FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY OF *HOMO INTERNETICUS* – RESULT OF APPARENT EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article presents the characteristics of several types of functional illiteracy of a modern man – homo interneticus. In today's computerized world traditionally understood literacy is far insufficient, therefore there is an urgent need for the introduction of universal functional literacy, which is the result of today's apparent education. Permanent connection to the internet makes modern educational systems based on printed texts completely dysfunctional. The phenomena identified in the article indicate the need to take measures to adapt the school to the requirements of students based on a permanent connection to the network. The shift to distance learning caused by the May / June 2020 pandemic made this problem clear.

Key words: illiteracy, types of illiteracy, information society, apparent education

1 INTRODUCTION

In various types of surveys Poland as a rule does not distinguish itself positively or negatively in the field of functional illiteracy. In many countries, the seriousness of the situation is recognized and dealt with in different ways, because it raises a fundamental question: whether a society in which a large percentage of people remain at almost preschool level is able to work rationally – direct its own life and collective life? Sources of this state of affairs are primarily seen in network communication, which is dominant today, hence a modern man is referred to as a man connected to the Internet, namely *homo interneticus* (*internetus*).

2 WHO IS HOMO INTERNETICUS?

If at the moment anybody hearing the words *homo interneticus* may smile, because this is a relatively new term used to classify a man from a sociobiological perspective. In short, *homo interneticus* means a man connected to the global social network. It is assumed that this concept appeared for the first time on the BBC Two website in the section run by Alex Krotoski (2010). Taking into account expressions appearing mainly in popular science publications it can be stated that *homo interneticus* is a new form of human evolution, which is based on a high state of his communication skills – the foundation of vital functions is the connection to the network. The lack of connection not only makes it difficult, but even impossible for him to function in every dimension: personal, social and professional.

From an evolutionary point of view and emphasizing the unique communication skills of human (*homo sapiens*) four classifications can be determined: *homo oralis*, *homo literalis*, *homo typographicus* and *homo interneticus*.

The term *homo sapiens* refers to people who appeared more than 1.4 million years ago and using handmade tools, including communication tools, were able to record the course of events (e.g. perform cave drawings and decorations distinguishing and differentiating items according to their destination and social status – but without the accompanying story, narration – they are completely illegible, and their meanings can only be guessed). *Homo oralis* is defined as the human species with a narrative (telling)

communicative mode, developing concurrently since the emergence of *homo sapiens*. It was linguistic communication, which was probably the only way of cultural transmission up to approx. 4-3 thousand years BC. Then appeared *homo literalis*, which is a term used to describe people efficiently communicating by writing. *Homo typographicus*, in turn, means people using a modern mode of mass communication, fully developed over the last 150 years.

The modern *homo interneticus* appeared with the invention of the WorldWideWeb. Surely, a human still speaks, writes and uses printed matter, but the creation and transmission of culture has changed fundamentally.

3 *HOMO INTERNETICUS* IS AN APPARENT (IGNORANT) OF EDUCATION AND LIFE

Our lives describe our philosophical image of the world. Philosophical literacy is embedded around the problem of being a well-read person and it is not about reading paper books only, but books in general, not only blogs and online hypertext, because this text, without the knowledge of the canon of the reading material, leads to chaos in thinking. This is clearly evidenced by the study of the state of readership in Poland in 2015, conducted by the National Library (Rakoski, 2015). It shows that as many as 63% of Poles had no contact with the book, and 37% read only one book.

