

## Globalization, Networking and Intercultural Communication

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to address the impact of globalization and networking on intercultural communication. Since the last century, social networking has been dramatically changing the “standard norms” of communication. For example, face to face communication is most often replaced with writing that, in its turn, has undergone great changes. To save time, netters use abbreviations (*idk* “I don’t know,” *brb* “be right back,” etc.). The processes of globalization and networking are tightly connected. They interact and influence intercultural communication, the vector of which is presently directed towards the global level. In this study, fifty nine students were asked to answer four questions concerning their communication with peers in other countries with the purpose of eliciting students’ understanding of the impact of social networks on intercultural communication. As the analysis of students’ survey of the issues central to global networking showed, for the digital generation (a.k.a, N Gen) communication through social networks is more preferable than speech. The survey on global networking uncovered significant differences in the attitudes towards intercultural constituents and categories; e.g., the attitude towards the notion of friends is conceptualized quite differently nowadays. The results show that most categories of intercultural communication are impacted by networking. Since globalization, social networking and intercultural communication are interconnected I start from the processes of globalization and networking and proceed to intercultural communication. Then I give a short questionnaire for students to hear their voices.

**Keywords:** Globalization, intercultural communication, Internet, social networking, social media, social change.

### 1. Introduction

Since the introduction of the Internet initially into the sciences (1980s), it gradually embraced all spheres of life. According to Veltman (2002), “[t]he advent of new technologies and the Internet led in a first instance to a networking of the great international libraries and research institutions.” (para 24). Thus, a relatively new phenomenon of social networking spread worldwide and became significantly prominent for many people belonging to various nations and countries. According to Computer Desktop Encyclopedia, the term varies: sometimes it is called just a ‘net’ or ‘network’ and denotes either a network or the Internet (written with the capital letter). Networking is highly popular, especially among millennials, the Digital generation (N Gen, network generation), this is the generation born in the ‘computer epoch’<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wordsby.com/categories/demographics.asp>, retrieved 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

Most of them are addicted to it, such netters are called *net-o-holics* / *net-a-holics*, or *computer junkies*<sup>2</sup> on the other hand there is a phenomenon of *social network fatigue*; the reason is that some 'friends,' as the netters call each other, create too many accounts on social networking sites (some of which are just useless or unsolicited), so that it becomes impossible to maintain their sites and to live an active social life on the Web. Many of them feel frustrated and experience mental exhaustion, which entails that some netters just stop communicating.<sup>3</sup>

With the unprecedented range of globalization processes, the number of contacts across cultures has dramatically increased, resulting in an unusual phenomenal spread of new social media embracing the whole world. Shuter (2012, p. 220). The present day situation is characterized by great changes in many aspects of reality. Globalization has induced mobility which has led to substantial growth of various cultural contacts, resulting in a great variety of Englishes. Social media and networking have induced a new kind of communication.

These changes entail an exuberant growth of scholars' involvement into the issues of intercultural communication. Researchers offer new approaches and methodologies. And still these three interrelated phenomena (globalization, networking and intercultural communication) require more scholarly attention in order to deeply understand how and in what direction intercultural communication is changing. With the purpose to study the interaction of these three phenomena and the way students perceive them and how they regard these changes a survey was conducted at a large university in Russia. The present study presents the results of the research data received from 59 students' responses.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Globalization

In their introduction to the book '*Globalization and Language Teaching*,' the editors David Block and Deborah Cameron (2002) say that "globalization is nothing if not a fashionable term – it pervades contemporary political rhetoric and is a keyword of both academic and popular discourse on economy, society, technology and culture" (p. 1). The scholars argue over when exactly this term first appeared; Block and Cameron enumerate several scholars who introduced some possible dates: 1) fifteenth century Europe; 2) seventeenth century; 3) 1961 (according to Webster's Dictionary).

Steger (2009, p. 15; cited in Chen, 2012, p. 3), defined the process of globalization in the following way: globalization "refers to the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space." In other words, globalization is "a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede, and people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (Waters, 1995, p. 3. as cited by Chen, 2012, p. 3.).

But most typically, as Kluver (2000) writes, globalization is defined with reference to the different forms of interconnectedness including networks. In the author's opinion, while

<sup>2</sup> <http://onlineslangdictionary.com/meaning-definition-of/net-a-holic>, retrieved 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.wordspy.com/words/socialnetworkingfatigue.asp>, retrieved 19<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

globalization refers to integrated economic institutions, the channels of technology help this integration. The development of communications technologies enrich the scope of trade and with electronic media any novel ideas will reach the destination within an instant.

