Internet English: A Technically Based Mode of Language?

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Annotation. Internet English has developed a special code and is highly affected by socio-cultural factors and the specific restrictions imposed by the technical equipment as the means of communication. As a new medium of verbal interaction it features the development of new vocabulary units. The main motifs for the development of new word forms are non- represented meaning values, irregularities, long word forms, parody and foregrounding. The created lexical units are regular grammatically and very flexible in terms of further derivation. They may contain both archaic and newly devised affixes due to alternative rules of morphology as the innovative process is based on creative analogy. Xenophobic factors, standardization trends, favour to parody, need for foregrounding and individual freedom of the participants of communication lead to the development of specific patterns of word building. Linguistic innovations distinguish the Internet community, which is built on collective beliefs; only conscious/ subconscious awareness of the strategy gives access to competent participation and introduction of language changes. Morphological elements of Internet English neologisms undergo significant influence of the sociolinguistic trends within the subculture. As a result, its specific vocabulary fits into the teleological paradigm of the culture; despite a variety of forms, the same strategy is followed by all word building processes. The paper concentrates on qualitative analysis of neologisms taking into consideration the general tendencies of the philosophy of the experienced users of Internet English. Methods and potential reasons of all types of derivation are explored. The paper concludes that despite the global scope of users and multiplicity of derivational features, specific trends may be established due to the existence of implicit universally acknowledged rules.

Key words: *Internet English, affix, pattern, function, meaning.*

Recent decades have witnessed the development of new forms of communication. Until the middle of the 19th century, oral communication was the only means of direct interaction. The advent of telegraph, radio, telephone, fax and television signalled the progress towards such modes of communication where live/ relay, oral/ written and one-way/ two-way interaction qualities were patterned in various combinations. Every novel technological mode imposed its restrictions on the convenience and costs of interaction, but no method could provide cheap written two-way communication before the advancement of the Internet, which was developed only as a means of specific military and academic correspondence. However, the specific needs of the society alienating from direct oral communication promoted its application at mass interaction level. As a result, a substantial amount of conversations shifted to the written online mode, where the specific system of restrictions and alternative possibilities resulted in the development of a new mode of language.

This paper concentrates on the issue of the effect of technologies applied in Internet communication on the alteration of language, emphasizing the development of new vocabulary featuring specific morphological trends. The paper aims at exploring lexical units found specifically in Internet English from the point of view of their structure, function and morphological motivation.

The amount of the material employed for the analysis of the present paper is approximately 11,000,000-symbol-long chat texts which proceeded in different channels and concerned a wide variety of topics ranging from everyday life to deeply specific technical discussions. All those chats are retrievable from log archives. The analysis yielded approximately 350 words and word forms that are neither common in Standard English nor referred to in slang dictionaries. Naturally, due to the bilateral influence of slang in informal spoken English and Internet relay chat English, it is not always possible to trace the real source of a particular lexical unit (this is not surprising as soon as we take into consideration that both of these modes of language can be attributed to the same group of users), but the general trend is increasingly noticeable.

The methodology of the paper is based on the analytical methods of *functional* linguistics, with particular attention paid to the functions of language in general and to the specific features of language in textual and other contexts. This theory is a part of the theory of the social interaction of the society, and the phrase as a unit is interpreted only taking the situational context into consideration. As a result, language is regarded as representing much more than a collection of sentences. In this tradition, it is treated as text or discourse, which is an interchange of meanings in interpersonal contexts.

The attitude to the technologically motivated aspects of language is expressed by *Technology-conditioned approach to language change and use* (TeLCU) developed by Bodomo and

Lee (Bodomo, Lee 2002). This method (or, rather a strategy) foregrounds that the emergence of new linguistic forms is to be parallelled by the evolution of the framework of linguistic analysis. It emphasizes bilateral causative influence exerted by the ongoing processes as the existence of new tools and media demands the creation of new forms of communication leading to changes in the way people use language in its various forms. The necessity for new analytical methods is caused by the emergence of unexplored practices of use associated with electronic discourse and influencing literacy as a whole. The authors analyze a chain of causes and consequences resulting in the development of computer language and seeing the social factor as the key element conditioning the ongoing processes. Thus, the development of language directly depends upon the social context in the integrity with technological conditions. As a result, the evolution of new forms of language and literacy is conditioned by dynamic social contexts and the origin of linguistic-communicative practice. The paper by Bodomo and Lee concentrates on the presentation of theoretical models with no reference to possibilities of their application in practice. The idea of the speech community, in which new standards are developed, is important for highlighting the way in which language exists. The language of a specific speech community functions not only as an abstract system, codified in grammar books and dictionaries; language is inherently a part of social life and it belongs ultimately to its community of users. It is they who make and remake it in their everyday encounters.

