need to say something urgent (for example, to warn about being late).

It is interesting that the "Other" option was not chosen by anyone. Thus, it can be assumed that topics for communication with family members are not critically different from communication with friends and do not have peculiar specific features.

The influence of the communication via the SNS on communication within a family

One of the most important questions of this survey was whether respondents believed that contacts via the information and communication technologies had an impact on everyday communication within their family.

58.9 % of respondents answered affirmatively.

41.1 % of respondents answered negatively.

Among them, 52.2 % of respondents admitted that the communication level within their families increased. 43.3 % of respondents did not see any significant influence of communication via the SNS on their communication within the family. Just 1.1 % of the respondents said that communication became more difficult and 3.3 % of the respondents found it difficult to answer.

The affirmative answers got the following comments (comments on the similar subject are combined into one group).

– Family ties have become stronger.

– Communication has increased / Thanks to various social networks, communication with relatives has increased.

– It became more fun, because I can easily connect with the whole family / It is convenient that I can contact anytime and anywhere.

– The exchange of information with parents increased, and therefore we began to talk about serious problems and on serious topics / We began to talk more about modern technologies / There appeared more common topics for conversation / We began to consult with each other more often.

– We all live separately from each other, and thanks to social networks we began to communicate closely / I live abroad, and social networks are the most important means of communication with the family / With the help of social networks, I can quickly ask about my relatives' health if I worry.

– Through social networks, one can say what is difficult to say in person / Father supported me during the exams, writing words that he had never said out in person.

– If you send a photo of a pet the reaction will be immediate.

These comments, in general, are quite positive, but there were also more negative comments.

– Communication has decreased.

– Communication became somehow compulsory.

– On the one hand, social networks are a good reason to start communicating, but on the other hand, you have to hide information that you don't want to show, and that may cause troubles.

– Now even when we are all at home, we often communicate via LINE, sitting in different rooms.

– We are chatting via SNS, and in this way it's as if we are just talking.

Thus, it can be concluded that communication through social networks, on the one hand, strengthens bonds between family members, since communication with relatives, even those living separately, becomes easier and more accessible. The ability to contact a person anytime, anywhere, which was mentioned by some respondents in previously shown questions as a negative feature of communication through social networks, in this aspect, is viewed more as a positive side of the ICT. This is quite true in the case when a person is worried, for example, about the health of his or her parents, or if they live separately and want to get news about their family in real time. This corresponds with the results of the research by Professor Takahashi, who considers the peculiarities of young people's connections in the Internet era: "Mobile SNSs allow young people to break away from their immediate spatial locations to connect with their friends beyond the time-space constraints, and in a way to reinforce social intimacy and maintain the new forms of *uchi* to which they currently belong. In this manner, young people create and maintain multiple *uchi* through their constant complex online and offline interactions in their social worlds" [Takahashi, 2014, p. 192].

Interestingly, several people mentioned that – with the help of social networks – one can express something that, for some reason, cannot be said in person. Perhaps, such manifestation of feelings and emotions, unusual for most Japanese people in everyday life, makes them take a different look at their relatives and may positively affect relations within the family. This is also confirmed by the comments on the increasing number of topics discussed with relatives. Communication in the global network allows one to express his or her thoughts more freely and openly, which, undoubtedly, affects communication between people, especially between relatives, who take a new look at the people they live with. On the other hand, the negative comments (although these were noticeably less numerous than the positive ones) should also be commented on.

Respondents mentioned that communication becomes mandatory, even if one does not want to communicate. It has already been said above that, for many Japanese, their life online and their life in the real world often do not overlap and seem to exist in parallel. Many friends in social networks have never met in person; and it is impossible to even vouch for the accuracy of the information provided in the online profile. However, in the case of relatives, one must inevitably have to reveal one's own "Self" even in the virtual world, since the refusal to communicate or correspond (or even lack of reaction to the photos that had been sent) can be regarded negatively and cause offense to a family member. Of course, such an attitude cannot have a negative effect only on relations between relatives.

