

# Psychological and Pedagogical Approach to Development of a Workshop for Older People “Let’s Talk Heart to Heart”

Galina Molodtsova  
*Department of Psychology*  
*St Petersburg State University*  
St Petersburg, Russia

Larisa Darinskaia  
*Department of Psychology*  
*St Petersburg State University*  
St Petersburg, Russia

**Abstract**—Due to a constant increase in the proportion of older people in the world, the problems of their integration into society, the motivation for a positive change in the quality of life, the expansion of the communicative space, and bridging the digital divide are becoming more prominent. One way to solve such problems is intergenerational interaction. When it is organized, the general interests of older and young people are emphasized, and conditions are created for the mutual exchange of experience and acquisition of new skills. For this purpose, special educational projects and programs have been developed. However, their implementation can be successful only when considering the readiness of representatives of both generations to productive interaction. This conclusion was made on the basis of the results of the pilot survey of older people ( $n = 68$ , aged from 58 to 91 years) and adolescents ( $n = 163$ , aged from 11 to 15 years). Taking into account the obtained data, programs of psychological and pedagogical support have been developed for different age groups, including workshops. The article presents one of them - a workshop for older people let’s talk heart to heart.

**Keywords**—continuous education, older people, digital environment, intergenerational interaction

## I. INTRODUCTION

During the last decades of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century humanity has faced the problem of a significant increase in life expectancy and a steady increase in the number of elderly people. Older people become more educated, ready to learn throughout their lives, maintain good health, thereby making a significant contribution to the development of society.

Meanwhile, the problems of the disunity of generations and the change of status of older people in society have been intensified: the pace of scientific and technological progress devalues the experience of past generations before subsequent ones; increasing literacy of the population, including digital, reduces the importance of traditions; transformation of the structure of the modern family breaks intergenerational ties. Older generation representatives often suffer from marginalization, which causes serious illnesses

such as loneliness, depression, anxiety, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to find solution that will improve the quality of life of older people by involving them in the digital environment.

According to some researchers [1], technological progress affects not only society, but also the individual life of each person. In the meantime, technological advances are available to the general population rather than to the seniors. This is due to age problems, economic and social status, level of education, attitude to innovation [2]. Furthermore, older people can be positively motivated to use digital technologies and the Internet if they are shown their potential in improving the quality of life [3]. But this requires the involvement of older people in the educational process.

There are different ways of teaching older people. One of them is training with young people [4]. Older people want to share their experience with young people, to understand the world of young people, to join it and to gain new and useful knowledge from this world. This is especially true when the elderly master the digital space and its technologies. But not always the dialogue of generations proceeds effectively. There are many barriers to its successful organization, among which, first of all, it is necessary to highlight the difficulties of communication. Let us consider how this problem is reflected in the scientific literature.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of the literature has shown that the interaction of older people with digital technologies has a positive effect on their mental activity and a positive effect on mental health stimulation [5]. Older people who use the opportunities of the digital world feel much more confident and less isolated, experience increased social support, show good cognitive abilities and independence in their daily activities, a lower level of depression [6-7].

But besides the positive impact of digital technology on the quality of life of older people, there are many negative consequences of using them. For example, among the negative consequences of using a computer are physical and emotional problems, guilt, isolation, anxiety,

---

**Corresponding Author:** Larisa Darinskaia, Department of Psychology, St Petersburg State University, St Petersburg, Russia.

depression, etc. [8,9]. There is evidence that that the negative attitude of older people to digital technology is often associated with a fear of disrupting everyday order, as well as a lack of interest or desire to learn new things in general [10].

In more recent times, many researchers in different countries have focused on *digital divide*, according to which access to Internet technologies and the corresponding technological skills (or lack of them) place a person on one or another side of the digital divide and on the concept of *intergenerational digital divide*, which reflects the age differences between the younger and older generations in the use of digital technologies [11-13].

