PECULIARITIES OF THE NET LANGUAGE USED BY ADOLESCENTS IN VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

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By his nature the child always needs to communicate with other people, establishing new relationships throughout his life and creating environments to feed his own needs of "cognitive curiosity", "security", "belonging and love", "respect" or "self-update".(Maslow, 8) Due to that fact, the Internet as a means of distance communication provides new knowledge, new relationships with peers, etc., achieved only through online activities in which the child succeeds by using a specific language of cyberspace. This language turns to greatly differ from everyday language used in the family, at school, in society, obtaining a meaning of a slang /a jargon, or better said of "a street language" (Danciu, 3). By its usual frequency in online writing and, progressively even orally, this language appears to be misunderstood by adults, thus allowing children to live in a net-user community where emotions and feelings appear only through symbols, thoughts through numerals, and sentences in form of a single word.

This virtual expression makes children feel themselves more independent from their parents, but also most vulnerable, as today the Internet still remains an environment which "almost exclusively monopolizes the time" (Todi, 12) the child possesses, thus, subjecting him/her to the risk of being attracted by a virtual reality which offers an escape from the real world. This reason raises concerns and worries for parents and teachers who often report the presence of an unknown abbreviation language in children's written assignments. (Jones,6) In the context of the adult's necessity to assist his own child development by supervising and guiding him towards the mature life, such a way contributing to his/her child harmonious development, the Internet appears to be an environment in which the child gains absolutely his own freedom with no any adult control while chatting or blogging because of the strange language he uses. This language is usually unknown for their parents and teachers, thus, depriving the adults of any opportunity to protect the teens. So, the article represents an attempt to investigate the Net language from the perspective of its structure, usage and possible application into adolescents' education.

In scientific terminology language word means "capability that is endowed every normally constituted human being to learn and use one or more systems of verbal signs to communicate with others and to represent the world" (Doron, Parot, 4) and revealing language, primarily, as a defining characteristic of humanity, which, according to Noam Chomsky (Piatelli-Palmarini, 11), allows the development of the human potential; secondly, as a consequence of cognitive development (Piajet, Inhelder, 10); and thirdly, in terms of social interactionism (Vîgotsky, 14) as a communication system. So, all taken together, these interpretations appear to be useful to fully understand the deep nature of language used in the virtual environment for communication purposes. Linguists have shown that the way we use language is closely related to social context in which it takes place and it is called by them as "register". (Wallace,15) This way, the style of speaking of one person will change when he talks on the phone with a child or his boss, when he writes in a personal diary or, even, while composing political speeches.

In the context of analyzing different types of language registers to detect and differentiate their specific issues, it was determined that the use of language in social context is directly influenced by the social norms and conventions where interaction takes place, and also by the specific type of the environment (e-mail, chat or instant messaging). So, there are fundamental differences between three languages so-called as Net slang or jargon used to communicate online: e-mail language, of a chat and talking online while doing other activities. To this extend, e-mail appears to be the most ceremonious, which writing style is an epistolary one as it can include phrases like "Dear Mr. X", "With great respect," etc.., even though it does not exclude the absence of some diacritics and capitalization, or the presence of shortcuts. (Girbau, 5)

A great interest in psychology is addressed to synchronous chat and asynchronous discussion forum. Chatting online apparently unifies the qualities of a face-to-face conversation and a telephone discussion, because it appears to be synchronous communication to take place through typed text. It important to mention that the typing mode will largely depend on the environment specific. Christopher

Werry [Werry,] analyzing the logs of several chats with the aim to highlight the properties of this very unusual register, noted that at the surface level a dialogue of the chat partners appears to be a mixture of insults and replies without sense. Nevertheless, an experienced user is able to follow the thread of discussion, making it as if there is a room within which occur several simultaneous calls or conversations. It is surprising that the user manifests a capacity to actively participate in discussions, passing easily from one to another, but without ending up the first.

The facility of these talks is the fact that the messages do not disappear immediately after they were sent, but occur slowly remaining on the screen for a short time. Moreover, chat users often write in the names of persons to whom their message addresses, thus keeping the discussion thread. To illustrate such a register, Christopher Werry proposes the following example:

"...<keels> booooooo

<Adriane> keels!!! Are you in or out today?

<bubi> keels, don't scary me! ...

<Shaquille> ariadne – what's up with you?

<keels> who you are, bubi?

<Alvin> bubi: what does you friend want to do in Australia…work

<Alvin> Shaquile: you know the problem.

