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Секція 8. ТЕХНІКА В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ: УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ КОНТЕКСТ

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COMMUNICATION IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL CONFLICT: PEACE EDUCATION FACING THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

***Abstract.** In the digital age, communication presents significant challenges for peace education, as technological advancements introduce new complexities in interpersonal relationships, information sharing, and conflict resolution. This paper examines the philosophical and social implications of digital communication, emphasising the need for a holistic approach to peace education that includes ethical, moral, and social values. It discusses the role of education in fostering peaceful communication, developing critical thinking, and promoting responsible digital citizenship.*

Furthermore, educators play a crucial role in promoting digital literacy, empowering students to navigate the digital world effectively, and equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to engage responsibly online. By exploring the intersection of technology, ethics, and human relationships, this work aims to contribute to building a more peaceful and harmonious digital society.

Key words: communication, education, digital age, peace education.

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КОМУНІКАЦІЯ В ЕПОХУ ЦИФРОВИХ КОНФЛІКТІВ: СВІТОВА ОСВІТА ПЕРЕД ФІЛОСОФСЬКИМИ ТА СОЦІАЛЬНИМИ ВИКЛИКАМИ ТЕХНОЛОГІЧНОГО ПРОГРЕСУ

Introduction. The rapid expansion of digital technologies presents many challenges for interpersonal communication. The exchange of ideas across generations requires redefining core values and social norms related to both trustworthy information sharing and peace education. In an age of widespread use of the Internet, social media, and artificial intelligence, a new realm is emerging where not only young people seem confused about the differences between the real and virtual worlds, truth and falsehood, good and evil. On the one hand, digital communication enables the quick and large-scale transfer of information, supports many areas of knowledge, and can save human lives. On the other hand, it can also contribute to social polarisation, disinformation, or even social conflict (Brown Sr. & Hersey, 2018).

In the context described above, developing appropriate educational strategies that not only foster practical communication skills but are also rooted in ethical and philosophical social values becomes crucial. Therefore, it can be argued that when addressing communication in the digital age, value conflicts are best analysed by examining the mechanisms behind this confrontation, as well as the theoretical foundations of axiology, which can inspire the development of peace education (Page, 2008, 231).

Only through deliberate, planned, and consistent shaping of young people's attitudes can we respond to and mitigate the adverse effects of technological transformations, while simultaneously fostering a society open to values such as mutual respect, tolerance, and education for peace. Addressing the challenges discussed here requires a holistic approach that considers both aspects of technological development and individual traits, as well as socio-economic conditions, moral, educational, and even political factors. All these challenges form a unified whole, intertwining and influencing the role of education in shaping peaceful communication in the digital age. Reardon emphasises that peace education should be intentional and value-driven, helping young people not just learn communication skills but also develop attitudes and ways of thinking that support fairness, cooperation, and non-violence. It encourages understanding how social, economic, and cultural forces shape human behaviour, guiding learners towards building a more peaceful society (Reardon, 1988, 74).

Causes and Conditions of Conflict in the Digital World. Teaching and developing practical communication skills, particularly those that support peaceful upbringing, now requires addressing digital conflicts and their origins. The advancement of digital technologies has introduced new modes of interaction that, on one hand, enable remote communication but, on the other, restrict face-to-face contact. The absence of in-person dialogue leads to misunderstandings and hampers mutual understanding between children and parents, students and teachers, and colleagues in the workplace. Consequently, communication often becomes superficial, and conflicts tend to escalate (Reardon, 1988, 1-10).

Research and daily experience show that online anonymity and limited face-to-face contact gradually diminish the sense of responsibility for words and actions. Phenomena such as hate speech, peer pressure among students, and tensions in professional settings are increasingly arising in digital spaces. Online communication influences group norms, clearly outlining what is acceptable and what may be criticised or ridiculed. These mechanisms help sustain social divisions and hinder the development of relationships based on mutual respect. A sociocultural layer further complicates digital issues. Prejudices, stereotypes, and distrust of people from different cultural and social backgrounds make interpersonal relationships even more challenging. Technological progress also encourages manipulation, posing an additional threat to social bonds. Fake accounts, deepfakes, and bots can spread disinformation, create divides, and make it difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood (Zhu, 2025, 11-29).

As Gorman emphasises, the anonymity of online interactions allows individuals to act in ways they might avoid in face-to-face settings, amplifying hostility and social tension. Her research shows that such behaviours not only harm the immediate participants but can also destabilise broader social networks, reinforcing division and mistrust (Gorman, 2019, 1-15).

