

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF USING CHAT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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Abstract: *This article presents a research conducted at five primary and three secondary schools. The research group filling out questionnaires consisted of 563 pupils, 103 teachers and 308 parents. Based on the research outcomes, positive and negative aspect of the usage of chat were to be evaluated. The author assesses positive possibilities arising from the usage of chat for project work and peer consultations among pupils themselves. The research shows that teachers are not interested in the usage of this technology. On the other hand, pupils are using chat solely for the purpose of their entertainment. Furthermore, students are not sufficiently warned by the school against the risks connected to chat using. The research showed that more attention has to be given to teachers' preparation in regard to IT technologies. The risks arising from internet communication have to be communicated to teachers as well as parents. Primarily further teachers have to be made aware of these up-to-date methods of teaching, e.g. project work, e-learning, group home preparation. These technologies have to be taken in account by school in their school education plans as well.*

Keywords: *chat, group work, project work*

The term chat can be used to indicate any form of communication via internet. However, it is primarily used for direct text, voice or voice-video connection of a group established for the purpose of this communication, using the following means:

- AOL Instant Messenger (AIM)
- Camfrog
- Campfire
- Gadu-Gadu
- Google Talk
- GT-Chat
- ICQ (OSCAR)
- Internet Relay Chat (IRC)
- Jabber (XMPP)
- MUD
- Windows Live Messenger
- MUSH
- PalTalk
- Pichat
- PSYC
- QQ
- SILC
- Skype
- Talk
- Talker
- TeamSpeak (TS)
- Yahoo! Messenger

Chat programmes supporting more protocols:

- Adium
- Digsby
- IMVU
- Kopete
- Miranda IM
- Pidgin
- Trillian
- Quiet Internet Pager

The term on-line chat comes from the word chat meaning «informal conversation».

Research description

The research was conducted at five primary and secondary schools in Brno. The data gathered are presented in graphs below. The on-line questionnaire was filled out by 563 pupils and 103 teachers. Parents filled out the total of 308 printed questionnaires.

Hypothesis

1. When teachers are not sufficiently aware of positive aspects of chat usage in project work, they are not using the technology.
2. When pupils are not instructed how to use chat for educational purposes, they are using it only for private communication and entertainment.
3. When parents do not have sufficient information concerning interactive methods of out-of-school education, they are not initiating their usage in school practice.
4. When teachers and parents are aware of the risks of chat usage, mainly from television and printed medias, and have negative attitudes towards them, they are avoiding these technologies and do not attempt to use them for educational purposes.
5. If teachers and parents, despite their negative attitudes, do not pay sufficient attention to the risks of this communication, they are undervaluing the risks.

Research results

Intended you to use chat in the project education?

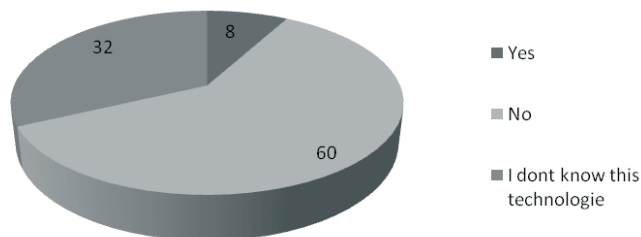


Figure 1.

Do you use chat in communication with your classmates?

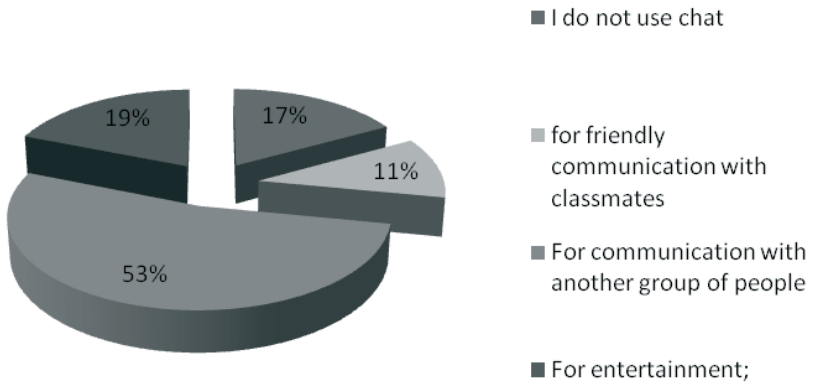


Figure 2.