Cowen (2002) draws attention to the fact that globalization has two sides: while it has brought effective commercial influences (for example spread of Toyotas in 151 countries; Coca-Cola in 185 countries; McDonald's all over the world, etc.), at the same time it tends to ruin cultures and their ethos. The author understands the word ethos as "a shared cultural matrix for interpretation, rather than a narrow conformity of opinion." (p. 48). On the one hand, globalization and social media promote ethnic and cultural diversity, but on the other hand we witness cultural losses. We see that "*Destruction of ethos* can cause non-Western cultures to lose their uniqueness, thereby faltering in their artistic creativity." (p. 47).

Thus, globalization has attracted many scholars' attention and presently it has grown into a key research area, which includes the study of changes in communicative behavior. As argued by Twombly by Wooly (2013), those students who travel abroad are more aware of global issues; they also are more academically driven. New technologies have transformed media formats into a mobile phenomenon made possible by devices such as personal computers, cellular phones, tablets, and Smartphones, (iPhones, BlackBerrys, Androids, etc.). Easy access to mobile telephones and Internet allow people, especially the young generation to use roam-calling, texting, IMing all over the world, visiting countries they would like to see while staying connected with their homes and friends. This is a new phenomenon and a debatable theme for research with no unanimous definition recognized by scholars.

The global phenomenon of social media, is tightly connected with new technologies and both in turn impact intercultural communication. There are voices warning about the great serious impact of new media inducing changes to life experience, and transformations in the field of economics, cultural patterns, communication styles, etc. (Chen, 2012). Furthermore, the cyberspace formed by new media allows people to generate virtual experience and reality, which effectuates the free alternation of one's gender, personality, appearance, and occupation (Chen, 2012). "The invisible cyberspace not only induces a gap between reality and virtuality, also effectuates the free alternation of one's gender, personality, appearance, and occupation." (p. 3).

Summing up, Chen (2012) constructs five important features of globalization:

First, globalization is a dialectically dynamic process, which is caused by the pushing and pulling between the two forces of cultural identity and cultural diversity, or between localization and universalization. Second, globalization is universally pervasive. It moves like air penetrating into every aspect of human society and influences the way we live, think, and behave. Third, globalization is holistically interconnected. It builds a huge matrix in which all components are interconnected with networks. Fourth, globalization represents a culturally hybridized state, which allows cultural transmission via new media to take place at a very rapid rate by permeating and dissolving human boundaries. Finally, globalization increases individual power in the new media society, which pluralizes the world by recognizing the ability and importance of individual components. (p. 3).

“With these distinct features new media pushes the trend of globalization to its highest level in human history” (Chen, 2012, p. 3). Movius (2010) highlights the fact that media have a central place in globalisation and gives three reasons for this: 1) media corporations globalize their products; 2) global infrastructure of communication eases and promotes global information flows; 3) and global media play a key role in how we presently communicate.

## 2.2. Networking

Social networking as a special phenomenon has significantly impacted networked societies all over the world. A new generation has recently appeared, variously called *N Gen* (network generation), *generation D* (digital generation), *millennials* or generation Y;<sup>4</sup> these are all those who were born in “*computer epoch*”.<sup>5</sup> It could be said that the global level of networking has led to significant differences in the attitudes towards many intercultural constituents; for example, for the digital generation communication through social networks is preferable to speech, and also, the attitude towards the notion of friends is conceptualized quite differently nowadays.

The process of medialization of everyday life, as Hess-Lüttich (2006) pointed out, has become domesticated. Scholars of media semiotics observe the change of habits of the young generation. The media are regarded as social processes that construct some meanings and they do this via discourse (Ibroscheva & Jyotika, 2008). According to Cheese (2008), Generation Y are “top young performers,” “highly technological savvy,” “relationship-oriented,” “use a wide range of media and technology to connect with others,” “[j]ob-[h]opping,” “hungry ... for knowledge,” and “have fun at work” (para 3, 10, 11, 13).