In response to the rapid digital growth of civilisation, a key challenge is developing an ethical and adaptable digital environment that can respond to ongoing changes. This environment should encourage dialogue grounded in mutual understanding and respect for individuals, while also promoting peace.

To navigate the digital world effectively, it's crucial to understand the factors that influence individual behaviour online and to develop targeted strategies. This requires collaboration among educators, teachers, psychologists, and support staff, both in educational environments and in everyday life. Doing so not only ensures adherence to moral principles but also offers psychological support in challenging situations, which are becoming more common in the digital environment. Only through this approach can education fully meet its pedagogical goals, effectively reduce conflicts, and nurture young generations to coexist peacefully in a digitalised world where communication remains a vital value (Costescu, 2024, 5-15).

The philosophical foundation of peace education. The philosophical foundations of peace education rest on redefining moral, epistemological, and social ethics that are crucial for promoting peaceful attitudes among individuals and communities. Central to this view is the idea that peace is not just the absence of conflict but a reflection of moral harmony, justice, and mutual respect. In the context of technological advancement, it is essential to establish modern moral principles that incorporate the values developed over millennia by our civilisation, while also acknowledging the unique aspects of communication and the culture of living in a digital world (Page, 2008, 15).

James Page identifies five main ethical traditions that underpin peace education: virtue ethics, consequentialist ethics, conservative ethics, aesthetic ethics, and the ethics of care. Each of these traditions offers unique perspectives on how education can promote peace by fostering suitable attitudes and values in individuals and communities (Page, 2008, 42–45). Virtue ethics, rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, emphasizes the cultivation of moral character and personal virtues such as honesty, courage, and empathy, highlighting the importance of internal moral development as a foundation for peaceful behaviour. Consequentialist ethics, by contrast, evaluates actions primarily based on their outcomes, encouraging learners to consider the broader social impact of their decisions and to prioritise actions that minimise harm and promote collective well-being. Conservative ethics draws attention to the preservation of social cohesion, respect for tradition, and the role of institutional frameworks in maintaining order and stability, suggesting that education can reinforce values that sustain harmonious communities. Aesthetic ethics introduces the dimension of beauty, creativity, and imagination into moral reasoning, proposing that experiences of artistic and cultural expression can cultivate empathy and sensitivity, enhancing individuals' capacity to appreciate diverse perspectives. Finally, the ethics of care, influenced by the work of Carol Gilligan and contemporary feminist thought, foregrounds relationships, empathy, and responsiveness to others' needs, advocating

educational practices that nurture compassion and mutual responsibility. Together, these five traditions provide a comprehensive framework for peace education, offering both theoretical guidance and practical strategies for educators to develop morally aware, socially responsible, and empathetic individuals who can contribute to a more just and peaceful society.

Contemporary research on peace education in the digital age highlights the importance of recognising the specificities of online communication in fostering peaceful attitudes. Digital media can be a powerful tool for promoting values such as justice, equality, and mutual respect, provided its use is conducted consciously and responsibly. (Grunewald, 2021, 128).

Furthermore, a critical-reflexive model of peacebuilding in the digital environment requires careful consideration of both technical and social aspects, along with ongoing reflection on how technology influences norms, behaviours, and values within society (Hirblinger, 2023, 270-272). This approach highlights that digital tools are not neutral; they shape how people interact, perceive ethical boundaries, and respond to conflict. By critically analysing the relationship between technological affordances, user behaviour, and social structures, educators and policymakers can create interventions that foster constructive engagement, promote responsible digital citizenship, and develop norms that support peaceful coexistence across online and offline communities.

Immanuel Kant's philosophy, especially his concept of the "categorical imperative," requires individuals to treat others as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end. This is a fundamental principle for peace education and the development of ethical attitudes (Kant, 1795, 56). Kant's focus on universal moral law and respect for human dignity offers a philosophical foundation for cultivating responsible, empathetic, and just individuals capable of addressing both interpersonal and societal challenges. In modern digital life, Kant's ethics prompt us to consider the moral effects of our online actions. It stresses accountability, mutual respect, and fairness in virtual interactions just as in traditional social contexts.

Developing communication skills for peace. Communication skills are not just about conveying information; they involve a set of six elements that shape relationships between people.

1. Clear expression of thoughts ensures that information is understandable to the recipient in both written and spoken forms. According to Hargie (2019, p. 45), this clarity is fundamental in effective communication.

2. Active listening involves attentively receiving the other person's message, asking questions that deepen understanding, paraphrasing, and showing genuine interest in the conversation. As noted by Brown and Williams (2020, p. 58), active listening is crucial for fostering mutual understanding.

