

The Communication Patterns and Needs of Distance-Separated Grandparents and Grandchildren

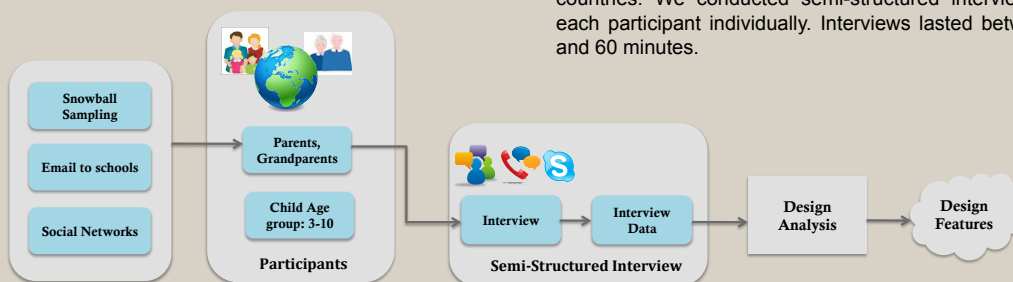
In order to maintain and build an emotional bond between distance-separated grandparents and grandchildren, appropriate design features are needed in current and future communication tools. These features should consider different challenges in developing this relationship such as time differences, busy schedules, cultural differences, language barriers, and family concerns.

Goal

We conducted a study to explore the existing communication routines as well as the future desired communication patterns between distance-separated grandparents and grandchildren. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the way they currently communicate as well as the expectations, limitations, and challenges that could be used to inform the design of future communication technologies.

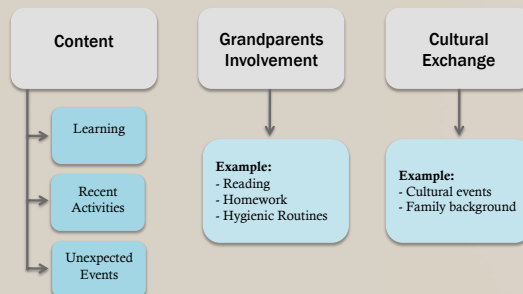
Study Method

Our study included nine participants (all female) recruited through snowball sampling, email to teachers and parents of a local school, and ads on Facebook, Twitter, and Craigslist. Half of our participants were grandparents of children between three and ten years old, while the other half are the parents of children in this age range. All participants represented families where the grandparents and grandchildren were separated across cities and countries. We conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant individually. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.



Study Results

Our findings show the content of the communication, how some parents like to get remote grandparents involved in child rearing responsibilities, and the desire for grandchild-focused cultural information exchange.



"My daughter read books for [her grandparents] in English although she knows that they can not understand English at all but the way that the remote grandparents enjoy her reading encourages her to read for them". - P5

"Few months ago my son had some tooth problem and went to dentist, as my father is a dentist too...I asked my dad to remind hygienic routine to my son." - P7

"I would like to talk about whatever their passions are. One of them is hugely interested in animals; one is interested in language, stars, geography and history. I'm just trying to build relationship with them wherever they are. Not really too subject specific. - P1