Abstract: - Netspeak elements are very common among young people even in formal ways of communication. In this paper the authors tend to discover whether the ratio of those elements is growing or falling by increasing the level of students’ education. The authors analyze the presence of Netspeak elements in asynchronous discussions within the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) course taught in 1st semester and within the MIS (Management Information Systems) taught in 7th semester at Zagreb School of Economics and Management. The methodology the authors use is the analysis of the posts in asynchronous discussion within the 1st and 7th semester using Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation, One Sample Statistics and Paired Samples Statistics. The results confirmed the hypothesis that the freshmen are more subjected to Netspeak even in formal discussions than the senior students.

Key-Words: - asynchronous discussion, Netspeak elements, spoken language, e-learning, Information and Communication Technologies

1 Introduction

Netspeak is a new language of information communication found on Internet in a form of chat, text messages and msn. [1] It changes the rules of written Croatian language by introducing new forms and using the old forms in new expressive ways. It reflects the return to the speech and the imagery in the electronic media being described as the third media revolution [2]. It's very rapid, direct and almost spoken. Netspeak attracts with its simplicity and creativity in shaping the message. Very popular especially among young people penetrates even though into the formal ways of communication.

In a paper „Correlation between Netspeak elements and asynchronous discussion“ [3] the authors have analyzed various elements of Netspeak used by students in closed discussions between students and between students and professors (student-student, student-professor).
Open discussions allow permanent communication between students, students and professor, professor and students. They can discuss either over class material or topics outside the teaching subject. Closed discussions are related to the teaching materials, and can be either professor-student or student-student.

There is a certain correlation between using Netspeak elements in professor-student discussion and the one between students. It means that the student using the Netspeak elements in an informal discussion with another student will be using more often the same elements either in a professor-student discussion. Thereat students use more often the Netspeak elements in an informal student-student discussion. [8] The studies show the same perception of the students. Students claim often use of Netspeak elements in an informal rather than in formal discussion. The senior students state the lower use of Netspeak elements than the freshmen. [9]

2 Netspeak elements in closed discussion

The research over the use of the Netspeak elements has been conducted at Zagreb School of Economics and Management, the leading higher educational institution in Croatia in a systematic use of e-learning. [10, 11]. We have chosen the courses with high developed asynchronous discussion:

1. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) – taught in 1st semester [12, 13]
2. Management Information System (MIS) – taught in 7th semester [14]

Table 1 shows the use of Netspeak elements within the posts of the same students within the 1st semester in 2007 and 7th semester in 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st semester</th>
<th></th>
<th>7th semester</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word in English</td>
<td>94 P-S</td>
<td>88 S-S</td>
<td>80 P-S</td>
<td>95 S-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diacritical Marks</td>
<td>70 P-S</td>
<td>66 S-S</td>
<td>76 P-S</td>
<td>75 S-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms and Abbreviations</td>
<td>70 P-S</td>
<td>78 S-S</td>
<td>66 P-S</td>
<td>73 S-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emoticons</td>
<td>52 P-S</td>
<td>36 S-S</td>
<td>11 P-S</td>
<td>30 S-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonstandard use of Punctuation</td>
<td>62 P-S</td>
<td>68 S-S</td>
<td>27 P-S</td>
<td>42 S-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uppercase graphemes</td>
<td>12 P-S</td>
<td>8 S-S</td>
<td>10 P-S</td>
<td>9 S-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged graphemes</td>
<td>8 P-S</td>
<td>17 S-S</td>
<td>2 P-S</td>
<td>4 S-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutation at the beginning of post</td>
<td>7 P-S</td>
<td>11 S-S</td>
<td>6 P-S</td>
<td>24 S-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary closing at the end of post</td>
<td>35 P-S</td>
<td>26 S-S</td>
<td>28 P-S</td>
<td>47 S-S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 The comparison of various elements of professor-student and student-student discussion

Even in 90% of posts there is present at least one expression in English language. It is expected because those are the IT courses, all about new technologies and the used expressions are internationally accepted. It is not a new thing. It’s common issue to all minor world languages, being subjected to English language not only in a field of information technology.

Those students using the diacritics in one discussion usually use them in all discussions as well as in e-mails. Up to 10% of students sometimes use diacritics sometimes not. Below 1% of students in the same post combine using the diacritics and omitting it.

Figure 2 shows the use of acronyms and abbreviations within the posts of the same students within the 1st semester in 2007 and 7th semester in 2011.

![Figure 2 Distribution of acronyms and abbreviations in a 1st and 7th semester](image)

In average the acronyms and abbreviations are used more often by students in 1st semester and in the informal student-student discussion.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the use of emoticons in 1st and 7th semester.

![Figure 3 Distribution of the use of emoticons in 1st and 7th semester](image)
In average the same students used emoticons much more less in 7th semester than they used to do that in 1st semester.

Unexpected result of wider use of emoticons in 1st semester within the more formal professor-student discussion is explained with the length of the posts. In fact, the posts within this discussion are oftener longer than in a student-student discussion so the possibility of the appearance of the emoticons increases.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of the use of the punctuation.

![Figure 4 Distribution of the nonstandard use of the punctuation](image)

Students in 1st semester use much more often the punctuation to express hesitation and yelling than they do that in 7th semester. In both cases, the punctuation is used oftener in informal student-student discussion rather than in professor-student. The nonstandard use of punctuation includes using the period, exclamation marks and question marks to stress out what we are talking about and to simulate hesitation or using loud voice. Very similar to the use of uppercase and prolonged graphemes it is used to add prosodic elements to the written words as well as to express strong emotions.

