

Synchronous communication service developed with and for older adults

The increase of average life expectancy and the decrease of birth rates observed over time, have led to the rise of aging population. National demographic indicators estimate that in 2060, per each older adult, there should be only two persons in active age. Faced to this context, the importance of the involvement in physical, mental and social activities in order to maintain and restore individual functions in older adults is global accepted and facilitating the access to social, cultural and leisure interaction is seen as a necessity. But, considering the low levels of Portuguese older people's education and the rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the inherent aging limitations and the tools interface design appear to affect older adults' use of ICT.

This paper presents the study of a synchronous communication service developed not only for the older adults, but with older users, under the Project SEDUCE 1.0 – Use of communication and information technology-mediated in Web ecologies by the senior citizen. A qualitative participatory action research has been carried out for a year and a half, involving seven older participants. Data were collected by applying direct participant and in situ observation, unstructured interviews and direct monitoring of the older adult's interaction with instant messaging services. The results reveal that the contact with family and the integration into the world of information and communication technology (e-inclusion) are the main motivations for older adults to use real-time messages. This paper also points out some recommendations for developing communication services targeting the older adult users, taking into account the language used, the strategies for identifying contacts and the flow of reading, writing and sending messages.

Keywords: Computer-mediated communication; Synchronous communication; User-centered design; Older adults.

Dados:

Sónia de Almeida Ferreira

CSETH Center for the Study of Education, Technologies and Health, School of Education, Polytechnic Institute of Viseu, R. Maximiano Aragão 3504-501 Viseu, Portugal

sonia.ferreira@esev.ipv.pt