<ariadne> shaq: don't have problems... you're stupid

<bubi> al, i think he wants to live and work

<Alvin> bubi: depends what type of qualifications, experince, intention, domains <Shaquille> Alvin – spell the name correctly!!!

<Alvin> GRRR

<keels> has someone seen a fruit tree named daco? " []

So, as the example shows, the Internet language is varied and very unusual, not only for the absence of a linear conversation, but for that it is a new language of symbols and combinations, different from the traditional language, which was predetermined by the need of people to tell so many things in a short time, thus saving time while typing the word. Consequently, there appeared a new type of shorthand language called Internet Slang (IS) or Internet Jargon (IJ).To understand the meaning of this new type of communication it is necessary to conceptualize the words slang and jargon. In the Internet context this is a new language, "characterized by its own grammar and code words, which are conventional "or" borrowed from other languages " especially regarding the work on the Internet, " consciousely used "by the users of cyberspace as for not being understood by others.[Coteanu et alt., 2] After Ryan Jones, IS is a broad concept given almost to any acronym and abbreviations designed to eliminate specific key words in writing online messages [Jones, R., 6] and that, unlike spoken slang, is harder to learn. It is interesting to mention that there is no a set of rules the slang was created or will be developed by, as the only principle to work is to use only what is easy and convenient to formulate thoughts. Thus, the slang represents a current trend used especially among teenagers to talk not only during their free time, but also during class activities; this way becoming some already formed speech automatisms. In fact, more and more teachers identifying acronyms or abbreviations in written assignments, especially words like "LOL" "OMG" or "BRB".

As examples of abbreviations and acronyms of IJ there can be: ASAP - As Soon As Possible, BC - Because, BTW - By The Way, CMIIW - Correct Me If I'm Wrong, CYA - See You (Seeya), DK - Do not Know, FOAF - Friend Of A Friend, HAND - Have a Nice Day, LOL - Laugh Out Loud, UR- You Are,

Thx – Thanks[1], etc.., that list seems endless. To facilitate the understanding of the slang by a novice user in order to easily adapt himself to the Internet environment, or by a parent who is interested in how to communicate with his /her child, in his book "Internet Slang Dictionary" Ryan Jones (Jones, 6) presents the top of the abbreviations commonly used by the adolescents. Some of them are as follows:

Nr.o	Combination	Significance
1	BF / GF	Boyfriend / Girlfriend
2	BRB	Be Right Back
3	CD9	Code 9 - means parents are around
4	GTG	Got to Go
5	IDK	I don't know
6	(L)MIRL	(Lets) meet in real life
7	MOS	Mom Over Shoulder
8	Noob	Newbie – often used to insult someone who seems to be incompetent in something, not knowing many things in a certain domain.
9	NMU	Not much, you?
10	POS	Parent Over Shoulder

Besides these mentioned issues, Ryan Jones speaks about the existence of so-called L33T language (called the Leet, or 1337), which is the practice of changing the letters of words with numbers or symbols, finally replacing the letters. For example, the letter "a" could be replaced by @, "b" by two characters "I3", where "t" becomes "7". The word L33T comes from the word "elite" which means the Internet concept of "I'm Cooler Than You", meaning "to be more skilled than you." The author states that there are not real L33T rules, so that it seems to be more a code than a language. [Jones, R., 6] One of the essential elements of L33T are words formed from a single letter, which appear to be used very often in conversation. As a result, these letter-words can then be added to other already formed slang words to create new ones. For instance, these are the following: B - be, C - see, K - OK, O - oh (interjection), M – am, R - are, U - you, 2 - two, too, to, 4 - for, y - Why. [6] Like the letter-words, the numbers have also a special place in this language, which greatly contribute to the mysterious image of this code. As examples of the new combinations my serve the following: (18)

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[1] Chat Abbreviations Dictionary
http://www.stropdeviata.com/viewtopic.php?t=841

Nr.	Combination	Significance
1	143	"I love you"
2	10-4	OK
3	10q sau 10x	Thank you or short Thanks
4	224	"today, tomorrow, forever"
5	2B	"to be"
6	404	"Couldn't find it"
7	4649 sau 46	"pleased to meet you", "hi"
8	4ever, 4eva	"forever"
9	54	"To ignore"
10	88, 881 or 886	"bye bye"

In chat the punctuation is usually omitted, especially full-stop sign, as instead of using it they usually press the Enter command key to send the finished sentence, then continuing to write another idea[2]. Moreover, spelling rules are rarely taken into account, as some will prefer capitalizing every letter except vowels (e.g., INTeRNeT), or deliberately omitting vowels from words (e.g., the word "very" will appear as "vr"). However, writing a word or a sentence in uppercase means to a shout or yell at someone, and sites recommended avoiding this process.[3] [Todi, 12] In addition to this, mistakes are often intended to be left uncorrected, and, then adapted to replace the correct spelling of this word.