About 10% of students use uppercase graphemes no matter if they attend 1st semester or 7th semester and no matter of the type of the discussion. Prolonged graphemes are oftener used in 1st semester and within the student-student discussion.

Figure 5 shows the use of salutation at the beginning of the post.

![Figure 5 Salutation at the beginning of the post](image)

Even though it is a closed discussion strictly related to the teaching materials students are not showing much interest in salutation directly continuing the discussion. It is the feature of spoken language, of common conversation where the strict rules of written Croatian language start to vanish. Skipping the salutation and complementary closing the discourse automatically assumes the conversational tone.

Figure 6 shows the use of complementary closing at the end of the post.

![Figure 6 Complementary closing at the end of the post](image)

Students are much more interested in salutation at the end of the post, but it’s important to stress out that the majority of the complementary closing at the end of the discussion are emoticons.
3 Results on Statistical Research

This research includes the analysis of the student posts who participated in asynchronous discussion in the 1st semester when they were freshmen, back in 2007, and the posts in asynchronous discussion on their fourth year of study, in the 7th semester in 2011.

The hypotheses are as follows:
1. Netspeak elements such as slang, omission of diacritics, acronyms, abbreviations, emoticons, nonstandard use of punctuations, uppercase and prolonged graphemes used in 1st semester will be used in 7th semester too.
2. Netspeak elements are used more often in 1st semester rather than in 7th.

3.1 Testing the first hypothesis

The authors assumed that the Netspeak elements are oftener used in 1st semester within the ICT course rather than in 7th semester within the MIS course. To test the first hypothesis the authors have been using the Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation with sample of 36 students that have been actively participated in the discussions in both courses, in 1st semester within the ICT course, and in 7th semester within the MIS course. If we look the average use of every Netspeak elements as shown in the Table 2 the authors state the correlation between the use of Netspeak elements in 1st and 7th semester.

The same Netspeak elements used in 1st and 7th semester have been compared and the results shows the statistically significant correlation between the use of diacritical marks and the use of emoticons with the reliability ratio of 95% regarding the significance ratio being 0,045 and 0,044. Other correlation coefficients are not statistically relevant; they are not correlated in 1st and 7th semester which is shown in a following figure.

The Table 3 shows the correlation coefficient and significance ratio proving the existence of correlation between mentioned elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Correlations</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Corr.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 ICT slang &amp; MIS slang</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2 ICT diacritical marks &amp; MIS diacritical marks</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.337</td>
<td>.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3 ICT acronyms &amp; abbreviations MIS acronyms and abbreviations</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4 ICT emoticons &amp; MIS emoticons</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.337</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5 ICT beginning of posts &amp; MIS beginning of posts</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 6 ICT end of posts &amp; MIS end of posts</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 7 ICT nonstandard use of punctuation &amp; MIS nonstandard use of punctuations</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8 ICT upper case &amp; MIS upper case ICT prolonged graphemes &amp; MIS prolonged graphemes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Correlation between each Netspeak elements in 1st and 7th semester

Therefore, there is a correlation between the use of diacritics in 1st semester and the use of diacritics in 7th semester as well as the correlation between using emoticons in 1st and 7th semester. There is a correlation between the use of emoticons, complementary closing at the end of the post and nonstandard use of punctuation in 1st and 7th semester. This result is expected and very logic because the posts in most of time end with emoticons.

As well, there is a correlation between the nonstandard use of punctuation and the complementary closing at the end of the post in 1st and in 7th semester as shown in following table.

Table 2 Correlation between the average use of Netspeak elements in 1st and 7th semester
3.2 Testing the second hypothesis

In order to test the second hypothesis the authors use the results obtained from One Sample Statistics and Paired Samples Statistics. The authors analyzed the average usage of Netspeak elements of all students, active participants in all discussions, as well as the average usage of Netspeak elements of active participants in just one discussion, either the one in 1\textsuperscript{st} semester or the one in 7\textsuperscript{th}. The obtained results are arithmetic mean showing the use of Netspeak elements in discussions in 1\textsuperscript{st} and in 7\textsuperscript{th} semester.

Looking at the average results, the authors can conclude that Netspeak elements are used most often in 1\textsuperscript{st} semester rather than in 7\textsuperscript{th} semester in both samples.

Pair-simple t-test analysis of use of Netspeak elements in 1\textsuperscript{st} and 7\textsuperscript{th} semester show that this difference is considered to be not so significant to be claimed as statistically significant, and if we look at the result of the analysis of use of Netspeak elements in discussions either in 1\textsuperscript{st} and 7\textsuperscript{th} semester we can conclude that this difference is considered to be very statistically significant.

Observing the use of Netspeak elements each by each, the authors note that some of them such as the use of slang, the omission of diacritics, the use of emoticons, the nonstandard use of punctuation and the use of prolonged graphemes are oftener used in 1\textsuperscript{st} semester than in 7\textsuperscript{th}. While the use of acronyms and abbreviations, uppercase graphemes and salutation at the beginning and complementary closing at the end of the posts are oftener used in 7\textsuperscript{th} semester than in 1\textsuperscript{st} semester.

### 4 Conclusion

Netspeak generate itself from a spoken language, it develops rapidly and is becoming a common tool of communication erasing the boundaries between formal and informal communication.

Looking at the average results, the authors can conclude that there is correlation between the average use of Netspeak elements in 1\textsuperscript{st} and 7\textsuperscript{th} semester. However, statistically significant correlation is between the use of diacritics and emoticon.

In conclusion it can be said that the use of Netspeak elements is oftener among the students in 1\textsuperscript{st} semester than in 7\textsuperscript{th} semester. Individually, the Netspeak elements are also more often used in 1\textsuperscript{st} semester.
References:


