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**A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE USE OF NETSPEAK
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

Implementation of Netspeak in High School and
University Language Teaching

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JOVANOVIĆ DANICA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE USE OF NETSPEAK IN
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The aim of this research is to explore the presence and pedagogical implications of Netspeak in English language classroom. Netspeak is the type of language that evolves within the electronic environment, and it is classified as an informal language. The goal of this research is to examine how Netspeak is accepted by high school and university English language teachers from Finland and Serbia, and whether and how they implement Netspeak in their teaching.

The topic of the educational use of Netspeak has not yet been widely explored, and, therefore, there are not many researches done on this matter. In this regard, researching the use of Netspeak for teaching purposes is a relatively new field, and this MA thesis brings new results on the subject and paves the way for further researches. It is a multidisciplinary research which combines linguistic research with media education.

The data are collected through 18 interviews of the English teachers working in high schools and universities in Finland and Serbia, and through the review of 3 segments of written teaching materials in which the use of Netspeak is present. The method used in this qualitative study is inductive qualitative content analysis (IQCA).

The findings show that the pedagogical potential of Netspeak is noticed by the teachers. The theory which comes out of the overall result of the research is that the majority of English language teachers implement Netspeak in their teaching. The approaches in the use of Netspeak are presented in the thesis.

Keywords: Netspeak, English language teaching, English language classroom

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1. INTRODUCTION

The use of the language on the Internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC) have raised new linguistic researches on the English language and its development in the twenty-first century. Among the first comprehensive studies about the Internet effects on the English language was Crystal's first edition of the book "Language and the Internet" in 2001. In the second edition of the same book, Crystal (2006, 275) states: "...we are on the brink of the biggest language revolution ever." Similarly, Baron (2001, 1) points out that Internet has radically transformed the way people communicate, both locally and globally. She examines the linguistic tools used on the Internet and describes computer-mediated communication as "a kind of linguistic centaur, incorporating features from both traditional writing and face-to-face discourse but ending up being more than a simple amalgam of the two" (2001, 23). After these two significant linguistic researches, several other researches have stressed that the use of modern technology and its relation to language leads to certain changes in punctuation, grammar rules and vocabulary (Kwak, Morrison, Peters & Zinkhan 2003; Denis & Tagliamonte 2008; Stavfeldt 2011).

This research delves into the linguistic changes which the Internet has brought into the English language and, as its main goal, it examines the educational implementation of Netspeak in English language teaching, with reference to media impact on teaching and learning. Netspeak is a novel medium that has evolved within the electronic environment combining linguistic and electronic properties. It includes unconventional linguistic variations, among which the most visible ones are emoticons and acronyms. Emoticons are written combinations of punctuation marks along with numerals representing emotions, while acronyms or abbreviations are formations of new words by compounding the first letters of the statement.

It has been claimed by many authors that online environments offer diverse forms of communication (Thorpe & Gordon 2012; Crystal 2006; Mann & Stewart 2000). Molyneux and Godinho (2012, 1467) illustrate: “The need for students in the middle years to develop proficiency in the specific language registers and subject-specific discourses of schooling continues to challenge schools and teachers, especially amongst linguistically and culturally diverse student populations.” The authors point out that the teachers should give more attention to the factors that motivate students outside of school, e.g. the text or topics should be something the students feel strongly about, or are interested in (Molyneux & Godinho 2012, 1467). Considering the fact that the language used on the Internet is a part of students’ everyday language, it is of great importance to examine the breakthrough of Netspeak into other environments beside its native, digital environment. Therefore, the research on blending of Netspeak into the English language classroom makes part of the linguistic research, and it is linked to the educational technology and the involvement of media in teaching and learning.

Educational technology follows the technological progress in the educational systems. For this reason, it is related to this linguistic research as a field which reflects the constant increasing of information resources enabled by new digital technologies. According to Simsek (2005, 178), studies on educational technology were initialized by “the pressure of industrial technology, regardless of educational sciences and studies of educators”. Similarly, the development of the language has been profoundly affected by technological inventions.

When the first attempt to log in to a network of two computers was successfully accomplished at the University of California in LA and the Stanford Research Institute in 1969, the new era of communication began, giving a new dimension to the use of language in a brand new medium for communication: electronic environment. Soon after, the new category for a word used in this kind of environment was defined as an “electronic” word, and it can be claimed that it has still remained the latest word category after the first two previous ones: spoken and written words. Namely, electronic word is perceived as a stand-alone conceptual category

distinct from, but sharing qualities with, the spoken and the written word (Mann & Stewart 2000, 183). With the arrival of electronic words, the language itself has got one more dimension which participates in the development of language. The role of language on the Internet and the impact of the Internet on language are two inseparable topics, and they both form a set for the linguistic research on language and the Internet.

The electronic word mentioned above has been a means of communication of the Internet users, and it is the center of linguistic evolution in the modern world. In this research I follow the conceptual framework of Netspeak defined by Crystal in the book “Language and the Internet”. Crystal (2006, 5) points out that his aim is “to explore the ways in which the nature of electronic medium as such, along with the Internet’s global scale and intensity of use, is having an effect on language in general, and on individual languages in particular”. He coins the term Netspeak in the first edition of the same book, referring to the type of CMC used in chatgroups, virtual words, World Wide Web, blogging and instant messaging.

Crystal (2006, 4) defines that a regular citizen of the Internet can be called “netizen”, which further on leads to the idea that Netspeak can be defined as a native language of a netizen. Prensky (2001, 1) argues that students of today can be classified as “Digital Natives”, referring to the fact that the majority of today’s students were born in the digital era. Furthermore, Prensky defines that these students are “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. Hence, if the native language of a netizen is Netspeak, then it is not an overstatement to say that the majority of digital natives speak Netspeak worldwide, i.e. the type of language that evolves within the electronic environment. Since Netspeak features can be applied in every written language used in the electronic environment, it is easily noticed that Netspeak does not refer and it is not limited to one specific language. However, the focus of this research is Netspeak in the English language.

Crystal (2006) mentions several times in his book that it is important for online users to feel like they are the members of the Internet culture. The recognition of subcultural potentials of Netspeak is important because netizens do have specific stylistic ways of communication on the Internet. They participate in the online culture, and it should be noticed that this culture may influence their way of communication in real life and in the classroom, as well. The language netizens use in CMC has led me to the idea to use this concept for the research which aim is to explore the use of Netspeak in English language classroom—a new environment for CMC, but a well-known one for digital natives.

If we look back into the past, it is noticeable that language is in a continuous process of development. The German philosopher-linguist Wilhelm von Humbolt wrote in 1836: “There can never be a moment of true standstill in language, just as little as in the ceaseless flaming thought of men” (Lehman 1967, 63). Similarly, Atchison (2001, 4) argues that language, like everything else, gradually transforms itself over the centuries. She continues on the same page: “In a world where humans grow old, tadpoles change into frogs, and milk turns into cheese, it would be strange if language alone remained unaltered.” Since the Internet is one of the linguistic “territories”, and it has made a great impact on languages worldwide, including the English language, it is important to follow and examine the existence and incorporation of Netspeak in other linguistic territories. In this research, the targeted linguistic territory is the English language classroom in high schools and institutions of higher education.

The effect of the Internet on the English language has been the issue of great anxiety among some researchers on communication and language (Denis & Tagliamonte 2008; Nelson 2007). On the other hand, there are linguistic advocates of the positive Internet’s impact on language development (Crystal 2006; Baron 2001; Werry 1996). In order to start the educational research on Netspeak and its linguistic influence and implementation in the English language classroom, it is important to take a look at the past and the history of concerns over new technological discoveries and their influences on language.

1.1 Written Language and Technological Inventions

From the historical point of view, the concerns over the possible social changes caused by new forms of written language brought by technological inventions have often been present in the past. The arrival of printing in the fifteenth century was seen by the Church as an “invention of Satan” and that there was a great concern that uncensored ideas would cause damage to social order in Europe (Crystal 2006, 2). Namely, printing had allowed the distribution of variant spellings into the literary marketplace, which raised scholarly concerns regarding the question of standardization of the language (Llamas Olague 2003, para.1). The invention of printing subsequently led to an extensive censorship, starting from 1486 when a state censorship office was established in Frankfurt in order to restrain unorthodox biblical translations and tracts. Only fifteen years later, in 1501, Pope Alexander VI put the censorship to secular books.