The analytical method of the paper is based on the exploratory model by William Croft (Croft 2005), who views language as a unity of components with their representative aspects and sees morphology in the light of analytical papers by Martin Haspelmath (Haspelmath 2002).

As early as the first half of the 20th century it was established (Malinowski 2001, originally printed in 1922) that languages seek to respond to the needs of their users, i.e., the society. The theory dealing with the language and society correlation was developed to full extent by Halliday (Halliday 1985) who claimed that every language needs to adapt its functions to the demands of its society. In *Spoken and Written Language* Halliday rejects the possibility that a language may stabilize at a particular point of its development. It is foregrounded that dynamism is one of the essential features of language as the phenomenon of language exists only through its society. As a result, users modify languages according to their specific needs, and the emergence of new technologies may result in technologically-conditioned forms of language. From the psychological point of view, the loss of spiritual roots and heritage, the drive of the modern society towards the businesslike formality and depersonalization in stratified money-based work relationships, the permanent hurry and consequent lack of time leading to the disruption of family bonds and friendly relationships together with a number of secondary factors expose the inherent weakness of an individual (cf. Donath 1999). Communication in the depersonalized world, where it is possible to invent a new personality and to empathize with it or to reveal one's individuality in anonymous conversational interactions, is naturally expected to compensate for the loss of the full-scale social life. Culturally and socially motivated, the linguistic features of Internet communication correspond to the basic needs of the modern society. As a result, the more an individual is drawn to the formal end of the register scale by the environment, the more informality is expected to be demonstrated outside the world of business engagements.

Another attempt to predict the development of computer language is performed by McMurdo in his article *Changing Contexts of Communication* (McMurdo 1995), where the author looks at the origin of computer language through historical analysis of language and its relation to scripture. McMurdo emphasizes that in electronic discourse messages are often sent and replied to with great ease and without much careful consideration. E-mail messages and chat phrases are usually informal and often short, quickly exchanged notes with an obvious resemblance to verbal conversation (cf. McMurdo 1995, p. 145). He notices that the development of mass media essentially contributed to the alteration of social, economic and cultural changes in life and that any specific writing-based culture gradually transforms into a unified culture of "electronic word". Thus McMurdo concentrates on revolutionary functional shifts in strategies of communication.

Given that languages aim at fulfilling the needs of the user society, the specific features of the Internet language are to reveal the linguistic philosophy of the world of Internet users. The herein adopted technological perspective specifies that the Internet culture is not merely a culture of information, but complementarily develops a culture of the Internet discourse skill, in which the message content is parallel to the message form (Rumšienė 2004, p. 49).

The specificity of technological limitations such as the absence of prosodic and paralinguistic features in communication in addition to the limitedness of the set of symbols heavily impose on the characteristics of verbal interaction. The new mode of language presents no restrictions on the phonological features of the lexicon as texts are only read and never pronounced. As a result, the amount of possible combinations of signs is substantially higher than in standard language. Furthermore, there is a possibility to develop pictographic units, for example, smilies, which mostly show emotional attitudes. The features of the layout of the text require some improvements to enhance the understandability of interaction, for example, by visually locating complex terms and set phrases within a single line. Last but not least, the rapidity of typing cannot match the speed of oral communication; this imposes on the need of abbreviations and shortenings in order to improve the "utterance-per-time-unit" ratio. As a result, the specific combination of technological restrictions and compensational elements leads to the development of a unique mode of interaction with interacting features of oral and written communication. On the whole, the major factors conditioning the evolution of Internet English are the specific communication interface (medium, page layout, etc.), time (rapidity of typing),

the limitedness of the set of symbols (no more than 100 symbols directly available on the keyboard) and socio cultural issues (strife for innovations, parody, etc.).

There are no restrictions on themes of communication on the Internet, but the amount of technologically oriented texts seems to be higher than in oral conversations (Rumšienė 2005b, 2006b). As a result, Internet English features multiple technical terms which are not applied in other communication forms so frequently. Internet chat language is the primary means of communication of technical issues. As a result, the specific mode of language is influenced by the communication interface and partly by its specific contents. In this paper, the analysis is not restricted to the terms of computer technology; in fact, previous exploration shows that the same features are typical to all lexis independently of the thematic area. Only about a quarter of the analyzed texts deals with computer-related issues; this corresponds to the general ratio of the contents of irc channels. On the other hand, Internet English-specific features are most prominent in the field where there is lack of adequate terminology to cover all aspects of required meaning values.

