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## **Some distinctive lexical features of Netspeak**

The present paper examines and portrays some of the major distinctive features of Netspeak in the context of English as a global language, with particular focus on the language of chatgroups (synchronous and asynchronous). Netspeak is a brand new electronic medium of communication, global and interactive in character, evidently related to English as a global language, with its own distinctive features in all of its varieties. The data used in the paper were obtained from several Internet sites, and then further analysed, bearing mind at all times the model used by David Crystal (2001), and starting with most of his suppositions and claims. The analysis of the data has proven that Netspeak displays a number of highly distinct features undoubtedly classifying it as a brand new (electronic) medium of communication.

**Key words:** Netspeak; distinctive features; (synchronous and asynchronous) chat groups; Internet.

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. *The aim of the paper***

The present paper provides an overview of a number of distinctive features of Netspeak in the context of English as a global language. Considered to be a relatively largely unexplored area, the brand new medium of communication labelled Netspeak is closely related to the Internet, whose dominant effect in everyday lives, on the other hand, is fast growing. The paper further examines and describes some distinctive features of Netspeak, primarily on the lexical and orthographic levels, highlighting its innovative nature given that, according to

Crystal (2001: 91), the most general features of Netspeak distinctiveness are currently found chiefly in graphology and the lexicon, as these are the levels of language where it is relatively easy to introduce both innovation and deviation.

As far as selecting the corpus, I was guided by the idea of choosing public Internet sites with free access, which provided for the option of online chatting, simply for reasons of convenience, and the fact that most users automatically opt for such Internet sites.

One of the sites I selected for taking samples of asynchronous chatgroup language was [www.doteurovision.com](http://www.doteurovision.com). Another was [www.escnation.com](http://www.escnation.com). Concerning synchronous chatgroup language, samples were collected from [www.esctoday.com](http://www.esctoday.com), which hosts its own chatroom. Another chatroom I visited frequently in order to collect random samples of online chat was one of the well-known chatrooms hosted by the Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Obviously, to access it, I had to have the necessary IRC software downloaded into my personal computer. The IRC is a form of instant communication over the Internet, mainly designed for group (many-to-many) communication in discussion forums called channels, but also allowing one-to-one communication.

## 1.2. *Why Internet?*

The Internet<sup>1</sup> has undoubtedly appeared almost from nowhere to take a rather important role in our lives. Computers have undoubtedly changed the way people communicate with one another. An increasing number of people throughout the world heavily rely on the World Wide Web as the primary source of information on various enquiries. Electronic communication, also referred to as computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become a vastly popular means of communication. Online chatting has, in the recent years, become extremely popular. According to some studies,<sup>2</sup> subscribers to AOL (America On-line) spend as much as 20% of their time online in various conversations on different chat lines.

Crystal (2001) argues that Netspeak is a radically new linguistic medium. The nature of the impact which the Internet is making on the English language has not been thoroughly investigated since the emergence of the Internet. It is only in the most recent years that this area has become popular.

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<sup>1</sup> Capitalised 'I' in the word Internet shows the significance of the new medium.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gunther (1998).

A starting point in my deliberations is the approach taken by Crystal (2001), who argues that 'Netspeak' is actually a radically new linguistic medium. According to Crystal (2001: 24), the fact that the Internet is an electronic, global, and interactive medium is crucial for the kind of language used on the Internet. The term *Netspeak* serves as an alternative to terms such as *Netlish*, *Weblish*, *Internet language*, *cyberspeak*, *electronic language*, *computer-mediated communication*, etc. Both *Netlish* and *Weblish* can be said to have been simply derived from English, 'electronic discourse' highlights the interactive nature of Internet dialogues, while 'computer-mediated communication' focuses on the medium itself. As a term, *Netspeak* joins the club of to-be famous '-speaks' such as *Newspeak*, *Oldspeak*, *Doublespeak*, *Royalspeak* and *Blairspeak*, while as a name, *Netspeak* is believed to be functional enough, as long as it is borne in mind that '-speak' here actually involves both writing and speaking, as well as the receptive elements of listening and reading.