A couple of centuries later, the arrival of telegraph and telephone were not perceived so much differently from the printing invention. As demonstrated by Crystal (2006, 2), the telegraph was foreseen as a danger of family annihilation and crime expansion, and the telephone was perceived as deterioration of society. Likewise, broadcasting technology brought big concerns about the possibility of rapid domination of propaganda and its negative influence on people. It is noticeable that the reactions of the authorities were targeting the influence of the technological inventions on the evolution of written language because such evolution was fast, and it was exceeding the previous control on language use that the authorities had at the time.

Regarding the linguistic point of view, the anxiety about translations of the Bible was mostly targeting the use of local languages in religious settings. This kind of language was not acceptable for being used in the Bible, and the new possibilities for translators were predicted to be dangerous for the future religious perspective. The concerns about local accents and

dialects were the issue of the debates regarding the broadcasting and the right choice of the language use and its influence of millions of viewers around the world. The arguments about the language use in media have remained the unsolved issue in the twenty-first century as it was in the past. On the whole, it can be claimed that previously mentioned concerns over the language use and distribution are related to the question of power and authority.

1.2 Language and the Internet

As previously mentioned, the initial creation of the Internet happened in 1969 after the successfully accomplished attempt to log in to a network of two computers between the University of California in LA and the Stanford Research Institute. After the launching of several Networks called ARPANET, NPL, Merit Network, CYCLADES and Usenet, the concept of a world-wide network, called the Internet, was introduced in the 1980s (Griffiths 2002).

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Internet is being used by personal, military, federal, regional, university and business users. Crystal (2006, 3) claims that the Internet has been likened to an amalgam of television, telephone, and conventional publishing, and he points out on the same page: “The term *cyberspace* has been coined to capture the notion of a world of information present or possible in digital form (the information *superhighway*).” The term Crystal mentions, “the information superhighway”, can be understood as a referral to the power which digital technology has on both spreading of information and, coherently, the use of language in digital form.

It has been argued that the influence of the Internet on language development is still the greatest when it comes to written or typed words (Crystal 2006; Stavfeldt 2011). Furthermore, it is noticeable that spoken dimension of the Internet has been a topic of discussion among many linguists. As an illustration, Baron (2001, 4) declares that the language used in emails or instant messages is “more like speech than like writing”. The connection between the linguistic development of the written language and the other three dimensions of the language (speaking, listening and reading) is quite noticeable, and it is not possible to put clear limits on the distinction between the development of each of the four dimensions separately. Written language reflects on every other language dimension, and vice versa, creating a circle which should be taken into account as a whole.

At the moment, the overlapping of traditional and modern in all aspects of language evolution is omnipresent. The use of both terms needs a further explanation due to the overlapping and interference between these two categories often used in many linguistic studies of the Internet language. Crystal uses the terms “conventional” and “traditional”, referring to non-electronic communication, by which he refers to the kind of communication carried out in real life, i.e. physical world. In addition to the explanation of the non-electronic, real life environment, I add Ihnatko’s definition in which he describes real world as “that which cannot be accessed via a keyboard” (1997, 160). All in all, it can be defined that traditional language refers to old-style speech and writing carried out in non-electronic environment. On the other hand, it can be claimed that modern language is present in both electronic and non-electronic environment.

In my research, I explore the use of Netspeak in English language classroom, which includes the research on the existence of Netspeak in the classroom and its implementation in English language teaching. In the twenty-first century, teaching and learning are conducted through a combination of electronic and non-electronic environment due to the constant development of the educational technology. Since learning environments and language usage vary between modern and traditional, in this research the emphasis is not on the attempt to classify Netspeak

as a modern, traditional or blended version of the two, but rather on the acceptance and incorporation of Netspeak in the English language teaching of today.

As previously mentioned, the scholarly concerns in the past caused by new forms of written language were linked to the question of power and authority. Nowadays, when it comes to the effect of the Internet on language, the same concerns are present among scholars and linguists. It can be noted that the power struggles related to Netspeak may be linked to the uncertainty about the possible threat which Netspeak may bring into the present written and spoken norms of the English language.

In this study, the focus is on the assessment of Netspeak as a pedagogical tool. This research topic is relatively new, and bigger studies on this particular matter have not yet been conducted. My interest is to explore how English language teachers (the representatives of the authority) perceive the existence of Netspeak in the English language classroom. Simultaneously, I examine how Netspeak is used in the teaching of the English language. On the whole, this research examines standpoints and experiences of teachers concerning the use of Netspeak in the classroom, as well as their assessment of the impact which computer-mediated communication (CMC) and Netspeak have on the language use in the English language classroom.

Several previous studies highlight Netspeak as evolution of language (Stavfeldt 2011; Atchison 2001; Baron 2001; Crystal 2006). As discussed by these authors, it is not easy to predict language change, but it can be recognized once it happens. Nowadays, it is evident that educational teaching practices concerning the English language and communication are already facing noticeable influences coming from the users of the digital technologies. In my opinion, the awareness of how technological tools affect language and communication opens up new possibilities for teaching approaches. The incorporation of the Internet language in the classroom is a new phenomenon, and its pedagogical and didactic implications need further

examination. In this regard, this research follows new linguistic aspects in English language teaching in relation to the Internet. Therefore, the research on the use of Netspeak in English language classroom appertains to the field of media education, and it can be classified as its linguistic branch.

1.3 Research Questions

The goal of the research is to examine the attitude and standpoints of high school and university English language teachers from Finland and Serbia on the existence and implementation of Netspeak in English language classroom. For this purpose, qualitative data are collected through 18 interviews and 3 segments of written teaching materials, applying inductive qualitative content analysis (IQCA) as a research method.

The main research question is:

How is Netspeak accepted and implemented in the teaching of the English language and communication?

Following sub-questions specify the main question of the research:

- a) How do high school and university English language teachers from Finland and Serbia perceive the use of Netspeak in the classroom?
- b) What are the similarities and differences between the use of Netspeak in traditional learning environments and in online teaching platforms?

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON NETSPEAK

Before 2001 when Crystal coined the term “Netspeak”, several other terms had been in use for the unconventional variations of English on the Internet. Some of them are “electronic language”, “electronic discourse”, “cyberspeak”, “Weblish”, “Netlish”, “Netiquette”, “Internet language”, and some other similar terms. Nowadays, Lolspeak and Textspeak can also be found beside the term Netspeak. Among all of these terms, it seems that Netspeak prevailed since it has been the most often used term in the last decade; therefore, I use this term in my research. From my perspective, Netspeak is a suitable term which defines a medium combining spoken, written and electronic properties. Initially deriving from the electronic environment, nowadays Netspeak is widely used on the Internet. Therefore, this compound word consisting of the words speak and Internet clearly illustrates the concept of Netspeak even to the people who are not familiar with this subject.

Before Netspeak, computer-mediated communication (CMC) was the often used term referring to different types of communication using a computer or a mobile phone, and nowadays smartphones, tablets and other devices programmed to carry out a set of logical operations which can be used for communication, among their other features. The forms through which the communication is enabled on these devices include: SMS, electronic mail (e-mail), World Wide Web, chatgroups, and virtual worlds. All of these ways of communication require the use of the Internet, except SMS type of communication, but considering the fact that SMS requires the usage of typed words, it also can be put in the same group even though it is not strictly connected to the Internet access.

From the linguistic-educational point of view, researching Netspeak and its influence on language led me to the idea of its pedagogical implication and further evolution in educational settings. Considering the fact that the online and offline learning environments are connected and interact with one another due to the development of the educational technology, it can be expected that Netspeak overpasses the border and break through from its native environment to the educational one.

