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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE OF THE INTERNET**

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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vlastnoruční podpis

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## **Abstract**

In this study there is analysed usage of various linguistic and Netspeak tools within different Internet situations and is compared with information provided by available literature about this topic. There were studied fifty English e-mails, ten English blogs, two online forums and observed numerous different online conversations within online English chatrooms. Research showed that the literature data are not valid mostly within e-mail openings and usage of emoticons within chat messages, while the capitalisation, punctuation, abbreviations and acronyms do not vary from information provided by available literature.

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## **Introduction**

In this work I am providing a background and specifics of online English language and its comparison with my research results. Within the research I studied my personal e-post, observed chat rooms and discussions and studied different blog posts. I paid special attention to the differences between formal and informal texts and distinguished between native and non-native writers.

I chose this subject because the Internet is still a very topical issue and almost everyone gets in contact with English there, so I think that this work can be found useful and help the readers with better orientation within online English and its usage.

## **THEORETICAL PART**

### **1. Netspeak**

Netspeak is nowadays one of the most important terms used in connection with language online. It is a term invented by David Crystal, first used in his book 'Language on the Internet' in 2001. (Crystal, 2006) Obviously, it is coined using words – 'Internet', and 'speak', while Crystal explains there that he chose the word 'speak' because it "involves writing as well as talking, and also ... a receptive element, including 'listening and reading'". (Crystal, 2006, p. 19) So in Netspeak we can see an intimate connection between speech and writing – moreover Naomi Baron claims that "writing has .. become a mirror of informal speech". (Baron, N., 2000, p. 188)

As Crystal, D. (2006) mentions, the term Netspeak is an alternative to many other terms for Internet slang, for example "'Netlish', 'Weblish', 'Internet language', 'cyberspeak', 'electronic discourse', 'electronic language', 'interactive written discourse', 'computer-mediated communication' " etc. (Crystal, 2006, p. 19)

So the word itself indicates all the language that is used online, including special vocabulary, special symbols, abbreviations, jargon etc. As Crystal, D. (2006) emphasises, the new inventions are appearing on the Internet mainly because of the fact that the Internet is primarily a written medium (that is why the usage of special symbols such as e.g. @ makes sense, but it naturally would not in speech).



## 1.1 Special vocabulary

Netspeak as an on-line slang language contains many innovations. One of them is the special vocabulary needed specially for punctuation in electronic addresses. (Crystal, 2006) As Crystal, D. (2006) summarizes, this online punctuation contains words such as ‘at’ , ‘dot’, ‘forward slash’, or ‘dot com’. Another innovation are suffixes of domain names, for example ‘.com’ (an abbreviation of the word commercial), ‘ac.’ or ‘edu’ (educational), ‘.gov’ (governmental), ‘mil’ (military), ‘.net’ (network organisations), ‘.org’ or ‘.co’ (the rest). (Crystal, 2006).

As Crystal, D. (2006) points out, a further development of special online vocabulary is still in progress – for example constant use of the words ‘dot com’ led to the coinage of the word ‘dotcom’, that is nowadays used as an adjective. Also the symbol @, (used as a universal connection between the name or nick of a recipient and an address), firstly chosen – as Baron, N. (2008) mentions - by a computer engineer, Ray Tomlinson, in 1972, is nowadays used as a replacement for letters ‘a’ or ‘at’ (e.g. ‘look @ yourself’). (Crystal, 2006)

Usage of various affixes is one of the favourite ways of creating new words. First, I would like to deal with prefixes; the symbol @ can - apart from being a supply of the words ‘a’ or ‘and’ - serve also as a prefix, e.g. in words such as @-address or @Home. (Crystal, 2006) The e-prefix (functioning as an abbreviation of the word ‘electronic’) is also being used in Netspeak frequently – Crystal, D. (2006) estimates that today there are probably hundreds of words with this prefix, for example e-book, e-cash or e-shop.

Secondly, there are special Netspeak suffixes. One of the most significant is a -z suffix. Its function is in replacing an -s suffix standing for a plural number – but not always. As Crystal, D. (2006) points out, usage of this suffix tends to be common within vocabulary which stands for illegal software, such as torrentz, serialz or gamez.

Another preferable technique of making new online words is compounding – for example a word ‘mouse’ used in ‘mouseclick’ or ‘mousepad’, word ‘click’ in ‘click-and-buy’ or ‘one-click’ or the word ‘web’ in words such as ‘webcam’, ‘webmaster’ or ‘webonomics’ etc. (Crystal, 2006) A blending technique can be demonstrated in examples such as ‘netiquette’, ‘cyberside’ (= killing a "person" in virtual world games) etc. (Crystal, 2006)

## 1.2 Specific Netspeak abbreviations

A wide range of abbreviations has been appearing online and according to Crystal, D. (2006) it is one of the most distinctive features of Netspeak. Some of them are being developed by users themselves, usually to fasten their online writings or short messages, the others are already set in a computer terminology.

As Joans, R. (2006) mentions, new abbreviations have been creating every day. For example his Internet Slang Dictionary published in 2006 consists of more than 2200 abbreviations and acronyms. For illustration I am providing David Crystal's choice of often used abbreviations in the Table 1.

Some of the acronyms from the first group (made by the Internet users) are also often used in text messages (such as 'CU l8r' standing for 'see you later' or '2day' meaning today), where specific shortening has appeared due to restricted length of the messages - 160 characters. (Crystal, 2006) On the other hand, some other abbreviations and acronyms are being used only online, because of its meaning that makes sense just in online context – for example BBIAM ('be back in a minute'). (Joans, 2006)

Misspelling is another factor that affects creating new acronyms. Sometimes it is unintended, but very often made by purpose. The most common way of intended misspelling is following pronunciation, which can demonstrate David Crystal's example (2006) 'sokay' standing for 'It's OK', or the use of '-z' suffix that I have already described in chapter 1.1.

Emotional expressions are another factor that vary the spelling. It has been made by adding some already written letters (e. g. 'Nooooo!'). The number of those multiplied vowels and consonants is voluntary and seem to reflect intensity of the emotion. (Crystal, 2006)

As Crystal, D. (2006) points out, the online abbreviations have no longer been serving only for words or brief phrases such as 'CU' ('see you') or 'gr8' ('great'), but also for whole sentences, for example 'CIO' standing for 'Check it out' or 'WDYS' meaning 'What did you say?'.

In the second main group – the computer and Internet terminology – we can see examples such as widely known acronyms like HTML (standing for 'hypertext markup language'), URL ('uniform resource locator') or FAQ ('frequently asked question'). (Crystal, 2006)

### 1.3. Usage of special signs for facial and verbal expressions in Netspeak

#### 1.3.1 Facial expressions - emoticons

As Netspeak does not provide a way to show facial expressions, body gestures, and other means of emotional expression, the use of emoticons (or so-called smileys) has developed. As the Oxford Dictionaries (2012) say, the word ‘emoticon’ was constructed by blending the words emotion and icon in the 1990s. According to dictionary.com (2012) the alternative term ‘smiley’ was used in the same period.

Emoticons can be defined as combinations of keyboard characters for showing a representation of emotional expressions of a face. (Crystal, 2006). The first emoticon itself was probably used by a Pittsburg professor Scott Fahlman in 1982, when he mentioned that there was a lack of an emotional background for expressing humour or greetings in his students' e-mails. (Jenkins, 2007)

Nowadays there are two main groups of emoticons – the western and Japanese ones. The western ones have to be looked at from the right side [ :- ) ], the Japanese are horizontal [ (^\_^) ]. In English online conversations the western style is the most used one – for example Crystal, D. (2006) do not even mention existence of those eastern emoticons, although some of them are commonly used nowadays too.

