X AND Y GENERATIONS WORKING WITH SPECIALTY TEXTS: ANALYSIS BASED ON PILOT PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

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Abstract

Research was started in Tallinn Health Care College to investigate, describe and compare reading strategies among the representatives of generation X and Y with the hypotheses stating that representatives of generation X and Y use different reading strategies. A semi-structured questionnaire consisting of 25 statements on the text reading strategies, 3 multiple choice questions on preferences considering the design and medium of the text, and three open questions on the translation process when working with a text in student's third language was prepared and conducted during the first, piloting stage of the research among the students of THCC. The analysis of the answers to three questions from a questionnaire are introduced in the presentation.

First question investigated the preferred medium of reading the text from - paper, computer or other smart device. Question offered a range of possible answers to mark the level of one's preferences: 0-20%, 20-40%, 60-80%, 80-100%.

Second question investigated the language in which the representatives of both generations prefer to read. The range 40-60% was most often marked in regard to reading texts in Estonian, in which 30% of the representatives of generation X and Y preferred to read.

Third question focused investigated using the Likert scale on how and where the texts were searched from. Both generations preferred internet as the first source of information, which was followed by databases.

The analysis of questionnaires confirms the choice of method and presents information indicating similarities but also differences in generations' preferences. The results direct the authors toward further research of the field as well as to investigate the strategies of working with texts keeping in mind the needs of effective teaching by making conclusions which mediums and strategies should be used when dealing with different generations in common classroom.

Keywords: *generation X, generation Y, specialty texts, academic reading*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's learning environment students are not limited to one generation and constitute a group of mixed generations with different experience, skills and preferences. This constantly changing nature of students and an increasingly global-oriented society has initiated the educational system's need to adapt as the success of higher education will depend upon its ability to respond successfully to such change (Black 2010:100).

According to Nugin et al. it is not easy to determine the exact date of birth of every generation as they have been found to be vague and the transitions difficult to pinpoint. (Nugin jt 2016:13). The pilot of a current research aims to investigate two generations - generation X and Y, at the moment studying in Tallinn Health Care College with the focus on their preferences and habits in working with specialty academic texts. In defining the terms for the research, it has been agreed that the representatives of X generation are considered to be people born in 1965 and 1979 and the representatives of generation Y in 1981 - 1995. (Nugin jt 2016, Brett 2017).

The initiation of the research was influenced by the authors experience as lecturers and seeing how students have different attitudes and approach to using digital and printed materials as well as internet in their learning activities. As it is, there are students who are more comfortable using a keyboard than

writing in a notebook and happier reading from a computer screen than from paper they can hold (Black 2010: 94).

The research started will cast light on the preferred strategies of the learners from different generations as it comes to searching for texts and working with texts, allowing lecturers to facilitate the learning process and make it more effective for all learners.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Methods

Research was started in Tallinn Health Care College to investigate, describe and compare reading strategies among the representatives of generation X and Y presuming that representatives of generation X and Y use different reading strategies. The impetus to initiate the research derives from the fact that the representatives of mainly X and Y generations in one classroom acquiring higher education is a challenge to lecturers considering all the characteristics that differ one generation from another.

Pilot was started in September 2017 and a questionnaire was created to be filled by the representatives of both generations. Before filling the questionnaire the principles of it were explained and it was possible for respondents to ask further questions at any time.

The data was analysed using descriptive statistics which summarizes and describes the received information. Inductive content analysis was used to understand and further investigate and interpret the respondents' answers thus acquiring information on their views and preferences in working with specialty texts.

Research uses elements of qualitative and quantitative research methods to effectively analyse the data and use it in drawing efficient conclusions.

2.2. Sample and Questionnaire

Sample was created using simple random sampling method. The choice of the sample for the pilot was flexible and purposeful, with the aim of the sample growing as the research continues. Respondents were first and third year nursing students of Tallinn Health Care College in 2017. For the pilot, 39 students filled the questionnaire, of which 11 were the representatives of generation X and 28 the representatives of generation Y.

A semi-structured questionnaire consisting of 25 statements on the text reading strategies, 3 multiple choice questions on preferences considering the design and medium of the text, and three open questions on the translation process when working with a text in student's third language was prepared and conducted during the first, piloting stage of the research. The analysis of the answers to three questions from a questionnaire are introduced in the current article.