The following table (p. 12) by Denis and Tagliamonte (2008, 6) illustrates the development of the English language in CMC for the past two decades. The interesting fact about this table is that it unifies the results of different studies on CMC which were conducted during the last decade of the twentieth century and in the beginning of the twenty-first century. It shows some of the apparent linguistic changes appeared within CMC, among which are abbreviations of the words, deletion of specific syntactic and morphological items, spelling variations and contractions, etc. However, it is noticeable in the table that the emphasis is on the language features which imply the deviation from the usual language rules. In this regard, this table is also a good example of the attitudes of scholars which demonstrate the concerns over new forms of written language brought by the use of technology. In my opinion, the table represents the summary of the selected CMC features which reflect scholarly concerns over the impact on the English language coming from the use of the Internet.

TABLE 1
Summary of Linguistic Computer-Mediated Communication Research

<i>Year</i>	<i>Researcher(s)</i>	<i>Form of CMC</i>	<i>Corpus Size</i>	<i>Feature</i>
1991	Ferrara et al.	e-messages (an early form of IM)	18,769 words	subject drop article deletion copula deletion tersed sentences shortened words
1996	Yates	computer conferencing (early newsgroups)	Written: Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen; Spoken: London Lund; CMC: 2,222,049 words	type/token ratio analysis pronoun use modal auxiliaries
1996	Werry	IRC	no corpus	conversation organization addressivity abbreviation prosody
1998	Hentschel	IRC	no corpus	prosody lexicon orthography turn taking
1999	Paolillo	IRC	6,317 lines	use of <i>r, u, z</i> use of code-switching, Hindi-English use of obscenity
2003	Palfreyman & al Khalil	IM (MSN)	2,400 Arabic words & 2,000 English words	use of Roman keyboard set to write in Arabic use of local dialect
2004	Baron	IM (AIM)	11,718 words	turn taking conversation length openings & closings abbreviations contractions emoticons

2.1 What is Netspeak?

In the beginning of the description of Netspeak features, it is important to introduce some of the existing definitions of Netspeak. According to Crystal (2006, 52), Netspeak is viewed as “a novel medium combining spoken, written and electronic properties”. In the urban dictionary, Netspeak is described as “a process of shortening words and replacing letters with different letters and/or symbols to supposedly make the typing process shorter”. From my perspective, Netspeak is the type of language that has evolved within the electronic environment, and it is recognizable by its most evident characteristics which are emoticons and acronyms.

Before focusing on the implementation of Netspeak in the classroom, some of the main features of Netspeak are presented in the following section of the thesis. According to Baron (2001, 20) and Mann and Stewart (2000), Netspeak includes emoticons, flaming, abbreviations, acronyms and other variations on words and sentences. Crystal (2006) notices more characteristics to Netspeak—spoofing and trolling, and he categorizes them as Netspeak maxims. Although Baron (2001) classifies flaming in the group of special linguistic features, I must notice that this feature of Netspeak rather stands for the stylistic category, than being solely a linguistic feature. However, stylistic features of Netspeak are introduced and shortly explained in the following sections, but the focus in the research is on the linguistic features of Netspeak such as emoticons, abbreviations, syntactic and morphological variations on speech and writing, and, subsequently, the existence and acceptance of these features in the teaching of English language and communication. All of these linguistic features are explained in the following sections of this chapter.

2.1.1 Linguistic Description of Netspeak

Emoticons

Emoticons are one of the key features of Netspeak and they usually represent faces. The first emoticon was created by Scott Fahlman in 1982 at Carnegie Mellon University (Baron 2001, 20). He proposed the character :-) to be used for joke markers, and :-(for expressions which were not jokes, and specified that this sign should be read sideways. Emoticons include “verbal descriptions of feelings and sounds as well as denoting signs of affection or approval” (Mann & Stewart 2000, 15). In my opinion, emoticons are the combination of punctuation marks along with numerals constructed to represents emotions, such as happiness, displeasure, surprise, wondering, fear, confusion, etc.

Table 2.1. Examples of *emoticons* or *smileys*:

:-)	pleasure, smile	:-(displeasure, sadness
;-)	winking	;-)	crying
:o o-o	shocked, amazed	%-(confused
:-] :-[sarcastic	:-	speechless
:-\$	blushing	:^)	wondering
] :)	evil green	:-*	kiss
-)	sleepy	-)	dull
:P	cheeky	(:	sweating

A large list of smileys is available at www.netlingo.com.

All of these characters have evolved into new advanced forms. The following emoticons are depicted to illustrate their wide virtual usage. For this purpose, following virtual premises are chosen: Microsoft Word, word processor designed by the multinational software corporation Microsoft; Skype, software application that enables voice calls over the Internet; Yahoo and Gmail web mail services; and Facebook, a social networking website:

- Word document: 😊 😞 😐

- Skype emoticons: 😊 😞 😐 😡 😢 😣 😤 😥 😦 😧

- Yahoo email emoticons: 🙋 🙌 🙍 🙎 🙏 🙐 🙑 🙒 🙓 🙔 🙕 🙖 🙗 🙘 🙙 🙚 🙛 🙜 🙝 🙞 🙟 🙠 🙡 🙢 🙣 🙤 🙥 🙦 🙧 🙨 🙩 🙪 🙫 🙬 🙭 🙮 🙯 🙰 🙱 🙲 🙳 🙴 🙵 🙶 🙷 🙸 🙹 🙺 🙻 🙼 🙽 🙾 🙿 🐼 🐾 🐇 🐉 🐊 🐋 🐌 🐍 🐎 🐏 🐐 🐑 🐒 🐓 🐔 🐕 🐖 🐗 🐘 🐙 🐚 🐛 🐜 🐝 🐞 🐟 🐠 🐡 🐢 🐣 🐤 🐥 🐦 🐧 🐨 🐩 🐪 🐫 🐬 🐭 🐮 🐯 🐰 🐲 🐳 🐴 🐵 🐶 🐷 🐸 🐹 🐺 🐻 🐼 🐾 🐇 🐉 🐊 🐋 🐌 🐍 🐎 🐏 🐐 🐑 🐒 🐓 🐔 🐕 🐖 🐗 🐘 🐙 🐚 🐛 🐜 🐝 🐞 🐟 🐠 🐡 🐢 🐣 🐤 🐥 🐦 🐧 🐨 🐩 🐪 🐫 🐬 🐭 🐮 🐯 🐰 🐲 🐳 🐴 🐵 🐶 🐷 🐸 🐹 🐺 🐻 🐼 🐾

- Gmail emoticons: 🐼 🐾 🐇 🐉 🐊 🐋 🐌 🐍 🐎 🐏 🐐 🐑 🐒 🐓 🐔 🐕 🐖 🐗 🐘 🐙 🐚 🐛 🐜 🐝 🐞 🐟 🐠 🐡 🐢 🐣 🐤 🐥 🐦 🐧 🐨 🐩 🐪 🐫 🐬 🐭 🐮 🐯 🐰 🐲 🐳 🐴 🐵 🐶 🐷 🐸 🐹 🐺 🐻 🐼 🐾

- Facebook emoticons: 😊 😞 😐 😡 😢 😣 😤 😥 😦 😧

The written online communication is deprived of the body language and voice, so in order to compensate this lack, emoticons, as a computer-specific genre of signs, are used to show mental and physical reactions of non-verbal communication expressed through facial expressions, eye movements and gestures. Emoticons imply the attitude or state of mind of a person. From the linguistic point of view, I want to mention that the term emoticon consists of the words “emotion” and “icon”, which further enforces me to discuss emoticons also from the semiotics point of view.

As Chandler (1997) demonstrates, semiotics is defined as the study of signs. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, every sign, or everything that is by anyone taken as a sign, consists of two parts: “signifier” and “signified”. Signifier is the form of a sign, and signified refers to the concept that the sign stands for. To illustrate this concept, a written word can be used as a sign.

If an Italian writes “giardino”, this is a signifier standing for the concept of garden. Although garden might be well known concept in every other culture of the world, only Italians will be able to decode this sign and understand its meaning, or recognize the signified. For others, this sign may only look as a simple compilation of letters.