Every emoticon has its own meaning. Some of them are understood automatically (for example ‘:-)’ standing for humour, pleasure etc.), some of them are not – for this case there are plenty of tables either on the Internet and in linguistic books, explaining the meaning of each emoticon. In the appendix, I am providing the Crystal's one who adapted it from Sanderson, 1993 (Table 2). Although according to this table it may seem that the emoticons are standardised and finite, their appearance can change according to personal taste. (Crystal, 2006) For example the basic emoticon ‘:-)’ can be used also without a hyphen ‘: )’, or moreover with more brackets ‘:-))))’, without a particular change of its meaning. (Crystal, 2006)

Although it seems that the emoticons are used hugely in Netspeak, Crystal, D. (2006) claims that only about 13% of the posts include an emoticon. Moreover, he says that not everyone uses them, which supports a claim of Baron, N. (2000) that adults do not tend to use

the emoticons that much, as they have sufficient communicative skills to express themselves clearly.

So the emoticons provide facial expressions where they would otherwise be lacking in online written text. But written communication existed far earlier than Netspeak, for example in the way of letters – so why did people not need to develop some kind of written emotional expressions in those "earlier" times too? Crystal, D. (2006) brings the answer - in traditional writing there was enough time for making one's phrases clear (which was also the reason why the formal letter conventions developed). But as Netspeak is closer to speech than traditional writing, something had to replace those conventions – for example a quickly written Internet message may be easily misinterpreted as vulgar - but the emoticon softens the situation. (Crystal, 2006)

### **1.3.2 Verbal comments**

Verbal comments are words or sentences usually written in angle brackets related to all kinesic events, for example ‘ <smirk> ’ or ‘ <laugh> ’, but sometimes those brackets can be replaced by asterisks (\*smirk\*). (Crystal, 2006) Abbreviated forms of such verbal comments are also used, often as a parallel to emoticons – Crystal, D. (2006) uses as an example a ‘ <g> ’ stands for a ‘grin’ [ :-) ], and its emoticon version can also be modified to ‘ <gg> ’ or ‘ <ggg> ’, standing for even bigger smiles. Other acronyms developed on the basis of this ‘ <g> ’ - for example ‘ <vbg> ’ meaning ‘very big grin’. (Crystal, 2006). As was already mentioned, also whole sentences can be used as a verbal comment – as Crystal's (2006) example shows ‘ <spoon nods in greeting> ’.

## 1.4 Punctuation

Usage of punctuation in Netspeak is very loose and voluntary, in some cases even missing. (Crystal, 2006) According to Baron, N. (2010), the punctuation shows the writers' view of the relationship between speech and written language. As Crystal, D. (2006) writes, there are three ways of how people use punctuation in their online writing – the first group maintain the traditions of formal writing, the second one use punctuation when it is necessary because of potential ambiguity, and finally the third group never uses it at all.

The online punctuation can be sorted into two groups – punctuation that has or has not been used in traditional writing. The first group includes repeated punctuation and some unusual punctuation combinations, the second group consists of totally new ones.

A voluntary amount of repeated dots (...) can mean a pause, as well as repeated hyphens (---) or commas (,,,). (Crystal, 2006) As Crystal, D. (2006) further mentions, emphasis is being showed by exaggerated or arbitrary forms of punctuation such as '!!!!'.

The unusual combinations of punctuation can appear at the end of the sentences– e. g. in Crystal's example 'Is it true of Yahoo!?', where the exclamation mark makes a part of the brand. (Crystal, 2006)

As Crystal, D. (2006) points out, a lot of new punctuation has been still appearing, for example the symbol of a number sign '#', informally called a hash, sharp, crunch or a cross-hatch, or the symbol tilde '~', in slang called a squiggley. The sharp is being used for example for introducing web addresses on blogs or in a programming language, the tilde can be either a part of a web address or can have its own meaning - 'about'. (Crystal, 2006)

The other group of new punctuation often derives from programming language. In this context, the exclamation mark serves for negating meanings, for example '!brave' stands for 'not brave' etc. (Crystal, 2006)

Next part of new punctuation consists of pairs of signs, while each sign is used either in the beginning and at the end of a highlighted expression. As Crystal, D. (2006) says, for example underbars ( '\_book\_' ) serve to express underlining, although there is an amount of other punctuation pairs indicating the same emphasis, e. g. a pair of sharps (#), forward and backward slashes (/ \) or equal marks (=).

The pairs of asterisks (\*) have more functions. Firstly, it can mean an emphasis withing a sentence (for example: "This is a *\*really\** interesting book.'). Secondly, it can indicate facial or emotional expressions (*\*groan\**), although in this case the use of angle brackets (< >) is more common.

## **2. Language of blogs**

### **2.1 What is a blog**

As Crystal, D. (2006) mentions, the term 'blog' was coined from the words 'web log'- this expression was firstly used in 1997 by Jorn Barger. In those days it was used as a description of his news web pages which required frequent updating. (Baron, 2008) Nowadays there are more definitions of this term - what they have mostly in common is a comparison to a 'journal'. For example according to Baron, N. (2008), the blogs are a contemporary online alternative for previously used ways of self-expression which used to be for example 'speakers' corners' (places where impressive people made their public speeches), letters to editors of newspapers or still being used on talk radio shows, where people can express their opinions via calling the live radio show. So a blog is another tool for satisfying someone's need for self-expression. (Baron, 2008)

One of the others definitions is Crystal's one (2006) – according to him the blog is a web application in which the user can enter, see and change/make new posts at any time. A wider and more complete definition is offered by Merriam-Webster (2012) - according to her the blog is "a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer".

A significant characteristic of a written blog and also one of factors influencing its specific vocabulary and grammar is - as Baron, N. (2008) points out - an absence of feedback. It means that the blogger behaves the same as a radio commentator; the leader of his broadcast talk show, although there some other people calling the radio - but they are 'under' the level of the commentator, as well as the people reacting to the blog text. (Baron, N., 2008)

According to Baron, N. (2008), there are four basic features of blogs that influence its final structure and also usage of the language: they are mostly text-based, they are updated often,

the entries are ordered chronologically and there are links that lead to other web pages (so-called hyper-links). And as Crystal, D. (2006) adds - the spontaneous reactions (that can be found in chat groups or social networks) are absent.

As Crystal, D. (2006) sums up, in blogs we can observe that a direction of a theme is not predictable, so the blogs texts are very spontaneous, and the writers use both standard and non-standard English.

Concerning vocabulary, we can usually find many non-standard replacements of single words, such as for example 'anyways' instead of 'anyway' or usage of a word 'criterium' instead of 'criterion'. (Crystal, 2006, p. 258)

Another category to consider is spelling – for demonstrating its looseness Crystal, D. (2006, p. 258) points out for example the usage of 'tho' for 'though', 'controling' for 'controlling' or 'twostage' instead of 'two-stage'. For punctuation, Crystal, D. (2006) points out that the bloggers tend to avoid mostly apostrophes (e.g. 'werent' instead of proper 'weren't').

### **3. Language of chatrooms**

#### **3.1 What is a chatroom**

For better and easier orientation, I will be using the term 'chatroom' in the same way as Crystal, D. (2006) does – as a general term for all online communication where more people are participating. As Crystal, D. (2006) points out, there are other terms used in a similar context, such as chatgroups, newsgroups, e-conferences (alternatively video-conferences), usergroups, discussion lists etc. So generally we can say that chatrooms have brought us the possibility of (online) conversation, and therefore are sometimes called 'virtual coffee houses', 'a fair', 'a cocktail party' etc. (Crystal, 2006)

There are few basic features of chatgroups. One of them is – as was mentioned above - that the conversation always involves a group of people. The second one – the users are often anonymous, and chat about large and changeable issues. (Crystal, 2006) And finally – according to Crystal, D. (2006), chatrooms can be divided into two groups according to time synchronisation of the users – synchronous and asynchronous ones. Now I will deal with those two chatroom groups from a linguistic point of view, as there are slight differences in each type.