## 2. Introduction to Netspeak and various Internet situations

Crystal (2001: 2f) states that the Internet is an association of computer networks with common standards which enable messages to be sent from any central computer (also known as *host*) on one network to any host on any other. It was first developed in the 1960s in the USA as an experimental network which quickly grew to include military, federal, regional, university, business, and personal users. Nowadays, the Internet is the world's largest computer network, with more than 100 million hosts connected by the year 2000. The Internet provides an increasing range of services and enables vast numbers of people to be in touch with each other all over the world through electronic mail (*e-mail*), discussion groups, chat rooms etc. There is a wide range of services available, starting from following daily news, looking at advertisements of any sort, via electronic shopping, to spending your time in the virtual world, chatting with people on the opposite side of the planet. A new term has been coined to represent the notion of everything available on the Internet – *cyberspace*, the space that could be best described as all-in-one; the television, the telephone, the telegraph etc.

The present paper opts to look at the ways in which the nature of the electronic medium and the global use of the Internet are having an impact on the English language. Crystal argues (2001: 5) that the electronic medium presents us with a channel which at the same time facilitates and constraints the human ability to communicate in ways rather different from any other situations.

## 2.1. *Various Internet situations*

Internet situations are normally placed in four categories, as follows:

1. Electronic mail (*e-mail*),
2. Chatgroups,
3. Virtual worlds, and
4. World Wide Web.

This paper will give a brief introduction to chatgroups, one of the four major Internet situations growing in popularity. More specifically, it will focus on some of its major innovative features found in both synchronous and asynchronous communication in chatgroups.

Naturally, some of these situations are easily identified, whilst others heavily depend on the emerging technology, resulting in their radical and speedy changes.

## 2.2. *Chatgroups*

Chatgroups are organised at particular Internet sites in the so-called ‘rooms’ in which computer users with an interest in a particular topic or topics can freely participate thus contributing to ongoing discussions on particular topics. These are continuous discussions, and Crystal divides them into two situations relating to chatgroups, depending on whether the interaction between computer users takes place in real time (synchronous) or in postponed time (asynchronous).

Furthermore, Freiermuth (2001) adds that the physiological mechanisms of online chatting are identical to those required for keyboard skills; dexterity, speed and precision are assets. Naturally, online chatting is different from writing, as it mandates a keyboard, a monitor, online access and client-server software. He further argues that, to have online chatting one must have all of these as prerequisite – they cannot be substituted for nor eliminated if interaction is to occur.

### 2.2.1. *Synchronous situations*

A synchronous situation includes users who enter a chat room and join an ongoing conversation in real time, sending at the same time their own contributions to the given topic. The contributions can be seen on a screen that scrolls down

incessantly and includes the contributions of other chat room users. One of the systems that makes possible real time chatting is the Internet Relay Chat (IRC), which consists of a vast number of chat rooms offering various topics for discussion to millions of users throughout the world.

Internet chatting has been called synchronous communication (Freiermuth, 2001) because a message, which can be sent by anyone logged onto a particular channel, can subsequently be read by all chatters logged onto that channel. Hence, chatting takes place in 'real' time, and appears onscreen like an actual conversation in process. Here is an example of what online chatting looks like (from a public chat channel called *ESCtoday*):

