Comparative content analysis in search of the Netspeak elements within closed asynchronous discussions and social media discussion

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to show the spread of omnipresent speak on the Internet, the so-called Netspeak through the various communication channels young people use. Netspeak is derived from the spoken and symbolic language that develops and changes rapidly becoming globally recognized. The authors conducted a comparative content analysis of the closed asynchronous discussions within the same generation of students in the first, and afterward in the seventh semester of their higher education, as well as of their discussion on the social media - Facebook. In order to conduct the analysis and measure the amount of Netspeak elements in mentioned discussions, 10 Netspeak standards have been used that are divided into four following groups: standards related to information and communication technology (ICT), grammar and syntax (G), prosody (P) and others (O). The distribution and the amount of the Netspeak elements are described in detail.

Keywords – Netspeak in higher education, Netspeak standards, Closed asynchronous discussion, Social media discussion

1. INTRODUCTION

Asynchronous online discussions are very important part of every e-learning system. They allow students to be in a permanent communication with one another and with their professors 24/7 permitting to choose the right moments to involve into the discussion that suit them the most. [1]-[3]

The importance of online learning emphasizes Chau stating that "It is shown that, if used appropriately, web-based learning has the potential to enhance both learning effectiveness and teaching efficiency." [4]

According to Steimberg & etc., the online discussion participants could be either active, passive or participants who do not participate in the discussions. [5] Active participants are those who write posts and actively participate in the discussions. Passive participants are those who read the posts but do not participate actively in the discussion. Modern Learning Management System (LMS) can monitor the rate of the activities in different modules, including the active or passive participation in the online discussions identifying that way how many times have participants taken part in the discussion and how many posts have they read although they haven't been active.

In the paper "Important Role of Asynchronous Discussion in E-learning System", the authors define the open and closed discussion. [6] The open discussions are meant for the informal communication between professors and students (P-S), students and professors (S-P) and the communication among students (S-S). The closed discussions are related to the lecture content and depend on whether the moderator is a professor or a student; the discussion could be professor-student (P-S) or student-student (S-S).

In this paper the authors analyze the amount of Netspeak elements which is used in a formal discussion between the professor and the students at the beginning of their college years and at the end comparing it with the amount of Netspeak elements within the informal discussion on Facebook. In the assessment of Netspeak elements within the specific social media messages – discussions on Facebook between the same generation of

students we encounter a challenge of collecting them. Our approach was to mobilize a very student of that generation who collected the discussions as a part of her final paper research.

2. NETSPEAK

The rapid development of new technology and everyday use of new forms of communication like Skype, Facebook, and the popular mobile applications such as Viber, Whatsapp, Snapchat etc. in various ways affect and change the language in order to develop a new language form - Netspeak. Netspeak generates itself from a spoken language, develops rapidly and becomes a commune tool of communication imposing the knowledge of its principles as crucial. Slowly but confidently erase the boundaries between formal and informal communication leading its way toward the global language. Netspeak attracts with its simplicity and creativity in shaping the message, and thanks to its universally recognized symbols Netspeak became a globalised form [7, 8]. Its main feature is the extensive use of abbreviations, emoticons, and punctuations. The technology, in a way, shapes the communication. As McLuhan said "we can characterize the ages of humanity, as, if not determined by, than at least reflective of, prevailing communicative technologies." [9]

2.1 Standards for measuring the quantity of Netspeak

In the paper "Standards for measuring the Netspak quantity in on-line text content" the authors created 10 standards grouped into 4 categories regarding their provenience for measuring the amount of Netspeak elements [10]. The first group is ICT and gathers 3 standards: words in English (I1), acronyms and abbreviations (I2), emoticons (I3). The second group is grammar and syntax and gathers also 3 standards: lower case graphemes (G1), diacritics (G2), space (G3). The third group is prosody and gathers 3 standards too: punctuation (P1), uppercase graphemes (P2), prolonged graphemes. The fourth group is "other" where the authors placed individual and sporadic elements such as the use of past tense "aorist", etc. (Table 1)

TABLE 1
STANDARDS FOR MEASURE THE QUALITY OF NETSPEAK ELEMENTS [10]