### 3.1.1 Asynchronous chatgroups

In asynchronous groups the messages do not appear immediately, but with a delay not caused just by technology. As Crystal, D. (2006) demonstrates, there is usually a management system which controls the participation of each user and which is made up of so-called list-owners, hosts, postmasters, moderators etc. (Crystal, 2006) These people (but it can be also just one person) control and decide whether they will let the message (post, article) appear or not, or alternatively if they reduce/enlarge the message. As Crystal, D. (2006) mentions, this censoring is needed to prevent any unwanted advertisement (in case of some links etc) or, for example, offensive messages. This censoring is the reason why the messages do not appear immediately, and therefore why David Crystal refers to this sort of online communication as asynchronous.

An interesting linguistic point is that the messages tend to be short – according to Crystal, D. (2006) an average message is about 3.5 lines in length. There are more reasons for this. The first reason is technological – some systems simply do not accept messages that are too long. (Crystal, 2006) The other reasons could be that chatgroups are an online substitution of a conversation, which means that long monologues would be boring for the other participants and as they wouldn't pay much attention to a long monologue in reality, they do the same online – they usually skip the long posts. But as Crystal, D. (2006) points out, the 'management' want the conversation to be read (the more the better), so this is also why the long messages are not wanted.

Another feature that Crystal, D. (2006) emphasizes is time non-linearity inside the chatgroups, which means that when we enter we can join any conversations and it does not matter if they are recent or finished years ago. However inside the topics, which are the conversations that contain one main topic – or alternatively can be sorted by their author - the time linearity is a key point there. (Crystal, 2006)

If we have a look at the structure of the posts, we can see that each of them always contains a date, then a topic title and usually also the number of the post. (Crystal, 2006) Apart from new participants, the chatters almost never write greetings at the beginning of their messages – as Crystal, D. (2006) mentions, a typical beginning contains some reference to the previously posted messages. This reference is usually made by means of a short quotation or



paraphrase of the sentence to which the writer wants to react. (Crystal, 2006) However, the quotation marks are usually not used. After the – voluntary – beginning, the body of the message always follows. By contrast to the beginnings, the participants tend to close their conversations. As Crystal, D. (2006) observed, this is usually done not by particular greetings, but with expressions such as ‘Cheers’ or ‘Take Care’.

Since chatrooms try to supply a face-to-face conversation, we can see that the language is very loose and tends to stand for real talking. Therefore the usage of general or spontaneous reactions is common – this involves expressions such as ‘Yeah’, ‘Wow’, ‘Well’ etc. (Crystal, 2006) As with face-to-face communication, in chatgroups we never know how the topic will develop and where it will finish. Also, if there is someone who writes continuously off topic, the moderators will exclude him. (Crystal, 2006)

Compared to e-mails, apart from their structure there is another distinct feature. Although writers of both e-mails and posts write in expectance of getting an answer, as Crystal, D. (2006) emphasizes, if no reply comes, the chatters are not surprised. It is because when people post messages, they do so because they think they have something to say, to share with others, they want to push the discussion further. If somebody else reacts to their post, it is – as Crystal, D. (2006) nicely calls it – a bonus, but if no one replies to your post, it is not considered as being personal.

### **3.1.2 Synchronous chatgroups**

These are the groups in which the conversation takes place in real time – almost like in face-to-face discussions. So there are many people online at the same time, and each of their posts are visible to all the others. As Crystal, D. (2006) points out, there are also types of software that allow the users to see each letter while it is being written (and not the whole message after it is sent), which is the closest written way to real life communication. A special kind of chat communication has been developed in case of instant-messangers, where the conversation usually takes place only between two participants. (Crystal, 2006)

Compared to face-to-face communication, there are some different elements. One of them is an overlapping, which happens in the synchronous groups much more than in a real

conversation. (Crystal, 2006) This huge usage of overlapping takes place due to nature of the medium - in fact it does not interrupt the user's turn as in spoken communication, and therefore the users do not have to hesitate while using overlapping.

As in asynchronous groups, here the users also often write greetings when they enter the chatroom, but usually almost nobody replies, otherwise the whole screen would be full of the greetings from the rest of the users, and it would not be easy (or even impossible) to follow the previous conversations. (Crystal, 2006)

As also Crystal, D. (2006) mentions, there is one very important factor that influences either the order of the posts and their structure (especially length) – it is the medium itself (PC, the Internet connection). It influences the time that is needed for the post or typing to appear – if it takes a long time, then the post usually does not make sense as the conversation has already gone further. As the users are forced to minimise the delays of arrival of the messages (and want to save their energy and time), there is a tendency to make the post as short as possible. (Crystal, 2006)

So as Crystal, D. (2006) writes, the users can help themselves to reduce the length of the messages by many means – for example using abbreviations such as ‘UR’ instead of ‘you are’, ‘msg’ instead of ‘message’ or ‘n’ meaning ‘and’ etc. The users also tend to omit the auxiliary verbs (‘you feeling better now?’), often ignore capitalisation, usage of apostrophes in contracted forms, or punctuation (‘i fine’). (Crystal, 2006)

Crystal, D. (2006) also points out that although the internal punctuation is usually not present, we can often see exaggerated usage of emotive punctuation (e.g. ‘nice!!!!!!!!!’), while even the whole post can contain only a question or exclamation mark(s).

Non-standard spellings (for example ‘seemz’ instead of ‘seems’ etc.) or errors made during typing are also very common, as well as transcriptions of emotional expressions, such as ‘hehehe’ or ‘umm’.

## **4. Language of E-mails**

### **4.1 What Is an E-mail**

E-mails are the electronic post that can be sent either to one or more recipients. (Rose, 2005) They are nowadays more than forty years old - the first of them appeared in 1971 (in those days used for military purposes), after a computer scientist Ray Tomlinson firstly used the sign @ for a division between a user's and a computer's name. (Byron, 2000)

### **4.2 Structure of E-mails**

E-mails are messages with the most clear structure very similar to traditional letters. As Schwalbe, W. & David Shipley (2008) suggest, the e-mails can be divided according to their message into six main groups – question and answers, then informative, grateful and apologetic e-mails and the e-mails written to assure friendships, where the main content is ‘how are you’. However, the lastly mentioned content is often a part of the other e-mails – usually in the beginning or at the end. (Schwalbe&Shipley, 2008)

According to Crystal, D. (2006), there are two, or sometimes even three main parts of the e-mail – an upper part called header or heading, a body of the message, and a voluntary third part made by an icon of an attached file to the e-mail.

#### **4.2.1 Headings**

Schwalbe, W. & David Shipley (2008) write that there are two main areas within headings, which are an e-mail address of a recipient and the one of a sender. The e-mail address of a recipient is anticipated by ‘To:’, the e-address of a sender by ‘From:’. (Schwalbe & Shipley, 2008) David Crystal (2006) is more specific and apart from those two parts he mentions another two main elements appearing within headings; an area of ‘Subject:’, where a short description of the message should be filled in (this is optional, but highly recommended and if the senders do

not fill this area in, some softwares even ask them if they are sure to send the e-mail without this), and a 'Date:' area which is filled in automatically by a software.