3. Selecting appropriate language forms for the situation, as communication between a student and a teacher differs from that between political leaders or between a parent and a school principal. Johnson (2018, p. 102) emphasises the importance of context in choosing the correct language.

4. Nonverbal communication, which constitutes a significant part of communication, relies on body language, gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Brown and Williams (2020, p. 75) highlight that nonverbal cues often convey more than words alone.

5. Empathy is the ability to perceive and understand others' emotions and respond appropriately to the situation. Hargie (2019, p. 158) asserts that empathy is essential for building trust and rapport.

6. Conflict resolution skills involve calm negotiation centred on shared interests rather than proving who is right, ultimately aiming for compromise. Johnson (2018, p. 210) discusses strategies for effective conflict resolution.

These competencies are also applicable to peace education in the digital world. However, virtual communication introduces an additional element: communication without physical presence and natural emotions, which does not mean it lacks a strong emotional charge. Brown and Williams (2020, p. 120) argue that digital platforms can amplify emotional expressions, sometimes leading to misunderstandings.

Young people who mainly communicate via devices such as laptops or phones using instant messaging are much less likely to participate in traditional face-to-face conversations. This shift can impede understanding and the development of all six areas of communication that have shaped our civilisation for millennia. Hargie (2019, p. 411) warns that over-reliance on digital communication may hinder the development of essential interpersonal skills.

Conclusively, it becomes one of the most important priorities of education to equip young people with these six communication competencies, which can be achieved through intentional teaching strategies that combine both traditional and digital learning environments. Structured classroom activities, such as debates, group projects, and reflective discussions, can allow students to practise clear expression, active listening, and appropriate use of language. Role-playing scenarios and collaborative tasks help cultivate empathy, improve non-verbal communication awareness, and encourage constructive conflict resolution.

Additionally, integrating digital literacy programmes can guide students in understanding how communication differs online and how to manage emotional expressions responsibly in virtual space. Schools can further support this development by fostering a culture of respect, offering teacher-led feedback, and providing safe opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue with peers. Through these approaches, education can strengthen the communication skills necessary for building positive relationships both offline and in the increasingly complex world of digital interaction. It should also be noted that, by cultivating these six key communication skills: clear expression, active listening, appropriate language use, nonverbal awareness, empathy, and conflict resolution, educators lay the foundation for a young generation that supports peaceful, ethical engagement in our digitally connected world. When young people learn to express ideas clearly and listen attentively, they are better equipped to discern and challenge misinformation or hostile rhetoric. If they know how to choose language thoughtfully across diverse real-life and digital contexts, it helps them avoid escalation and respect different perspectives, beliefs, and approaches. Young people can build trust and social cohesion rather than alienation and polarisation when they know how to recognise nonverbal cues and use empathy. Finally, if we can teach young people how to master conflict resolution, even on a daily basis, they will shift their focus from “winning” to resolving conflicts, from positional to interest-based communication. However, this can be achieved through mutual understanding, respect, and shared values. Integrating work on communication skills of young people into the educational system at all levels should help develop pedagogy for peace and consequently contribute to a society rooted in fairness, mutual respect, and sustainable harmony. As Owen Hargie emphasises, communication should be viewed as a skilled behaviour and a vital component of interpersonal competence (Hargie, 2019).

Ethics, Responsibility, and the Limits of Freedom in Digital Media. Ethics and responsibility form the basis for fostering healthy, informed, and safe relationships in digital media, which now play an increasingly vital role in shaping opinions, attitudes, and social behaviour. In the pursuit of promoting peace, avoiding conflict, and encouraging mutual respect, the significance of ethics in online communication cannot be overstated. The digital environment, with its instant access to information and potential for anonymous participation, offers both tremendous opportunities and considerable risks. Anonymity and the ease of publishing content can lead to abuse, the spread of disinformation, verbal hostility, and hate speech. Consequently, it is essential to set clear boundaries on freedom of speech that do not infringe upon the rights and dignity of others.

Freedom of expression in the digital sphere should be regarded as a vital aspect of responsible communication. This implies that every user must be aware of the consequences of their actions and the effect their words and content might have on others. Responsibility is not solely on individuals; it also lies with the media, digital platforms, authorities overseeing online activities, and creators of technological tools, who, when designing algorithms and recommendation systems, should aim to reduce the risk of disseminating harmful content.

Establishing ethical standards in digital media is vital for creating a space where hate speech, verbal abuse, and disinformation are absent. Educational mechanisms are necessary to teach users how to identify harmful or manipulative content, foster critical thinking, and utilise digital tools responsibly. Media education should encourage a culture of dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect, shaping attitudes that promote social harmony and communal responsibility.

In this context, the importance of self-regulation in the media industry is as significant as that of educational activities. Companies and institutions operating within the digital realm should integrate ethical principles with technological advancements, both in content moderation and the development of recommendation algorithms. This can help create a digital space that is safe, transparent, and user-friendly, where freedom of speech is balanced with responsibility for others.

The boundaries of freedom in digital media must be clearly established to safeguard individuals from harmful content, information manipulation, and online hostility. Setting these boundaries does not mean restricting freedom as a fundamental value, but rather creating a space where constructive communication, creative exchange of ideas, and peaceful dispute resolution can occur. Developing and implementing ethical norms is a challenge that demands the cooperation of all involved in digital life, including users, media outlets, as well as state institutions and international bodies.

Responsible models of action in the digital world should be grounded in fundamental values such as respect, tolerance, solidarity, and empathy. Developing such models is crucial for fostering a long-term culture of peace in the digital age, where technology not only enables rapid information sharing but also encourages the development of informed, responsible, and ethically aware global citizens. Upholding ethics, responsibility, and the limits of freedom in digital media is an investment in the future of societies that utilise technology not solely for convenience or entertainment, but primarily for the common good and harmonious coexistence.

Teaching Digital Literacy: A Key Responsibility for Educators. Educators play a vital role in fostering digital literacy by integrating critical thinking, online safety, and responsible digital citizenship into their teaching methods. By demonstrating responsible digital behaviour and providing guidance on evaluating online sources, educators help students navigate the digital world effectively. Through curriculum design and teaching strategies, they can cultivate essential skills such as critically analysing online information, recognising bias, and detecting misinformation. In doing so, educators equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to engage responsibly online, make well-informed decisions, and actively participate in an increasingly digital society.

Furthermore, teachers can encourage students to develop a nuanced understanding of digital media, recognising both its advantages and limitations, and promote healthy online habits, digital etiquette, and effective online communication. By integrating digital literacy into their lessons, teachers can help bridge the gap between students' online and offline lives, preparing them to succeed in a swiftly changing digital world. Ultimately, teachers' efforts in fostering digital literacy can have a lasting influence on students' academic, personal, and professional futures.

Conclusions. In summary, effective communication in the digital age demands a comprehensive approach that combines ethical education, technical skills, and an understanding of the elements influencing online interactions. As digital technologies evolve, the ability to discern truth from disinformation and to practise empathy becomes vital for fostering peaceful relationships (Reardon, 1988, p. 74). The challenge for educators lies not only in teaching digital literacy but also in embedding moral values such as respect, responsibility, and tolerance into everyday digital exchanges (Page, 2008, p. 231). Developing skills in clear expression, active listening, and conflict resolution ensures that communication promotes mutual understanding rather than division (Hargie, 2019, p. 158). The anonymity and rapid nature of online discourse can reduce accountability; therefore, establishing ethical boundaries that uphold individual dignity and social harmony is essential (Gorman, 2019, p. 10). By grounding digital education in both philosophical principles and practical strategies, societies can address technological challenges while shaping a generation equipped to engage constructively, empathetically, and responsibly both online and offline (Brown Sr. & Hersey, 2018, p.

25). Cultivating these skills and values is crucial to creating a future founded on dialogue, cooperation, and peace.

Furthermore, as digital communication redefines interpersonal relationships, the need to develop intercultural competence and global awareness, grounded in the principles of peace education, increases. Digital spaces have the potential to serve as platforms for peaceful dialogue, reconciliation, and shared understanding across cultural and ideological boundaries. Promoting openness, curiosity, and cultural sensitivity in online interactions not only reduces misunderstandings but also strengthens the values of coexistence and mutual respect that support peaceful societies. Education, therefore, should not only prepare individuals to navigate digital systems but also to utilise these systems as tools to promote justice, empathy, and nonviolence.

Finally, sustainable progress in digital communication relies on continuous reflection and adaptation. As artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and other emerging technologies transform the way people exchange ideas, societies must remain vigilant in upholding human-centred values and peace. Ethical communication should aim to turn digital spaces into environments that promote reconciliation, compassion, and solidarity, rather than hostility or polarisation. By integrating peace education into digital learning, communities can develop global citizens who approach differences with empathy and dialogue instead of aggression. In this way, humanity can ensure that technological innovations serve as a bridge to peace—allowing individuals to communicate with understanding, resolve conflicts nonviolently, and build a fairer, more harmonious world.

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