The sign :-| represents a speechless face. There are two eyes and an indifferent mouth. If we look at this sign, we see a double-dot and a closing line. With the concept of signifier and signified in mind, the question appears, is this sign interpreted as a speechless face also by people who have never seen it before? Applying more of the semiotics terms, it is evident that emoticon can also be defined as iconic. Codognet in chapter IV of his Internet article about the semiotics of the Web demonstrates that pure iconography is not possible. He adds: “Icons have to present themselves as such, to display their own icon-ness. A sign is not iconic until the interpreter recognizes it as such.” Besides being iconic, it can be noticed that emoticons are also symbolic and indexical. Symbolic denotes that there is another sign in itself. The :-| is iconic, as it shows a simplified human face. However, the meaning of this sign is recognized by convention whereas the referral to a human face has been defined by common sense. Lastly, indexical dimension can also be recognized in the final semiotic analysis of an emoticon. As an illustration, smile in an emoticon can be interpreted as an index of humor, good mood or friendliness. Similarly, devilish smile can be taken as an index of mischief or playfulness.

On the whole, the emoticons are not understood as a simple message “I am speechless” or “I am sad”; they are used as added features. They can be analyzed technically and culturally. Technically, :-| or ☹ does not have any specific meaning in itself, but the cultural context makes the emoticon being a meaningful sign.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Another important feature of Netspeak is the use of abbreviations and acronyms. A very distinctive graphology of Netspeak is seen in the formation of abbreviations and acronyms, and it includes spelling practice of compounding the first letters of the statement, forming a new word. At first, abbreviations and acronyms have been used in the written language before emoticons appeared in CMC. Their function was to conserve energy and/or space. Baron (2001, 21) points out the existence and the purpose of abbreviations in the medieval times: “In the case of medieval manuscripts, for example, use of abbreviations allowed additional words to be inscribed on a single page, reducing the number of animal skins needed to produce a book.” Similarly, with the purpose to reduce typing time, abbreviations and acronyms are also used in online communication, creating an online jargon, also known as text message shorthand. The number of characters is very important for CMC because chat programs, IMs, social networks and other online environments restrict the space and number of characters which can be used in one message.

Table 2.2. The list of Netspeak abbreviations and acronyms commonly used in CMC.

afaik	as far as I know	irl	in real life
afk	away from keyboard	j4f	just for fun
asap	as soon as possible	jam	just a minute
bbfn	bye bye for now	ljatd	let's just agree to disagree
be4	before	lol	laughing out loud
brb	be right back	np	no problem
btw	by the way	nwo	no way out
cul8r	see you later	o4u	only for you
dur?	do you remember	oic	oh I see
fyi	for your information	otoh	on the other hand
gal	get a life	rotfl	rolling on the floor laughing
gr8	great	tia	thanks in advance
ilu	I love you	ttyl	talk to you later

The large list of acronyms and abbreviations is available at www.netlingo.com.

All of these features of Netspeak are only the core of the most visible diversities between the language which has been used in so called ‘real life’ and in online environment. There is much more to the linguistic description of Netspeak. In addition, these are some more characteristics of CMC: the use of *u*, *r*, *y* instead of you, are, why; shorten words; succinct sentences; influences on prosody; article deletion, etc. These features refer to syntactic and morphological variations on the standard language.

2.1.2 Stylistic Features

As an example of stylistic features of Netspeak, flaming, spoofing, and trolling are shortly introduced in order to point out the culture of Netspeak users. These features are not examined in this research, but I find them relevant to be mentioned because they indicate the existing types of computer-mediated communication, and emphasize the significance of social interaction among Netspeak users.

In several studies, a stylistic feature of Netspeak called *flaming* is defined as a rude expression of hostile feelings (Mann & Stewart 2000; Baron 2001). As an illustration, Mann and Stewart (2000, 15) explain that flaming is used “to hector or harangue another person electronically in response to an electronic message and is found in all types of CMC”. The common discernment of the researchers is that the language of flaming is aggressive, and that flames are directed at an individual recipient. In these studies, it still has not be specified what should be considered as a flame. It seems that the reason for this can be found in the fact that people’s communicative styles and tastes differ, so very often there are no clear distinctions whether users ‘are having a discussion’ or they are ‘arguing’. However it is evident that flaming is a kind of linguistic aggressiveness. Moreover, Millard (1996, 152) introduces the term metaflaming, referring to situations where people take strong positions and start flaming each other about the issue of flaming.

Spoofing and *trolling* also characterize the ways of communication on the Internet. *Spoofs* are messages whose origin is unknown. These messages may be inserted by the software, but they are also inserted by the participants of the communication. The users may ignore, question or react to a spoof, but these messages are mostly neutral and, even though are often considered annoying, their meaning is not insolent like, for example, the meaning of flames. Moreover, *trolling* is sending of messages which are intended to irritate the other communicators to bait them to answer. These are mostly false information, and they are usually ignored by the old group members.

Taking all of these stylistic Netspeak features into account, it is visible that there are various forms of online communication between Netspeak users. Researching these characteristics, it can be concluded that the communicators themselves decide on the type of communication they are willing to use. It is apparent that Netspeak users, i.e. netizens, create their own ways of communication. This evidently reflects that online consumers are in control of creating the preferable communicative styles. In addition, it can be designated that online culture is a form of an open society, and as such, it enables the freedom of its users. Since Netspeak users are used to be in control of preferable language styles online, it is interesting to examine how influential their Internet linguistic habits are in the use of English in educational settings, i.e. English language classroom.

2.2 Social Aspect of Netspeak

Social aspect of Netspeak is discussed in this section in order to manifest the behavior of online users. From the educational point of view, this is a significant matter for this research because online social practices may be used to indicate the reasons for the transition of Netspeak from the online environment to the English language classroom. Being used as a tool

for overcoming language barriers, Netspeak is a powerful social tool. I am of the opinion that Netspeak paves the way for further development of the English language into dominant global language. In the following paragraphs, the results of several significant studies on this matter are introduced and discussed.

Special attention should be paid to the language seen in CMC because the social practices of netizens are reflected through the language they use. Kwak et al. (2003, 19) argue: "Web chatters may develop and/or adopt a common vocabulary or jargon that they use to communicate with each other in the online context." They included fifty-seven countries in their study on consumer communication in cyberspace. Their results have shown that the majority of online communicators were between 16 and 40 years old, with 21% between 26 and 30 years of age; seventy percent of respondents were male; and English was the predominant language used by chatters. All of the previously mentioned features of Netspeak they put into one category naming them "a special jargon to communicate" (p. 23). They go on to say on the same page: "For example, many chatters used the abbreviation "C2C" to request "camera-to-camera" communication. "ICUC" translates into "I see, You see." Chatters were also able to express emotions online without using words to describe them. Often some combination of symbols was typed to convey a particular emotion. Consider the comment from a chatter, "C2C, ;)." Here, the symbol, ' ;)' represents a 'wink'." These authors do not use the term emoticon, coined for this specific characteristic of CMC, but they certainly did notice all of the Netspeak's main features.

In some researches it has been found that non-English-speaking users are chatting as often as English-speaking users (Kwak et al. 2003; Drotner & Livingstone 2008). Furthermore, in these studies it is indicated that the majority of its users are teenagers and people under the age of forty. For example, Drotner and Livingstone (2008, 140) claim: "It is no overstatement to say that texting has been a phenomenon that was developed among teens." Furthermore, in the book "Txtng: The Gr8 Db8", Crystal discusses the reasons for the rapid popularity of texting

and chatting. Crystal (2008, 93) argues that the nature of the communicating medium itself proved appealing and that among young people, in particular, texting quickly emerged as an index of belonging.

On balance, suffice is to say that the behavior of online communicators shows the social aspect of Netspeak which indicates that netizens enjoy being part of a community. Netspeak can even be perceived as an index of prestige within an online group. If we notice that Netspeak is much more than being only a linguistic tool, we may come to the conclusion that social factors also play a significant role for the users of Netspeak. Therefore, this tendency for community making may indicate that Netspeak users could transmit the use of Netspeak in other premises, and my aim is to explore to which extent this transition is existent in the English language classroom.