There cannot be implied much creativity within the headings because of already set structure of e-mail addresses which have to be followed precisely, otherwise the e-mail will be not be delivered (or will be delivered to a wrong person). But there is one exception – the subject space. As this is the first thing that the recipient will read, the way how it is written is crucial, because this line can affect whether the recipient will even open the e-mail or not. (Crystal, 2006)

As most e-mails with a subject written all in capital letters are being recognised as junk-mails (which are according to BusinessDictionary.com (2012) unasked marketing e-mails), it is highly recommended not to use the capitals in subject spaces. (Crystal, 2006)

According to Crystal, D. (2006), length of the subject should be also considered because of a limited amount of characters that will be displayed in the summary of recipient's mailbox. Therefore the line should be short and clear, optimally with the most important information in the beginning. (Crystal, 2006)

#### **4.2.2 Body of message**

The body of the message usually consists of a greeting, the message itself, a closing and a signature. (Schwalbe&Shipley, 2008) The rules implied into structuring e-mails are mostly derivated from traditional letter writing, and therefore – as Crystal, D. (2006) remarks – there is little new within those rules. Nevertheless, there are still some rules of e-mail writing that do not appear in the traditional letters. One of those rules according to Crystal, D. (2006) is that the message should be as short as it will be all visible at one time without scrolling. If the message is longer, then it is recommended to put a short summary into the first paragraph. (Crystal, 2006)

Another interesting rule is mentioned by Schwalbe, W. & David Shipley (2008). They say that if we receive an e-mail with a proper punctuation, we should not omit it in our answer either, as well as when we write to an older recipient than we are. (Which is a rule that definitely cannot be implied into traditional writing as the punctuation is always present there.)

#### 4.2.2.1 Openings

There have been used many different greetings in e-mails. Crystal, D. (2006) writes that the most frequent greeting in his e-mails was 'Dear David', which is a salutation that Schwalbe, W. & David Shipley consider being "always acceptable and always correct". (Schwalbe&Shipley, 2008, p. 101)

The second most common greeting in Crystal's e-mails was a simple usage of his first name - 'David'. (Crystal, 2006) Surprisingly, this is an opening that do not appear in Schwalbe&Shipley's guide how to write e-mails, although there are about 8 pages dedicated to openings in their book, which can mean that it is not recommended to use just a first name without adding any other greeting such as for example 'Dear' or 'Hi'.

As the third most common greeting of Crystal's e-mails was 'Hi David', according to him it demonstrates the fact that the e-mail is generally considered to be rather informal medium. (Crystal, 2006)

#### 4.2.2.2 Closings

Although the presence of closings in e-mails indicates that there has been a close connection with the traditional letter writing, there is one difference – as Crystal, D. (2006) mentions, structures such as 'Yours sincerely' are relatively absent. (This phenomenon can be explained by a claim of Schwalbe, W. & David Shipley (2008) that this phrase is the coldest one and indicates that we do not know the recipient a lot.) In addition, as Crystal, D. (2006) points out, this phenomenon again confirms informality of this medium.

According to Crystal, D. (2006), the closings have two elements – a pre-closing phrase ('Lots of love', 'Thanks' or abbreviations such as 'TTFN' - which are described in Table 1 - etc.) and a signature, while in most cases they are both present with a strong tendency to be put each on a separated line.

The signatures can be put either automatically or manually. As Crystal, D. (2006) writes, there are three kinds of the manual ones – the first name, both first and second name, and finally an initial letter or letters. Other information such as titles or qualifications can be added optionally – depends on a type of the letter. (Crystal, 2006)

On the contrary Schwalbe, W. & David Shipley (2008) say there are also other elements that can be a part of the identification, not specifying whether automatic or manual. According to them the signature part can contain up to twelve elements, for instance the full name with a title, a name of the organisation and its address, a phone number and fax, an e-mail address, a web page, a logo etc. (Crystal, D. (2006) also mentions those elements, but according to him they appear only in automatic signatures). Moreover, they recommend not to use the titles if possible, because according to them it usually does more harm than good. (Schwalbe&Shipley, 2008)

As Crystal, D. (2006) writes, there are two main functions of closings in e-mails in contrast with traditional letters. Firstly, it tells us that this is a margin of the personal message and it is not necessary to scroll down anymore. Even if there is some text after the closing, it is usually some advertisement or messages automatically generated by a system such as "This e-mail is confidential and should not be used by anyone who is not the original intended recipient" (Crystal, 2006, p. 110), which are not necessary to be read.

Secondly, it has its identity function – not only it says to the recipient who was the sender, but it also identifies the writer in case when the e-mail is forwarded or attached to other people. (Crystal, 2006)

## **PRACTICAL PART**

### **5. Introduction**

In this part I will make my own analysis of elements described in the theoretical part. Firstly, I had to choose samples of each online setting; I used 50 e-mails that I received from English-speaking people – 15 of them were from two UK native speakers, 20 them were from English teachers and the rest was from students of English or my friends from abroad, while almost a half of all the e-mails (24) was formal and a little more than a half (26) was my private post.

Types of my choice of blogs were following: three 'diary' blogs from writers younger than 20 years, then four 'travel' blogs and three 'experience' blogs writing about various topics such as business or sport.

Within the chat messages I was observing two online 'forums' (or discussions) – each of them contained more than fifty posts - and then various English chatrooms at *www.wireclub.com*.

### **6. Openings and Closings of E-mails**

#### **6.1 Openings**

Crystal, D. (2006) wrote that in his e-mails the most common greeting was "Dear David". I have found this type of opening in my English e-mails too, but the greeting "Dear ..." definitely was not the most common one. Instead, the most used opening was "Hi" (found in seventeen e-mails, while almost all of them – sixteen - were informal letters) or just my name without any preceding phrase or word (eight cases from which six were formal e-mails). The greeting "Dear ..." took only the third place in my e-post – I found it in five of my e-mails, four of them were formal. The openings "Hi" and "Dear ..." were used both by native and non-native speakers with almost the same frequency, but my name without any preceding greeting was used three times more by non-native speakers (from eight e-mails with this opening six of them were written by

non-natives). Another opening that appeared within my e-post was "Hello" (two cases, both informal, one written by native, one by non-native speaker).

Then I did have a look at the use and frequency of openings. My estimation was that about 75-80% of my received e-mails would contain an opening, because in almost 90% of the English e-mails that I have sent the opening was present. But the reality turned out to be different; only about 65% (32 e-mails out of 50, 13 of them was formal post) of all my English mail contained a greeting. The other senders omitted this part and started immediately with writing the body of the message. Most of those were non-native speakers (eleven cases out of eighteen).

## 6.2 Closings

As it was mentioned in chapter 4.2.2.2, the closing consists of two parts – a pre-closing phrase and a signature. But this does not always have to be true; for example in more than a half of my business e-mails (fourteen out of twenty-four) either one or another component of the closing was missing, while in ten of my twenty-four formal e-mails there was not any ending at all. In most of the e-mails with incomplete closings it was the pre-closing part that was omitted, while the signature was present (nine cases out of fourteen). There was quite a high percentage of unsigned formal e-mails – around 30% (five e-mails out of those fourteen). This phenomenon of not signing formal letters could be in my opinion explained by the fact that in these cases it was not that important who was the sender of the e-mail, because the content/attachment itself was of a bigger importance than who wrote it. So the senders probably considered that adding their names or initials was useless or unimportant.

The native speakers seem to follow the proper rules of closings in formal e-mails more than the non-natives – out of seven business e-mails written by native speakers six were closed properly. On the other hand from seventeen formal e-mails from non-native speakers only eight of them contained a proper closing.

There was a significant difference within the informal e-mail closings in comparison with the formal ones. Generally it seems that in personal e-mails there is a stronger tendency to close them properly with both parts of a closing, than in the formal ones – twenty of my twenty-six informal English e-mails were finished either with a pre-closing phrase and a signature (which is almost twice as much as in the formal e-mails). Only in five of twenty-six of my sampled



personal e-mails the closing was incomplete (usage of just a pre-closing phrase or of a name). Only in one private e-mail the closing was missing.

There was not a big difference between native and non-native speakers – almost a half of the proper closings was written by the native speakers (eight out of fourteen), as well as the incomplete closings containing only one part (three out of five).

It may seem that the writers tend to follow the traditional-letter writing rules more in personal e-post and the business e-mails are more straight and informative. But there are factors that have to be further considered - firstly, I was doing some research within my *received* formal e-mails, which means that I was – as a student or an employee – mostly of less status than the people who wrote me, so they did not have to follow strict rules of letter-writing as much as I have to while applying for a job or writing requests/questions to my colleagues or the boss.