Individual freedom should be the main reason of multidirectional creativity in Internet English. It is intensified by the absence of any elements imposing the use of a universal system of signs on representatives of various cultures. Thus, anthropological differences lead to slight variations even in case of interpretation of fundamental laws. This explains not only the abundance of neologisms in Internet English but also the variety of their nature. In fact, practice shows that no essential problems of (mis)understanding arise between native and non-native speakers as well as between representatives of different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, it is possible to claim that there exists some universal code, the adherence to which ensures mutual understanding throughout the communication process. On the other hand, any violation of the code demonstrates one's non-adherence to the (sub)culture As separate cases represent the philosophy and the unwritten rules of Internet English, it is possible to explore the general trends of word formation and validate the results of the analysis (Rumšienė 2006b, p. 2).

The main motifs for development of new forms are (cf. Rumšienė 2005a, p. 327-8):

- non-represented meaning values;
- irregular forms or forms with atypical affixation;
- long word forms (too many symbols);
- need for parody or foregrounding experienced by a net user.

As a result, the development of new lexical units may stem either as a result of the absence of a necessary word or due to the unacceptability of already existing words largely motivated by stylistic issues. Thus, lexical innovations are motivated by a combination of linguistic and social factors. From the sociolinguistic perspective, adherence to neologisms is motivated by the emphasis of one's belonging to the social group which largely favours and even makes emphasis on the innovation. As a large part of neologisms substitute the "outdated" lexical stock, it is not purely semantic reasons that make the Internet society change the thesaurus. It may be explained by foregrounding, shortening, standardization, xenophobia, etc. but, on the whole, alterations are largely introduced for the sake of alterations themselves, just as an act of economy and amusement (Rumšienė 2006b, p. 3). Hale and Scanlon believe (cf. Hale, Scanlon 1999, p. 3-22) that because of the nature of Internet conversation, the interlocutors of online media should play with voice, i.e. their utterances should reflect linguistic inventiveness, creativity, play in the form of new words and odd constructions. In addition, Internet language users should aim their discourse at the specific digitally-oriented audience and share its background and style features (which in fact is emphasis on the fact of collective creativity).

There are five major groups of neologisms in Internet English: compounds, affixational derivatives, words with new roots and shortenings/ clippings together with acronyms. In terms of percentage, the frequency of methods is approximately: 40% of compounds; 24% of affixational neologisms, 16% of new roots, 8% of conversion, 6% of shortening and 6% of irregular cases (Rumšienė 2006a, p. 4). It is very complicated to make precise estimates as multiple neologisms feature combinations of word building types; as a result, in this calculation a word is attributed to a class which exerts the strongest influence on its formation. It is important to note that Internet English in addition to liberal mechanisms of creativity allows some reinterpretation of the morphemic structure of a word. Thus, *picked it up* may be transformed to *pickuped*. As in numerous other cases, substantial economy of symbols occurs (4 symbols, adequate to about two seconds). Although it does not seem to be an essential improvement, in the area of harsh competition to attract attention, it really matters.

As it has already been mentioned above, the layout of the text is a significant factor in the philosophy of Internet language. While in oral communication ideas mostly correspond to phrases, written texts are influenced by the line factor. As computers break lines automatically, collocations and set phrases may be visually separated. As a result, it is much more convenient to link such groups of words into one. In addition, some time and space is saved. Spaces between words are frequently against the formal technical requirements; they are avoided in file names, website names and other codes, which are automatically interpreted by computers; consequently, participants of online communication generally have a different attitude to the function of the space between words. It is not surprising that the largest part of neologisms is compounds. Language abounds in set phrases and collocations; this is extremely typical of technically-oriented speech, where numerous terms are expressed in two or more separate words. The decision to unite them into one and omit breaks seems natural at least due to two major reasons: first of all, this saves space and time, and second, the absence of breaks ensures that the whole word is within a single line. Thus, the

amount of compounds in Internet English is higher than in Standard English just because the medium and way of communication largely contribute to that. Last but not least, such neologisms-compounds are always fully transparent, and their understanding does not cause any problems to the participants of the communicative process. In fact, in technology-targeted chats, the amount of compounds in comparison to all neologisms may reach even up to 80 per cent (cf. Rumšienė 2006a, p. 4).