"Participants did point out that they were more comfortable with some family members as friends on Facebook than others, for a variety of reasons. One factor that clearly influences rules for disclosure on Facebook is the age of a family member. Some students expressed concern about older family members seeing aspects of their Facebook profiles, notably images and videos. They were particularly concerned that older family members might judge them, without even giving them a chance to discuss what may be a misleading picture. As one participant remarked, 'You don't know exactly what they're interpreting. They could see something and not talk to you about it, and see it in a certain way. They don't know the real story'. Also, the participants pointed out that Facebook, by its nature, tends to emphasize events during which something interesting actually happens, like a party – so, most people don't post pictures of their study groups. As one said, 'guess they would only be seeing the fun side'. Another noted, 'no one is going to bring your camera while you're studying in the library'." [Fife, LaCava & Nelson, 2013, p. 115]. Similar results were obtained when studying young people from different countries, not only Japan. It seems that the study of such similarity in the responses of representatives of the young generation can lead to interesting results in further studies of the impact of the global network on young people.

The same desire to preserve certain privacy even in the virtual world can explain the comment that one has to hide a part of the information from their profile. This is especially true for various photographs, statements, etc., which can be interpreted incorrectly and lead to misunderstanding or offence.

It is interesting that, in some cases, according to the comments, real life communication was replaced with correspondence in social networks. On the one hand, the ability to find information and to respond to it quickly is convenient, of course, but, on the other hand, this form of communication can be a reason for family members to distance themselves from each other, since direct communication becomes secondary to the virtual message exchange of content. As Saida Sultana notes in her study devoted to the impact of the Internet on the relations between parents and children in Bangladesh, "An explanation is time displacement: It has been argued that Internet use

is negatively associated with family time. The main contention is that time spent on one activity cannot be spent on another. Internet use is a time-consuming activity, and in families that are connected to the Internet, high frequency of use might be negatively associated with family time and positively associated with family conflicts" [Sultana, 2017, p. 47].

Authors of numerous studies on the impact of the ICT on communication between people come to the conclusion that direct communication between people is often reduces due to the increasing use of the ICT, but the results of our study show that the gap between those who believe that ICT has an impact on communication within the family and those who do not consider it in such way, is not so radically large.

Among the 41.1 % of respondents who answered that communication technologies did not have any impact on everyday communication within their families, there were people who made the following comments:

– On social networks we communicate only on insignificant topics that we forget soon, such as shopping. In case of something serious, it is better to call or to go and to talk in person.

– I don't communicate with my family too much.

– Either with social networks, or without them – the same.

– I write in social networks only if I have a kind of request.

– I send important information in messages, but this does not affect our family relations in any way.

– The amount of communication has not changed.

Thus, the number of respondents who evaluated the impact of social networks and instant messengers on communication within the family as negative is rather lower than the total number of those who responded positively or declared the absence of such influence. However, it should be noted that the focus group of the current study were students of higher educational institutions – in other words, quite socially prosperous groups. In the case of focus groups of some other social level, the results may differ significantly. These results can be confirmed with the data presented in the research where the attitude of Japanese and American parents and teens towards the SNS and communication via the SNS was analyzed. According to the research, only 25 % of Japanese teens feel distracted when their parents use mobile phone while being near and only 6 % of them say that mobile devices are hurting parent-child relationships [Bay, 2017].

The results of the survey are also confirmed by the fact that the question about how quickly the respondents react and respond to the messages received from their family members was answered in the following way: 58.9 % of respondents answered that they react as soon as possible. 38.9 % answered that they respond in the reasonable time, and only 2.2 % answered that they did not respond to such messages. Thus, the overwhelming majority of the respondents, regardless of the positive or negative assessment given by them to the impact of ICT on the communication within the family, do not leave messages from relatives unanswered; and they even try to respond as soon as possible.

The influence of communication via the SNS
on communication between older and younger generations

In order to evaluate the impact of the use of social networks and instant messengers on the communication of representatives of different generations, the following question was offered: do you think that, due to the use of social networks and instant messengers, the older generations find it difficult to understand the youth?

‒ 60 % of respondents answered negatively.
‒ 40 % of respondents answered affirmatively.

Despite the fact that the majority still believes that the ICT does not affect mutual understanding between different generations, quite a large number of respondents think differently, so they gave the following comments:

‒ Network slang of young people is incomprehensible to the older generation. Older people do not even understand why young people constantly look at the phone even in the elevator / Artificial words like 草 or *www* appeared (an example with these words was given several times) / There are words that are used in the network only / Probably, it is difficult to understand abbreviated words / There is a lot of information distributed through social networks and focused exclusively on young people.