Secondly, I have observed that within the informal e-mails it depends whether the e-mail was written with an intention to say hello or tell news, or if the e-mail was used as a means of communication instead of a - for example - mobile phone or an instant messenger. Because in the first case, the closings are perfectly structured in almost all my private e-post (five out of six). On the other hand, if the sense of the e-mails was to plan a meeting or organise some event, the e-mails lost their structure very quickly (usually in the first or second reply) and started to be more similar to chat or instant messaging. Therefore also the closings were written more loosely or were not written at all. But there still remained a tendency to use at least one part of a closing very often.

In conclusion we can say that the private e-post tends to follow the traditional-letter writing rules a lot, while in formal or business e-mails it depends whether they are written by a boss (or his assistant) or eventually teachers, or if they are written by the requester or employee.

The most common pre-closings in my private posts were "Regards" (eleven cases, seven of them were written by native speakers), "Take care" (appeared in seven e-mails, two of them were by native speakers) and "All the best" (appeared in four e-mails, only one of them was by a native speaker), the most favourite pre-closings of the formal e-letters were also "All the best" (appeared in five cases – two of them were written by native speakers) and "(Best) Regards" (appeared in five cases too, three of them written by native speakers).

## 7. Usage of Abbreviations and Acronyms

### 7.1 General Usage

Before I will deal with usage of acronyms and abbreviations in particular online settings, I would like to mention results of my research about meanings of those abbreviations. When I asked my eight non-native English speaking colleagues about the simple English abbreviations such as 'thx' (thanks), 'btw' (by the way) or 'asap' (as soon as possible), most of them answered that they either understand or use them in their English online writings. But when I asked them about other ones that were not in my opinion as clear as the previous ones (such as 'bbfn' – bye bye for now, 'wb' – welcome back or 'tia' – thanks in advance), the majority of them neither knew the meaning, nor were able to make a guess.

On the contrary, the native speakers in general use the clear, simple abbreviations more often, but from my research made within four of them I could see that they neither understood most of my choice of not such common or clear ones. The number of those more difficult abbreviations that they were familiar with was in average the same as with my non-native English speaking colleagues – from one to three out of ten. On the other hand there exist hundreds and hundreds of abbreviations, which means that someone *has* to use them. If not the non-native, or the native speakers, then there had to be a third group of English speaking online writers.

Because of the results of my research, I had to find that third group of people who would be familiar with the complicated English abbreviations. So I have made another research, this time between current/ex- English chat users and non-users, and I found out the first group was one who understand (or remember) much bigger amount of abbreviations than the non-users.

In conclusion I would like to say that usage of abbreviations or acronyms in various online writings does not significantly differ between native and non-native speakers as I supposed before, but the difference lies mostly between chat users and non-users.

### 7.2 Blogs

Within my sampled blogs I did not find any abbreviations or acronyms there, which is evidence of how much blogs differ from other online texts. The other chosen online structures are all designed for some kind of online communication, whereas blogs are mainly considered as

monologues or sharing experiences of the writer who does not expect any feedback as much as the writers of e-mails or chat messages. Therefore the bloggers do not have to think about finishing their posts within a short time (and very often also do not think about the structure, which leads to unpredictable changes of topic), and so the blog texts are mostly free of the contemporary online innovations such as abbreviations.

### 7.3 Chat Messages

As chat communication has mostly the function of replacing oral communication, the style of writing meets the special requirements needed in expressing one's self in the shortest and most concise possible way, because the speed seems to be one of the most significant and influencing factors of chat communication. Therefore the presence of various abbreviations and acronyms is expected and almost required there, it is the tool that meets the required high speed of writing and sending messages the best.

Users of chat rooms are currently developing more and more new abbreviations, so it is understandable that not all the users always understand them all. Moreover if the users enter a new chat group, they can feel lost for some time in the beginning, because each chat or discussion group has its own specified abbreviations with which they distinguish themselves from other chat groups, and which are a part of the chat group's identity. (Crystal, 2006)

According to my observation of some English chat conversations I can say that the most used group of abbreviations was the one expressing emotions or a current state, such as 'rotfl' (standing for 'rolling on the floor laughing') or 'lol', standing for 'laughing out loud'. (Found in seventy-three cases out of one hundred abbreviations or acronyms used within chat messages).

One quite offensive but also very commonly used word created especially and only for chat conversations that I would like to mention is 'newbie' (the word with negative connotation used for new users) and its abbreviations 'newb' or 'n00b', written with zeros.

Another group of widely used abbreviations has a greeting function. Although there does not appear any set structure of messages in chat communication, there is a general tendency of writing a greeting while entering or leaving a chat room. Within the opening greetings the users used mainly new spellings (or misspellings) such as 'yello' or 'hey', but a few abbreviated openings also appeared – for example 'wb', standing for 'welcome back', or 'ib' – 'I'm back'.

On the other hand, the closing phrases offer much more examples of abbreviated forms. Some of them expressed saying *goodbye for a while* because the user has to leave a computer for a moment - the most favourite ones of those were 'bbiam' ('be back in a minute'), 'bbs' (meaning 'be back soon') and 'bbfn' ('bye bye for now'). Abbreviations I would mention for saying a finite goodbye are 'bbt' ('be back tomorrow'), and 'bbl' ('be back later').

When I had a look at online asynchronous discussions, which make a part of the topic of chat messages, usage of abbreviations differed. There were either abbreviations such as 'FAQ' ('frequently asked questions'), that make a part of a default setting of the discussion page, or abbreviations /acronyms used by the writers themselves.

In the second mentioned area the abbreviations were not used as much as within simultaneous chatting, probably because the speed is not that important there as the message itself. If there were used any abbreviations, they were mostly the ones expressing the writer's mood (as an example can serve a widely used and favourite abbreviation 'lol'). But as I said, usage of them was quite rare there – my research found that only in every twelfth message was there contained any.

## 7.4 E-mails

As in all Internet communication, also in e-mails the use of abbreviations or acronyms appears. But as the e-mails generally tend to follow the rules of classic letter-writing, usage of abbreviations is not that common there as for example in chat messages, where the writers need to save typing time. It also depends whether the e-mail is formal or not – in the second case the abbreviations or acronyms appear more frequently.

In the formal e-mails I have found abbreviated forms in only two cases (out of twenty-four), both written by non-native speakers, while in my private post the abbreviations appeared in almost every second e-mail. Most of the abbreviations appeared in the closing part of my e-mails – among the most used ones were for example 'tul' (standing for talk to you later), 'ttn' (standing for 'ta-ta' for now, meaning bye), 'cu' (see you) or the simple 'thx' / 'tx' (thanks).

Use of abbreviations or acronyms differs also in connection with the nationality – if the writers were non-native speakers, then they usually used just a small amount of the abbreviations with a tendency of repetition of them in their next e-mails. On the other hand, the native speakers seem to be keen on using newer and newer abbreviations and they also used them more often.

But as well as the non-native writers, in e-mails they were trying to restrict their usage as much as possible.

In conclusion, e-mail writing is one of the online forms that has the closest connection with traditional writing, therefore we can see a tendency of following traditional structural rules and the use of modern innovations – such as abbreviations – is still highly restricted there.

## **8. Usage of Emoticons**

### **8.1 Blogs**

As was mentioned in the chapter 2.1, blog writing has a structure very similar to a diary - therefore the writers can write in whatever way they prefer, so I was expecting many innovations, sometimes chaotic structure, a tendency to be original and also common usage of emoticons. Again my expectations were different from reality.

In my choice of ten English blogs, three of them did not use any emoticons at all. The texts of those 'experience' blogs were therefore written in a style similar to official newspaper articles – a title, then several paragraphs, sometimes some photos added, and a clear structure of the writings (the presence of introduction and conclusion, sticking to the topic), without any informal emotional signs.