2.3 Hybrid between Spoken and Written Language?

In the previous studies, it was debated that Netspeak includes the characteristics of both speech and writing (Baron 2001; Werry 1996; Crystal 2006; Ferrara, Brunner & Whittemore 1991). The question of whether CMC belongs to a written or to a spoken category was introduced in the previous century, and Ferrara, Brunner, and Whittemore were among the first to discuss this issue. These authors call IM “real-time interactive written discourse” (1991, 8). Moreover, Werry (1996, 61) debates: “...CMC reproduces and simulates the discursive style of face-to-face spoken language.” Crystal (2006, 51) stresses: “Netspeak is more than an aggregate of spoken and written features. It does things that neither of these other mediums do, and must accordingly be seen as a new species of communication.” Comparing these studies, I draw the conclusion that in a medium in which technological facilities evolve very quickly, the linguistic features of Netspeak will also evolve together with its modern online environment. Considering the fact that crucial researches on Netspeak have been done during the past

decade, it is noticeable that development in CMC technology opened up new possibilities for the online communication. Videos and live Web cameras enabled the speech communication online, providing new options for synchronous communication, and enabled more often spoken use of language online.

As previously mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, all four dimensions of one language, writing, reading, speaking and listening, are strictly connected, and influence each other. Seeing that Netspeak was initially created as a written (typed) form of language, its influence on language, both spoken and written, in real life was evident even before videos and live Web cameras enabled the verbal use of language on the Internet (Denis & Tagliamonte 2008). This means that interference between Netspeak and spoken real life language started to happen before the language on the Internet gained the speaking dimension. This interference concerns the word order in the sentence, using of abbreviations as full verbs (I lol'd) or adding inflectional suffixes to existing English words.

All in all, Netspeak was enabled by the CMC technologies. Communications technologies of today allow people to have synchronous interactions with the same levels of accuracy as in the real life environment. It is easy to understand why an increasing focus of many linguistic studies is on the various forms of computer-supported human interaction in regards to social and linguistic aspects. However, the number of researches dealing with the potential implementation of Netspeak in language teaching is relatively small. In the next chapter of the thesis, the focus is on the studies which discuss the use of Netspeak in English language teaching.

3. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF NETSPEAK

This chapter of the thesis is the continuation of the theoretical background of Netspeak. The previous chapter focuses on the studies regarding the definition and features of Netspeak. In this chapter, I make an overview of the previous studies in relation to pedagogical implications of Netspeak. Given that Netspeak is a contemporary widespread language medium which roots are in the electronic environment, its existence and evolution should also target other linguistic territories. In this research, the focus is on the educational linguistic territory: high school and university English language classroom.

Since the aim of this research is to explore standpoints of English language teachers on the subject of the use of Netspeak in the classroom, theoretical background of this kind of study points at previous linguistic studies and academic debates on the topic. The subject of the implementation of Netspeak in English language teaching has not yet been widely explored. Therefore, this research delves into a field which at the moment is not broadly examined. However, from the debates which are presented in this chapter, it can be concluded that opinions of scholars are divided. Therefore, in the following sections, standpoints and opinions of scholars are presented and discussed.

3.1 Debates on Pedagogical Implications of Netspeak

The pedagogical implications of Netspeak are widely debated among scholars. Some of them discuss the importance of the Internet linguistics, i.e. Netspeak, for English professionals (Stavfeldt 2011; Tomita 2009; Crystal 2008; Abrahão de los Santos 2012). On the other hand, there are debates which reflect scholarly concerns over the influence of Netspeak on students' literacy (O'Connor 2005; Shaughnessy 2008).

Delving into the researches on pedagogic implications on Netspeak, I came across Prensky's statement in which he mentions that today's teachers have to learn to communicate in the language and style of their students (2001, 4). Prensky here refers to the functioning in the digital era in general, but this also applies to the use of the Internet language. However, it is expectable that there are some authors who do not have positive standpoints on Netspeak and its influence on the development of the English language. Some critics argue that Netspeak violates the usual rules of sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization. O'Connor (2005) defines Netspeak as "the bastardization of language". On the other hand, some describe it as "mainly dialect of English" or "the lingua franca of the Internet". I perceive Netspeak as a "native language of netizens". Concurrently, Netspeak is a linguistic medium which was developed on the Internet, and it can be presumed that its linguistic properties might differ from the formal language. Therefore, pedagogical implications of Netspeak might be more visible by observing these informal language properties as an accompanying linguistic characteristics of the language derived from the electronic environment.

In the Internet article "'Netspeak' doing more good than harm to English language, experts say", it is illustrated that a panel of experts at a recent symposium on "Language on the Internet" in Washington announced that rapidly spreading digital dialect of English is doing more benefit than harm (para. 2). In the same article it is said that Netspeak "brings freshness

and creativity to everyday English and it is even reviving the almost lost art of diary keeping” (para. 7). In this concept, diary writing refers to blogging. The interesting fact about this concept of online diary keeping is that it inspires thinking about the frequency of writing in the digital era. Namely, blogging is a continuation of the practice of diary keeping. The article indicates that the art of diary keeping tend to be lost nowadays. While this may be true, the point I want to make is that people today often write blogs. This means that practice of everyday writing is enhanced by the use of new technologies, rather than being endangered. If we notice that among the Internet users there are students of English language, we may come to the conclusion that these students probably write daily, and by doing so, they use Netspeak. This students’ consumption of Netspeak may imply that Netspeak is a part of their everyday practice. Therefore, the attention of the English language teachers should be paid on the potential pedagogical implication of Netspeak since students of today express themselves in many linguistic forms, and one of them is through the language they use in electronic environments.

Discussing pedagogical implications of Netspeak, Stavfeldt (2011, 8) notes that most studies on Netspeak and CMC suggest that this linguistic development has a positive influence on literacy. Stavfeldt’s research deals with pedagogical implication of Netspeak in modern teaching materials used for the teaching of English language in upper secondary schools. In his research there are no findings related to Netspeak in the teaching materials and none of the interviewed teachers have used it in their teaching. This finding shows a quite unanimous attitude of English teachers towards the use of Netspeak in teaching. It can be seen from this research that these English teachers have not implemented Netspeak in English language teaching. However, Stavfeldt himself perceives Netspeak as a resource that should be used in teaching, if only to relate to the students' everyday use of English (2011, 4). I agree with his opinion on the implementation of Netspeak in English language teaching. By and large, teachers should be the ones who emphasize the difference between formal and informal language use. However, this does not mean that Netspeak should not be implemented in language teaching, it only means that pedagogical implications of Netspeak should be contextualized and specified.

In addition to the scholarly debates, it is significant to mention Tomita's examination of text-messaging influence on students' writing habits and whether students are able to make difference between informal and formal writing. Tomita (2009, 185) emphasizes that students are growing up in a world of ubiquitous technology and that educators are beginning to explore how this new technological tools might benefit students. The author draws a conclusion that in a rapidly changing world, students should master the use of the technology tools in order to effectively communicate and collaborate together (2009, 189). In the end of the research the author states: "Students need to be effective communicators not only from a formal standpoint, but also an informal one as well. This includes the ability to compose a term paper or essay for History or English class utilizing formal writing skills, and communicate efficiently using short text messages. Educators need to understand that literacy is not limited to only typographic literacies, but includes digital literacies as well." As seen in his statements, Tomita puts emphasis on the necessity for students' mastering of both formal and informal language use in today's digital era. The necessity for managing both of these literacy skills in the digital era of today is one more implication for the implementation of Netspeak in English language teaching.

To continue, there are some debates among scholars which target the potential threat on students' formal language use caused by digital literacies. Some scholars openly criticize the impact of digital literacies on students' language development. One of them is a former teacher, Jacquie Ream. In Shaughnessy's interview (2008), Ream declares that digital generation has being raised without communication skills, further explaining that it takes little critical thinking or analysis to reply with an acronym. She notes: "The internet is a wonderful tool for research and communication, as is text messaging for quick imparting of information. But it is too easy, too simple. It is a way of feeding information, and lots of it, without any filtering—critical thinking—of what it means." She emphasizes that without learning the proper formal writing skills, teachers will see more and more writing with disorganized sentences, sentences without structure, which reflects disjointed and displaced ideas. An interesting fact here is that in parts, this attitude seems to be an exaggerated outcry over Netspeak itself, rather than the objective observation of its potential threat on formal students'

language. Moreover, Ream's prediction of the increase of disorganized language use gives the impression of an anticipatory conclusion on the subject which is still insufficiently explored.