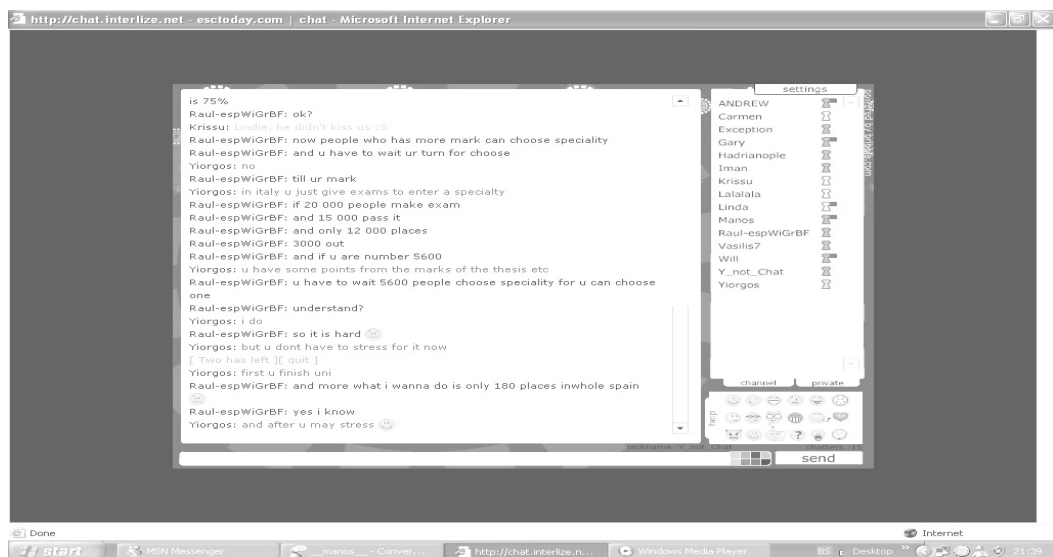


Figure 1: Synchronous chatgroup communication

As it may be observed from both examples, a number of chatters are in the same chat room, engaging in the same conversation at the same time. However, from this short conversation it is not clear whether all chatters are contributing to the same conversation, but there are obviously specific propositions aimed at other individuals.

### 2.2.2. *Asynchronous situations*

The interaction between users is stored in a particular format, and made available to other users on their request. Users can hence catch up with the discussion in the postponed time, adding their comments to any given topic, and are not limited by time. According to Crystal (2001: 11), one of the popular features of 1980s computer-mediated communication are the bulletin boards, which can nowadays be found in the form of discussion forums of various sorts. Another example is the mailing list, to which users subscribe bearing in mind that all messages sent in to the list will reach everyone subscribed to the list.

Here is an example of communication in asynchronous Internet situations (from the messageboard available at [www.doteurovision.com](http://www.doteurovision.com)):

