

Nino Sharashenidze

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

Tel.: +995 599 393980

+370 686 91 423

E-mail: nino.sharashenidze@tsu.ge

Research interests: syntax, dialectology, semantics, language history, Georgian as a foreign language

THE KEY CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE NEW GENERATION IN GEORGIA¹

The paper aims to analyze the key characteristic features of the new generation in Georgia. In order to implement the analysis, a questionnaire was compiled and a survey was carried out among youngsters born in the years between 1980 and 1990. The answers reflected the specific features of the new generation. The argumentation of the answers and their analysis explained the basis for the origin and development of these features. A qualitative research was implemented and, as a result, categories and sub-categories of the key features were identified. The following features have been yielded by the research: addiction to digital technologies, facilitated communication, aspiration to independence, openness to novelty, re-assessment of traditions, goal-oriented attitude, freedom of expression of opinions, acceptance, superficiality, and stress.

KEY WORDS: new generation, characteristic features of the new generation, Georgia.

Introduction

Research of the new generation is one of the most interesting and important directions in various fields. This kind of research is of broad interest for pedagogical and educational sciences, psychology, and social sciences. The new generation embraces youngsters born in the years between 1980 and 1994. Some research has been done to identify this generation as well as others and their distinguishing characteristics (Chang, Kennedy, Petrovic 2008; Ferincz, Hortovanyi, Szabo, Tarody 2011; Kennedy 2009; Berk 2009; Targamadze 2014). They are referred to in different ways, but share a common feature – all of them are users of digital technologies, whose thinking and attitude to the world is largely different from that of the preceding generations. The research has outlined numerous issues that should be taken into account by the educational system.

The Aim of the Research

The aim of the research was to study the characteristic features of the new generation by means of self-evaluation, namely, what key features they identify regarding the new generation and what characteristic features they outline while evaluating their personali-

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ties. Our target group embraced youngsters born after the year 1990². Besides, the target group was selected based on the following principle: their higher education is not related to pedagogical sciences, but currently they undergo a MA course in the direction related to pedagogical sciences. The aim of such selection was to study the attitude of those youngsters who have not undergone pedagogical education and are thus free of certain stereotypes related to the new generation. At the same time, their education enables them to generalize certain issues and outline the key characteristic features of the new generation. After the selection of the MA course, they intend to work in the educational system. Thus, it is interesting to find out what basis they have in order to study pedagogical sciences. The goal of the research is to implement the analysis of self-evaluation of a certain target group. Therefore, several issues have been outlined:

1. What key characteristic features do the representatives of the new generation outline?
2. How do they argue and prove their opinions and what examples do they bring?

Research Methodology and Target Group

The key methodological tool for the research is Social Constructivism. Its main aim is to define the basis of society's knowledge, viewpoint and understanding. Social constructivism analyzes the understanding of culture and context based on the formation and construction of society and the grounds of its knowledge. Therefore, it is important for the development theory. Social constructivism implies a concrete idea about reality, knowledge and teaching. According to social constructivism, reality is defined by actions. Members of a society jointly create the world, whereas reality is defined by their thinking. Knowledge is a fruit of thinking which is revealed in culture. Individuals create it by means of their actions, jointly with others, in the environment they inhabit (Kim 2001). Taking into account this method, the key research tool – the questionnaire was compiled. In order to achieve the given aim, the following questions were included in the questionnaire:

1. Name 10 key characteristic features of the new generation;
2. Prove your opinions with arguments;

The respondents were also asked to give their personal data: first name, second name, gender, date of birth, BA specialty, and MA specialty.

The research involved MA students from several universities of Georgia: first year MA students of Educational Psychology and Research MA program of the Department of Social and Political Sciences of Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University, first year MA students of Education Administration Program of Shota Rustaveli Batumi State University, MA students of Field Education Methods and Methodology of Samtskhe-Javakheti State University, students of Language Teaching Methodology Department of Telavi State University, one student of Media Research MA program, one student of Public Administration MA program, and two students of Information Technologies MA program.

² In all, 25 youngsters were interviewed, out of whom only four were born before 1990, 1 – 1982, 1 – 1988, 2 – 1989. Their attitudes do not differ from the attitudes of others, so it is not a matter of separate analysis. Thus, their data are reviewed together with the data of others.

Research Outcomes and Their Analysis.