It is clear that certain literacy skills are demanded in order to achieve the level required for effective and clear written communication. Another scholar whose attention is caught by pedagogical implications of Netspeak, Charles Nelson (2007), argues whether the use of the Internet language should be pointed out as incorrect to the students even though this type of language is not wrong per se. This is a significant point which implicates the necessary contextualization of Netspeak. Nelson discusses the use of the students' language expected by their audience in a particular academic context. He stresses: "What is not 'wrong' per se can be wrong in a particular context" (Nelson 2007, para. 4). Considering the fact that students' audience in academic settings are teachers and the other students, the conclusion can be drawn that the teachers should orient their students to notice contrasts between Netspeak and academic language. However, in order to do this, firstly it is necessary that teachers acknowledge pedagogical implications of Netspeak in order to start discussions on proper language use in particular contexts.

In some scholarly debates, the emphasis is precisely on previously mentioned importance of teachers' role in English language teaching. One of the most prolific writers of books on the subject of Netspeak, David Crystal (2008, 163), points out that what teenagers are not good at is fully understanding the consequences of what they are doing, in the eyes of society as a whole. He stresses that this is where teaching comes in. Crystal (2008, 165) comes into view that if there are children who are unaware of the difference between texting and standard English, then it is up to teachers to make them aware. He goes on to say: "If there are children whose discourse skills are being hampered by texting, then it is up to teachers to show them how to improve" (2008, 165). Analogous to Crystal, Stavfeldt (2011, 23) expresses the similar opinion on this matter by saying: "By teaching form and function, in terms of formal versus informal e-mails, chat, bulletin boards etc., and also discussing the various levels of interaction

of these forms with students, a teacher may act as a catalyst for a heightened language awareness.” These scholarly notes are used as an example of a very important point which refers to how big and versatile teachers’ role is in English language teaching. Communication in English language certainly exceeds the boundaries of only formal usage; therefore, there is a need for more versatile approach in English language teaching which will include many literacy forms.

In addition to the debates on concerns over students’ unawareness of the language use in particular contexts, Crystal illustrates that it would indeed be worrying if students entered an examination hall unaware of the difference between formal and informal English (2008, 166). It is stated by Crystal that according to the evidence from some studies, the vast majority of students are well aware of the difference, and do not use textisms in their formal writing (2008, 166). Hence, this is a significant datum because it clearly indicates that according to the results of the studies, students’ use of English language is contextualized. If students are aware of the difference between formal and informal English, it means that they understand in what particular contexts is appropriate to use informal language. Therefore, these results show that the concerns over the threat on students’ formal language use caused by digital literacies may be too anticipatory in their predictions, and the subject of the use of Netspeak in English language classroom certainly needs a further examination.

One more discussion which deals with the mentioned concerns over the technology impact on student’s literacy development is Thompson’s article on the new literacy. Thompson (2009) points out that among some scholars technology is the factor to blame. However the author believes that proliferation of new forms of online pop-cultural exegesis has given students a chance to write enormously long and complex pieces of prose, often while working collaboratively with others (2009, para 8). Here I want to mention Berkman’s significant note on these existing scholarly concerns. Berkman says: “Of course, we’ve been here before with rock ‘n’ roll, psychedelia, the Charleston . . . for every youth craze, there were oldsters who

decried it. Similarly, there have always been people who wished to protect the poor, vulnerable English language from assault by barbarians” (2008, para 3). Somehow it seems that benefits associated with Netspeak potentials seem to be often ignored by the scholars whose focus is strictly oriented towards potential threats on students’ linguistic skills. This may be the reason why there are so many scholarly debates in which the focus is on the two opposite standpoints on influence of Netspeak on literacy evolution.

In the debates regarding the pedagogical implications of Netspeak and its potential implementation into teaching, it can be noticed that there is an emphasis on the educational gap between contemporary cyberspace communications and approaches used in English language and literacy teaching. There are the authors who are of the opinion that the modern notions of the literacy in the twenty-first century and the standard English language teaching should not be restrictively divided (Lotherington, Neville-Verardi & Ronda 2009; Stavfeldt 2011). Lotherington et al. (2009, 11) claim that educational practice has been slow to recognize that textual norms provide inadequate preparation for contemporary communication, and I agree with them. Modern educational expectations of communicative competence should be connected to the complex and interactive digital genres of communication in the digital era. Moreover, English language attainment seems to be remarkably limited in the resources used in English language and literacy teaching. The evaluation of literacy in the modern era seems to be insufficiently adjusted for learners who read and write in the digital environment. In other words, the educators’ interpretations of literacy “skills” should not be so strictly normative anymore.

According to the previous studies, the acceptance of Netspeak in the classroom seems to be the matter of teachers’ awareness of its existence and popularity in the digital world, and subsequent assessment of its implementation in educational practice. All in all, it can be assumed that technologically coated words, phrases and idioms may not be easily accepted by authorities because of numerous reasons. Some of them are: Netspeak differs from the standard

language, it is created by people who belong to digital generation (netizens), there may be a possible lack of interest to learn Netspeak features, the question of power. It is also expected that certain changes take time to be acknowledged and accepted. However, these assumptions need further examination, and this is why more of the studies on this topic are needed.

Eduarda Abrahão de los Santos notices the lack of deeper linguistic researches on Netspeak use in the classroom. Abrahão de los Santos (2012, 69) notes: “The lack of deeper linguistic researches on the field of Internet culture linguistics might be a sign that linguists are ignoring the development of the Internet varieties.” Abrahão de los Santos states that Lolspeak, the term the author uses instead of Netspeak, “is not explored by linguists or teachers, who could use it for written variation research and contextualized language culture classes” (2012, 62). To this opinion, I add that there should be the need for acknowledging the significance of Netspeak for both professionals and students. After all, students are not only learners of the English language anymore; they are also the users of it. Students interact online using the live language on the internet. Therefore, the studies on the development of written language could also include “the vast, diverse and unexplored dialects that are created on the Web” (Abrahão de los Santos 2012, 69).

In order to prove the initial concept of the importance of Lolspeak in English language teaching, Abrahão de los Santos (2012, 75) concludes:

Also, as Lolspeak is very recent and famous on the Internet, it can be used in many different and attractive exercises for English learners, since they are appealing for people of all ages. The combination of funny and charming elements can be an ally of teachers, who sometimes fail to catch the students’ attention. Language variation, vocabulary, phonetics, and spelling are only a few of the contents that Lolspeak can help teaching, and any dedicated professional can find various ways of using the macros inside the classroom. Lolspeak, as

well as the whole meme culture, deserve more attention from language professionals. Linguists and teachers should not ignore this fresh and inexhaustible source for research and study, as it can help them in many ways.

This statement perfectly explains how rich the field of pedagogical implementation of Netspeak may be in English language teaching. I made the following table selecting the words from Abrahão de lo Santos' glossary in order to show how Netspeak explores the literacy and phonetic possibilities of the English language:

Table 3.1
Netspeak variations on words and spelling

<i>Netspeak</i>	<i>English</i>
Aftr	after
Ai	I
Anythin	anything
Ar	are
Bettr	better
Bfore	before
Cudnt	couldn't
Dat	that
Haf	have
Impreshon	impression
Inna	in a
Karpet	carpet
Leev	leave
Liek	like
Mai	my
Nao	now
Naychur	nature

Newz	news
Okaiz	okay
Onli	only
Sed	said
U	you
Urs	yours

Adapted from Abrahão de los Santos' glossary (2012, 71)

This little Netspeak glossary illustrates the spelling variations on words. It is also evident that in these few examples of Netspeak words, we see the evolution of the language. In many researches on Netspeak it has been shown that its appearance and fast growing popularity among Internet users can be linked to the human playful nature. Crystal (2008, 71) discusses this factor by claiming: “It’s fun—in the broadest sense of that word.” In addition he explains: “It is a part of our intuition from our earliest days: something like 80 per cent of the language used to children in their first year of life is playful. And children quickly learn that one of the most enjoyable things you can do with language is to play with its sounds, words, grammar, and—later on—spelling” (2008, 72). In the previously shown table, it is apparent how Internet users play with spelling, creating a new literacy corpus. For this reason, as Abrahão de los Santos (2012, 75) mentions that Netspeak could be an “ally of teachers”. Since retaining students’ attention is not an easy task for teachers, Netspeak could be an allied tool for teaching because of its attention-catching possibilities.