STANDARD	DESCRIPTION	P
I1 – English words	New technologies development is based on English language so it happens that Croatian is subjected to overwhelming English words.	10
I2 – acronyms and abbreviations	Acronyms and abbreviations are composed of the initial letters of each member of the expression in them. 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 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.	10
I3 – emoticon	Emoticons are signs, symbols. They are not just colon and parentheses, it is a sign of a good or 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.	10
G1 – lower case graphemes	Contrary to the grammar rules, the use of lower case graphemes where it should be used upper case graphemes.	10
G2 – diacritics special signs	Part of the grapheme that change the sound of the grapheme. Those signs are omitted and often recorded by the standard rules of English language.	10
G3 – space	The omission of space where needed, after punctuation.	10
P1 – punctuation	Punctuation is used in a non standard way in order to compensate the auditive channel within the discussion.	10
P2 –uppercase graphemes	In written Croatian language there is standard use of uppercase in three particular situations. First is with the proper names, the second as the first letter in a sentence and finally in order to express politeness. Though, there are some exceptions. Uppercase within the whole word, sentence or text can be used for esthetic, advertising or propaganda reasons. It is used in order to emphasize the specific word and to plan and to add the prosodic elements to the written word.	10
P3 –prolongation of the graphemes	In written Croatian language there are 30 sounds each represented by single grapheme (except three sounds being represented by double graphemes *dž, lj* and *nj*). There's no such a thing as geminate (a double consonant such as *mm* and a word *communication*). It is used in order to add prosodic elements to written words. Prosody gives rhythm and melody to a word. It comprehends acoustic parameters such as accent, intonation, and melody.	10
O – Other	Use of tense considered to be obsolete – aorist. As far as the past tenses are concerned, the most frequent and the most dominant tense in contemporary Croatian is the Croatian *perfect - Vidjela sam te* (PERFECT – *to see*). Shortened form, *aorist* form would be *Vidjeh te.* (AORIST – *to see*).	10

Research conducted by Aleksic-Maslac & etc. shows that the students use more Netspeak elements at the beginning

of their study program than at the end of the study program when the amount of the elements decrease [11].

Accordingly, there is a positive correlation in the way that students which use more specific Netspeak element in the first semester will be using them in the seventh semester as well. Hereafter, in the paper, the authors compare previous findings with the use of Netspeak elements on Facebook.

3. RESEARCH AND RESULTS

Research has been conducted on the same group of students but in the different periods of time as well as on different communication channels. It is measured the amount of Netspeak elements within the closed online discussion between professor and students (P-S) in the same generation of students in the first semester and in the seventh semester as well as on the social network Facebook.

- In the 1st semester within the course Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) [12]
- In the 7th semester within the course Management of Information Systems (MIS) [13]
- On Facebook

Figure 1 shows the comparison of the overall amount of the Netspeak elements throughout the three analyzed channels. It is interesting that over 30% of the students use all kinds of Netspeak elements within the discussions related to the course content although, in the discussion about the use of Netspeak, they stated that they limit the use of Netspeak only in the informal discussion, closely paying attention not to use within the formal discussion. As it is expected, the use of Netspeak elements in informal discussion is much wider, but the difference is not so considerable.

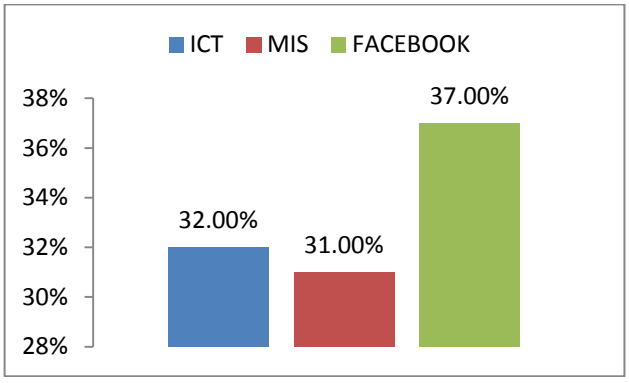

FIGURE 1
AMOUNT OF NETSPEAK ELEMENTS WITHIN THE 1ST AND 7TH SEMESTER AS WELL AS ON FACEBOOK

Table 2 shows the distribution of the standards throughout the different communication channels.