The impact of social networks on various constituents of intercultural communication is underscored by many scholars. According to Shuter (2012, p. 219), “new media...are transforming communication across cultures”; electronic media have altered contemporary methods of communication (Movius, 2010). Chen (2012, p. 3) argues that “[w]ith its distinctive features new media has brought human society to a highly interconnected and complex level, but at the same time, it challenges the very existence of human communication in the traditional sense.” “[n]ew media not only influences the form and content of information/messages, but it also affects how people understand each other in the process of human communication” (Chen, 2012, p. 3). After studying a wide range of literature Chen (2012, p. 4) identified three main areas of impact:

- (1) the impact of national/ethnic culture on the development of new media,
- (2) the impact of new media on cultural/social identity, and
- (3) the impact of new media (especially social media) on different aspects of intercultural interaction (e.g., intercultural relationship, intercultural dialogue, and intercultural conflict)

Summing up, we can compare the new media with the mythological two-faced Janus. One face gives the opportunity to talk on-line with a multitude of ‘friends,’ which the digital

<sup>4</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennials>, retrieved 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wordspy.com/categories/demographics.asp>, retrieved 19<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

generation is happy to see. Social networking, by incessantly generating information due to new technologies, helps ‘friends’ to maintain connections. But the other face of Janus threatens existence of unique minority cultures, their cultural patterns, and life experience, through the pervading globalization. Thus, the networks transform communication styles and other intercultural communication categories.

In the present research, intercultural communication is understood as integrating pragmatic, cognitive, affective, axiological, cultural, and behavioral patterns in communication acts between two individuals belonging to different cultures (interpersonal communication) or communicative acts between groups belonging to diverse cultural contexts (intercultural communication).

#### 2.4. Changes in Intercultural Communication: Theoretical Framework

The processes of globalization and networking are tightly connected, and in turn influence intercultural communication, the vector of which is presently directed towards the global level. The new generation that has grown up on Internet technologies has transformed the attitude to communication. Many researchers reconsider intercultural communication in light of new social media and recognize great changes (Cheese, 2008; Chen, 2012; Cowen, 2002; Movius, 2010; Pfister & Soliz, 2011; Shuter, 2012.). Pfister and Soliz (2011) illustrate their idea of changes with four interconnected arguments in the following way: “(1) producing new public fora capable of (2) hosting rich, multimodal “spaces” of contact on (3) a scale of many-to-many communication that (4) challenges traditional modes of representation” (p. 246).

To succinctly outline the present day cause of intercultural transformations all over the world we have to address new media which have triggered contacts of people from different cultures and caused changes from “face-to-face encounters” to instantaneous “communication with others regardless of geo-political boundaries, time, or space” (Shuter, 2012, p. 219).

The impact of networking on intercultural communication has dramatically changed the ‘standard norms’ of communication, compared to the last century. Netters have acquired the so-called ‘digital culture’ introducing changes to linguistics, speech, the way of spending time, etc. Instead of words, netters often use abbreviations, for example, *idk* (“I don’t know”); *bff* (“best friend forever”); *brb* (“be right back”); *nvm* (“never mind”); *sup* (“what’s up?”); *cya* (“see ya [you] later”); *lol* (“laugh out loud”); *omg* (“oh my gosh!”) *w8* (“wait”), *rolf* (“rolling on floor laughing”); *yolo* (“you only live once”), to mention just a few.

The changes in communication before social networks and presently are compared in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Comparing Intercultural Communication Before and Now

<i>Before</i>	<i>Now</i>
Face to Face ( <i>f2f</i> )	Mediated (Networking)
Telephone (standard)	I-phone, cell phone

Books	E-books
Teaching	Learning
Writing	Texting / IMing
Words, collocations	Abbreviations (often)
Collaborative work ( <i>f2f</i> )	Distant collaboration
Working in offices	Working at home (often)
Identity	Identity (disguised by niks)
Control of information	Information can freely move around (Chen, 2012)
Reality	Virtual experience and reality (Chen, 2012)
Long way of connection	Spontaneous interconnection (Chen, 2012)
Limited circle of social relations (compared to to-day's situation)	Big on-line social relations (Movius, 2010)
Categories: Values (shared by many in a society)	New values (acquired through virtual societies, from friends living in a great variety of countries)
Standardization (Reigeluth, 1996)	Customization (Reigeluth, 1996)
Centralized control (Reigeluth, 1996)	Autonomy with accountability (Reigeluth, 1996)
Autocratic decision making (Reigeluth, 1996)	Shared decision making (Reigeluth, 1996)
Compliance (Reigeluth, 1996)	Initiative (Reigeluth, 1996)
Conformity (Reigeluth, 1996)	Diversity (Reigeluth, 1996)
One-way communications (Reigeluth, 1996)	Networking (Reigeluth, 1996)