The research yielded certain characteristic features of the new generation, which were grouped into categories. For each category, certain sub-categories were outlined. In order to analyse the data in a complete way, the list of categories and their analysis is given below.

1. The majority of respondents think that the key characteristic feature of the new generation is addiction to **modern technologies**. They use various names for this feature, which has given rise to new terms in their speech: technomaniac, technoholic, technology-addict. Besides, as was expected, they mentioned that modern technologies embraced almost all spheres of their life: the intellectual field, communication, and entertainment. Thus, several sub-categories were outlined:
 - **The key means of communication** is digital technology, which embraces not only computers, but also i-pad and telephone. Representatives of the new generation communicate with friends and acquire new friends by means of the above-mentioned technologies.
 - **Regarding the obtaining of information**, digital technologies are of decisive importance, as they yield a large volume of material in a short period of time. According to the questionnaires, one of the characteristic features of the new generation is **well-informedness**. They are able to obtain a large volume of information in a short time; therefore they consider themselves well-informed in all fields of life.
 - **A major portion of entertainment** is also due to modern technologies.

The respondents bring the following arguments to prove their opinions:

- ✓ The development of technology has led to strong addiction to computers, telephones, i-pads, etc., as technology has become one of the pre-conditions for socialization;
 - ✓ Youngsters spend a lot of time at the computer, although they are aware of its negative effect;
 - ✓ They are affected by technology and still they are eager to obtain new technological devices;
 - ✓ Technology has developed and become inalienable part of everyday life;
 - ✓ Young people are attached to computers and spend less time reading books;
 - ✓ Modern technologies facilitate communication, establishing of relationships, and acquisition of friends;
 - ✓ All the above-mentioned is due to the fact that modern technologies facilitate our life;
 - ✓ Nowadays it is much easier to obtain information, as one has access to electronic books and all kinds of necessary information;
 - ✓ Technology is the major source of obtaining information, entertainment and communication.
2. Another key feature of the new generation is a new form of **communication**. According to the representatives of the new generation, several features should be outlined in this regard:

- **Lack of personal communication:** on the one hand, modern technologies have changed the forms of relationships, and imply the lack of personal contacts.
- **Facilitated contacts:** on the other hand, modern technologies facilitate communication, although the relationships have become more superficial. The respondents also underline that communication has become more open, and this makes representatives of the new generation more “sociable”.
- The same category embraces **large-scale educational opportunities**, as the new generation is not restricted in space and, alongside with the freedom of movement, offers new communications.

They argument the given feature in the following ways:

- ✓ With the development of technology, the new generation spends less time on human relationships;
 - ✓ Direct communication is replaced by communication via social networks;
 - ✓ Telephone and internet facilitate communication, but lead to a decrease of face-to-face communication;
 - ✓ Relations are more open due to current social networks;
 - ✓ Nowadays communication is much easier than it was in the case of the previous generation. It is easy to connect via mobile and social networks. This enables communication even in case of loaded schedule, when we are unable to visit people;
 - ✓ Friends and partners are easy to find, although the contacts are brief. However, we are more open to contacts;
 - ✓ People find common language more easily;
 - ✓ Representatives of the new generation are more open to communication, even with foreign guests, than the representatives of the previous generation. They are more inclined towards socially acceptable behaviour;
 - ✓ The 21st century has facilitated migration. One can get education wherever he wants; we are not restricted to certain countries.
3. One more common feature is outlined in the self-evaluation process. This feature may be generalized as **aspiration to independence**. This feature is revealed in the wish to live independently and take decisions on one’s own. This feature is especially significant with reference to the younger generation of Georgia, and can be viewed as a sign of sharing the European values. In this regard, the new generation radically differs from the previous ones. Representatives of the new generation try to transfer this feature to everyday life. This feature also conditions their **active nature**, as being active, they try to find their place in society and achieve independence in this way. Besides, representatives of the female gender have become more active and aspire to complete independence.