Meanwhile, researchers have found that intergenerational education is one of the most important social factors contributing to the involvement of older people in the digital space [14]. Similar programs have been successfully implemented in different countries: a project to develop digital photography skills and create a digital print and book project in Derbyshire (England); the work of schoolchildren of the environmental club of the Swynnerton Youth Club (Staffordshire, England); TINA project – Information Technology for Grandparents and Grandchildren - in Portugal, Grandkit project in Romania. In the Netherlands, the WeVlie project has been developed, which is based on the concept of strengthening intergenerational ties as a means of creating reliable and sustainable communities [15-16].

An important topic is bridging the digital divide between the older and younger generations in attitude to digital competence and ways of mastering the Internet, as well as studying the features of various forms of experience transfer and interaction between generations in the use of digital technologies [17].

In general, it can be concluded that the success of the introduction of training programs for older people, involving the inclusion of intergenerational practices, is often associated with overcoming a number of difficulties, mainly communicative, both in the older and in young trainees.

On this basis, we set the research question: what are the specifics of the preparatory work with older people, encouraging further productive interaction with young people including the field of mastering digital technologies?

The purpose of our study was to develop a workshop *Let's talk heart to heart* from the standpoint of the psychological-pedagogical approach to teaching adults, with the subsequent goal of involving the elderly in the digital space based on the principles of intergenerational interaction, interactivity, and self-development.

### III. METHODOLOGY

At the first stage of the study, we conducted a pilot survey of older people about the possibilities of

intergenerational interaction in the field of digital technology. The survey results showed that the organization of such cooperation requires preliminary psychological support work, which increases the readiness of the older generation to interact with young people. Based on this, we have developed a program of psychological support for older people when they master the digital environment [17]. The program consists of a complex of psychological and pedagogical activities including workshop *Let's talk heart to heart*.

The purpose of the workshop was formation of the readiness of older people to intergenerational interaction with young people.

*Working process.* The workshop was held in three sessions of 60 minutes each. A group of 6-10 people was formed after a preliminary conversation of the coach with each participant in order to get acquainted, to form motivation for group classes, to determine the general state of health. Each session included an introduction, main and final parts. The task of the introductory part was to create a positive emotional background for the participants, readiness for active participation in the lesson.

The content of the main part of the lesson included:

- a discussion about the role of communication as a basic human need, its specificity in different age periods of a person's life; opportunities to expand the communicative space with the help of modern digital technologies, etc. (cognitive component);
- formation of the participants of a positive self-attitude and readiness for the realization of their capabilities in various activities (emotional-reflective component);
- formation of communication skills - familiarity with the techniques of reflexive and non-reflective listening, constructive communication in conflict situations, etc. (behavioral component).

The final part summarized the sessions, discussed the feelings, the mood of the participants, their condition after working together.

Leading psychological and pedagogical principles of conducting the workshop were providing psychological security, acceptance of each participant, age compliance, differentiated approach and confidentiality.

*Participants.* 68 older respondents aged from 58 to 91 years (51 women, 17 men) took part in the pilot survey. Two groups of 7 people each participated in the approbation of *Let's talk heart to heart* workshop, 14 older participants aged from 63 to 86 years, average age 69.25 ± 7.4, including 12 women and 2 men (all participants are residents of St. Petersburg)

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the respondents' survey assessing the capabilities of older people in the development of digital

space with the help of intergenerational practices are clearly positive. The majority of respondents (67.7%) answered affirmatively to the question of whether they could use modern digital technologies more if they received assistance. About a quarter of respondents answered negatively (23.5%), 8.8% of respondents were not sure. Older people considered that their children, other relatives (60.3% of answers) and grandchildren (69.1%) could help them to master digital technologies (the question allowed the choice of several alternatives, as a result of which the sum of answers might exceed 100%). 16.2% of respondents indicated specially organized courses for training.