In 2014, Spanish BBVA Foundation checked the scientific knowledge of the Europeans using 22 questions. The Poles gave an average of 11 correct answers, Italians and Spaniards were ranked behind us, the leaders – Danes, Germans, Dutch – knew the answer to 15 questions. Copernicus and Maria Skłodowska-Curie "saved" Poles from "a great shame"- only 7 percent of Poles believe that the Sun revolves around the Earth (in some countries this belief is shared by up to 20% of respondents).They were asked about the names of world-famous scientists, and only every fourth Pole could not mention any (only in Poland the Nobel Prize winner – Maria Skłodowska-Curie won this kind of a ranking by beating Albert Einstein). The other results were poor. Half of Poles believe that people lived as early as in the era of dinosaurs. Two-thirds claimed that antibiotics fight viruses. Only 30 percent were able to select the right of the four answers to the question: what may a genetic disease in the family result in? (in Denmark, up to 80 per cent). Although Poles were generally in favor of scientific progress, they broke the record when it comes to distrust towards scientists, most often stating that scientists cross ethical limits. More than half of respondents thought that way. Every third expressed the belief that scientists are lying and are dangerous.

The test also examined the numerical relationship between those who are in favour of evolutionism and the advocates of creationism in each country. On average, 63% of EU citizens believe that the man and the world are rather the result of evolution, 25% claim that this is the work of God (the rest did not give a definite response). In Poland, 37% of respondents leaned towards the evolution and 45 percent opted for the creationist view. In this respect, this is an exception, because even in traditionally Catholic Italy and Spain more than half of the respondents declared evolutionism. Only the Americans turned out to be more creationistic (where the ratio was from 30 to 60 percent). At the same time, Poles are the most optimistic when it comes to the ability to reconcile the truths of faith with scientific knowledge.

In general, the Poles are doing quite well in reconciling faith with non-scientific beliefs. According to the CBOS research (Report, 2011) 33% believe in reincarnation (transmigration of souls), 61% in destiny (bad, good fortune). Much more often these

people declared themselves as practicing Catholics than non-believers. More than half of Poles believe in superstitions. The most religious (practice several times a week) are two times more superstitious than non-practicing. The ranking of superstitions heralding success is as follows: keeping one's fingers crossed, a chimney sweeper, a four-leaf clover, a talisman, the number 7. Among bad omens are a broken mirror, a black cat, a handshake across the threshold, the number 13, getting up on the wrong side of the bed. This could, of course, be considered as a nice cultural characteristics.

People who are completely mentally healthy, less educated, or with a higher education degree, cannot handle the reality that surrounds them. Small problems that can be solved on a regular basis with minimum funds grow rapidly to the size of a powerful tsunami in life. The man is ineffectual, helpless, confused, but .... when the frustration appears he often becomes demanding, impulsive, postulative and more and more steeped in aggression. Such functional and life illiterates cannot articulate what problem they need to struggle with, do not understand it and are looking for a kind of help, everywhere showing aggression and a demanding attitude (Functional illiteracy – the surrealism of postmodernism, 2015).

4   TYPES OF ILLITERACY OF HOMO INTERNETICUS

Social illiteracy. Social Illiteracy is undoubtedly rooted in a massive and rapid development of telecommunication services. It's not just the Internet, but above all the mobile network, especially smartphones. The statistics are as follows: in 2002 only 19% of the world's population had mobile phones (1,174 billion people). The Internet was used by only 631 million (10% of the population). At the end of 2011 the number of mobile phone users reached 6 billion inhabitants of the earth. More than 2.3 billion people had access to the Internet, while in most cases it was a mobile access. At the end of 2011 *Facebook* community was the third largest "country" of the world, just behind China and India.

Modern "illiterates", often with a university degree, cannot meet the demands of competence of the twenty-first century. In the new, post-industrial reality it is no longer enough just to know the alphabet and be able to read and write. It's far too little. Reading texts and searching for data in the network is far different from "traditional" work with the book. Network resources are interconnected through millions of links and references. Conducting research and gathering information has become simple, fast, and available as never before in history. And here comes the problem (Rymszewicz, 2016).