The majority of respondents explain this feature in the following ways:

- ✓ They try to gain independence at an early age and lead their lives on their own;
- ✓ Families restrict their freedom, whereas youngsters try to take decisions independently, without the interference of their parents;

- ✓ Youngsters try to avoid attachment to their families;
 - ✓ The new generation has its opinions and takes decisions independently;
 - ✓ They are eager to become financially independent;
 - ✓ The new generation is more active. They are actively involved in the activities of the State and non-governmental sectors. There are youth NGOs actively involved in diverse fields of life;
 - ✓ Women have become more active. Their role has increased both in the family and social life.
4. While characterizing the new generation, the majority of respondents mentioned different attitude to **novelty**. There are three clearly outlined sub-categories in this category:
- **The attitude of the new generation to novelty as such** – they are ready to accept any novelty. They are open to novelty and have clear values of adaptation and acceptance. They explain this by their aspiration to permanent novelty and discovery. Therefore, the majority of respondents mention innovation as the key characteristic feature of the new generation.
 - **Critical attitude to the existing values** – they are critical to everything. Sometimes this turns into mistrust. They try to verify information and avoid any external influence.
 - **The attitude to traditions** – there is a clearly critical position regarding traditional mentality. They try to break certain stereotypes not only by a different attitude but also by active actions. This is explained by common aspiration to globalization. In this process, values are re-assessed and less significance is attached to traditional mentality. All this leads to a change in the attitude to the external world.

When presenting arguments for this feature, the respondents mentioned the following:

- ✓ They are more open to novelty and adapt to new environments more easily than representatives of the older generation;
- ✓ Their aspiration to Western values is a precondition for the change of their attitude to certain issues;
- ✓ Old values and attitudes are changed. For instance, the issues that were considered taboo in the older generation are actively discussed nowadays. The attitude to diverse institutions has also changed;
- ✓ Having a “boy-friend” or a “girl-friend” was rare in the older generation. Now it is a common phenomenon;
- ✓ European values are rapidly gaining foothold;
- ✓ Things change rapidly and people have to adjust to the new environment;
- ✓ There are ongoing reforms in every field;
- ✓ The new generation is different, and taboos are rare;
- ✓ The majority of youngsters do not “trust” ready-made information. They think and discuss, and form their own opinions in this way. They avoid influence and are not easy to persuade;

- ✓ They frequently verify information via internet or implement their own research;
- ✓ They try to break traditions and in this way find their own “self”;
- ✓ They consider that Georgian traditions contradict the modern world due to certain restrictions they impose.

One more sub-category in this regard is the aspiration of the new generation to **being different**, frequently meaning physical difference. Aspiration to being different develops features like boldness, freedom of complexes. They boldly speak about any theme, they are direct and say what they think.

Inclination towards being different often leads to incorrect self-evaluation, which is widespread among the new generation. Besides, the respondents characterize the new generation as curious, having diverse interests. Other respondents mentioned the tendency towards being fashionable. Young people often try to take after others.

- ✓ The new generation is bolder in their behaviour, communication, dressing-style etc.;
 - ✓ They make tattoos, piercings, dye their hair blue, yellow, and all colours of the rainbow;
 - ✓ They express opinions in a more direct way and wear unusual clothes;
 - ✓ They are free to express their opinions, are not afraid of novelty, and make courageous steps to achieve their aims;
 - ✓ Their majority are devoid of complexes, they are not shy to say what they think;
 - ✓ Some youngsters do whatever is fashionable (they even go to church because this is fashionable, or criticize the clergy because this is also fashionable; they go to fancy cafes to be fashionable etc.);
 - ✓ Frequently they buy things, clothes, accessories that are fashionable, because other youngsters possess those things;
 - ✓ They are interested in the news and events inside and outside their country;
 - ✓ They are not shy of things their elder generation used to be shy of;
 - ✓ There are youngsters with extremely low or extremely high self-esteem.
5. One of the key characteristic features of the new generation is **tenacity**. The sub-categories in this regard are: **prevalence of personal interests, career ambitions, high motivation and self-confidence**. They are aware of the importance of these features and are eager to present themselves in the best possible way. As a result, they have good self-expression skills. Self-confidence and ambition seem to be one of the key characteristic features of the new generation. Their aim is to find their place in society and achieve success in their career.