Compounds referring to technical terms are created almost automatically. For example, "to send mail" is a habitually used command. Naturally, it evolves into *sendmail*: "<glacious> ziom: isn't it just a blank line with a . on it for *sendmail*?". The shift to *copypaste* is clearly due to semantic reasons as in most cases the action of copying is followed by pasting. *Makefile* is not a combination of two commands, it is a single action defined by a stable word group. The same process is observed in multiple examples: commandline, opensource, itemstatechanged, pageformat, getConnection, HttpClient, soundproblem, getInputStream, OutOfMemory, etc. An interesting feature is the usage of capital letters in the middle of words. Possibly they prevail in long phrases to show the end of a word; at least, such units as *datacenter* are not likely to have the second morpheme capitalized. On the other hand, this is not a decisive factor, one may come across such cases as *formatA*, where the upper case seems to originate from the tradition to capitalize disk names. Thus the main reason for compounding in the lexical field of computer-related technologies rather emphasizes the meaning of the whole unit than of its individual constituents and helps to understand the complex term correctly by singling it out from the general course of the text.

There are no restrictions on the word classes being parts of compounds. Similarly to Standard English, nouns, adjectives and verbs dominate, but pronouns, prepositions, numerals, single letters and even interjections may also occur, e.g. *myspace*, *outofdate*, *error404*, *copyA*, *ohright*, etc. As a result, there are no restrictions for the components, but the factor of collocability is never violated. For external observers this may be unexpected, but experienced users regard compounding as a natural process and tend to join the whole group of words cumulatively referring to a single entity. An additional motif to link words is the preference to phrases without prepositions such as *attackspeed* instead of *speed of attack*. Prepositions may also be rejected in phrasal verbs, for example, "<Cody|fud> I *agree* Ubbe" instead of "I *agree with* X". Thus, Internet language rejects semantically empty functional words whenever possible.

This tendency is observable in technology-unrelated lexical units as well. As a result, such cases of alternative spelling as *vacuumcleaner*, *highschool*, *dayofweek*, *handjob*, *button-smashing*, *paperdoll* and *grouphug* are frequent. The semantic function of the set phrase is irrelevant; even those set phrases which consist of functional words may be compounded, e.g. *howcome*. The existence of some compounds is definitely due to their previous use as website names, for example, the girl of the dreams is called *wannabegirl* (cf. www.wannabegirl.com); the necessity to create single-word prompts may have triggered the tradition of almost universal compounding. It is the same people who communicate in the same linguistic and technological environment, and consequently they stick to the same rules of word-to-word relationship. In oral communication, the presence/ absence of a gap disappears; thus, this strategy of compounding is a specific feature of the written modes of language. The difference between the word and the morpheme is slightly shifted in Internet language from what is habitual in Standard English. Every lexical unit with a high collocability rate may turn into an affixational morpheme. This process may be observed in *click* (single*click*, payper*click*, *click*rate, etc.), *ass* (bad*ass*, kick*ass*, *ass*hat, *ass*-loads, dumb*ass*), *web* (*web*sphere, *web*logic, etc.). It should be noted that most of such roots have preceding compounds in Standard English, e.g. *asshole* or *website*.

Compounding is not restricted to the "gluing" of two or more free morphemes; it is a part of complex processes dealing with morpheme alterations. As a result, many lexical units lose those elements that do not constitute the most recognizable part of the root. In *sysadmin* (*sys*tem *admin*istrator), definitely no semantic value has been lost, but at the same time users are able to save 12 symbols.

Internet society favours the building of compounds with phonetically close elements; such constructs frequently have a shade of irony. *Japanimation* (* bunny chears *japanimation* style with the lil asian school girl) features the emphasis on the fact that the Japanese produce a number of animated films for children; it is evident that the segment *an* is shared by Jap*an*(ese) and *an*imation. Generally, Internet English although being a form of solely written communication plays with phonetic effects as much as the genre of poetry. *Idgit* is a mixture of *idiot* and *digit*; it refers to a person who is not competent in digital technologies. Similarly, *luser* is a computer *user* with lack of adequate skills, i.e. a *loser*. The play here takes place not only on the level of phonetics, but also in spelling alterations. The resulting compounds have reference to their initial elements both at the level of orthography and phonetics. Mergers of words may emphasize their cumulative semantic value rather than collocability. Multiple cases of compounding feature shortened forms of one or more elements. This is not an obstacle for the understanding of such lexical units as usually the most important syllables are preserved to make the meaning clear. For example, *to chilax* is *to chill and relax*, *crunk* is *crazy and drunk*, and *fugly* is *fucking ugly*. As *wah* is an interjection referring to being upset and the ambulance has predominantly negative connotations, it results in the development of an exclamation *wahmbulance!* (meaning approxima-tely: someone is crying over something stupid), evoking ironic attitude of other participants of the conversation. The process may occur not only at the level of words, but also by relating entire word groups. Two quantifiers, *hell of* and *a lot of* are merged into *hellofalot*, which denotes a substantial quality of something (<CyTG> must have a *hellofalot* of it's then).