TABLE 2
THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE STANDARDS THROUGHOUT THE DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

	ICT	MIS	Facebook
I1	94.09	67	49.25
I2	68	72.47	34.80
I3	26.09	14.09	81.42
I	62.73	54.33	55.16
G1	13.77	3.51	37.73
G2	35.22	18.98	45.74
G3	12.35	14.06	49.33
G	20.45	12.18	44.26
P1	34.09	15.56	43.86
P2	5.41	21.06	22.19
P3	0.35	0	20.76
P	13.28	12.21	28.94
Other	47.05	44.92	20.05

3.1 First group of Netspeak standards – ICT

Figure 2 shows the percentage of ICT standards from 55% on Facebook and within MIS course to even 62% within ICT course.

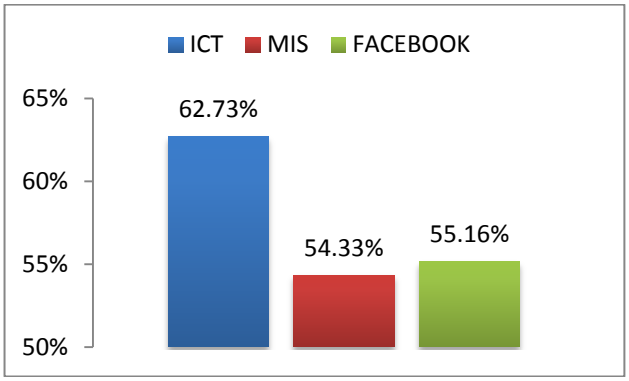

FIGURE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF THE ICT STANDARDS

It is interesting to analyze the ICT group through each standard. In the Table 2 we can easily see that even 94% of the students use English words (I1) within the ICT course taught in first semester, and 67% within the MIS course taught in seventh semester which is expected because the courses are strongly tight to the new technologies. At the same time, almost 50% of students use English words on Facebook.

Standard I2 related to acronyms and abbreviations is used in seventh semester within the MIS course by 72.47% of the students, and 68% of the students in first semester within the ICT course. In the same time the

acronyms and abbreviations are used by 34.8% of the students on Facebook. The lower number on Facebook can be interpreted by the lenght of the discussions which are shorter. Although, if the density by the number of characters [14] is measured, the density will be much more higher than in online discussions.

26% of the students use emoticons within the discussion between professor and students in the first semester. By the end of the study program the percentage decrease and it is 14% of the students using emoticons. At the same time even 83% of the students use emoticons on Facebook. As Figure 3 shows that within the discussions between professor and students (P-S) in both courses, students use so called basic emoticons (smiley, sadly, etc) while on Facebook they are more creative and use much larger number of emoticons.

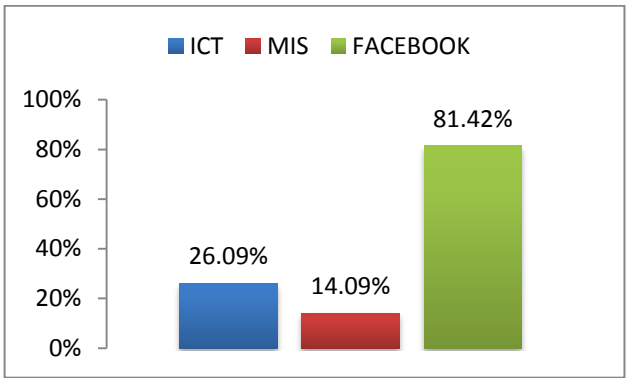

FIGURE 3
STANDARD I3

3.2 Second group of Netspeak standards - Grammar and syntax

Figure 4 shows the use of Netspeak standards from the second group related to the grammar and syntax. The amount of those standards decreased from 20% to 12%, whilst, the students seem to be more relaxed on Facebook because the analysis shows that 44% of students use those standards.