The data and studies summarized in the table confirm great changes concerning intercultural communication categories. A previous study by Lebedko (2014) found that students (Chinese and Japanese) from abroad who came to Russia to study Russian language and culture used social media less during the honeymoon stage (of culture shock and/or acculturation). They gradually began using Facebook and Renren social media at the recovery stage and later they pointed out that 'speaking' with friends on the nets was supporting them if students experienced cultural bumps or communication failures at the acculturation stage. Some students accepted various values (not so many) and rejected others. The study showed the impact of social media: values now are more dynamic than ever before. Shuter (2012) pronounced these tremendous changes as 'the revolution.' One can also see that the process of teaching has been transformed to learning, that gives initiative to students; e-books are preferred to books; writing has turned into Texting and IMing; abbreviations are often preferred to words and collocations; F2F (face-to-face) collaborative work has presently changed to distant collaboration when authors who

do not know personally each other, know the projects they are working on and discuss them without getting acquainted. In regard to internet 'friendship', identity can be disguised when 'friends' are reluctant to know their 'friends' and use nicknames. The notion of intercultural communication has also changed from one way communication to networking with multiple friends. Another impact of the digital age is that previous control of information has been converted to information that can freely move around (Chen, 2012).

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Participants**

Fifty nine students ranging in age from 20 to 23 at a large university in Russia expressed informed consent to be involved in the experiment focusing on digital social networking and its influence on intercultural communication. There were 56 females vs. three males. All of the respondents were students majoring in linguistics and also studied intercultural communication. The languages of their studies (English, German, Spanish, and French) depended on their choice. English was the second language for those who majored in German, Spanish, and French. Students majoring in English studied other languages German, Spanish, or French as their second foreign language. Their names were numerically codified to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the identity of the participants.

#### **3.2. Procedure**

The students were asked to name their favorite nets, to share their experience of using social networks, their communication with other students from different countries, and what they consider useful for them or what they did not like. The sources of the data collection were exclusively students' answers and reactions to the short questionnaire. This material collection generated a body of 57 respondents, in addition to two students out of 59 who wrote: "I don't use social networks." The responses varied from one question to another.

#### **3.3. Questionnaire**

For the purpose of soliciting students' attitude towards networks and finding out how important the networks were to them, the students were asked to answer questions concerning their goals in using networks and its significance to them. All of the participants studied English as an obligatory language, therefore, the questionnaire was in English. Since the research is tentative, the questionnaire was short including four open-ended questions:

- 1) What is / are your favorite new media / networks?
- 2) How often do you use social media?
- 3) Who are your 'friends' and where do they live?
- 4) What languages do you use and how significant / insignificant is the networking for you?

### 3.4. Students' Voices: Attitudes to Networking

The results are tabulated below according to the questions in the questionnaire.

#### *Question 1. What is / are your favorite new media / networks?*

Table 2 shows the specific networks preferred by the students.

Table 2. Networks

<i>Question # 1: What is / are your favorite new media / networks?</i>	<i>Number of networks</i>
Facebook (FB) was the most popular	<b>37</b>
Vkontakte (VK)	<b>18</b>
Mail agent	<b>5</b>
Skype	<b>5</b>
Twitter	<b>5</b>
Odnoklassniki	<b>4</b>
You tube	<b>4</b>
Tumblr	<b>3</b>
Istagram	<b>1</b>
Forum	<b>1</b>
Google	<b>1</b>
Two students did not like to communicate using networks	<b>0</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>84</b>

Out of 59 students we have received 84 answers, which is explained by the fact that some students have several accounts. Two students wrote that they actually do not use social networks because they do not like it at all. Judging from the results obtained from the first question the most favorite network is Facebook (FB) followed by Vkontakte (VK) (a Russian network meaning "Being in contact"), then Mail agent, Skype, Twitter, Odnoklassniki ("School mates", also a Russian network) and other networks.

#### *Question 2. How often do you use the networks?*

The following table shows the overall frequency of usage and a selection of the students' responses.

Table 3. How Often do Students Use the Networks?