Thus, the above-mentioned features may be united under one category and they may be termed as “high degree of tenacity”. The following arguments have been brought to prove the significance of this feature:

- ✓ They attach more significance to career prospects than financial growth;
- ✓ They outline their aims at an early age. They are well-informed and use all kinds of opportunities to achieve their goals;

- ✓ They have clearly defined goals and try their best to achieve them;
- ✓ They think a lot about how to present themselves in the best possible way;
- ✓ Despite the low level of education in the country, they are interested in self-development and try to find a job at a young age;
- ✓ They aspire to their aims more than the previous generation;
- ✓ They can share their opinion regarding concrete issues and prove their arguments to anyone;
- ✓ They have concrete objectives and do everything (study, work, increase the level of qualification) to achieve their aims;
- ✓ They are confident that they can do things better than others;
- ✓ If they have a goal, they are sure they will achieve it;
- ✓ They have no difficulty in finding their place in society;

One of the sub-categories of this feature is **orientation towards personal interests and underlined individuality**. In certain cases, individualism implies mistrust of others, or even egocentrism. In this regard, the respondents mentioned the following:

- ✓ Mistrust of people and their abilities has led to preference of individual work rather than team work;
 - ✓ Young people are chiefly motivated by their own wishes and are less collectivistic than their previous generation;
 - ✓ They are frequently egocentric saying – I want it, I want it, I want it.
6. The new generation attaches great importance to the **freedom of expression of their opinions**. This is mentioned as one of the specific features of the new generation. They are characterized by free thinking, which is considered essential. The arguments regarding this issue are as follows:
- ✓ The new generation is free as compared to the older one. They are more capable of expressing their opinions, they are ready to express their attitudes, and care little about what other people think about them;
 - ✓ They express their opinions more freely;
 - ✓ One of the characteristic features of the new generation is the free style of life;
 - ✓ They are free in expressing their opinions, choosing their career and jobs, nowadays families rarely interfere in these matters;
 - ✓ They have their own opinion about every issue;
7. The survey has proved that one of the characteristic features of the new generation is high degree of **acceptance**. They are more open to accept people of diverse cultures and orientations. Due to high degree of acceptance, they consider themselves more humane and less inclined to conflicts. However, the answers and arguments of the respondents have outlined some negative peculiarities related to acceptance. Representatives of the new generation are often ironical, cynical, and aggressive to different people, there is a lack of mutual respect and politeness. Frequently this is revealed in impulsivity and strong emotions. The above-mentioned contradictory characteristic features probably mean that representatives of the new generation

understand the necessity of acceptance in the modern society, but acceptance is not revealed in all aspects of life so far. The following arguments are given in the answers to the questionnaire:

- ✓ Most of my familiar youngsters show acceptance of minorities regardless of sexual orientation, religious or political viewpoints;
 - ✓ They have more pity for people, they find it hard to enter into conflicts with people and try to avoid violence;
 - ✓ In my opinion, the new generation is less inclined to conflicts than the previous one. There is less opposition between streets and districts. The cult of “bad guy” no longer exists. Other values are more important, more attention is paid to education;
 - ✓ I think the new generation is more ironical about people or novelties;
 - ✓ Numerous inner problems, as well as major and minor external problems have led to aggression among youngsters;
 - ✓ They frequently laugh at people who are slightly different from them;
 - ✓ Many young people find it hard to control their emotions. This is aggravated by social-economic problems, hence, aggression has increased;
 - ✓ I think we are facing a serious crisis of politeness, especially in crowded places. However, impoliteness is widespread also among the older generation;
 - ✓ They become aggressive and react acutely even in case of minor reasons. This is especially vivid while observing the social networks.
8. One of the striking features of the new generation is **optimism**. While evaluating themselves, they note that the new generation is more optimistic than the previous one. The following features may be identified in this category: on the one hand, representatives of the new generation are impatient and want to achieve the desired results in less time and with less effort. On the other hand, they are more pragmatic and try to plan their future in a more pragmatic way. Many of them want to be leaders. The following arguments have been mentioned in this regard:
- ✓ Unlike the previous generation, the new generation views life more optimistically. Probably this is due to a relatively stable situation in the country, peace, decrease of conflicts, etc. Thus, the new generation is more optimistic than the elder one.
 - ✓ Despite high level of unemployment and low quality of education, youngsters try to obtain the utmost of their university course. They do not give up easily even if they fail at job interviews. Sometimes they agree to work for free and accept hard working conditions, because they have hopes for a better future;
 - ✓ The new generation is more enthusiastic and cheerful than the elder one;
 - ✓ The majority of young people try to select a profession with better employment opportunities. They do not want to waste time on the fields that are not well-paid or have no prospects;
 - ✓ They try to look at both sides of the coin;
 - ✓ They think they will achieve a lot without strenuous effort and hard work;
 - ✓ Almost every youngster wants to achieve the desired aim as soon as possible;

- ✓ They take decisions quickly and independently, sometimes even thoughtlessly;
 - ✓ In the current competitive environment, young people want to achieve more than others.
9. Alongside with other characteristic features of the new generation, the respondents of the survey mentioned **superficiality**. Several sub-categories should be distinguished here: superficiality is often related to the unwillingness of the new generation to read books. As the internet is the chief source of information, youngsters spend little time reading books. Besides, the information they obtain via internet is **too general**, sometimes non-professional and superficial. In the same category we should mention the lack of interest and neglect of problems and processes both inside the country and outside its borders. This is also related to superficiality. The arguments regarding this category are as follows:
- ✓ Due to the large amount of information, youngsters try to learn as much as possible in a short time. Therefore, they remain superficial and, having acquired at least superficial knowledge of certain issues, move on to other tasks;
 - ✓ The society, especially students, obtains information easily, via internet. Thus, there is no need to read books;
 - ✓ They are not well-read. This is obvious from their speech and thinking;
 - ✓ They prefer computers to books;
 - ✓ They are superficial and lack responsibility;
 - ✓ They are often unwilling to grasp problems deeply;
 - ✓ Some youngsters do not care about education. They have no concrete aims and ambitions. They often neglect the processes that take place around them;
 - ✓ I have often heard young people say that they do not care about political processes as they have no direct impact on their lives;
 - ✓ Due to the hard state of our country (political situation, health care, economic and social situation, delinquency etc.), young people are pessimistic about a change for better.
10. Other important characteristic features of the new generation are: **stress, depression and neurosis**. Various reasons for these have been mentioned by the respondents: the environment of permanent stress, rapid rhythm of life, constantly changing outer world, lack of time, frequent change of jobs, etc. The above-mentioned features are described as follows:
- ✓ Young people get easily irritated;
 - ✓ They are inclined to depression and avoid expressing their thoughts and opinions in public;
 - ✓ The rhythm of life is rapid. There is constant rush, and the environment changes fast;
 - ✓ People change jobs frequently and face constant problems in their life;
 - ✓ They lack the ability to work in a stressful environment;
 - ✓ Permanent hurry and constant reforms are obvious in every field of life;

- ✓ Taking exams in order to find jobs – this is a characteristic feature of the 21st century;

Thus, the survey has proved that the existing situation – globalization, development of technology, etc. – influences the new generation and leads to the development of specific features. It can be concluded that the new generation greatly differs from the previous ones. Representatives of the new generation are well familiar with modern technologies, they communicate more easily. Besides, they are more critical and try to re-evaluate outdated traditions. They aspire to independence and new ideas, although all the above-mentioned leads to a certain degree of stress. Thus, the characteristic features of the new generation in Georgia are as follows: **addiction to digital technologies, facilitated communication, aspiration to independence, openness to novelty and re-evaluation of traditions, tenacity, freedom of expression, acceptance, superficiality, and stress.** These characteristic features reflect not only the peculiarities of the new generation, their aspirations and inclinations, but also current processes in the country and the impact of these processes on the mentality of the community. All the above-mentioned should be taken into account in all fields of life, especially in the system of education.

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Nino Sharashenidze

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

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The survey has proved that the existing situation – globalization, development of technology, etc. – influences the new generation and leads to the development of specific features. It can be concluded that the new generation greatly differs from the previous ones. Representatives of the new generation are well familiar with modern technologies, they communicate more easily. Besides, they are more critical and try to re-evaluate outdated traditions. They aspire to independence and new ideas, although all the above-mentioned leads to a certain degree of stress. Thus, the characteristic features of the new generation in Georgia are as follows: **addiction to digital technologies, facilitated communication, aspiration to independence, openness to novelty and re-evaluation of traditions, tenacity, freedom of expression, acceptance, superficiality, and stress.** These characteristic features reflect not only the peculiarities of the new generation, their aspirations and inclinations, but also current processes in the country and the impact of these processes on the mentality of the community. All the above-mentioned should be taken into account in all fields of life, especially in the system of education.

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