‒ This is a way of communication which previous generations are unfamiliar with / Older people do not use social networks / I think that for 70-year-old people, it is difficult to understand the youth / Many people lie on social networks especially in order to show their importance. It is difficult to understand / One cannot understand new realities such as, for example, sending New Year's cards via Internet/ The culture of instant information sharing via Twitter or Instagram has just started, and the older generation has simply not gotten used to it.

‒ I do not even understand the younger sister's hobbies.

‒ People stopped talking face to face.

Thus, many who responded positively to the question about the impact of the ICT on mutual understanding between representatives of different generations note that not only the behavior of young people, but even a specific language that appeared to communicate in the network may be incomprehensible to previous generations, who do not get used to social networks and instant messengers. The shaping of such language looks quite natural: most users of social networks and instant messengers are young people, who are often characterized with the creation of specific vocabulary that is inherent in each generation in order to stand out and be different from previous generations. Naturally, the constant use of Internet communications cannot but influence the development of the language. There is a so-called network slang, changing the norms of communication, writing familiar words, etc. It is young people who are the first to respond to the slightest changes in society, be it the emergence of new technologies, social, economic, and political changes, etc. At the same time, new words are not always a part of the official dictionary. Many of them are to be considered obsolete even among the representatives of the generation that created them, not to mention the next generations.

At the same time, older generations not only consider the expressions of the youth language to be 'inelegant' and 'irrelevant', but often simply do not understand the young Japanese, even if they

use common words, because their meaning often changes. In particular, the words "草" (*kusa* – the grass) or "www" mentioned in the commentary are used to mean laughter (in the West, the abbreviation LOL is often used for this). The first sound of the word "laugh" in Japanese – "*warau*" （笑 う） – W, repeated several times, resembles the grass on the lawn (www) with its outlines, which was replaced by the character meaning "the grass" [Borisova A, Issa N. 2018].

Thus, the most vivid examples of the misunderstanding between the generations given in the comments above are words and expressions of the youth language and network slang. However, this is true for the generations of parents of today's youth, and for their parents: every next generation invents its own words and expressions, often with that very aim of making its speech incomprehensible to older generations. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether the use of social networks and instant messengers has a great influence on mutual understanding between generations, or is it just a natural process in which every next generation tends to differ from the previous one; and the ICT is just a convenient tool for achieving this aim.

Other comments, in their turn, refer, rather, not to the use of the ICT, but to changes in the life of the society as a whole, including the rapid introduction of new technologies, the process which representatives of previous generations may not be ready for, as well as for a certain style of communication in social networks. For older people, it is unusual to use, for example, online orders and delivery (it's easier for them to go to the store by themselves), emails and sending greetings via e-mail. Thus, indeed, it is not so much a matter of the ICT, as the differences of the way of life typical of representatives of different generations.

It can be confirmed with the comments of respondents who believe that the ICT does not affect understanding between people of different generations. These comments as following:

– I think that the ICT is not what influences mutual understanding. A different matter is that children now use smartphones and other technologies from the cradle, but this is more a matter of social problems.

– The ICT does not particularly affect, I think, the difference lays in cultural differences with previous generations.

– There are points of coincidence, and there are also mismatching points as it was before. I don't think the ICT particularly affects.

– There is a gap between older people who do not know how to use social networks and young people.

– The generation of our parents communicates quite differently and establishes connections between people in a different way. I think it's hard for them to understand our communication style.

Thus, although quite many representatives of the younger generation point out the misunderstandings between their own and older generations, they are not inclined to blame the ICT for the development of mutual misunderstanding between the generations of parents and children.

Moreover, some respondents assessed the impact of communication via the ICT positively and even expressed the hope that the ICT would serve to overcome the existing misunderstanding between generations.

– People of all generations are free to express their opinions, and this can be the key to mutual understanding.

– Since it is easy to contact and talk even with relatives living far away, the relationship is only getting stronger.

– Thanks to the diversity of connections between people, the ICT help to strengthen such connections.

– It has become easier for me to communicate with older relatives when they started using social networks.

– It has become easier to establish strong connections with people.

– Through the use of *emoji*, it has become clear what people really feel.

– Some things for people are easier to write than to say, so it's easier to understand each other.

It is easier for many Japanese to express their thoughts and emotions in writing than in personal communication – and this fact draws attention again. It is not surprising that *emoji* was separately noted as a means of expressing one's own emotions: the culture of visual images is quite close to the Japanese mentality with its figurative writing (characters) and, therefore, thinking. At the same time, in the everyday life, a vivid demonstration of emotions and feelings is not welcomed. Perhaps, that is why *emoji*, bright and funny, often grotesque, exaggeratedly depicting various emotional states, has become an integral part of the culture of Internet communication, aiding mutual understanding and illustrating messages.

Thus, university students noted that the impact of the ICT on communication between representatives of different generations is not always negative, which is often noted in various studies, and even was rated positively. On the other hand, it was noted that the spread of social networks, although it entails an increase in the number of the vocabulary of network slang, incomprehensible to older relatives, was not a determining factor affecting the understanding between different generations.

Some perspectives on the future development of the ICT

In the last question, respondents were asked to evaluate the further impact of technology development on communication. The overwhelming majority of respondents (67.3 %) responded that further development of technologies and their spread will touch an increasing number of various areas. One of those who responded in this way commented on his answer like this: "Not only social networks, but all technologies, in general, are rapidly developing. It is possible that, in the future, it will not be so necessary to meet and communicate in person. Probably, some changes in the style of communication are inevitable". Some respondents also made comments that personal contacts were likely to shorten.

– 25.5 % of respondents suggested that the development of technology would not affect the relationship between people, and communication will remain about the same, as it is without changes now.

– 4.1 % of respondents believe that at present the development of technologies has reached its peak, therefore, no significant changes and further influence on communication are expected in the future.

– Finally, 3.1 % of respondents found it difficult to answer.

Conclusions

Based on the foregoing, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Information and communication technologies, in particular, social networks and instant messengers play an important role in the communications of the modern Japanese, especially young people, who are the most active users of the global network among all age groups. Without any doubt, the proliferation of these technologies cannot but affect the communication between family members, which was confirmed by the results of the survey.

Most of the respondents, all of whom answered that they were users of social networks and used some instant messengers, in one way or another used social networks, as well as other ICT, to communicate with their relatives. At the same time, communication with parents via social networks and instant messenger takes place more often than with brothers and sisters. The opinions of those who responded to the question of whether the ICT influenced daily communication with relatives or not have divided, but the number of those who responded negatively slightly exceeded the number of the affirmative responses. At the same time, the majority of those who answered in the affirmative gave a positive assessment of the impact of the ICT on communication with their family members, noting that they managed to strengthen bonds between relatives and had the opportunity to communicate more often. There were fewer of those who mentioned negative impact of the ICT on communication, but one should not ignore the comments that communication in social networks is intrusive, and building a circle of virtual friends leads to the need of hiding some undesired information, which can be misinterpreted. As for the topics of communication, no specific differences from communication with friends of the same age, for instance, were revealed. However, many respondents noted that the spread of communication through social networks and instant messengers can lead to misunderstandings among representatives of different generations, especially with regard to the spread of network slang. In general, the older generation may find it harder to adapt to the rapid development of the ICT. However, some respondents believe that it is not so much the development of technology, but the existing difference between habits, including communication habits, of different generations. Moreover, according to some opinions, communication in social networks can serve to strengthen mutual understanding between generations and serve to establish closer ties between relatives.

At the same time, the majority of respondents believed that further development of technologies, including the ICT, would continue, and this might have a certain impact on direct communication between people. Comments were received that, due to the development of the ICT, the need for personal communication may be reduced.

In the future, it would be interesting to conduct a similar survey among the representatives of the older generation and compare the obtained results. In such analytical comparison it would be possible to find out not only the opinion of representatives of different generations on the impact of the ICT on communication between relatives, but also to evaluate the extent of the spread of the ICT in the everyday life of the modern Japanese, as well as to try to shed light on some social problems of intergenerational relations.

БИБЛИОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ СПИСОК

Борисова А.А., Исса Н. Механизмы словообразования в японском молодёжном языке // Лингвокультурная эволюция Японии в информационном обществе: погружение в новую реальность. СПб: ВВМ, 2018. С. 80–99.

Фукуяма Ф. Доверие: социальные добродетели и путь к процветанию. М.: АСТ, 2004. 711 с.