<i>How often I speak with friends</i>	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Each day	13	<i>I use social nets each day (01); I added a page on FB 3 years ago in Spain. I keep on speaking with most friends practically every day and with others I communicate on FB or Skype less often (027); I am 20 years old student, I use social networks every day (012); I communicate with friends in Facebook with those who live far away and those who live within 5 minutes walk from me (08).</i>
6 times a week	6	<i>After living in Spain, I have many friends with whom I like not only to 'speak', but also seriously discuss some political situations in the world, it takes time (6 times a week) (010).</i>
5 times a week	9	<i>I speak with my friends from all over the world at least five times a week (03); I spent a year in Germany and got acquainted with many friends, I speak with them very often (about 5 times a week) (013).</i>
4 – 5 times per week	4	<i>I am interested in speaking with students from other countries. At least I talked 4 – 5 times per week (04).</i>
4 times a week	8	<i>I speak 4 times a week, I wish I have more time to speak each day (028).</i>
Once or twice a week	4	<i>I 'speak' once or twice a week (05).</i>
Once a week	5	<i>Once a week is enough for me because I am very busy with my homework assignment. (054).</i>
Seldom / rarely / from time to time	2	<i>I seldom use facebook, I have an account, but I rarely check it once or twice a week, just to check how my friends are doing. I don't have any other social network. I use them (social nets) from time to time. (06).</i>
Don't use at all	2	<i>Don't use social networks at all (058) / (059)</i>

As can be seen from the students' responses in Table 3, their frequency preferences of using networks considerably varied from 'each day' to 'seldom'/'rarely' and to absolute rejection. In terms of percentage, those who used networks each day comprised 22%, followed by 5 times a week – 15.25%, and 4 times a week – 13.5%. Both 6 times a week and 3 – 4 times a week 'speaking' with netters coincided in percentage (10. – 16% and 10. – 16%). Those who 'spoke' once a week comprises 8.47% followed by those who used networks 4-5 times a week (6.7%), coinciding with those who used networks once or twice a week (6.7%). Those who used the network seldom comprise 3.38%, coinciding with those who did not use any network at all

(3.38%). It is noteworthy that the latter expressed their opinion towards social networking by refusing to communicate through the nets. However, overall, the majority (40 out of 59 students) used social networks at least 4 times per week.

***Question 3. Who are your 'friends' and where do they live?***

The following selected responses represent the global range of students' social networks.

(027) *My friends are exclusively students from Latin America, Italy, France, America, Iran and other countries. We all are tied by the Spanish Language.*

(028) *I learned Spanish in Spain and know many students there, we became friends, I love speaking with them all. My friends live in Spain.*

(08) *I have a lot of friends from abroad. All my friends I know personally. My friends are from all over the world and it's hard to list all the countries: Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Australia, New Zealand. Also I have many friends from different Russian cities: Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok.*

(054) *Most of my friends are students who live in Russia, Ukraine, and Canada.*

(029) *My friends live all over the world. Even in neighbor room.*

(050) *My friends live in Utah, USA; Oakland, New Zealand; Madrid, Spain; St. Petersburg, Irkutsk, Vladivostok (Russia).*

(045) *My friends live in America (New York), Spain (Madrid, Alicante, Valencia), England (London).*

(05) *My friends live in Russia and Spain.*

(025) *My friend is from New Zealand, but he lives in Bogota, Columbia. Another friend of mine lives in California, USA.*

(03) *My friends are from China, Japan, Korea, Spain, and Latin America.*

(011) *I know friends from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Poland.*

(06) *My friends live in Asia and North America, and I don't use Facebook, but I use WhatsApp on my phone, this is how I stay in touch with the rest of my friends.*

Most of the students enjoyed having friends and communicating with them any time they are free. The range of countries in which the students got acquainted with 'friends' are enormous and their friends live all over the world. Only two students out of 59 did not use social networks. Most responses indicated that the students actually saw that the world had become more global.

***Question 4. What languages do you use and how significant / insignificant is the networking for you?***

The following selected responses represent the students' language usage (various responses were selected to show the most indicative varieties and significance/or insignificance of the networking).