Contrary to the general trend of curtailing at the juncture,

linking vowels may be inserted. In *reflectoporn* (meaning: Internet auction where items are sold by exhibitionists), the vowel *o* is employed to make the neologism phonetically acceptable. Although the word is not expected to be pronounced, it still preserves some similarity with such compounds of Standard English as *physicochemical* or *sociolinguistics*. In *cluebie* (a clueless newbie), reference to pronunciation is also made by the preservation of the linking vowel *e*, which gives reference to the pronunciation of the word; this is important so that not to mix *cluebie* and *clubbie* (a visitor to a club). Internet English frequently follows the patterns established in the traditional thesaurus, and only in exceptional cases produces unique shifts. The specificity of Internet language lies as much in the originality of its word building devices as in the multiplicity of neologisms built on a regular basis. As a result, the majority of traditionally constructed novel lexical units are easily understandable to the outsiders of the (sub)culture, and it is acronyms and symbols that disrupt the transparency of the entire message.

Alterations of already existing compounds are part of Internet English communication style. Thus *something* may be replaced by *somekind* (<Avarni> we are having *somekind* of odd invasion here..), which is close in meaning, but regularly spelt as two independent words. *Anyway* is substituted by *anyweb* mocking the fact that whatever is said and wherever the communication takes place, it is still World Wide Web. A similar root shift is present in *obeserexic*, where *anorexic* (a person with inability to eat) is parodied to produce the semantic value "a person who eats too much". A frequent case of this type of compound "interpretation" is a neologism sharing the first member with one lexical unit, and the second unit with another compound: *otherway* is expected to share its semantic values with both *otherwise* and *anyway*. A major difference between Standard English and Internet English is the fact that the Internet (sub)culture has developed creative attitude towards all elements of language and does not treat anything as a stable unit. As a result, those lexical units or set phrases which are trite elements of Standard Language are reinterpreted to foreground the dynamism of the process of communication. It is psychologically affected by the incessant evolution of technologies keeping in mind that five decades have witnessed five computer development revolutions. As the style of communication is largely motivated by the features of the technological perspective, this is a natural parallel.

Internet English compounds are different from those of the Standard Language in terms of the fact that they favour the rejection of unnecessary affixes: thus, *a barkeeper* is transformed into *barkeep*. *Sugarpic* (*sugar* + *pic*ture; meaning: an erotic photograph of oneself which is sent to one's boy/ girlfriend) is a similar case, but it deals with clipping rather than with the rejection of an affix as the first syllable is sufficient to identify the root. The initial part of Standard English compounds seldom includes verbs and few verbs are compounds. In Internet English, there is no such restriction and such verbs as *to shitlist* (meaning: to include people into lists of non-desired participants of chat communication) are common. Compounds may contain complicated structures including complete prepositional phrases. Thus, cam2cam (meaning: a way of communication when both participants can see each other as they have cameras (=cam) integrated in their computers) consists of noun + preposition + noun structure. Such a pattern would be almost impossible in Standard English. The very inclusion of a preposition into the lexical structure of a verb or a noun (*halfop*, etc.) is common; two morphological units perform a shared function and there is no need to separate them. On the whole, the immense popularity of compounding is mostly due to the willingness to connect semantically related lexemes physically by producing space economy and in some cases introducing humorous effects.

Compounding and acronymic structures are closely related phenomena of word building as they both include parts of at least two stems. However, differently from compounds, which are usually transparent in terms of meaning, acronyms are very difficult to understand as they may combine initial letters with various other signs. Some of those acronyms that have no phonetic blocking enter the standard language as well, e.g. *lol* (laugh out loud), *rom* (read-only memory) or *irc* (Internet relay chat). Acronym use is not a specific phenomenon of Internet communication; it is common in various formal texts, e.g. *dnp* (did not play) in reports on sport matches, but on the Internet their use is much wider. In addition, they denote not only technical terms but also various informal phrases, e.g. *brb* (be right back) or *rotfl* (rolling on the floor laughing). Acronyms are highly motivated by the use of technologies: as the process of typing is slightly slower than speaking but the human eye is able to "decipher" sequences of consonants far better than the ear, the acceptability of this type of abbreviation increases substantially. While in Standard English it still takes three syllables to pronounce BBC or USA, on the Internet *cul* (see you later) requires no more time than *and*. Some acronyms add some element of punning, e.g. *wombat* stands not for an Australian animal, but rather denotes absolute uselessness of something (*w*aste *o*f *m*oney, *b*rain *a*nd *t*ime). Another peculiar feature of Internet language compounds is that they can always function as standard lexemes acquiring word form affixes, e.g. *rofling* (*r*olling *o*n *f*loor *l*augh*ing*). This repeats the regular pattern of semantic meaning-laden roots and syntactically functional affixes. In addition, acronyms may be further interpreted in terms of word building. While in Standard English **USean* or **BBCish* sounds improbable, Internet style allows extensive further development, e.g. *wb* (*w*elcome *b*ack) is transformed to *wibs*, *wibbles* or *wibbers*.