Informing parents about the use of instant messaging in school

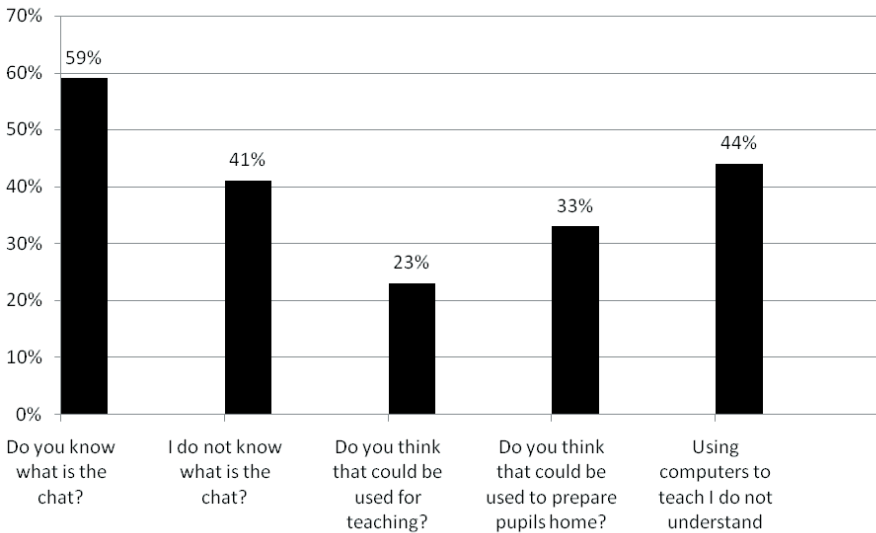


Figure 3.

Teachers' knowledge: Are you aware of the risks for pupils arising from the following services and influences?

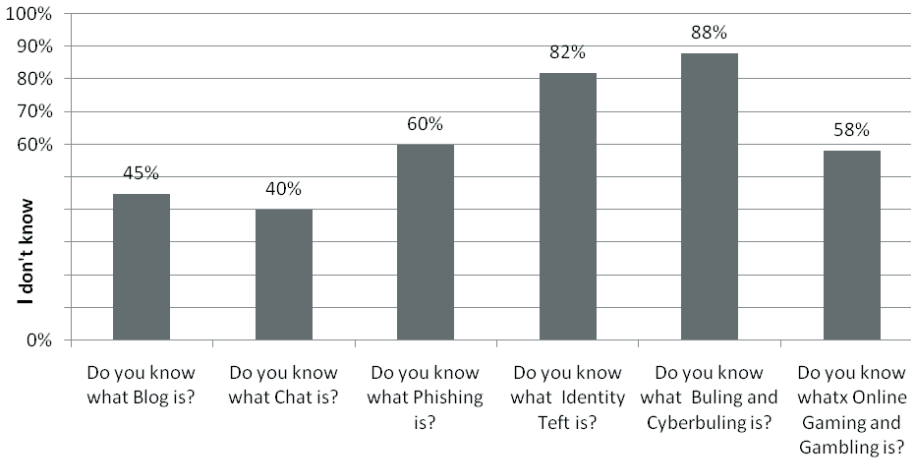


Figure 4.

Parents' knowledge: Are you aware of the risks for pupils arising from the following services and influences?

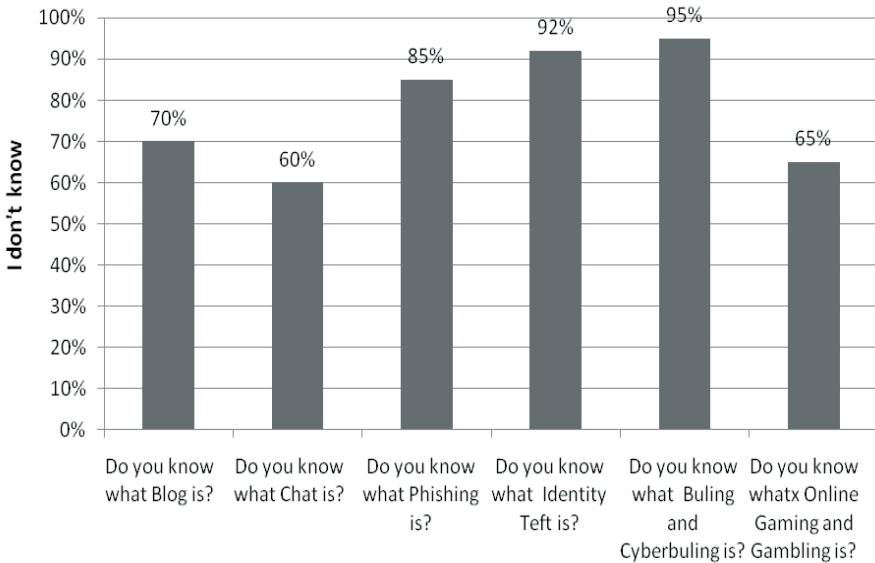


Figure 5.

As a teacher I am aware of the risks arising from the use of some internet services

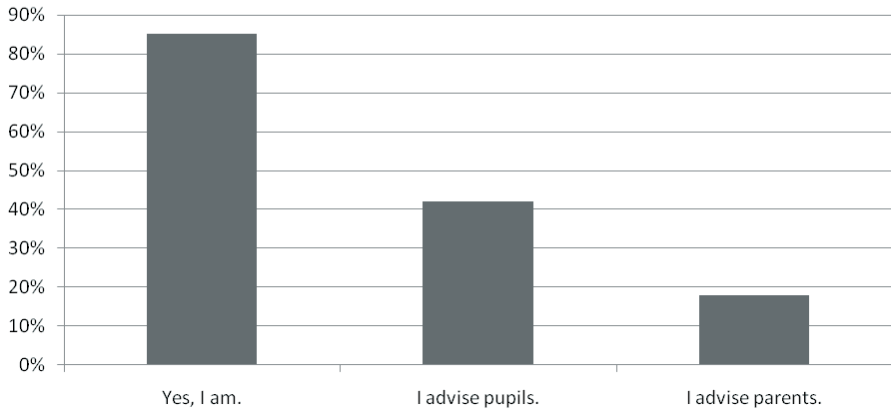


Figure 6.