The analysis of *Let's talk heart to heart* workshop showed that work with older people was emotional and vivid. Table 1 "Evaluation of *Let's talk heart to heart* workshop by older people" reflects the assessment of working methods used in the workshop, their opinion on the possibilities of intergenerational interaction in mastering digital technologies, as well as an overall assessment of their participation in the workshop.

TABLE I. EVALUATION OF LET'S TALK HEART TO HEART WORKSHOP BY OLDER PEOPLE

Table Head No	Results of Participation in Trainings	
	Questions	Number of responses of older people (%)
1	What are the most effective methods of learning?	
	mini-lecture <i>Communication in our life</i>	10,6
	role-playing games that imitate intergenerational interaction situations	23,5
	drawing technique <i>Circle of my communication</i>	4,2
2	exercise <i>Tell your partner what you are lucky in</i>	61,7
	Do you think that intergenerational learning will help you to master digital technologies?	
	Yes	62,2
	Rather yes	27,5
	Rather no	0
3	No	10,3
	How do you assess your participation in the workshop?	
	Satisfied	75,7
	Rather satisfied	23,3
	Not satisfied	0
	Difficult to answer	1,0

The exercise *Tell your partner what you are lucky in* (61.7%) aimed at activating ideas about oneself, emphasizing the positive aspects of one's own personality, caused the greatest interest. In second place they put role-playing games that imitate situations of intergenerational

interaction; mini-lecture on the topic "Communication in our life" (10.6%) and projective drawing techniques ("Draw your social circle") caused the least interest (4.2%).

As shown in Table 1, for most elderly people participation in the workshop was useful and effective in terms of understanding the characteristics of communication in different age periods of life. The majority of participants (89.7%) felt that intergenerational learning could be useful in mastering digital technologies. And only 10.3% of them gave a negative answer to this question. In general, the participants of the workshop appreciated the experience, 75.7% were satisfied, rather satisfied-23.3%. No participant expressed a negative opinion, but it was difficult to answer for 1.0% of older people. Apparently, to understand the information such people need a longer time.

At the final stage of the workshop, the participants spoke in a free discussion about the importance of communication in the lives of older people ("I want to talk, but there is nobody to talk to.", "I'm lucky that I have friends with whom I regularly communicate"), the need for psychological and pedagogical support in the prevention of conflict situations of a communicative nature ("sometimes it is so difficult to find the right words...", "you need to learn to manage yourself...", "you need the help of a specialist"), especially with the younger generation ("my grandchildren and I from different planets...", "young people speak the language that I do not understand", "... they do not listen to me at all...").

Participation in the workshop helped the elderly to understand the problems of communication, to understand the importance of digital technologies to improve their quality of life, to get the skills of constructive communication ("thanks to the organizers for such an interesting and useful lesson", "I will definitely come again", "a little tired, but still happy").

The study results can be applied in the system of upgrading teaching qualification of moderators and volunteers who work with older people, and also become the basis for the scientific and methodological support of social projects focused on intergenerational interaction.

V. CONCLUSION

The study shows that in the process of working with older people in the format of a workshop it is necessary to achieve not only educational but also developmental effect. In order to do this, it is important to take into account the leading guidelines of the psychological and pedagogical approach to adult education: reliance on the life experience of participants, focus on cooperation and understanding, consideration for the interests and needs of interpersonal interaction of representatives of different age groups. There are also a number of requirements to the moderator, who should have sufficient experience in teaching, including working with older people; understand the psychology of communication, social perception, group dynamics; take