First question investigated the medium the text was read from - from paper, computer or other smart device. Question offered a range of possible answers to mark the percentage of one's preferences: 0-20%, 20-40%, 40-60%, 60-80%, 80-100%.

Second questions investigated the language in which the representatives of both generations prefer to read. Question offered a range of possible answers to mark the percentage of one's preferences: 0-20%, 20-40%, 40-60%, 60-80%, 80-100%.

Third question focused on from where and how the texts were searched. Likert scale was used to retrieve information with the answer possibilities of "very often", "often", "sometimes", "rarely", "very rarely".

3. RESULTS

First question investigated the medium where the text was preferably read from - from paper, computer or other smart device. As for paper, 40-60% was the most often marked answer by the representatives of 18% of generation X and 30% of the representatives of generation Y. The data describing generation Y reveals that the number of representatives reading texts from paper is remarkably higher than among the representatives of generation X. The most popular was computer as this was marked to be 60-80% by 36% of the generation X and 30% of the generation Y representatives. Smart devices are shown to be used quite rarely to read texts compared to other medium, which is demonstrated by the choice of range being 0-20% by 45% of generation X and 50% of generation Y.
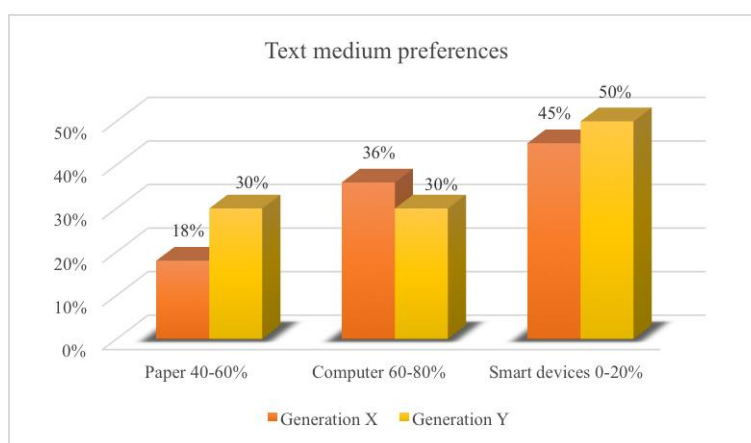

Fig. 1. Preferred medium of text

Second questions investigated the language in which the representatives of both generation prefer to read. In Tallinn Health Care College the language of instruction is Estonian but in order to compile academic written papers students have to search for materials in other languages as well as specialty sources in Estonian are lacking. The language choices given in the questionnaire were Estonian, English and Other Language, which in turn had to be specified.

The range 40-60% was most often marked in regard to reading texts in Estonian, in which 27% of the representatives of generation X and 30% of generation Y preferred to read in. In reading texts in English generation X showed equal preferences but from generation Y, 42% preferred to read in Estonian in range 60-80% and the range 40-60% was chosen by 34% of the answerers. Finnish and Russian were also mentioned but main languages marked were Estonian and English.
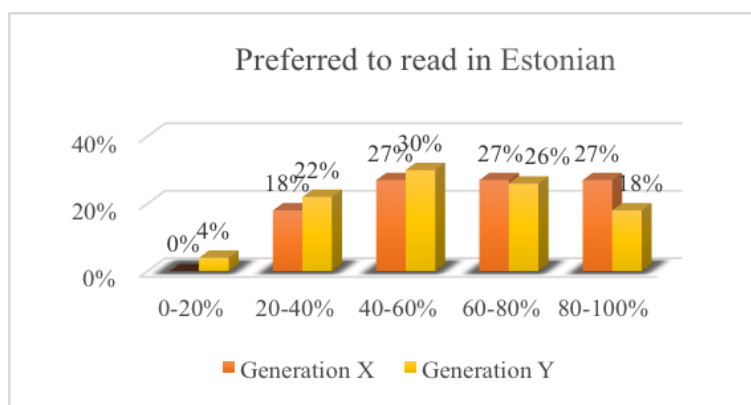