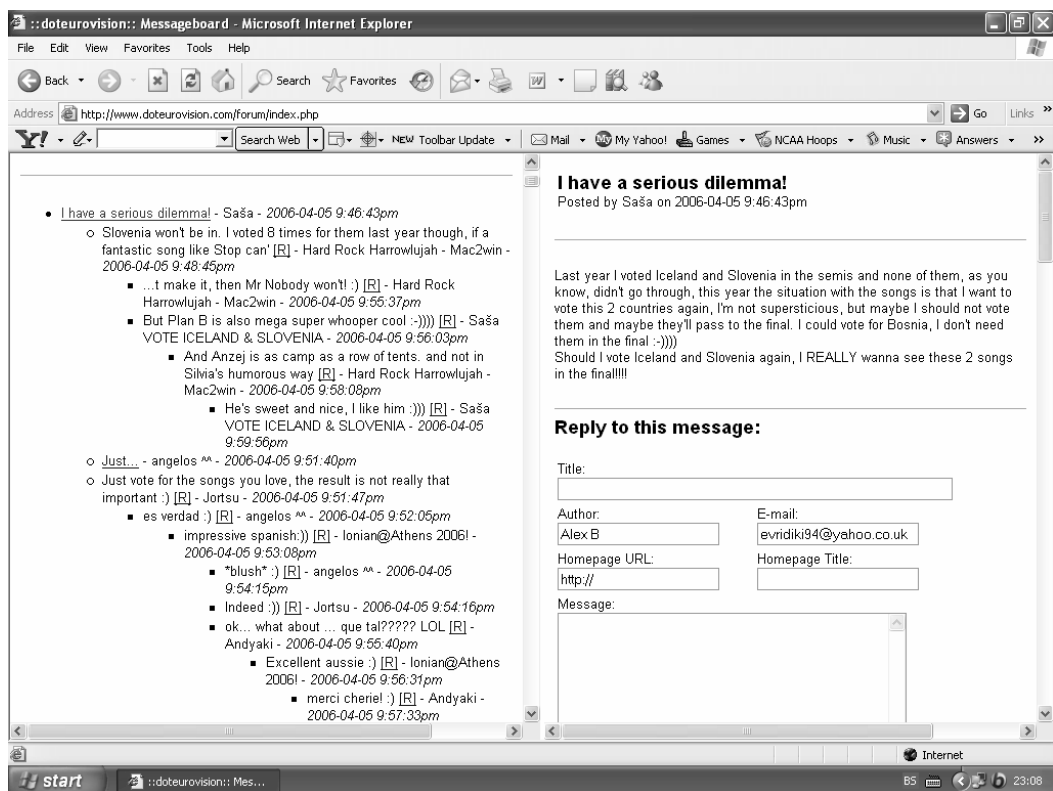


Figure 2: Asynchronous chatgroup communication

An unlimited number of Internet users, subscribed to a particular Internet site (with the permission to use the messageboard or not), have access to the mes-

sageboard. Messageboards on various sites are normally organised in a rather practical way, where messages are sorted out by date, and individual users can freely contribute to any given topic with their own comments.

### 3. Some distinctive lexical features of Netspeak

As has been stated earlier, the term *Netspeak* is an alternative to many other terms that can be found in use, such as; *Netlish*, *Weblish*, *Internet language*, *cyberspeak*, *electronic discourse*, *computer-mediated communication* etc. Its name suggests speaking, but we must remember that it actually involves writing primarily.

Here is an illustration of how electronically produced language affects spoken language (Crystal, 2001):

- (1) a. It's my turn to download now. (i.e. I've heard all your gossip, now hear mine)
- b. I need more bandwidth to handle that point. (i.e. I can't take it all in at once)
- c. She's multitasking. (said of someone doing two things at once)
- d. Let's go offline for a few minutes (i.e. let's talk in private)
- e. Give me a brain dump on that. (i.e. tell me all you know)
- f. I'll ping you later. (i.e. get in touch to see if you're around)
- g. He's 404. (i.e. he's not around)
- h. He started flaming me for no reason at all. (i.e. shouting at me)
- i. That's an alt.dot way of looking at things. (i.e. a cool way)
- j. Are you wired. (i.e. ready to handle this)
- k. I got a pile of spam in the post today. (i.e. junk-mail)
- l. He's living in hypertext. (i.e. he's got a lot to hide)

m. E you later (said as a farewell)

As far as punctuation is concerned, some of the special vocabulary used by programmers is now widely found in everyday speech, particularly in handling electronic addresses. For example, most radio and TV presenters add e-addresses when informing their viewers and listeners about how to write in to a programme, using words such as *at*, *dot* and *forward slash* to punctuate their utterance. *Dot com* has now become a frequently used expression. Crystal (2001: 20) states that written English actually shows developments well beyond the literal use of *.com*, given the fact that this suffix is also one of the several domain names showing what kind of organisation an electronic address belongs to. Hence the following major categories:

- *.com* - commercial organisations,
- *.edu* or *.ac* – educational organisations,
- *.gov* –governmental organisations,
- *.mil* – military organisations,
- *.net* – network organisations, and
- *.org* or *.co* - all other organisations.

In fact, *dotcom* has come to be used as an adjective, with or without the period, often hyphenated, too, as in *dotcom organisations*, or as a noun, as in ‘We’re wealthy *dotcomers* with no children.’<sup>3</sup> It has also been used in a number of ways, especially in slogans in advertising, as follows:

- (2) a. *.com* and get it - an offer to win a car on the Internet
- b. [lunch@Boots.yum](#) - come and have lunch at Boots
- c. *un.complicated* – introducing an ad for personal finance
- d. Get around the [www.orld](#) – a company uses this slogan
- e. [www.alk](#) this way – another company slogan

A similar trend may be observed with the use of the symbol @, which is now the universal link between the recipient and address. This symbol was chosen by a computer engineer, Ray Tomlinson, who sent the first network e-mail in 1972. This character seemed most suitable as it did not occur in names and it did stand out on the keyboard, with a certain meaning to it (someone being ‘at’ some-

<sup>3</sup> Will&Grace TV comedy show, NBC, SEASON 4.



where). Ironically, a number of companies have used the symbol in their company names, such as @llgood, @pex, @tractions, etc. It has been observed showing up where traditionally the word at should be, such as *This is where it's @* (a slogan), one of Bill Gates' books is called *Business @ the speed of thoughts*, etc.

The *e*-prefix has been used in many expressions. The *Oxford Dictionary of New Words* (1997) notes *e-text*, *e-zine*, *e-cash*, *e-money*. Other examples since noted include the following words:

(3)

- e-tailing, e-tailers
- e-lance, e-lancers
- e-therapy, e-therapists
- e-management, e-managers
- e-government
- e-bandwagon
- e-books
- e-conferences
- e-voting
- e-loan
- e-newsletter
- e-security
- e-cards
- e-pinions
- e-shop
- e-list
- e-rage

It is evident that it is not possible to say how many of these developments will become a permanent feature of the language. Language change can never be predicted, but only recognised once it has happened. Crystal (2001: 22) concludes that a certain notion of Netspeak has begun to evolve which is rapidly becoming a part of popular linguistic consciousness, and evoking strong language attitudes. Hence the importance of determining its main linguistic properties and aspects.

Netspeak can, therefore, be considered an eclectic resource,<sup>4</sup> but is arguably more than just an aggregate of spoken and written features. While Crystal (2001:

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<sup>4</sup> Davis and Brewer (in Crystal, 2001: 47): Writing in the electronic medium, people adopt conventions or oral and written discourse to their own, individual communicative needs)

48) finds it “a new species of communication,” Baron (in Crystal, 2001: 48) calls it, metaphorically, “an emerging language centaur – part speech, part writing.” Crystal goes on to further develop the metaphor to include “speech + writing + electronically mediated properties.” In fact, Crystal calls Netspeak a genuine “third medium,” comprising several properties of both speech and writing, combined with the properties electronic texts display.

According to Crystal (2001: 81), one of the most obvious features of Netspeak is the lexicon that belongs to the internet. The lexicon is encountered whenever someone enters one of the Internet situations. Terms traditionally found in technology and computer science, such as *cable*, *disk*, *bit*, *binary*, and *computer* are not part of this lexicon, as they form part of the jargon of science and technology, extending well beyond the Internet. On the other hand, there is a large number of words and phrases that have emerged in the realm of Internet-restricted situations and activities in which all major lexical processes in English take place.

According to Hudson (2000: 411), one of the causes of language change is expression of new meanings. With the changes in societies, there is always a need to express new meanings in languages. Hudson argues that it is the characteristic of openness that enables languages readily to create new words to express new things, events, and ideas that come along.

As far as new meaning is concerned, Hudson (2000: 241) argues that there is no evidence that languages place any limits on imagination, or therefore on new possibilities of meaning. Because of the principle of limited novelty, new meanings with new forms are relatively rare. However, one of the ways to get such words, particularly in an Internet situation, is invention.

### 3.1. *Invention*

Invention is precisely what the name suggests - inventing a word, more or less from scratch. There is often controversy about possible inventions, as some people question whether they are truly invented, or whether another origin for them simply cannot be discovered. Some of these examples are:

- (4) a. *geek* ‘strange looking person’
  - b. *snob* ‘person over-proud of social status’
  - c. *barf* ‘vomit’ (verb)

Proper names of companies and products are believed to be more often invented, such as *Kodak* and *Exxon*.

There is certain logic behind inventions as they are not entirely arbitrary. There are particular relations of form and meaning. For example, *Kleenex* invokes 'clean', and *zip* sounds like one of its meanings.

In his discussion of form constraints on inventions, Hudson (2000: 246) says that invented words cannot be completely new in form, as they have to conform to the phonological rules of the language. Inventions contain phonemes of the language which are ordered in ways consistent with old words. Hudson further argues that an English invented word that would be pronounced /tlak/ or /srilg/ would be impossible, but an invention like *dork* /dork/ has unsurprising and completely English-sounding pronunciation.

Concerning the emergence of neologisms, a number of patterns have been observed in terms of prefixation, and suffixation, as well as compounding. The following provides an overview of some recently observed trends, broken down by several categories:

### 3.2. Compounds

It is characteristic of Netspeak that in combining two words to make a new compound word, one element is found repeatedly, as in the following examples:

(5)

- *mouse*: *mouseclick*, *mousepad*, *mouseover*,
  - *but also phrasal verbs*: *mouse across*, *mouse over*,
- *click*: *click-and-buy*, *one-click*, *leftclick*, *rightclick*, *double-click*
- *ware*: *shareware*, *groupware*, *freeware*, *firmware*, *wetware*
- *web*: *webcam*, *webcast*, *webmail*, *webmaster*, *webster*, *webzine*, *webliography*
- *net*: *netlag*, *netdead*, *netnews*, *hypernet*, *Usenet*, *Netspeak*
- *hot*: *hotlist*, *hotlink*, *hotspot*, *Hotmail*, *HotJava*
- *bug*: *bugtracker*, *bug fix*, *bug bash*, *BugNet*

### 3.3. Prefixes

A special set of items is found in use as prefixes or combining forms:

- (6)
- *cyber-: cyberspace, cyberculture, cyberlawyer, cybersex, cyber rights*
  - *hyper-: hypertext, hyperlink, hyperfiction, hyperzine*
  - *e-: e-voting, e-list, e-shop, e-security, e-books, e-managers*

### 3.4. Suffixes

A number of elements is found in suffix-like use:

- (7)
- *-bot: chatterbot, cancelbot, softbot, mailbot, spybot, knowbot*
  - *-icon: emoticon, assicon*

### 3.5. Blends

Blends, where part of one word is joined to part of another, are instantiated in examples like:

- (8) *netiquette, netizen, infonet, cybercide, datagram, Infobahn, Internaut, bugzilla*

Blends are typically found in Netspeak as two words of a phrase with parts of both, ordinarily the first part of the first and the last part of the other. In comparison to clippings and acronyms, blends can be said to start out as simple abbreviations, but given their appearance which is more word-alike, they become new words, like in the following example taken from asynchronous chat:

(9)

[www.doteurovision.com](http://www.doteurovision.com):

- Bulgaria 06.. (postebly by tonyvision on 2006-04-18 8:37:24 pm)
  - flop top or average? Who came up with this flop top thing?

- **Bottop!!** [R] – TomofLondon ☺ 2006-04-18 8:39:52 pm

### 3.6. *Other ludic Netspeak extensions*

Some otherwise straightforward lexical suffixes are often extended in a playful way, as in:

(10)

- *-itude*: winnitude, hackitude, geekitude
- *-full*: folderfull, windowfull, screenfull, bufferfull
- *-ification*: hackification, geekification

### 3.7. *Innovations*

Several types of lexical innovations have been observed, too, as follows. The replacement of a word-element by a similar sounding item, as in:

(11)

- *ecruiting*: electronic recruiting
- *etailing*: electronic retailing

looks like a special type of blending, heavily relying on subtraction. Further, we note productive use of word-class conversion, normally from noun to verb, as in:

(12) to mouse, to clipboard, to geek out, to 404

### 3.8. *Lexical innovation through unusual spelling*

Nicknames that are universally accepted (and are the norm, to a certain extent) can be spelled in a wonderful and/or weird way, making them special, which at the same time results in a refreshing of the vocabulary stock. Some examples of nicknames taken from Crystal (2001: 161) include the following;

- (13) sleepless, shydude, pilot, Dutchguy, irish, cloudkid, oldbear, bfiancee, Pentium, pcman, froggy, tulip, BMW, cheese, Godot, BeaMeup, Elvis, Stalin, sexpot, buttspasm, HITLER, HAMAS,

Nicknames from the corpus this study is based on, as collected from [www.esctoday.com](http://www.esctoday.com) include:

- (14) EuCROVision\_Man, EuroFan, Groggy, Impreza, Ivan\_macedonian, Le-Royaume-Uni, Nikki, Norwegian, Pompompom, Superstar, Lalalala, Hadrianople, Y\_not\_Chat, Yiorgos

Nicknames taken from the data collected from IRC exemplify the same phenomenon:

- (15) PaddyD, andi, Ashea, bex, Chris\_away, MinnHinstiDans, Steenfort

These nicknames fall into several categories:

(16)

- Empty: Y\_not\_Chat, bex
- Sonic: Lalalala, Pompompom
- Ludic: Impreza, Groggy
- Typographically playful: PaddyD, Le-Royaume-Uni, EuCROVision\_Man, etc.

The same respelling tendency frequently produces nonce-formations: grouping words together into a compound (e.g. *what a unifreakiniversitynerd*), or linking a number of words by hyphens (e.g. *dead-slow-and-stop computer*), which may qualify as a conversion from phrasal bases. These are illustrated in the following asynchronous chat sample:

(17)

- As serious a question as I'm ever likely to ask – **boogwewillallshine** – 2006-04-25 6:19:26 pm
  - MacBos for certain, Turkey most likely, AlbArm maybe, Cyp rather not [R] – **Stefan-LST Trip to Athens** – 2006-04-25 6:56: 11pm
  - macedonia and bosnia...[R] **Niall@work!** – 2006-04-25 6:56:11 pm

Ad-hoc lexical innovation may be due to deliberate mixing of languages, as in the following example where Spanish elements are mixed with English:

- (18) *Glassos espanoles* ([www.doteurovision.com](http://www.doteurovision.com))

### 3.9. *Abbreviations and Acronyms*

Netspeak is also notorious for its variety of abbreviations. Acronyms are quite frequently used. Some of them include:

(19)

- BBS: bulletin board system
- BCC: blind carbon copy
- FAQ: frequently asked question
- HTML: hypertext markup language
- ISP: Internet Service Provider
- URL: uniform resource locator
- Names of many firms and sites: AOL, IBM, IRC
- Combinations of letters and numbers:
  - P4P: Platform for Privacy Preferences
  - 3Com: Computer, Communications, Compatibility

The acronyms found in various Internet situations are no longer restricted to words or short phrases, argues Crystal (2001: 86), and they can be sentence-length: *GTG* (got to go), *WDYS* (What did you say?). Individual words are reduced to several letters: *PLS* (please), *THX* (thanks). Hudson (2000: 242) defines acronyming as “a sort of clipping in which a phrase is replaced by a word based upon the first letters of its words.” Bauer (1983: 237) essentially agrees with that definition by saying that:

An acronym is a word coined by taking the initial letters of the words in a title or phrase and using them as a new word, for example *Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* gives *SALT*.

However, it is not necessarily the case that every abbreviation counts as an acronym: to be an acronym the new word must not be pronounced as a series of letters, but as a new word. Bauer (1983: 237) gives the following example here: if Value Added Tax is called /vi: ei ti:/, that is an abbreviation, but if it is called /væt/, it has become an acronym.