For the Internet users, English is not “a simple tool to be used in school or work; it is their main medium of entertainment” (Abrahão de los Santos 2012, 68). Therefore, the use of Netspeak in the classroom can be a method for improving students’ motivation in learning the English language more interactively. Implementing Netspeak in English language classroom would enable students to take part in online interactions, and, at the same time, to practice the language use. Netspeak is rich in abbreviations, idioms and grammatical variations, and, as

such, it should be noticed by educators. Furthermore, Netspeak should not only be addressed by teachers, but also start being incorporated into teaching materials used in language teaching in today's digital era.

3.2 Notes on Existing Debates

It is significant to mention that even though there is a certain amount of discussions on pedagogical implications of Netspeak, it is noticeable that among linguistic researchers this topic has not yet been explored widely. Reading the debates which target the subject of Netspeak in English language teaching, I notice that the opinions of scholars are going into two separate directions: advocacy of the positive impact of Netspeak (Stavfeldt 2011; Crystal 2008; Tomita 2009; Abrahão de los Santos 2012), or advocacy of its threatening influence on students' literacy skills (O'Connor 2005; Shaughnessy 2008). Therefore, it is not a rare occurrence to run into many scholarly debates which focus is on the review of the opinions which stress the technology impact on student's literacy development. For example, Thompson (2009, para 1) argues: "As the school year begins, be ready to hear pundits fretting once again about how kids today can't write." However, most of the debates target the influence of Netspeak on students' literacy skills, but few of them deal with actual implementation of Netspeak in English language classroom.

The reason for the lack of the studies and debates on implementation of Netspeak in English language classroom may lie in numerous reasons. One of them may be the fact that the attention of scholars is still focused mainly on the influence of Internet linguistics on students, while Netspeak has not yet being recognized as a potential pedagogic tool. At this point, it seems that the advocates of benefits of Netspeak and its potential implementation in English language classroom are prevailingly involved in the discussions on the existing concerns over

the technology impact on student's literacy development. Therefore, the focus on pedagogical implications of Netspeak seems to be the topic which needs more time to be acknowledged by the linguists.

Taking everything into account, it can be concluded that at this point, discussions and researches of scholars concerning Netspeak show different opinions on the matter. Some believe that implications for the use of Netspeak in education do exist and that Netspeak can and should be implemented in English language teaching. The advocates of this standpoint are open to adapt to the new trend, not focusing only on the formal language, but also on the possibility to include informal beside formal, acknowledging the multiple dimensions of literacy in the 21st century. On the other side, some scholars think that Netspeak is a possible threat to the English language which may harm students' literacy skills.

However, language continues to evolve in the digital era, expanding new literacy dimensions. As mentioned by some researchers, the studies on this subject are not numerous, and the implementation of Netspeak in the classroom is still not widely explored by scholars and researchers. Therefore, this research explores the awareness of teachers of this contemporary language phenomenon and their readiness to include it in their language teaching.

4. RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

This chapter presents the methodological frame of the thesis and the process of collection and analysis of the data. Firstly, the method for the research is introduced, explaining the reasons for choosing the method. In this research, there are two sets of data which consist of 18 interviews and 3 sets of study materials used in English teaching. Hence, the data collection process and the data analysis are presented after the research method.

4.1 Inductive Qualitative Content Analysis (IQCA)

Content analysis is a research method that may be used with either qualitative or quantitative data, and in an inductive or deductive way (Elo & Kyngäs 2008). My research on the use of Netspeak in English language classroom is a qualitative research. Thus, as a suitable research method, qualitative content analysis is chosen to be used in this qualitative linguistic research. In the qualitative content analysis, the aim is to describe the phenomenon in a conceptual form. This research method is used for qualitative text interpretation of the data collected in the research.

Using this method, the aspects of qualitative text interpretation of the data are put into categories. The category development can be inductive and deductive. According to Mayring (2000, 3), in the inductive approach, the material is worked through and categories are revised and reduced to main categories, while deductive category application works with prior formulated, theoretical derived aspects of analysis, bringing them in connection with the text. In IQCA, the analysis derives from the research data, and the researcher formulates theory from the results of the analysis (Mayring 2000, 4).

Inductive content analysis is used in cases where there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon or when the phenomenon is fragmented (Elo & Kyngäs 2008, 107). Considering the fact that in the case of the research on Netspeak in English language classroom, the phenomenon is still fragmented and not widely explored, IQCA is a suitable applying method because the theory needs to be formed during the research process. Following the inductive qualitative content analysis, the main categories deriving from the data analysis are presented in the results, and the developed theory is presented and discussed in the conclusions of the thesis.

4.2 Data Collection

In this section, I give insight into the data collection process of the two sets of data used in this research on the use of Netspeak in English language classroom. The first set is the interview data collected from English language teachers and professors working at the universities and high schools in Finland and Serbia. The second data set is three selected segments of written teaching materials for English language teaching provided by the interviewed teachers.

4.2.1 Data Set 1: Interviews and questionnaire

The first source of data for the research is the interview source. This first data set consists of 18 semi-structured interviews tailored for teachers and professors of English language, teaching at the universities and high schools in Finland and Serbia. The informants are aged between 26 and 58; 11 are women and 7 men. The interviews were conducted in the autumn of 2012. In order to contact the participants, the snowball technique is used. A characteristic of this technique is “the use of participants to contact other respondents” (Streeton, Cooke &

Campbell 2001, 37). The purpose of the data collection process is to collect qualitative data, which is also the aim of the interviews. As mentioned in the section 4.1, the data are analyzed using the inductive qualitative content analysis as a research method.

To begin with, the reason for choosing interviewees from two different countries is the possibility to examine and compare their standpoints and possible implementation of Netspeak in their teaching methods and materials. Both Finland and Serbia have state-supported educational systems, but with different structure and practices in their educational systems: the stages and duration of studies differ, as well as the grading system. Thereby, the goal is to explore and get insight into the same academic field, but from two regionally different sources.

Secondly, for this research, the targeted level of the English language courses is the advanced one. I chose this level of English because I find the existence of Netspeak interesting to be examined in the advance language courses particularly because of its informal linguistic nature. Therefore, the chosen interviewees are the teachers and professors at high schools and universities. The reason for including both educational institutions in the research is that in some cases, the level of English language courses is very similar in high schools and in universities due to the academic curriculums designed for various studying purposes and the students of different language backgrounds. Hence, both high school and university experts in the field were interviewed. Subsequently, the data from the interviews were jointly examined, focusing on the provided information on the topic, without drawing the line between the two different educational institutions.

In order to conduct the interviews, the questionnaire tailored for the English language educators was made. The example of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix 1. The final version of the questionnaire contains two parts. In the first part of the questionnaire, the basic personal information on age and gender of the interviewees are collected, coupled with the questions on the native language, the country of origin and country of residence of the

interviewee. Furthermore, the data about the level of education and the time working as a professor of language and communication are also collected in the first part of the interview. The aim of collecting the personal information is: (1) to sort out the origin of the interviewees since the clear idea from the beginning was to interview experts from two different countries, (2) to compare the attitudes and standpoints on the matter of the interviewees from different countries of origin, residence and different native languages.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the focus is specifically on the educators' attitudes towards Netspeak in English language classroom and its implementation in teaching methods and materials. This part of the interview contains seven main questions. The questions are designed in a way that they encourage respondents to express their open opinion without previously offered checkboxes options.

In the beginning of the second part of the questionnaire, the teachers are asked if they are familiar with the term Netspeak, and whether they have ever used ICT tools in their teaching. Since one of the sub questions of this research is what are the similarities and differences between the use of Netspeak in traditional learning environments and in online teaching platforms, the positive answer to the question on ICT tools leads respondents to a sub question, examining which ICT they have been using. The respondents who have used Netspeak in online teaching platforms subsequently provided the teaching materials which form part of the second data set.