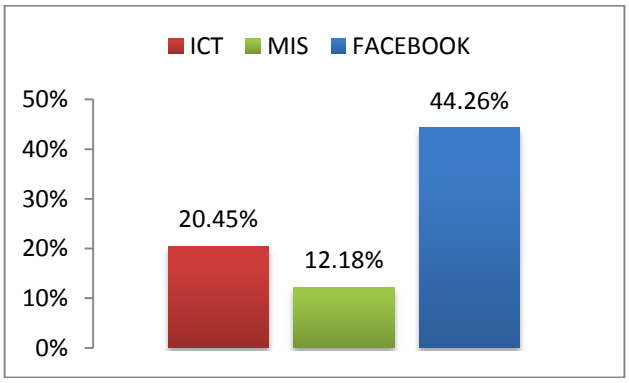

FIGURE 4
DISTRIBUTION OF THE NETSPEAK STANDARD - GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX

Lower case graphemes (standard G1), is used by 13, 77% of the students in the first semester (Table 2). Although, as the years is passing by the more students are paying attention to spelling, still there is 3.5% of students enrolled in seventh semester which are starting the sentence with the lower case instead of upper case. Whilst, 37.7% of students on Facebook use lower case paying no attention whether there is a new sentence beginning.

Regarding the standard G2 related to the omission of the diacritic signs there is a huge difference between the students enrolled in first semester that are omitting more often and the students in the seventh semester that pay more attention to not to omit the diacritics. Diacritics are omitted by 45.75% of the students chatting on Facebook.

There is a substantial difference regarding the Netspeak standard G3 less used within the formal discussion related to the course content (12.35% and 14.06%), and much more used by students chatting on Facebook (49.33%).

3.3 Third group of Netspeak standards – Prosody

Figure 5 shows the amount of Netspeak elements from the third group related to the prosody. About 13% of students use the elements which represent prosody within the formal discussion, while a double number of students (28.94%) use the standards of prosody chatting on Facebook.

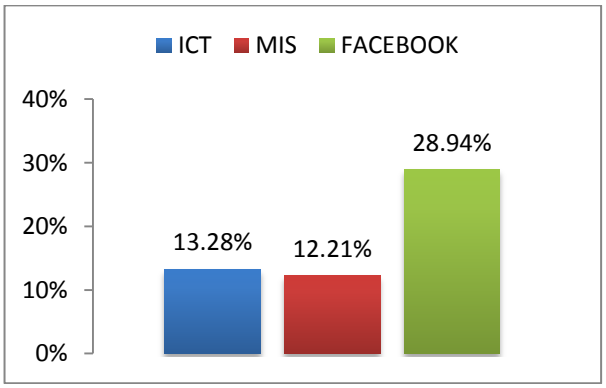

FIGURE 5
PROSODY

Standard P1, related to the sequences, for example "…, !!!, ????" is used by 34% of the students analyzed in first semester. By the seventh semester the situation radically change, and the use decrease to the percentage of 15.56%. At the same time, the standard P1 is very often within the discussion on Facebook (see Table 2).

Standard P2, related to the use of the upper case to emphasize the chosen words, is used just by 5% of students analyzed in the first semester while it increase among the students analyzed in the seventh semester (21%). Almost the same situation is on Facebook where 22% of the students use upper case to emphasize some chosen words.

Standard P3, related to the prolongation of the graphemes, is poorly used in a formal, professor-student discussion, while it is used by 20.76% of students chatting on Facebook.

4. CONCLUSION

Comparative content analysis of Netspeak elements within the closed asynchronous online discussion between professor and students (P-S) in the same generation of students in the first semester and in the seventh semester as well as on the social network Facebook shows that Netspeak in all mentioned discussions is broadly used.

Facebook as an informal discussion online platform for sharing photos, videos and messages with friends, with its amount of Netspeak elements is very close to closed asynchronous online discussion between professor and students at the first semester at Zagreb School of Economics and Management. The possible explanation is the friendly and informal atmosphere on P-S discussions in the first semester as well as in the discussion on Facebook. Furthermore, the use of words in English is the most frequently used in discussion within the ICT course that is explained by its strong cohesion to the learning of new technology terminology. The most frequently used Nestpeak element on Facebook is emoticon which is explained by the friendly and informal environment on that online platform. Morover, the use of prosody to emphasize some words are more frequent on Facebook discussion as it is on closed asynchronous discussion related to course content. It is understandable considering the rate of professionalism that students cherish in communicating with their professors.

Certain and allowed amount of Netspeak elements are present in formal discussion moderated by professor related to the courses content and rather more are present within the discussions on Facebook. Although, it will be very interesting to observe in the future researches the growth of the amount of Netspeak elements in formal discussion and the impact that this phenomenon will have on national languages in long terms.

Finally, there is always room for improvement and further researches that we would conduct and expand to myriads of other languages.

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