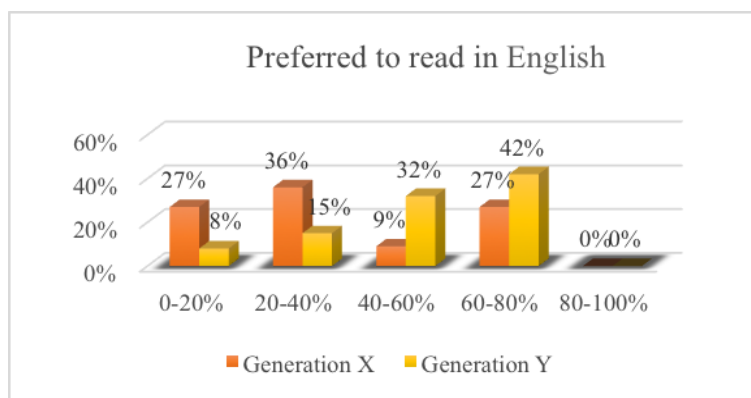**Fig. 2.** Preferred language – Estonian

Fig. 3. Preferred language - English

Third question focused on from where and how the texts were searched. Likert scale was used to retrieve information with the answer possibilities of "very often", "often", "sometimes", "rarely", "very rarely". Both, generation X and Y preferred the internet as the first source of information which was followed by databases. Other answers varied by generations. 18% of generation X answered that databases were searched "very often", from generation Y 48% very often uses search words both in English and Estonian "very often".

Time filter is "very rarely" changed by both generations (X – 18%, Y – 48%). Other respondents marked as "very rarely" varied by generations. Most of generation X uses search terms in other languages besides Estonian "very rarely" while representatives of generation Y use search terms "very rarely" and "rarely" as mentioned in regards to Finnish and Russian.

4. DISCUSSION

The pilot confirms the belief that further investigation into the matter of text and language preferences of the two generations are needed and would be beneficial to both, learners and lecturers. Some of the results coincided with the authors previous opinions while some were yet surprising. It was expected that the respondents would prefer to read in their native language (Estonian) but the fact that smart devices received were marked as to be read from only on the range of 0-20% by both generations was somewhat surprising, as the smart phone still seems to be the most often used means of searching for quick answers during lectures. The reason of not using other smart devices but more often a laptop for reading longer texts are presumably connected to the more comfortable reading and text-highlighting offered by computer.

The preferred language to read from was investigated as to search for differences between generations. It was revealed that Generation Y differs from generation X by preferring to read most of their materials in English as 42% of the respondents marked for it the range 60-80%. As mentioned earlier the evidence-based, scientific materials in most of the students native language, Estonian, are somewhat lacking, databases and articles in English are a necessary choice. Generation Y being younger and thus having better English skills prefer it to reading in Estonian as it saves time and makes the learning process more efficient.

Results reveal that digital and printed materials are used somewhat equally. In secondary education printed materials among which most are books, are more common which would also explains the habit of reading form paper. Also, the materials in students' native language are most often recommended and used. The pilot questionnaire's results reveal that even if the search is performed in computer, the learners tend to print the materials and still read it from paper. It was especially evident among the representatives of generation Y which was presumed to prefer digital materials. Diane Mizrach with her study supports the argument as it states that learners actually do prefer materials on paper although it is a common belief that more and more learners prefer digitalized materials (Mizrachi 2015). The

reasons behind it are most likely that reading from paper seems to be more comfortable. Health considerations cannot be overlooked as well, as reading from computer has been reported to cause eye fatigue and strain thus resulting in a negative effect on learning as a process itself.

As for the questionnaire, some respondents orally or in the open question section expressed their wish to have more open questions included in the questionnaire where they could elaborate and explain their choices. Their suggestion will be taken into account in future steps of the research.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the questionnaires conducted within the frames of a pilot project confirm the choice of method and present information showing similarities but also differences in the generations' answers. The results direct the authors toward further research of the field and into investigating the strategies of working with texts keeping in mind the needs of effective teaching by making conclusions which mediums and strategies should be used when dealing with different generations in shared classroom. The results so far direct the authors into considering that printed materials deserve more attention than perhaps they have received so far, with the emphasis still being on searching the databases for information but offering the learners from different generations the opportunity to use printed materials in addition to the digital ones. According to the pilot study, smart devices are not the preferred means of reading, which is valuable information when planning the future educational activities for both, generation X and Y. The preferred language of reading is an intriguing point to tackle in the further stages of the research, as it offers possibilities to interpret the choices using the socio-historical background influencing the respondents' preferences.

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