In another four - travel - blogs the emoticons appeared with an average frequency of one emoticon for one paragraph. Again the structure was well organised, the message of the writings usually easily understandable, and the emoticons did not disturb neither the structure, nor me as a reader. Moreover there did not occur a big amount of emoticons either – in average there appeared one emoticon for the whole post, usually at the end of the paragraph or the whole post.

The last group of blogs was the one written by relatively young English speakers – I suppose their average age could be from fifteen to twenty years. The last three blogs of my choice fit into this group. The texts of those blogs were more chaotic for me, partly also because the emoticons were over-used there. The average amount of emoticons was three per paragraph, which disturbed me while reading and therefore it was complicated for me to concentrate on the message (if there was any). But the problem of those kinds of blogs were not just the emoticons, but also the chaotic structure and changing topics, which is a phenomenon mentioned also by D. Crystal (2006), so on this point I have to strongly agree with him.

As well as in many other online communications except chatting, the most frequent type of emoticons used in blog writing was the simple ':-)' or its variations, the second was the blinking one ';-)', and the third was ':-D'. As we can see, there is still a strong tendency of usage of 'western' (vertical) emoticon types in English blogs.

In conclusion, the use of emoticons on blogs is neither unusual nor banned, but generally I would say that the more the text is serious or informative, the less emoticons are present. On the contrary, the more unimportant the message or experiences shared on blogs is, the more emoticons appear there.

## **8.2 Chat Messages**

Because the term 'chat messages' involves various types of chat communication in my thesis and because usage of emoticons differs slightly in each of those groups, I will deal with them separately.

In my choice of online discussions the emoticons appeared in every seventh post. The difference in research of David Crystal (2006), which showed that the emoticons appeared in every thirteenth post, could according to me have happened because of many factors such as choice of forums or by the fact that he had done his research six years ago. Nevertheless my research data are very different from Crystal's in this case.

The relatively low rate of usage of emoticons in posts in my opinion shows that those people participating in the discussions usually had a topic to talk about and were quite seriously discussing the matter, so they did not have to show their facial expressions with smileys as their emotions were usually not the main matter of the messages.

On the other hand, the posts of synchronous chatgroups were in comparison with the forums full of those facial expressions, which can either mean that there is not any serious topic for talking, or that those online discussions are participated in mainly by non-adults. This opinion is supported also by Naomi Byron (2000) who said that the adults have more sufficient communicative skills for expressing themselves than the children or adolescents and therefore do not have a need for using the emoticons (in order to avoid ambiguity) that much.

### 8.3 E-mails

There has appeared a habit of using emoticons in informal e-mails – in my choice of twenty-six English informal e-mails twenty-four of them contained at least one smiley. In a vast majority the most basic one ':-)' or one of its variants was used (described in chapter 1.3.1). The following most often used emoticons were ';-)' and ':-P'. The average amount of emoticons in my English informal 'emoticoned' e-mails was almost two per e-mail.

On the other hand, it seems that in formal or business e-mails usage of emoticons tries to be avoided, nevertheless this is not achieved completely – from twenty-four English business or formal e-mails of my choice I found at least one smiley in six of them, while five of these were written by non-native speakers. Again the basic emoticon ':-)' seemed to be the most favourite – I found it in five of those six e-mails. In a vast majority of the 'emoticoned' formal e-mails the emoticon was used there just once (five out of six) - and in all cases it was again the basic one - ':-)'.

## 9. Usage of Punctuation

As already mentioned in the chapter 1.4, online punctuation can sometimes be used very loosely, and sometimes not used at all. (Crystal, 2006) Nevertheless this is not always true, and therefore I will now deal with punctuation in particular Internet situations.

### 9.1 Blogs

Blogs usually use the traditional punctuation instead of the non-traditional punctuation such as repeated signs etcetera which can be seen in other online communicative devices.

In most cases the traditional punctuation was fully and correctly used within blog writings, only sometimes (three cases out of twenty paragraphs) there was for example a missing dot at the end of the sentence, but this was obviously made by mistake, not as a style or intentionally loose usage of punctuation. Nevertheless I have found that there exists a tendency of omitting the final dot if there is an emoticon at the end of the sentence (appeared in ten out of twelve final paragraphs).

I have found just two examples of usage of non-traditional punctuation in cases such as emphasizing a particular word (usage of asterisks), but this method was not used so commonly, because it is usually possible to emphasize the words by putting them in bold. The emotional or facial expressions in angle brackets did not appear within blogs at all, probably because this online medium is more text-based than communication-based.

In conclusion I would say that bloggers follow the punctuation rules as much as is possible within their possibilities (knowledge of the punctuation rules, time for self-revision etc).

## **9.2 Chat Messages**

Chat conversations generally omit a lot of traditional punctuation, which in my opinion can be caused by the requirement of fast writing within this communication. On the other hand the chat messages are full of non-standart usage of punctuation such as repeated sign or angle brackets (< >) in order to write facial or emotional expressions, asterisks etc. Now I would like to deal with particular aspects of punctuation within chat messages.

When I focused on online discussion posts and its usage of standard punctuation, I realised that as well as within blogs there appears a strong tendency of omitting the last punctuation sign where it should have been a dot – on average every fourth post was not finished properly.

On the other hand if the sentences were interrogative, a question mark was almost always present, as well as exclamation marks (in fifteen out of eighteen interrogative or exclamative sentences). Proper usage of commas within sentences seems to be common, but in few cases (approximately two posts out of ten) the writers omitted it. Generally speaking it seems that usage of standard punctuation withing discussion posts is voluntary where it does not cause ambiguity.

In comparison with blogs, usage of non-standart punctuation is more common in online discussions. I have found repeated punctuation signs on average in every fourth post – they were mostly repeated dots in varying amounts at the beginning or at the end of a sentence, then repeated question and exclamation marks. On the other hand I have not found repeated commas in any part of online discussions.

The signs helping to express emotional or facial statuses (such as e.g. angle brackets) appeared only rarely, probably again because the emoticons are easier to use there instead.



Generally I would say that the longer the body of a message and the more complex information was provided, the more attention was paid on punctuation. On the other hand – the shorter the post, the looser was the punctuation.

As the messages within synchronous or asynchronous chat groups are usually written spontaneously and in high speed and as there is no time either for revising the messages (as it is possible with previous ones), nor for correcting them, usage of punctuation is very loose in this area. For example the dots at the end of a message can be hardly seen there, on the other hand the users seem to adore over-using of the rest of standard-writing punctuation marks such as question or exclamation marks (often doubled or more repeated). The asterisks, in order to emphasize some word(s) or even whole clauses, also seem more common in this type of communication than in the others – they appeared on average in every eight post.

I consider it interesting that although speed seems to be the most significant factor within synchronous or asynchronous conversations (and therefore the messages are usually short and often also with mistakes), the users are still able to find time for exaggerated usage of punctuation, although it does not usually cause any important or noticeable influence on the meaning of the messages.

In conclusion I would say that in comparison with all the other online texts, chat conversations contain the loosest usage of punctuation.

### **9.3 E-mails**

As already mentioned, there are three possible ways to use punctuation – to use it properly, to use it only if there is otherwise a danger of ambiguity, or not to use it at all. (Crystal, 2006) In my e-mails, I could see all three approaches applied.

In more than a half of my e-mails the punctuation was used as properly as it would be used within traditional written letters – there was almost no comma, dot or question/exclamation mark missing; moreover, non-standard usage of punctuation was almost non-existent in those properly written e-mails. On the other hand, almost a quarter of my English e-mails were written without the use of any punctuation. (I have to add that in those cases capitalisation was also omitted, but I will deal with this interconnection in the chapter 9.) Nevertheless, those e-mails ignoring all punctuation were usually the shortest ones not following the standard structure

(opening, body, closing), usually written in order to tell me only one piece of information (as if it was a chat message).

