Analysis of particular Netspeak elements in closed discussion within the Information and Communication Technologies course

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Abstract: Asynchronous discussion can take place no matter how distant you are and therefore are playing a very important role of any e-learning system. On-line discussion allow students to consider and examine other people’s thoughts and opinions on a specific topic and answering on them in a concise and logical way. On-line discussions are better quality than traditional, in-class discussion. Within the ICT course taught in a first semester at Zagreb School of Economics and Management, we use two types of online discussion, so called opened and closed discussions. Opened discussions represent every day, informal communication between the students and the teachers while the closed one are related strictly to the course topics. In this paper we will analyze the use of some particular elements of language in closed discussion on two levels: teacher – student and student – student. Netspeak is a new language of information communication found on Internet in a form of chat, text messages and msn. More rapid, more direct, natural and almost spoken. Some scholars consider this kind of phenomenon a degradation of a written Croatian language while some others thinks that language is constantly changing no matter what, under any circumstances and that the Netspeak is just the result of the changes. Analyzed parts of the Netspeak in this work are those the most subjected to changes, as for Croatian language those are the omission of diacritical marks, increasing use of acronyms and abbreviations and the introduction of signs meaning actual state of mind or mood, so called emoticons. We expected the discussion between students and teachers to be formal, highly respecting the norms of the written Croatian language and the discussion between students to be less formal, more near to the Netspeak.

Key-Words: online discussion, Netspeak, e-learning, Information and Communication Technologies, education, asynchronous, language

1 Introduction
Very important parts of every e-learning system are discussions. [1]-[3] In paper, "Important role of Asynchronous Discussion in E-Learning System", the authors define open and closed discussion [4]. Open discussions provide constant communication between students and professors regarding teaching materials but also on topics not closely connected to teaching materials. Discussions can also be a professor-student, student-student and student-professor. Closed discussions are related to teaching materials, and can be a professor-student and student-student. Figure 1 summarizes the discussions that are used among the course Information and Communication Technologies at Zagreb School of Economics and Management. [5, 6].

Figure 1 Discussion types
Research shows that there is a substantial difference whether the teacher leads a discussion or student. According to Kremer & McGuinness [7] there is a small probability that the imbalance between professional expertise among the participants of the discussion (teachers and students) can contribute to open debate. However, at the same time they say that the discussions opened by students create a special atmosphere in which students can freely ask questions and oppose others opinions. Following results of this research show that closed discussions were followed by students even after the discussion has ended; they followed the discussion among a long period of time. Although the use of discussion in the e-learning for the purpose of education is the formal communication; students are much more relaxed and they more often use informal communication. In this paper we will analyze to what extent among discussions is Netspeak used among the course ICT in the academic year 2009/10.

2 Netspeak
Generating online content by users and making all kinds of social networks has led to making it a "new generation" (Web 2.0). A phenomenon such as YouTube and MySpace is a hint in which direction is Internet about to move, or how it would have an impact on everyday life. Precisely because of that is it necessary to implement better control to the process of some new language forms creation that is taking the primacy of communication, even to the extent when users stop to distinguish the difference between formal and informal communication, especially when using these new unstandardized language forms. There are several types of new language forms, but certainly the most interesting use of the entire new language is popularly called "Netspeak".[8]

2.1 Communication Process
Language is historically subject to changes. At the present time the principle of alteration postulated one hundred years ago by Ferdinand de Saussure, father of modern linguistics, is easily observed in new mass media such as those generated by computer science (chat, msn, forums, etc.) and the mobile phones (sms). Although this principle guarantees the continuity of languages, it is not taken into account when debating, when voices arise in favor and against the new codes of communication arise. [9]

Every communication process's task is to analyze the source, coder, transmitter, channel, receiver, decoder and recipient as shown in Figure 2. [10] The communication process is set so that the source of products the information (I), which is encoded to pure message (M). The transmitter materializes the message in the signal (S). Signal is good if it has same shape as the message, if it is aligned with the channel, which also has a very specific material properties and if it is receiver and decoder, who processed the opposite transmitter encoding and can accept it. The signal in the channel is affected by the noise (N), which interferes with communication flow. Noise or interference should be considered and any discrepancy between the parts of the communication chain. Mismatch between the encoder and so decoder product semantic noise. The receiver can inform the source of the feedback notification (F) which closes the communication process.