As a parent I am aware of the risks arising from the use of some internet services

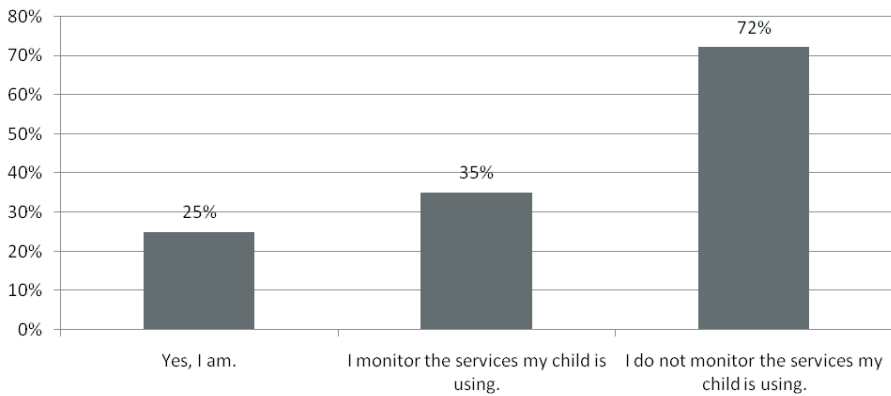


Figure 7.

Evaluation of hypotheses

Ad1.

The hypothesis was confirmed. The majority of teachers (56%) is aware of some of the means of chat communication, mostly ICQ and Google Talk. Only 8% of teachers considered the possibility of the usage of these technologies in education. All of them were under 30 years of age. These results were confirmed during interviews with teachers. Teachers report that they are overloaded with preparation of the new curricula

for school education programmes, and thus have no time for devising new methods of teaching.

Ad2.

The hypothesis confirmed that only 11% of pupils use chat for communication with classmates and the conversations mostly do not concern school matters. 53% of pupils communicate with other groups of people than their classmates. This communication can lead to the risks showed in the graph 4.

Ad3.

A part of parents, though 59% of younger parents, are aware of chat. However, they have not thought about the usage of chat in education. Therefore, they do not require teachers to use this technology in communication with pupils or parents.

Ad4.

This hypothesis was not confirmed. Even though the teachers are aware of the risks arising from chatting, they do not reflect it in their work, they are not interested in using this interactive method to improve the class climate or overall school preparation. The parents have rather little information about risks of chat.

Ad5.

This hypothesis was confirmed, mainly with regard to teachers. Teachers (85%), even though, rather well informed (see picture 6), inform neither pupils (42%) nor parents (19%) sufficiently about the risks. The situation is even more serious concerning parents as only 32% of parents having a computer at home, monitor the internet services their child is using. Only 9% of parents and 17% of teachers are aware of programmes for detecting unwanted communication.

Conclusion

The research proved that the ways teachers are trained in basic IT skills do not prepare them for advantages of the modern communication ways usage in education at primary schools. It becomes obvious that, in many cases, primary school ICT education focuses on basic skills pupils are already aware of from home. Concerning the use of communication channels and chatting the pupils are more experienced than their teachers and parents. Undervaluation of risks arising from the communication can be attributed to insufficient social experience of pupils and their desire for adventure. The teachers should motivate pupils to search foreign language chats (German, French, English) and thus improved their motivation in learning languages.

POZITIVNÍ A NEGATIVNÍ VLASTNOSTI POUŽÍVÁNÍ CHATU ŽÁKY ZÁKLADNÍ ŠKOLY

Abstrakt: Uvedený článek popisuje výzkum provedený na pěti základních a třech středních školách, celkem na dotazníky odpovídalo 563 žáků, 103 učitelů a 308 rodičů. Na základě výzkumu měly být zváženy pozitiva a negativa používání chatu žáky 9 tříd ZŠ a nižších ročníků gymnázia. Autor článku zvažuje, jaké

pozitivní možnosti poskytuje chat na příklad pro projektovou skupinovou výuku a pro vzájemné konzultace žáků. Z výzkumu vychází, že učitelé nemají o tuto technologii zájem. Naproti tomu žáci využívají chat pouze pro svoji zábavu a často nejsou školou upozorňováni na rizika, která chat přináší. Ukazuje se, že bude třeba věnovat mnohem větší pozornost přípravě učitelů na využití internetových technologií. A zároveň seznámit učitele i rodiče s riziky, která mohou použití některých internetových komunikací provázet. S použitím moderních metod výuky, jako je projektové vyučování, e-learning, skupinová domácí příprava, je nutno seznamovat zejména studenty učitelství. Školy by měly také uvažovat o těchto technologiích při přípravě školních vzdělávacích plánů.

Klíčová slova: chat, skupinová výuka, projektové vyučování