In conclusion I would like to say that I definitely agree with Naomi Baron's (2010) claim that the punctuation reflects the writers' view of the relationship between written and spoken language, because if the e-mails were properly structured, they usually followed also the rules of punctuation, whereas the loose ones seemed more like chat messages.

## **10. Usage of Capitalisation**

### **10.1 Blogs**

Although blogs can be used as a means of communication in the sense that other interested people are this way informed about the writers and their experiences (e.g. if the writer is abroad and shares his life by way of an online journal), generally the blogs are the most continuous texts written by unprofessional writers. Therefore the capitalisation is – in comparison with the other non-professional online texts – is being given a big attention.

Almost all the titles or subtitles were following the rules of capitalisation (e.g. "My New Village in Scotland"), as well as the bodies of the posts (in two cases there appeared a lower-case letter at the beginning of a sentence, but this was obviously made by accident).

But if there was a closing phrase at the end of the post (for example saying bye or a short summary or final opinion), in almost every third blog post the capitalisation was omitted. This in my opinion again shows that the writers switched their perception of their writing – in the beginning it was more like a continuous, classic text, while at the end they seem to perceive their writing more as a communicative device (e.g. "please comment below.."etc.) and probably because of that they sometimes tended to omit the capitalisation. I can see there a noticeable parallel with usage of punctuation. This again reflects – as N. Baron (2010) mentions - the writers' view of whether their writings are considered more as spoken, or as written language.

## 10.2 Chat Messages

As well as the punctuation, also the capitalisation within the chat messages is very often omitted. The posts in synchronous communication are usually not considered as proper sentences, but as a sort of fragments and therefore the users do not bother with rules of capitalisation a lot - often neither within proper names. (For example only every third proper name including capitalised nicknames was written properly.)

On the other hand, the posts within online discussions seem to be structured more carefully, so also the rules of capitalisation are considered more there (as well as in case of punctuation). On average in every eight chat post the writers ignored the capital letters at the beginning of the posts, but if the post was longer and they used a dot at the end of this non-capitalised sentence, the next sentence was almost always capitalised.

I supposed that if the writers used proper punctuation, they would use also proper capitalisation (and if they do not follow rules of punctuation, they would ignore also the capitalisation). But the reality was that on average every twelfth ignored the capitalisation totally (e.g. "... not me. but what if we ..."), although they were punctuated.

Another interesting element that I observed was writing whole words in capital letters. As Crystal, D. (2006) wrote, this method is usually used to represent shouting ("no, I DON'T THINK SO!!!!"), often followed by multiplied punctuation marks. According to me this rule is not always true (for example within e-mails, but I will deal with this in the next subchapter), but it definitely works within chat messages.

## 10.3 E-mails

Although I have already said that e-mails are the type of online communication that follow the traditional rules the most (similar to letter-writing), I have observed that usage of capitalisation is also, in this type of writing, sometimes very loose.

If the e-mails were of high importance or very formal, then the rules of capitalisation seemed to be followed almost properly, but also in five out of twenty-six of my informal English e-mails I could see proper capitalisation too.

Nevertheless in most of my sample e-mails (thirty-eight out of fifty – twenty-three informal, fifteen formal e-mails) I could see incomplete, quite loose usage of capitalisation, as

well as punctuation. It tended to be almost always present within sentences at the beginning of paragraphs. On the other hand the opening and closing phrases in my opinion seem to be considered more as fragments rather than as proper sentences, and probably because of this the capitalisation tended to be omitted there in approximately four cases out of ten. For a better illustration see the example below:

"all the best,  
Mollie"s

Another point that I would like to mention is usage of upper case for whole words or even clauses/sentences. As was mentioned above within chat messages (in chapter 9.2), writing in capital letters is usually understood as shouting. I have to admit that also within e-mails this appears to be true, but not everytime. In three of my informal e-mail I found that when the writers used the upper case for particular words or even bigger syntactical constructions, they did not mean it as shouting, but as emphasis. The punctuational signs (such as asterisks etc.) used for example within chat messages do not seem to be preferable in e-mails, and therefore there is - in my opinion - a need of expressing some emphasis in another way. There are of course other methods designed for emphasizing (e.g. bolding the letters etc.), but not all the e-mail settings provide them (alternatively not all the users know how to work with them), and therefore the writers might consider usage of upper case as a simpler and quicker method to use.

## **11. Final Comparison of Theory and My Research**

In this chapter I would like to compare my gathered knowledge about online English language based on my research with the theoretical background provided in the first part of this work. I found out that information about online English language provided by relevant authors is in most cases valid, nevertheless there sometimes appeared slight differences between theory and practice within some issues that I have observed.

Firstly, as it was written in the beginning of the practical part, according to my sampled e-mails the most frequent opening was a name without any further adjectives, alternatively usage of greetings such as 'hi'/'hello' or a combination of those two. On the contrary, the most used

opening within e-mails of David Crystal (2006) was 'Dear' and then his name. I suppose that this difference might have been caused by the the age difference between me and the writer.

Secondly, my research data about emoticons within chat messages disagree with the Crystal's (2006) observation that only in about 13% of the online chat posts the emoticon was present. As it was mentioned above, I found the emoticons in only about 7% of chat posts. According to me these figures are significantly different, nevertheless both of them are low anyway, so in my opinion in the end Crystal's data still remain relevant. I think that the different results between mine and Crystal's research could have happened either by a different choice of sample chat messages, or by the fact, that his research is six years older than mine. But as I said, I do not consider it as an important difference, nevertheless it *is* a difference.

During my research and getting familiar with English online language literature, I also went through some guides dedicated to online text writers and offering pieces of advice or rules of how to write properly online texts (e-mails, blogs etc). For example Rowse, D. (2011) in her guide for bloggers suggests to have always a prepared writing plan and structure and even to refresh this plan regularly. But when I had a look at some English blogs, I could see that they are usually neither planned, nor specially structured. The writers usually posted their articles whenever they wanted to or had time and often sorted their thoughts *during* writing their posts (observed in five articles), and almost never before. Generally spoken most of blogs were written spontaneously, so from this point of view many parts of the guide(s) are not considered by the writers as topical or useful.

On this very brief example I wanted to demonstrate that not only the theoretical literature describing how the reality *is* like is sometimes not right up to date, but that there is also literature that looks at the practice from the other point of view – how according to them all the writings *should* look like – but at the end the reality is again very different.

At this place I would also like to mention that not just the theory in some cases turned out to be different from today's online usage of language, but also some of my expectations about things that I have supposed that even do not need further research, turned out - thanks to working on this thesis – to be completely wrong.

A very good example of above mentioned findings could be my ex-hypothesis when I was almost 100% sure that native speakers must have understood a larger amount of online abbreviations or acronyms than me or my English speaking colleagues (non-native speakers). But when I had given a questionnaire to my English and American friends with some examples of

abbreviations, I found out that those native speakers understood almost the same number of the abbreviations as when the respondents were the non-native speakers. Nevertheless it is true that the native speakers were able to use or understand a wider range of abbreviations, but those had to be used within a context. Then they could guess a meaning of the abbreviation or even create their own much easier than the non-native speakers. But generally spoken, without any background or context, there was not almost any difference between native and non-native speakers.

## 12. Conclusion

The goal of this work was to compare already existing theoretical literature about the contemporary English online language with my own observations of selected Netspeak situations and to see, how much they differ.

At first I had to find and get familiar with the available literature dedicated to linguistics of English online. I focused mainly on works of David Crystal, Naomi Byron and Schwalbe&Shipley. Their findings are described in the first part of this work. In the second part I tried to give a complex picture of a contemporary reality of different online situations while focusing on whether the rules or findings from authors mentioned above are still valid or not.