The relative frequency of conversion, which may occur between virtually any two parts of speech, may be explained by the fact that a new kind of speech being a shorter word in terms of graphical signs is extremely convenient. The name of an Internet search engine *Google* produces the verb *to google*; in the following example, the same happens with the acronym noun *irc*: (<tjen> […] it's a lot of *googling* and *ircing*). As the development of the Internet Language is

extremely dynamic, it does not take hundreds of years to develop conversional pairs. Thus, conversion got popularized mostly due to its multilateral economy in addition to simplicity. While in Standard English conversion usually occurs in words having bare roots, in Internet English this is not a decisive factor. Thus, *a vendor* may produce the verb *to vendor*. Many neologism compounds and shortenings further produce conversion-based related words. As a result, for example, the noun *sysadmin* produces the corresponding verb: "<azcl> […] you obviously haven't been *sysadmining* for very long". It also seems that virtually any root-only word may be converted to another part of speech, especially in case of semantic gaps. The adjective *remote* is converted to the noun *remote* (something that is distant, especially a computer), *a message* produces *to message*, *to vanish* produces *a vanish* and all these innovations are motivated by the absence of required semantic values. Even such morphologically complex words as *executable* may undergo conversion (in this case, from adjective to noun: <lgnhsl> […] configure: error: C compiler cannot create *executables*.

Affixation is another frequent method of word building. First of all, it has to be noted that while comparing Standard English and Internet English the lists of actively used affixes do not correspond. Thus, Internet English may take any word building pattern for a basis without considering whether it is active or already abandoned in other modes of language. First of all, the Internet society has a creative attitude towards word building. Linguistic (or, more specifically, morphological) inventiveness is a possibility to add some variation to the mode of language which has technological limitations regarding extralinguistic features. Non-standard creativity helps avoid monotony of written communication. On the other hand, standardization of some paradigms allows to increase the speed of the development of neologisms. While affixation may pose some phonetic problems in Standard English (e.g. *luxury* versus *luxurious*), visual expression of word forms on the Internet gives a clear reference to the stem. If a word building paradigm is actively used in Standard English, its application in the Internet language is flawless. Thus, the absence of a semantic value in the language is not the only reason for lexical creativity.

A large part of the affixes of Standard English deal with the function of negation, and some of them clearly overlap in their functions. If it is taken into consideration together with the fact that negation may be achieved via purely grammatical means, it becomes evident that numerous elements get to perform the same (or parallel) function(s). As economy of space and time is a key priority of the Internet culture, preference is given to the device which requires minimum effort. It clearly is the affix *un-*, which is also largely employed in Standard English. However, it is not universally applicable, and this may result in extensive syntactic patterns. To avoid this, Internet English endows this affix with the ability of universal application. Such cases as *undead* (not dead anymore), *uncool* (not great), *unexistant* (non existent) and many others prove that its applicability in Internet English substantially increased in comparison with Standard English. In fact, even those who are totally unfamiliar with the culture of the Internet and its strategies of linguistic expression would easily understand the semantic function of *unexistant*. When typing, it gives the economy of two symbols in comparison to its traditional analogue *non-existent*, and the shift is clearly motivated by the values of the specific mode of language. Naturally, it is more convenient to use the same affix in all cases of negation; as a result, *un-* as the dominant negating prefix in the neologisms of Standard English, is used not only in new words, but also sometimes substitutes other negation-laden affixes in already existing lexical units. Such cases as *unappropriate* standing for *inappropriate* are quite common. Similarly, to *dismount* may be substituted by *to unmount*. On the other hand, those negative prefixes, which have specific meanings incomparable with *un-*, e.g. *dys-*, are not substituted. Similarly, if there are several variants of the same affix, the basic universal form is established. As a result, *accessible* is transformed to *accessable*.

As it has been mentioned above, there is the single dominant negative prefix *-un*, which mostly indicates the cancellation of an action and is applied almost automatically to virtually any word, e.g. *to unmute* (to switch the sound on again, cf. *to undo*) or *to unarchive* (to retrieve some material from the archives). It is convenient as negation in English takes functional words, and negative prefixation helps save place and time in addition to setting a standard pattern.