Computerization of society focused only on quantitative changes showed clearly that changes in quantity did not lead to changes in quality, because, paradoxically, an easy access to the network and its unlimited resources of knowledge has become one of the main causes of specific retrogression in terms of literacy, especially in terms of disappearance of the ability to understand written texts and their critical analysis. The man who is afflicted with the so-called functional illiteracy can read and write, but is devoid of critical thinking skills and analytical understanding of the messages, and thus remains closed within a limited circle of his own rigid beliefs and points of view. He remains unable to change the perception and understanding of the surrounding social world - is a social illiterate and has trouble with reading of not only bus and flight timetables, but does not understand what is privacy or a good self-image and the image of other people in the network. In the twenty-first century, social illiteracy simply means the inability to efficiently function in the world without borders or rigid resources of knowledge and without the behaviour according to set patterns.

Health illiteracy. This type of illiteracy is still a little-known concept, but affects *homo interneticus* more and more. He prefers Internet advice, diagnosis and therapies rather than a visit to the medical clinic and a real medical examination. This also applies to the level of skills to cope with a complex system of health care, how understandable is the information on health and disease coming from different sources, whether he can find and understand these facts and use them in a manner intended to support and maintain health in a good condition.

Health illiteracy can (...) be defined as a set of competencies and skills in the field of a broadly understood health, obtained from the proper use of information sources (not) allowing for minimizing the occurrence and impact of risk factors on the health of the individual and the environment in which he functions, in order to improve and maintain good health (Olejniczak, 2016, p. 240).

Rational use of data sources (often non-evidence based) via the Internet depends on the ability to search, filter and interpret information concerning health, that is health literacy. D. Olejniczak (2016, p. 240-241) writes that *the ability of individuals to make evidence-based decisions about health is one of the measures of health literacy and should be analyzed in the assessment of health needs of the selected groups in the population*. The level of this skill, if measured, can give an answer to the question about the health potential of a group, and consequently facilitate a decision on the selection of the channel of information flow, or in the case of direct education, on the selection of appropriate methods and educational means and the choice of the right scope of material, tailored to the needs and capabilities of a group. Bearing in mind the need to assess the health needs of the human being as a fundamental element of the implementation of a health promotion programme, we can see the importance of assessing the level of health literacy.

Technical illiteracy. *M. Wińcza assumes that this type of illiteracy is related with the existence of close dependencies (...) between the rapid development of manufacturing techniques of metal structures and the increasing occurrence of breakdowns. Only a few breakdowns and damages arise without direct participation of human factor during the processing of the material into a finished product (hidden material defects, catastrophes, natural disasters, etc.). The basic cause of the breakdowns, a diverse range of losses (including human) results from improper human activities in the production process. They may result from ignorance, lack of proper knowledge or intentional activity in order to hide the drawbacks of the manufactured construction. In each of these causes the responsibility for the occurred breakdowns lies on people who lead to them and they take financial, criminal a widely-understood moral responsibility for the existing situation (Wińcza, 2008, p. 92). The cause of this state is a commonly occurring functional illiteracy. A vast majority of students over 15 do not understand the weather maps and instruction manuals. They do not know how to read and prepare charts, diagrams and infographs* (Programme..., PISA, 2014).

You may also meet the opinion that the Poles are not particularly a "technically advanced" society and if we omit the fact that it is quite easy to understand the origin of this stereotype (let us look at the state of industry in the country –it is not very developed, and if it is, it is rather in the form of an assembly line than a design and development office) it is worth considering how to improve this state of affairs and how to introduce technical literacy.

Today, a young man cannot replace fuses in a car, does not distinguish between drills for wood and concrete, and panics at the thought of disassembling the computer case

and replacing the hard drive. Is this because of the lack of technical classes at school relating to the ability of the implementation of basic technical activities, being in fact a rational use of knowledge in practice (Walat, 2006)?

Others illiteracy: economic, political, praxis ...

5 CONCLUSION

The source of functional illiteracy is primarily the cyberspace of virtual world, which gives the illusion of not only communication with the real world and learning this world (not just reading, writing, counting), but also the illusion of understanding and living in this quasi-real world.

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