It may be noted in the following example that the use of abbreviations is accompanied with rather emotive punctuation, as well as emoticons, clearly showing three Netspeak features employed in a very short chat sample alone.

(20)

- **BTW**...the parrot won :) [R] – Tin Tin -2006-09-09 11:01:40 pm

- **LOOOL!!!!** And presenter? – Frank – 2006-09-09 11:01: 52  
*pm*

We also note that apostropheless contractions (contractions without apostrophes) are generally very frequently in synchronous chat. However, the example below shows that an individual chatter's choices of contractions with or without apostrophes may vary even in short chat sessions:

- (21) Line 8: Ashea: **he's** happy misha...looks like **we'll** be stuck with the ukrainian frenchie  
 Line 24: Ashea: we **wont**, cos i **dont** really speak it...i understand it

#### 4. Conclusions

I collected data from naturally occurring sources available from several Internet sites chosen for this paper's corpus. All data examined in this work were obtained from Internet chatrooms, and then further analysed, bearing mind at all times the model used by David Crystal (2001), and starting with most of his suppositions and claims.

In addition to my overall conclusion that Netspeak clearly displays a vast number of distinctive features, here are some of my other major observations and conclusions:

- Chatters most certainly increase variety through the use of creative and highly innovative language forms.
- Chatters almost always prefer colloquial to literary language.
- Chatters are limited by their environment.
- Chatters can produce complex clausal constructions, but prefer speed to precision.
- Chatters freely and frequently use acronyms and abbreviations, as a means to take active participation in a conversation.
- Chatters freely reduce multi-word sentences and sequences of response utterances to a sequence of initial letters: *bbfn* (bye bye for now).
- Chatters cope with many simultaneous difficulties in multiple online conversations. Therefore, they tend to use less words, and modify spelling as to meet their needs, thus producing non-standard or perverse spellings.
- Chatters opt for various special fonts and styles when they wish to highlight certain ideas or questions.
- Most chatters comply with the lower-case letters rule on messageboards or in chatrooms; cases of message sin capitals were registered where chat-



ters were either frustrated over something or wished to underline their points.

- Chatters seem to be aware of the information value of consonants as opposed to vowels, judging by such vowel-less items as *txt* (text), and *tmrw* (tomorrow).

I wish to conclude this work by quoting David Crystal on the emergence and future of Netspeak (2001: 242):

I see the arrival of Netspeak as similarly enriching the range of communicative options available to us. And the Internet is going to record this linguistic diversity more fully and accurately than was ever possible before. What is truly remarkable is that so many people have learned so quickly to adapt their language to meet the demands of the new situations, and to exploit the potential of the new medium so creatively to form new areas of expression.

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**NETSPEAK: NEKA LEKSIČKA RAZLIKOVNA OBILJEŽJA**

U ovom se radu ispituju i prikazuju neka od temeljnih razlikovnih obilježja *netspeaka* u kontekstu engleskog kao globalnog jezika, s posebnim osvrtom na jezik tzv. *chat* grupa (sinkronih i asinkronih). *Netspeak* je potpuno novi elektronski medij komunikacije, globalnog i interaktivnog karaktera, koji je očigledno povezan s engleskim kao globalnim jezikom, i koji ima vlastita razlikovna obilježja u svim svojim pojavnostima. Podaci korišteni u radu pribavljeni su s nekoliko internetskih stranica te analizirani imajući u vidu model kojim se koristi David Crystal (2001), polazeći od većine njegovih pretpostavki i tvrdnji. Analiza podataka je pokazala da *netspeak* karakterizira velik broj izrazito razlikovnih obilježja što ga nesumnjivo svrstava u potpuno novi (elektronički) medij komunikacije.

**Ključne riječi:** *netspeak*; razlikovna obilježja, (sinkrone i asinkrone) *chat* grupe; internet.