A major difference between word building processes in Standard English and in Internet English lies in the fact that while the usage of affixes in Standard English depends on the part of speech to which they are adjoined, Internet English poses fewer restrictions. The causes of this morphological liberty may be traced to the fact that the technology of the Internet lets people remain anonymous and they are not afraid of experimenting. Affix-based neologisms are comparatively frequent as affixes have set meaning values; thus the meaning of *authenticator* (*authentic+ate+or*) can be detected using purely logical operations. Similarly, *bestness* (*best+ness*) is the quality of being the best. It violates some formal rules of word building as the suffix "-ness" is not added to adjective forms of the superlative degree, but the pattern of meaning development is totally clear. Internet English liberally interprets some basic norms of word building. Irregular patterns of affixation are frequently employed, e.g. the affix *-ly* is added to the noun/ verb *chat* to get *chatly*. Intuitively feeling that the preceding examples violate the traditional structure, even inexperienced users face no difficulty in dealing with the meaning values. On the whole, the structure of the word remains maximally simple, and there seem to be no cases that a root-only word should acquire an affix and preserve the old meaning. In fact, two essential factors, namely, economy and style reasons, which also largely overlap, condition the present run of the vocabulary development processes. However, in some cases affixes are treated with slight differences of their meaning or with atypical kinds of stems, the latter being much more frequent. First, non-standard

paradigms are regularized (*bad→baddest*; *best→bestness*); second, already existing words may be supplied with affixes (*imagine→imaginate*; *snooze→snoozilate*); third, affixes may be used in atypical surrounding (*shot→shotness* despite the traditional pattern *adjective* + *ness*). Usage irregularities do not tend to lead to meaning adjustment; all words denoting material objects are liable to acquire abstract counterparts.

The universally accepted vision of the world may undergo very lax interpretations, and, for example zero or a very small but unknown number or amount of something may be referred to as *eleventy*: "<Gwyd> Alaric, I have *eleventy* billion dollars to donate". Undoubtedly, such words amuse one's interlocutors, and their user may get more attention from their part.

It is evident that language users mutually agree on the function of particular morphemes: only as long as a particular affix carries the same function through an infinite number of words can the communicative action achieve felicity conditions. Thus, it is much easier for a root to have a shift in its meaning than for an affix. As a result, there is no problem in adding affixes to any parts of speech or types of structures, e.g. *pwnage* consists of the acronym verb *to pwn* and the noun suffix *-age*. In addition, many roots gradually turn into affixes. Whenever their meaning values are universally acknowledged, they turn into bound morphemes, which are possible to combine with numbers of roots (cf. Rumšienė 2006, p. 4).

In affixational word building, a part of the root may be completely eliminated, and, for instance, *hello again* is said as *relo* (*re+hello*). It is similar to the merger of two roots of compounds, but the clipped root seems hard to understand to external observers. In case of affix use, reiterating elements may be dropped even if they have different functions; thus *re-enabling* is transformed to *renabling*. Adherence to the only variant of every root is noticeable. While in Standard English there is a clear opposition in the pairs *clear/ to clarify*; *(a) grief/ to grieve*, Internet language modifies the second variants to *to clearify* and *to grief*. As there are no spellcheckers in irc chats, the uniformity and consequent simplicity of the code is a convenience which lets the user concentrate on the ideas s/he wants to express rather than on the spelling exceptions. This desire is natural as habitual speakers would also be annoyed if they were required to give the correct orthography of every word they use. While conversion usually occurs in such cases when a root does not produce the required part of speech or it sounds stylistically unacceptable (e.g. *to err* in comparison to *an error*), affix-laden words are more likely to undergo subsequent morphological changes. As a result, *an error* produces *to error* ("[…] because mail *was erroring* with the imap error"), but this is not a universal rule.