Figure 2 Communication process

2.2. Netspeak Elements
Medium or message (M) includes a selection of characters. It is a simultaneous multiple circuit of used channels in which they implemented a system of signs. Use of characters is one of those elements by which a human is clearly different from other living beings; the characteristically activity is human differentia specifica.[11]

Every character is phenomenon for itself. Appearance is not determined by its characteristics, but about what is “behind”. One of these kinds of characters use is part of the Netspeak, and are called emoticons.

Emoticon is not just a colon and parentheses, it is the sign of a good or bad mood, and sometimes takes other meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Symbols are signs in which the relationship between signifiers are already learned. This relationship is not naturally, but conventional (agreed). [10]

Standard language, like any language idiom, has two main functions: communication one and symbolic one. These two functions are also incorporated into its writing. Communication function examines the role of language in benefit communication, and symbolic to be a sign to the community. Each speech is based on implicit norms which are lead by both, speaker and listener; but when this is required by the social needs of communication, there can be created explicit norm in the form of a standard language.

Acronyms are abbreviations are composed of the initial letters of each member of the expression in them
abbreviations. Abbreviations are mixed; there are regular and occasional ones. There are common abbreviations that are short parts of words or sets of words, and read as if the words are spelled correctly. Other abbreviations are formed by merging the initial letter or letters of multi-member group called names and is usually read as written.[12]

Diacritical marks are not only omitted but are recorded by the standard rules of English language. This is why new students’ generations are omitting it from written Croatian language.[13] New technologies development is based on English language and it is also creating some new standards now called Netspeak. It is a common issue for all the minor world languages. All are subjected to overwhelming English and tends to be extinguished on a daily basis. The dynamic of language changing is always the same: first we detect the change in the speech and then the change slowly enters the written language as a norm. The changes are primary identified on the lexical and then on the morphological level.

Very poor use of the salutation at the beginning and complimentary closing at the end of post (although at the end of posts, we will identify greater use) directly leads to the increased conversational type of a text message. Discussions, even though in writing form, are undertaking the spoken language rules. Conversational style is also known as everyday style (mostly verbal) communication. In a written style this conversational style appears in the records, letters and notes, and is also known as unprepared, unofficial, casual and simple.

3 Results
Table 1 shows the comparison of the various elements among professor-student and student-student discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professor – Student Discussion (%)</th>
<th>Student – Student Discussion (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Croatian Language use</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diacritical Marks</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms and Abbreviations</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emoticons</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting at the beginning of post</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting at the end of post</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Comparison of the various elements among P-S and S-S discussions.

The study described in the paper "Impact of Information Technologies and Communication to the language changes and the creation of new language form - Netspeak" [8] shows that even 90.4% of students in course ICT stated that in the formal communication they are using the standard Croatian language. However, analysis of the discussions of the same group of students gives quite different results (Figure 2).

![Figure 3 The use of Standard Croatian Language](image-url)

In professor-student discussions 73% of students used the written Croatian language, including Netspeak elements such as omission of the diacritical marks, use of emoticons etc. Although it is obvious that provided materials are educational content, online forum is among students perceived as less formal form of communication. The student-student discussions difference is more pronounced - only 54% of students used the standard Croatian language.

3.1 Statistical Research
As discussions among the ICT course represent an additional, optional element and serves to motivate more students, in the following research we will analyze only a sample of students who participated in the discussion professor-student and student-student discussion (N = 91 students - 20% of students who enter the course).