(015) *In some way through the communication in English I improve my vocabulary. There are a lot of new words in the Internet. Yes, it does help, especially when we discuss something academic. I broaden my vocabulary receiving response from my English speaking friends.*

(044) *While networking, I use Russian and occasionally English. Social networking is very important in contemporary world. They are inalienable part of both communication with friends, relatives and business partners, to have business relations. Facebook help me support the connection with acquaintances living abroad. Rather rarely I communicate with friends from USA, Canada and México.*

(052) *I use English, Russian and Spanish. It helps me to learn languages because I have possibility to communicate with native speakers of English or Spanish, I widen my vocabulary.*

(027) *I use English, Spanish, Russian and it helps me to learn languages when I communicate with my friends in the net. I know new word combinations, new phrases. And so I remember it better in this way. I use English, Spanish and Russian when communicating in social networks, which helps me master my English and not to forget my good Spanish. It helps me develop my informal English, especially. I also learn vocabulary from native speakers.*

(021) *This form of communication helps me sometimes, for instance, when I speak Spanish with foreign students, I usually try to learn more things of the spoken language, slang and various colloquial phrases.*

(014) *Themes of communication usually are customs of different countries, mode of life, cookery, photography, dances, natural phenomena, sometimes learning (very rarely); we use Spanish and English.*

(047) *This communication is very important. It develops myself and my friends, we share our experiences and impressions.*

(037) *For me, Facebook is a chance to communicate with people that I like but who live far from me, it's very convenient because in most cases it's almost impossible to meet in reality.*

(018) *Due to Internet I can communicate both with foreigners and with people whom I do not have time to see. Some of my friends live aboard. I use English or German. My friends are from various countries: Germany, USA, and Great Britain. Since there is lack of time, it is very convenient to communicate through social network. By the way, communication with foreigners serves a good practice with languages.*

(040) *It is through social network that the opportunity of communicating with people from neighboring countries appears. We also use other programs to communicate through Internet. There appears the acquisition of experience with these people. I mainly communicated with Ukraine and Belorussia. With time the necessity disappeared because of the difference in common interest.*

(036) *The themes we discuss are world news, joint discussion; videoblogging (vlog); dialogs about personal life, etc.*

(030) *Significance of such connections help, at least superficially, get acquainted with unknown mentality, and as maximum, acquire new friends.*

(034) *Of all the social media, I like facebook because it's very comfortable for communicating, especially when your friend and you are in different countries.*

Summing up the students' responses one can notice that only two students out of 59 did not

like to 'speak' on the net. Most of the other students liked to communicate with their peers. One more theme is prominent in the students' responses: this is education. Their goal is to '*improve the vocabulary*'; the respondents underscore that social networking '*does help, especially when we discuss something academic*.' (015). Respondent (044) turned her attention to the importance of '*social networking ... in the contemporary world*.' There were only a few responses of a somewhat negative nature; for example, (040) said that due to different interests their communication stopped. Another respondent (030) mentioned communicating with an acquaintance '*with unknown mentality*'. Generally, most students in the digital generation like 'speaking' on the net and see primarily positive things; they did not pay any attention to great changes in intercultural communication relative to the experience of previous generations.

#### 4. Conclusion

The main objective of the present paper was to address the two processes of globalization and networking and their impact on intercultural communication. It is argued that the paradigm of communication is presently changing, for example, face to face communication is more and more often replaced with writing in social networks; and for the new generation, born in the digital era, communication through social networks is more preferable than speech. A tentative study survey was conducted with the purpose of eliciting students' attitudes to new social media. Fifty nine students at a large Russian university were asked to answer four questions concerning their communication with peers in various countries. The findings in this research include the following: 1) most students highly valued their virtual societies underscoring the help from friends in networks (*Social networking is very important in contemporary world. They are inalienable part of communication with friends* – respondent 044). 2) Social networks are applied as an instrument in education. Students' responses showed that education is also highly valued (*It helps me to learn languages, I widen my vocabulary* – 052; *I have possibility to communicate with native speakers of English or Spanish* – 052); *it helps me master my English and not to forget my good Spanish* – 027). 3) Communication for business to acquire (*business partners, to have business relations* – 044). 4) General communication (*Facebook help me support the connection with acquaintances living abroad*. 044).

Overall, respondents reported rather strong emotions concerning their wide horizons opened to them thanks to social networking (virtual societies, education, business, general communication).

This tentative study is limited in some respects, which will require future research. One of the limitations of this research was the small number of respondents participating in this survey (fifty nine). A larger group could generate broader results. The absence of students' knowledge about new changes in intercultural communication are due to their generation (the millennials, or N Gen) and they should get acquainted with what kind of changes intercultural communication is experiencing in the world, relative to previous generations. In the future, this would help them understand such serious problems as, for example, the threat to the preservation of minority languages and cultures. A larger research scope could produce more reliable generalizable results. In further research, interview and self-reflective methodology will be applied, in order to triangulate the results of the survey.

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