Because Netspeak as a progressive phenomenon is still developing and changing, in the beginning I supposed that mine and authors' data would - thanks to a relatively big time difference between editions of their books and my research - differ a lot. (In case of Crystal, D. the time difference is six and seven years, in case of Schwalbe&Shipley it makes four years, the works of Byron, N. are ten and four years old by now). Despite of my expectations, the differences were not that significant as I supposed. Of course I could find some, but those were little things and in my opinion they did not break the exactitude of the mentioned works. This means that despite of a fast development of Netspeak, which is changing every day, the basics of this online phenomenon are already established, which offers easier orientation for both the users and the linguistics.

In conclusion I would say that thanks to little differences between literature and reality that I have observed we can see that Netspeak is really in progress and that if we want to go with it, we have to be still aware of new tendencies and approaches, otherwise our knowledge could be in some time out of date.

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## 12. Appendices

**Table 1:** *Some abbreviations used in Netspeak conversations* (adapted from Crystal, 2006, p. 91)

<i>afaik</i>	as far as I know	<i>fyi</i>	for your information
<i>afk</i>	away from keyboard	<i>g</i>	grin
<i>asap</i>	as soon as possible	<i>gal</i>	get a life
<i>a/s/l</i>	age/sex/location	<i>gd&amp;r</i>	grinning ducking and running
<i>atw</i>	at the weekend	<i>gmta</i>	great minds think alike
<i>awhfy</i>	are we having fun yet?	<i>gr8t</i>	great
<i>bbfn</i>	bye bye for now	<i>gsoh</i>	good sense of humour
<i>bbl</i>	be back later	<i>hhok</i>	ha ha only kidding
<i>bcnu</i>	be seeing you	<i>hth</i>	hope this helps
<i>b4</i>	before	<i>ianal</i>	I'm not a lawyer, but
<i>bfd</i>	big fucking deal	<i>ic</i>	I see
<i>bg</i>	big grin	<i>icwum</i>	I see what you mean
<i>brb</i>	be right back	<i>idk</i>	I don't know
<i>btw</i>	by the way	<i>iirc</i>	if I remember correctly
<i>cfc</i>	call for comments	<i>imho</i>	in my humble opinion
<i>cfv</i>	call for votes	<i>imi</i>	I mean it
<i>cm</i>	call me	<i>imnsho</i>	in my not so humble opinion
<i>cu</i>	see you	<i>iou</i>	I owe you
<i>cul</i>	see you later	<i>iow</i>	in other words
<i>cul8r</i>	see you later	<i>irl</i>	in real life
<i>cya</i>	see you	<i>jam</i>	just a minute
<i>dk</i>	don't know	<i>j4f</i>	just for fun
<i>dur?</i>	do you remember?	<i>jk</i>	just kidding
<i>eod</i>	end of discussion	<i>kc</i>	keep cool
<i>f?</i>	friends?	<i>khuf</i>	know how you feel
<i>fotcl</i>	falling off the chair laughing	<i>l8r</i>	later
<i>f2f</i>	face to face	<i>lol</i>	laughing out loud

(Continued)

**Table 1:** (cont.)

<i>mtfbwum</i>	may the force be with you	<i>tttt</i>	to tell the truth
<i>na</i>	no access	<i>t2ul</i>	talk to you later
<i>nc</i>	no comment	<i>ttyl</i>	talk to you later
<i>np</i>	no problem	<i>ttytt</i>	to tell you the truth
<i>nwo</i>	no way out	<i>tuvvm</i>	thank you very much
<i>obtw</i>	oh by the way	<i>tx</i>	thanks
<i>o4u</i>	only for you	<i>tyvm</i>	thank you very much
<i>oic</i>	oh I see	<i>wadr</i>	with all due respect
<i>otoh</i>	on the other hand	<i>wb</i>	welcome back
<i>pmji</i>	pardon my jumping in	<i>w4u</i>	waiting for you
<i>ptmm</i>	please tell me more	<i>wrt</i>	with respect to
<i>rip</i>	rest in peace	<i>wtfigo</i>	what the fuck is going on?
<i>rotf</i>	rolling on the floor	<i>wtg</i>	way to go
<i>rotfl</i>	rolling on the floor lauging	<i>wu</i>	what's up?
<i>rdfm</i>	read the fucking manual	<i>wuwth</i>	wish you were here
<i>rtm</i>	read the manual	<i>X!</i>	typical woman
<i>ruok</i>	are you OK?	<i>Y!</i>	typical man
<i>sc</i>	stay cool	<i>yiu</i>	yes I understand
<i>smtoe</i>	sets my teeth on edge	<i>2bctnd</i>	to be continued
<i>so</i>	significant order	<i>2d4</i>	to die for
<i>sohf</i>	sense of humour failure	<i>2g4u</i>	too good for you
<i>sol</i>	sooner or later	<i>2l8</i>	too late
<i>t+</i>	think positive	<i>4e</i>	forever
<i>ta4n</i>	that's all for now	<i>4yeo</i>	for your eyes only
<i>tafn</i>	that's all for now		
<i>thx</i>	thanks		
<i>tia</i>	thanks in advance		
<i>tmot</i>	trust me on this		
<i>tnx</i>	thanks		

**Table 2:** *Some examples of emoticons* (Crystal, 2006, adapted from Sanderson, 1996, p. 40)**Basic smileys**

: -)	pleasure, humour, etc.
: -(	sadness, dissatisfaction, etc.
; -)	winking (in any of its meanings)
; -(      : ~-(	crying
%-(      %-)	confused
: -o      8-o	shocked, amazed
: -]      : -[	sarcastic

**Joke smileys**

[ : -)	User is wearing a walkman
8 -)	User is wearing sunglasses
B : -)	User is wearing sunglasses on head
: - }	User has a moustache
: *	User is drunk
: - [	User is a vampire
: - E	User is a bucktoothed vampire
: - F	User is a bucktoothed vampire with one tooth missing
: - ~	User has a cold
: - @	User is screaming
: - : -)	User is a punk
: - : -(	Real punks don't smile
+ : - : -)	User holds a Christian religious office
0 : -)	User is an angel at heart

## **Resumé**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá specifiky užití anglického jazyka na internetu a je rozdělena na dvě části.

V první, teoretické části, se nachází osvětlení základních pojmů spojených s touto problematikou, jako jsou různá internetová prostředí či specifika online angličtiny, tj. Netspeaku. Druhá část je empirická a obsahuje výzkum a studium různých internetových textů a situací, jako jsou blogy, e-maily a chatové zprávy.

Cílem práce bylo porovnat dostupnou literaturu zabývající se danou tematikou senými vlastními poznatky a určit, zda se tyto dvě kategorie liší, což se nakonec v určité míře potvrdilo.

## Annotation

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<b>Katedra:</b>	Katedra anglického jazyka
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<b>Název práce:</b>	Angličtina na internetu.
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	English Language of the Internet.
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá specifiky užití anglického jazyka na internetu. V první, teoretické části, se nachází osvětlení základních pojmů spojených s touto problematikou, jako jsou různá internetová prostředí či specifika online angličtiny, tj. Netspeaku. Druhá část je empirická a obsahuje výzkum a studium rozdílných internetových textů a situací, jako jsou blogy, e-maily a chatové zprávy. Práce si klade za cíl seznámit čtenáře se základními specifiky Netspeaku a usnadnit jejich orientaci v této oblasti.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Netspeak, zkratky, akronymy, interpunkce, Internet, blog, chatroom, e-mail, emotikony, angličtina online
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	This bachelor thesis speaks about specifics of English language on the Internet. In the first, theoretical part, there is an explanation of basic terms connected with this topic, such as different Internet settings or specifics of online English (Netspeak). The second part is empirical and consists of research of different Internet texts and situations (blogs, e-mails, chat messages). Aim of this work is to introduce to readers basic specifics of Netspeak and to simplify their orientation within this area.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Netspeak, abbreviations, acronyms, punctuation, Internet, blog, chatroom, e-mail, emoticons, online English
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	2 přílohy
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	45 s., 3 s příloh
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	AJ