For our research we proposed following hypotheses:
1. Results will show statistically significant correlation between using written Croatian language and using Netspeak (i.e. Omission of the Diacritical Marks, increase of the Acronyms and the Abbreviations, use of the Emoticons) in formal communication among Professor – Student and Student – Student discussions.
2. Analysis will shot statistically significant differences between using written Croatian language and Netspeak elements among formal Professor-Student and informal Student-Student discussion.
In this research we wanted to see whether there is some connection among students between using written Croatian language and using Netspeak for formal and informal discussions. To test the first hypothesis, we used Pearson correlation coefficient and correlated students’ results (N=91) for using written Croatian language, increasingly using acronyms and abbreviations, emoticons and omission of the diacritical marks as parts of Netspeak. Results showed that main hypothetical assumptions are proven and that there is significant correlations between using written Croatian language with using Netspeak. We can assume that students, who are better language oriented, are using more often written Croatian language, also in formal and informal communication and will not use Netspeak in formal communication at all. In following table marks P stands for Professor-Student discussion and mark S stands for Student-Student discussion.

Table 2 Correlations

The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the linear association between two scale variables. Some correlations reported in the table are negative, although not significantly different from 0 because their p-value is greater than 0.10. This suggests that using acronyms and abbreviations in professor-student discussion and emoticons in both discussion types don’t have appreciable effect on using net speak rather than written Croatian language.

Table 3 Paired Samples Statistics

The Descriptive table displays the mean, sample size, standard deviation, and standard error for both groups. Across all 61 subjects, using written Croatian language dropped between 0.18 and 0.19 points on average while using discussions. The subjects are clearly using diacritical marks among discussions but with no difference more than 0.1 point. Acronyms and abbreviations are similarly used in professor-student and student-student discussion. Emoticons are more used in student-student discussion, difference around 0.2 points between pair samples. The standard deviations for professor-student and student-student discussions reveal that subjects were more variable with respect to diacritical marks and emoticons than to using written Croatian language and acronyms and abbreviations.
The Pearson correlation between the baseline and using written Croatian language and diacritical marks, but also emoticons use among student-student and professor-student discussion measurements is 0.563; 0.736 and 0.406, almost a perfect correlation. At 0.106, the correlation between the baseline and using acronyms and abbreviations levels is not statistically significant. Levels were higher overall, but the change was inconsistent across subjects. Several lowered their levels, but several others either did not change or increased their levels.

The 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference provides an estimate of the boundaries between which the true mean difference lies in 95% of all possible random samples of 16 patients similar to the ones participating in this study. The t statistic is obtained by dividing the mean difference by its standard error. The Sig. (2-tailed) column displays the probability of obtaining a t statistic whose absolute value is equal to or greater than the obtained t statistic. Since the significance value for change in using standard Croatian language is less than 0.05, we can conclude that the average loss of 0.787 points per using diacritical marks is not due to chance variation, and can be attributed to the Netspeak growth. However, the significance value greater than 0.10 for change in Acronyms and Abbreviations level shows the net speak expansion did not significantly reduce their use.

### Table 5  Paired Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Standard Croatian Language: P-S vs. S-S</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.1802</td>
<td>.3708</td>
<td>.0478</td>
<td>.0935</td>
<td>.2834</td>
<td>3.973</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>Diacritical Marks: P-S vs. S-S</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.0787</td>
<td>.3189</td>
<td>.0408</td>
<td>.0036</td>
<td>.1927</td>
<td>1.927</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>Acronyms and Abbreviations: P-S vs. S-S</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.0197</td>
<td>.4898</td>
<td>.0627</td>
<td>.1009</td>
<td>.1451</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
<td>Emoticons: P-S vs. S-S</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>-.2541</td>
<td>.4392</td>
<td>.0562</td>
<td>-.3666</td>
<td>-.1416</td>
<td>-4.519</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4 Conclusion**

During this time of global technology development, digitalization and virtualization literacy takes on new aspects, new style. In addition to the existing functional styles of the written Croatian language, such as scientific, administrative and business, journalistic, and conversational style seems to be dangerously approaching the introduction of a new Internet style that may result from the latter, but goes beyond it by establishing their own new rules.

This new Internet style, popularly called Netspeak is more and more taking the most important role in information communication imposing the knowledge of its principles as crucial. Generating itself from a spoken language, developing rapidly and becoming a common tool of communication, slowly but confidently erase the boundaries between formal and informal communication leading its way towards a global language. New channels of communicating our message dramatically changes the way we communicate our message to the world.

**References:**