into account the peculiarities of trainings and workshops with people of different ages.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Rajendra, P., &Patil, B. (2012). Academia.edu. Retrieved February 16, 2012, from Technological Advancements and Its Impact on Humanity: [http://mpkv.academia.edu/PratikButtePatil/Papers/309646/Technological\\_Advancements\\_and\\_Its\\_Impact\\_on\\_Humanity](http://mpkv.academia.edu/PratikButtePatil/Papers/309646/Technological_Advancements_and_Its_Impact_on_Humanity)
- [2] Gaßner, K., & Conrad, M. (2010, March). ICT enabled independent living for elderly. A statusquo analysis on products and the research landscape in the field of Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) in EU-27. Berlin: Institute for Innovation and Technology. Retrieved from [http://www.aaldeutschland.de/deutschland/dokumente/ict\\_for\\_elderly\\_webversion.pdf](http://www.aaldeutschland.de/deutschland/dokumente/ict_for_elderly_webversion.pdf).
- [3] Karavidas, M., Lim, N. K., &Katsikas, S. L. (2005). The effects of computers on older adults users.Computers in human behavior, 21, 697-711.
- [4] Jarvis, P. Adult Education and Lifelong Learning/ Theory and Practice. – 3rd edition. – London and NewYork: Routledge Faimer, Tailorand Francis Group, 2004. – 382 p
- [5] Nycyk, M., &Redsell, M. (2006). The role of computer tuition in community health: A grounded theory approach. Aging International, 31, 296–308.
- [6] Kim, Y. S. (2008). Reviewing and Critiquing Computer Learning and Usage Among Older Adults. Educational Gerontology, 34, 709-735.
- [7] Osman, A., Poulson, D., & Nicolle, C. (2005). Introducing computers and the Internet to older users: Findings from the Care OnLine project. Universal Access in the Information Society, 4(1), 16–23
- [8] Richardson, M., Zorn, T. E., & Weaver, K. (2001). Seniors' Perspectives on the Barriers, Benefits and Negatives Consequences of Learning and Using Computers. RetrievedDecember 5, 2011, from [http://www.slis.indiana.edu/faculty/hrosenba/www/1574/pdf/richardson\\_senior\\_net.pdf](http://www.slis.indiana.edu/faculty/hrosenba/www/1574/pdf/richardson_senior_net.pdf)
- [9] Grabianowski, E. (2011). How Computer Addiction Works. Retrieved December 5, 2011, from HowStuffWorks, Inc.: <http://computer.howstuffworks.com/internet/basics/computer-addiction2.htm>.
- [10] Morris, A., Goodman, J., &Brading, H. (2007) Internetuseandnon-use: viewsofolderusers. Journal Universal Access in the Information Society, Vol. 6 Iss 1, pp. 43-57.
- [11] Norris P., 2001. Digitaldivide: Civic engagement, information poverty, and the Internet worldwide. Cambridg University press. 303 pp.
- [12] Warschauer, 2004. Technology and social inclusion: Rethinking the digital divide. MIT press. 274 pp
- [13] Prensky M., 2001. Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. On theHorizon(MCB UniversityPress, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001. <https://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf>
- [14] S.F. Mititelu. “Internet an dmedia – abstract intermediaries in the intergenerational conflict”. Academy of ProfessionalEducation, no. 10 (64), pp. 60 – 64, 2016.
- [15] Intergenerational Practice, Policy and Performance: A Framework for Local Authorities Beth Johnson Foundation, 2009. URL: Bickford D.J., Wright D. Community: The Hidden Contextfor Learning. // Learning Spaces.Ed. by Diana G. Oblinger. URL: <https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/PUB7102d.pdf>
- [16] F. DeLConte.WeVlie: “A Service concept to promote connection between generations as a means to create strong and sustainable communities” 2015. Retrieved from URL: <https://repository.tudelft.nl/islandora/object/uuid:4465a7e1-f424-47bf-97b4-b3fcc1dd8bf2?collection=education>
- [17] Darinskaia L., Moskviceva N. Experience of Development and Implementation of Psychological Support Programs for Elderly People in Digital SpaceMastering // INTED2018 Proceedings, 12th International Technology, Education and Development Conference. Valencia, 5-7th of March, 2018. – IATED Academy,pp. 4046-4054, ISBN 978-84-697-9480-7, ISSN 2340-1079p.