It is interesting to state the formation of the plural number constructions which consists of adding the suffix "0rz" to the singular form (for example, the word "sk1llz0rz" is the plural form of the English word "skill").[4] To sum up the whole information provided above on the L33T language, there will be presented a specimen sentence. So, the statement "The chat language is made up of abbreviations, acronyms, numbers or letters." will change into L33T language style as follows: "73h cH47 l4n9u493 iZ M4D3 UP oF 488r3vI47iOnZ, 4CROnymZ, num83rz or L3773RZ."[5]; thus, confirming again the complexity and uniqueness of this secret code – the reason all children adore it.

Also, important is the fact that verbal messages of the chat are often accompanied (especially in the absence of a camera) by the nonverbal elements designed emotionally to complete the verbal information. The symbols called emoticons/smileys (sometimes made by a combination of punctuation marks and/or letters, sometimes by drawings, figures expressing emotions) illustrate moods, emotions, express certain

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[2] http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A787917

[3] http://abc-netmarketing.com;
http://muntealb.orgfree.com/Manuale/regulament-grup-discutii.htm

[4] Language Structure Rules
http://www.safesurfingkids.com/chat_room_emoticons.htm

[5] L33t Translator http://www.jayssite.com/stuff/l33t/l33t_translator.html

feelings or gestures such as smiling, laughter, sadness, confusion, irony, disappointment, anger, distrust, etc. and stress on the way the sender feels about the message while transmitting it to the receiver. [Todi,12] The emoticons/smileys could be presented in form of several styles: Western, Asian, mixed, etc. (Wolf, 17)

Traditional symbols of Western style is written from left to right, including the most common symbol as eye sign (:) placed in the left, then the nose (-) and mouth (|). Examples of such emoticons are: (17)

Nr.	Combination	Significance
1	:-) or =] or:) or =) or :] or :^) or :D	Smile or happiness
2	:-L or =L	Tired
3	:(or =(or D: or D=	Sadness, anger
4	xP or XP	Disgust, trick
5	;) or ;]	Blink
6	(: < here the message > :)	Whispering something to a person in a ear or saying something
7	:O or =O	Shock, surprise
8	=X or :X	Lips sealed; pity that something that was not supposed to be said was said; or shocked silence. No comment.
9	:* or ;*	Kiss
10	:** or ;**	Kissing back
11	:'(or :_(or :*(	To cry
12	>:O	Fury, cry
13	>:E	Hatred
7	:O or =O	Shock, surprise

In turn, the Asian style of symbols can be understood without turning the head to the left, necessary for interpreting the Western style, as it represents such a combination type (*_*), where asterisks indicate the eyes, usually the main element, intent symbolizes the mouth, and parentheses designating the head shape. However, it is noted among users the tendency to replace the eyes with other symbols such as ^ ^, comma or point to remove intent, and, alternatively, mouth or nose being absolutely omitted. As examples may serve the following symbols:[6]

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[6] www.*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emoticon*

Nr.	Combination	Significance
1	(^_^)	Smile
2	(;_;)	Cried eyes, sadness, angry.
3	\(^_^)/	Joy, "Hurray!"
4	(*_*)	"Surprise !."
5	(o.O)	Shocked
6	(^o^)	Lough aloud
7	(-.-)Zzz	Sleeping
8	(*^^*)	Shame
9	(?_?)	Nonsense or "I don't know."
10	(<.<)	Suspicious, could be sarcasm
11	d(^_^)b	Listening to music
12	(Z.Z)	Sleeping persons
13	(-_-;)	Perspiration (with the sense of ashamed), or irritated
15	v(^_^)v	Peace, victory

Another way to express feelings online is graphic emoticons which, according to Wolf (Wolf, 17), is a small picture intended automatically to replace the addressed typed text, especially used in forums and instant messaging programs. As examples might serve the following: 😵 which shows confussion, 🙂 for smile, 🙂 to express offense, or the state of foolish, 😡 for trouble, etc.

Analyzing the social sites such as odnoklassniki.ru or facebook.com, it is sensed a growing tendency to combine English net jargon with the national aspects of the language. For example, there appeared the abbreviations of greetings like "pret" instead of Russian "privet", or "sl" instead of Romanian "salut" (meaning "Hi!"). Some Anglicism remained to be shorter, such as "NP" ("no problem") or "oops" sometimes spelled with one "o". Instead of "you" remained just "u", combined with the numeral "4 u" or "2 u" meaning "for you" or "to you", and the current formula for approval was reduced from "ok" to a simple "k". This way, there appeared the words such as "NE1" meaning Internet, "l8er" meaning "later", "22ror" (Romanian "tutoror") instead of " to all", or "2ne" (Romanian "bine") instead of "good".(Bucurenci, 1) Besides, the national social networks provide the communication in the national net jargon, created by the same rules as the English one, but being inspired from the national language. For example, the Romanian letters "ș " and „ț " similar with Russian „ш" and "ц" turned to be written like " sh" and "tz"; or Romanian letter "u" similar with the Russian "y" was replaced by "oo".

What is more, depending on the discussion purpose, the speakers use lower-case and capital letters to stress one particular word from the sentence, omitting punctuation marks and word space. This way, the message seems to be confusing for those unfamiliar with this type of language as it is not stated clearly whether this is a question or just a statement. Thus, it is written „*StInFataHavuz.VrbCdNeVdm.LaRvdr!"* instead of Romanian „Sunt *în fața havuzului. Vorbim cînd ne vedem. La revedere!", meaning „I am in front of the fountain. Let's talk when we meet. Good bye!".*

While communicating within video game chat the children usually use word-shortening (Urusciuc, 13), where the wording is concise and laconic, as well as in the chat, since the player is usually absorbed by the game and has no time to waste for writing. The online game jargon is almost reduced to symbols, for e.g. the one of closed parenthesis followed by a colon (eye and mouth corners up) meaning a smile, and two points followed by open parenthesis (eye and mouth corners down)

meaning sadness. (Girbau, 5) This way of chatting is determined by the fact that the players do not know the real name of their partners, their age, sex, or even location, but only the nickname, which is usually different from their real personal data. It can even happen in games to know each other only by their total game rating, which is distinct from the chat.

The identity of the online conversationalist arises some other problems related to his/her online security, representing the risk a teenager could be exposed to by presenting all his/her personal data online. This way, the role of the adults is to supervise their children while communicating in chats, teaching them to avoid talking with the strangers, to avoid offering personal data, phone numbers, address, and encouraging their children to share their online chatting experience, etc. On the other hand, the Internet might also represent the risk for the adolescents as it might create an environment which will keep them staying online more than communicating in the real world. Besides, the adolescents have to be taught the Netiquette to communicate online, which, by Virginia Shea (Shea, 10), have to be supported and sustained by each chat as a set of strict recommendations for the users. Some of these rules are as follows: "(1) remember the human; (2) adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life; (3) know where you are in cyberspace; (4) respect other people's time and bandwidth; (5) make yourself look good online; (6) share expert knowledge; (7) help keep flame wars under control; (8) respect other people's privacy; (9) do not abuse your power, and (10) be forgiving of other people's mistakes."[7]

Another challenge of communicating online appears to be the fact that the Internet slang used as a means of communicating online influences the way the adolescents write to accomplish their school assignments. For instance, a new study found that two-thirds of U.S. teenagers use Internet writing shortcuts, such as emoticons and informal abbreviations, in their written schoolwork. This way, students who blogged or participated in social networking sites were more likely to use informal language in accomplishing given tasks. (Lenhart, A. et alt., 7) This study's results alarmed some educators, but the discovery that 64 percent of teens use emoticons in their writing is a "teachable moment," according to researcher Amanda Lenhart (7) who sees an opportunity to teach the differences between formal and informal writing in classes. For this reason, the teachers could provide online activities, for e.g. blogging, to foster standard language usage for classroom activities such as reflective writing, science journals and written group discussions. Moreover, the teacher could include the activities which require converting the Internet slang expressions into the formal one, using special web applications and sites such as http://www.1337talk.com/ . This way, the students will be able to operate with the variations of the online jargon to re-write messages, funny short stories or song's lyrics to make lesson more attractive and motivating for the students. Also, during the classes there could be used online interactive games, crosswords, word puzzles to generate developing students' linguistic skills. One of these activities is a word search which requires students to find out as many good and bad online nicknames as they can.[8]

Taking into account all mentioned above, it is important to state that the Internet represents an environment to generate the development of teenagers' social skills by interacting within social networks which make them express their thoughts and opinions through Net language/ slang - a combination of words, punctuation marks, numbers, acronyms and smileys. This phenomenon opens new horizons for pedagogy and psychology to develop new approaches for the adolescents' harmonious education.

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[7] http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html

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http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/friends/nicknames/print_wordsearch.html