REFERENCES

Borisova, A., & Issa, N. (2018). Mekhanizmy slovoobrazovaniya v yaponskom molodezhnom yazyke [Mechanisms of word formation in the Japanese youth language], *Lingvokul'turnaya evolyuciya Yaponii v informacionnom obshchestve: pogruzhenie v novuyu real'nost* (pp. 80–99). Saint Petersburg: VVM. (In Russian).

Fukuyama F. (2004). *Doveriye. Sotsial'nye dobrodeteli i put' k protsvetaniyu* [Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity]. Moscow: AST. (In Russian).

* * *

Bay, W. (2017). Teens and parents in Japan and US agree – mobile devices are an ever-present distraction. *The Conversation*. Retrieved February 25, 2019, from https://theconversation.com/teens-and-parents-in-japan-and-us-agree-mobile-devices-are-an-ever-present-distraction-84325

Borisova, A. (2018). The Influence of the Social Networks and Messengers on the Youth Language of the Japanese//IAFOR Research archive. Retrieved December 19, 2020, from https://papers.iafor.org/submission41776/

Emarketer. (2016). Senior Internet Users in Japan Who Use Line, by Age, 2015 & 2016 (% of respondents in each group). Retrieved September 20, 2019, from https://www.emarketer.com/Chart/Senior-Internet-Users-Japan-Who-Use-Line-by-Age-2015-2016-of-respondents-each-group/197901

Fife, E. M., LaCava LuA., & Nelson C. L. (2013). Family Communication, Privacy, and Facebook. *The Journal of Social Media in Society*, 2(1): 106-125.

Kinjo, S. (2011). How the "Shy" Japanese are Using Social Media. Retrieved December 3, 2020, from https://blog.btrax.com/how-the-shy-japanese-are-using-social-media/

Nikkei Asian Review. (2016). Japanese spend least time on social media worldwide. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Japanese-spend-least-time-on-social-media-worldwide

Nippon.com. (2019). Japanese Youth Spending More Time Online. Retrieved December 19, 2020, from https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h00408/japanese-youth-spending-more-time-online.html

Rocketnews.24. (2017). Gendai-no wakamono nettomin ga ageta «SNS-o shinai riyū» iroiro «ryōshin-to Facebook-de kakawaritakunai kara» nado [Among the reasons «Why not using the SNS» given by the young population of the Network, «Don't want to get in touch with parents in Facebook» etc.]. Retrieved March 23, 2019, from https://rocketnews24.com/2017/12/08/989085/ (In Japanese).

Social Media Lab by Gaiax. (2020). [Jakunensō-no SNS riyō jōkyō kanren-no chōsa matome] Terebi wa minaiga netto dōga wa mainichi miru. Jakunensō-no netto riyō jōkyō to wa? [Survey summary related to SNS use situation of young generation. We do not watch TV, but we watch net animation every day. What is the net use situation of young people?]. Retrieved November 15, 2020, from https://gaiax-socialmedialab.jp/post-55237/ (In Japanese).

Statista. (2020). Internet penetration rate in Japan in 2019, by age group. Retrieved December 15, 2020, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/759869/japan-internet-penetration-by-age-group/

Statista. (2020). Leading countries based on Instagram audience as of October 2020 (in millions). Retrieved January 15, 2021, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/578364/countries-with-most-instagram-users/

Sultana, S. (2017). Social Networking Sites (SNS) and Family Relationship: A Study on Youths of Dhaka City. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 22 (4, Ver. II): 46–52.

Takahashi, T. (2014). Youth, Social Media and Connectivity in Japan. In *The Language of Social Media. Identity and Community on the Internet* (pp. 186–207), London.

Travel Voice Japan Trade News. (2017). SNS users account for 70 % of all Japanese Internet users. Retrieved January 15, 2021, from https://www.travelvoice.jp/english/japanese-sns-users-account-for-70-of-the-total-internet-users/

Wakamono kotoba jiten (2020). Anata wa wakarimasu ka? Wakamono ga tsukau kotoba-no "imi", "yurai", "shiyō rei" wo majie wakariyasuku setsumei shimasu [The dictionary of the youth language. Do you understand? The easy-to-understand explanation of the meaning, origin and use examples of the words, used by the young Japanese]. Retrieved January 15, 2021, from http://bosesound.blog133.fc2.com (In Japanese).