As Internet English is closely related to oral speech and users seek to achieve some economy of symbols to increase the speed of communication, shortening is a widely established derivational process in Internet English. A substantial part of terms are of foreign origin being polysyllabic words, and at the same time their initial syllables are sufficient to make them understandable and distinct. A number of examples of clipping are found on the Internet, and usually if one is familiar with the meaning of the full word may also easily guess the semantic value of the derivative even without any context. In cases *congratulations→grats, fragmentation→frag, weblog→blog, ack-nowledged→ack* or *something→somat, etc*., the root gets reduced to its first syllable except for the case of *blog*. As a result, participants of the communicative process still get sufficient information regarding the semantic functions of a lexical unit. *Blog* has been widely acknowledged; it rapidly spread in English-speaking countries because of its high popularity in slang(s). Shortenings occurring in the Internet language usually correspond to the way people speak, and such word forms as *dif(f)* or *probs* are not purely Internet-specific. The difference rather is in the fact that in Internet communication, such word forms are recorded. In some cases even meaning-laden parts of lexical units may be dropped. Thus, *disgustin* is transformed to *gustin* although namely *dis* endowed the word with its negative connotations. There is an opposite process of root extension; it usually foregrounds the time span of an action, and the emphasis on the low speed of the Internet is expressed by adding additional *g*'s to the root and saying that the Internet is *lagggy*. This stylistic device is possible in written texts only as in oral communication it is impossible to pronounce consonants as long sounds.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to establish the relationship of spoken and digital varieties of language, and the claim that shortenings are simply transferred to Computer English as a ready-to-use product is probably impossible to beat. Only those cases of shortenings which are impossible to pronounce may be related to the digital forms of language, e.g. *acct* standing for *account* (<Xara> I had one *acct* banned for botting) or *appt* replacing *appointment* (<Trish'> i got *an appt* on wednesday to see what all the tests say […]), even though they are shared by the language forms of emails, short messages and Internet relay chats. Consequently, shortenings fit into the spirit of the Internet language but are more likely to be borrowed rather than created specifically in the process of irc communication. A compound may also include a shortening, for example, the access to *hypertext* (*ht*) is commonly referred to as *htaccess*. This type of words is specific in terms of pronunciation as the second segment is readable directly while the shortening is read letter-by-letter. On the whole, experienced users easily adjust to such "irregular" lexical units, and the preference is still given to the economy of place and time.

The amount of new roots in Internet English is relatively low. In addition to abbreviations or acronyms turning into independent words, e.g. *rom* (read only memory), proportionally few cases may be mentioned. *To blag* (<shaggy-h> some cost assloads, some you can *blag* for free) refers to having some document sent. In spite of the existence of a number of synonyms in Standard English, *to blag* is created to denote a specific type of downloading. However, when a new root is adopted, it is flexible enough to be represented in different

parts of speech, e.g. *to chmod* in "<linuxn00b> what does *chmod* do?" (noun) or "<mnko> in most cases you will need *to chmod*" (verb). It is likely that the main problem with the scarcity of new roots is the achievement of mutual understanding. While the ability of understanding a neologism produced by affixation or compounding relies on the general competence of language use, a new root can hardly evoke any analogies or specific associations. As a result, new roots will probably make an insignificant part of Internet English innovations (cf. Rumšienė 2006b, p. 6).

To sum up, a specific form of communication, combining practices of oral speech and written discourse with technology restrictions and the alternative possibilities it provides, results in the development of a unique form of language. A new type of depersonalized society favouring linguistic experiments has risen; its values within the communication process include economy of time and place, innovativeness and a sense of humorous parody. Creative processes in the fields of lexicology and morphology are mostly motivated by non-represented meaning values and by non-standard word forms; this attitude results in the development of high numbers of neologisms, most of which are produced by compounding, affixation and conversion. The new words are very active morphologically, and Internet English is very dynamic. In many cases, analogical patterns of word building may be traced in Standard English. Strife for parody allows non-standard interpretation of the morphological laws of the English Language, and the lists of active affixes in the two modes of language do not fully correspond.

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Goda Rumšienė

Interneto anglų kalba – technikos sąlygota kalbos forma?

Santrauka

Interneto anglų kalba pasižymi savita vartojimo aplinka – tai itin dinamiška individo kūrybinės laisvės sąlygota šnekamojo pobūdžio kalbos forma išreikšta rašytiniais simboliais ir ribojama paralingvistinės plotmės nebuvimo. Kalbinė aplinka – techniniai apribojimai bei vizualinių teksto formų suteikiamos nestandartinės galimybės – kartu su susiformavusios kalbinės bendruomenės strategija suteikė galimybę vystytis netradicinių formų naujadarams, kurių kiekis yra daug didesnis nei bendrinėje kalboje. Internetinė anglų kalba pasižymi didesniu darybos metodų kiekiu; dalis paradigmų neturi atitikmenų standartinėje šiuolaikinėje anglų kalboje. Kūrybiniame procese pirmenybė teikiama dūriniams, afiksacijai bei akronimijai. Darybos procesus paskatina semantinėms vertėms adekvačių leksinių vienetų nebuvimas bei inovatyvumo strategija. Šį procesą labiausiai motyvuoja siekis taupyti laiką ir vietą rašymo procese bei polinkis į dominuojančių elementų bei mechanizmų taikymą.

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