In the next part of the questionnaire, the respondents are asked to give their opinion about the Internet language influences that they have observed among the students in the classroom. Later on, they are asked to give examples of their incorporation of Netspeak for teaching purposes, which is the highlight question of the questionnaire. In the end, the teachers' standpoints about Netspeak and its influence on the English language are examined by the last few questions of the questionnaire.

The aim of the interview is to explore the acceptance and implementation of Netspeak in teaching materials used for the teaching of the English language and communication. Due to the orthographic nature of Netspeak, the interviews were conducted partially or totally in a written form. In the end, the data collected in the interviews were sufficient for the needs of the thesis, and they provide the insight into the subject of the current position of Netspeak in English language classroom.

4.2.2 Data Set 2: Written Teaching Materials

Three parts of written teaching materials provided by teachers form the second data set. The material is provided by the interviewed teachers and professors who have assessed the prevalence of Netspeak appearance in the teaching materials and evaluated the materials as adequate for the research. The selection of the parts of the teaching materials is made by the teachers themselves, therefore they contributed to the collection of the second data set by helping the process of narrowing down the data. The written materials are mostly language exercises or parts of the materials in which Netspeak has been used for teaching purposes.

Not only are written teaching materials a reliable source of data because of the possibility to see the occurrence of Netspeak in them, but they are also a suitable source of data for the comparison of the use of Netspeak in traditional learning environments and in online teaching platforms. As mentioned in the section on the data set 1, the respondents who have used Netspeak in online teaching platforms provided the material which they had used in their teaching via ICT tools. The goal of the comparison is to explore whether there are existing differences in the frequency and the ways in the implementation of Netspeak between traditional classroom teaching via textbooks and digital learning environments.

In the written materials, the use of Netspeak is apparent, and there are no major difficulties in noticing the application of the Internet slang words or the methods by which Netspeak has been incorporated into teaching practices. Significant parts of the written materials are presented and discussed in the results of the research. On the whole, the interviews and the occurrence of Netspeak in written teaching materials represent a compact source for researching and analyzing this linguistic and social phenomenon.

4.3 Data Analysis

In this section, inductive approach for qualitative data analysis is described. As introduced in the paragraph on qualitative content analysis, in IQCA the analysis derives from the data, and the researcher formulates theory from the results of the analysis (Mayring 2000, 4). Moreover, Thomas (2003, 1) clarifies that the purposes for using an inductive approach are to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data, and to develop of model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the raw data. Therefore, the process of inductive coding used in this research is presented in the following text.

Both sets of data are analyzed applying the following procedures for inductive analysis of qualitative data introduced by Thomas (2003, 5):

1. Preparation of raw data files (“data cleaning”)

The raw data files of both sets of data are formatted in two common formats for each data set. Interviewers’ comments and specific features of the content of the written teaching materials are highlighted. For each data set a backup of each raw data file is made.

2. Close reading of the text

Once texts have been prepared, the raw texts are read in detail to gain an understanding of the topics and details in the text.

3. Creation of categories

The next step was to identify and define categories or themes, which derived from multiple readings of the raw data files. This is called 'in vivo coding'. As mentioned by Thomas (2003, 5): "For in vivo coding, categories are created from meaning units or actual phrases used in specific text segments." Subsequently, text segments are classified into categories for both data sets.

4. Overlapping coding and uncoded text

The rule that underlies qualitative coding is that a considerable amount of the text may not be assigned to any category, as much of the text may not be relevant to the research objectives. This occurrence did not happen in the data analysis because such amount of text was not found in the data sets.

5. Continuing revision and refinement of category system

Some categories are combined under a superordinate category when the meanings of the themes were similar.

In the final analysis, it is established by IQCA that when reporting findings, the summary or top-level categories are often used as main headings in the findings, with specific categories as subheadings (Thomas 2003, 8). Also, it is good practice to include suitable quotes in the text to illustrate the meanings of the categories. This approach is followed in the data analysis, and it is demonstrated in the results of the research.

5. RESULTS

This chapter deals with the results of the research on the acceptance and implementation of Netspeak in English language teaching among Serbian and Finnish university and high school teachers. The results derive from the inductive qualitative content analysis which was introduced and presented in the previous chapter.

In order to introduce the content of the findings, short description of the final analysis is presented in this paragraph. The applied method is inductive qualitative content analysis (IQCA). Following this methodological approach, the aim is to sort out the data and to develop them into a model or framework that captures key themes (Thomas 2003). This is accomplished by creating categories from the raw data files of the interviews and written teaching materials. In the process of forming the categories, short phrases/labels are used to refer to category. For all categories, text or data associated with category is added in order to illustrate meanings and perspectives associated with the category. In the report of the findings, main headings represent the top-level categories, while subheadings stand for specific categories. In addition, suitable quotes with the codes of the informants are used in the text to illustrate the meanings of the categories.

Considering everything stated above, the results of the research are presented in the following part of the thesis. The results are demonstrated separately for each set of data because the two data sets are distinctive in nature. In the end, the results from both sets of data are discussed in the conclusions, as well as the theory on the topic. To begin with, the results of the interviews with teachers and professors are presented first, and afterwards the outcomes of the analysis of written teaching materials are elaborated.

5.1 Results of the Interviews on Pedagogical Implications of Netspeak

As previously mentioned, the first data set consists of 18 semi-structured interviews. Out of 22 Finnish and Serbian teachers and professors of English language who were asked to participate in the research, 18 of them responded and were interviewed or filled in the questionnaire. Nine questionnaires were sent via email to the teachers, and the rest was conducted face-to-face prevalently in a written form. Ten out of eighteen respondents are Finnish university and high school teachers and professors of English language, and eight are Serbian teachers currently working in Serbian high schools.

Applying Thomas' (2003) instructions presented in the section 4.4 on data analysis, the following categories are the result of the inductive coding. In the final analysis, I classify five main categories as the most relevant after finishing the process of combining the smaller categories into more encompassing categories. The description of the meaning of each category reflects the key characteristics and scope of the category. These categories engird teachers' standpoints on the use of Netspeak in the English language classroom.

Following short phrases (labels) represent five main categories developed from the interviews with Serbian and Finnish university and high school teachers of English language:

1. Familiarity with Netspeak
2. Awareness of the existence of Netspeak in the classroom
3. Readiness to use Netspeak in teaching
4. Approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching
5. Opinion on Netspeak influence on the English language development

Description of the meaning of each category:

1. Familiarity with Netspeak

This first category emerges from the important initial research segment which is the overview of the teachers' familiarity with Netspeak. The findings of this category show that all interviewed teachers and professors are familiar with Netspeak. However, the majority of them are not clearly aware of the term itself. In the final analysis, two specific categories are developed: (a) familiar with the term; (b) familiar with the concept or the meaning of the term. Therefore, the specific categories are classified:

(a) Familiar with the term

Seven teachers and professors express their familiarity with Netspeak by stating that they know what Netspeak means and that they are familiar with the term itself.

(b) Familiar with the concept or the meaning of the term

The rest of the respondents answer that they are not aware of the existence of the specific term used for the communication which includes variations on words and abbreviations derived from the Internet. Some of the informants declare: "I can guess what it means: IMO, ROTFL, emoticons" (I3); "I know what it is, but I did not know there were 'technical' terms for the Internet language" (I5); or "I have not heard the term before, but the concept is familiar" (I12).

This initial result of the research is very significant because teachers' confirmation of the familiarity with Netspeak and its meaning enable further research on the possible implementation of Netspeak in the classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this category is to introduce further categories of the research. The summary point of this category is that all the interviewees from both countries are familiar with the existence of Netspeak although the majority of teachers are not familiar with the term itself. Those who are not familiar with the term were stating that they could easily guess what the term meant out of the word Netspeak, and gave the explanation about their understanding of Netspeak. These results show that the informants are not fully familiar with the term Netspeak, but that they are aware that Netspeak is the type of language that has evolved within the electronic environment, and many of them explained that they knew its most evident characteristics which are emoticons and acronyms.

One more significant fact is that all the respondents are familiar with the existence of Netspeak, regardless of their age. This result shows that teachers keep up to date with the linguistic development in the digital era of today, and this occurrence is shown to be present among teachers of all ages. The reason for the equal grasp of Netspeak among teachers of different ages can be seen in their further statements in which they are explaining that they know what Netspeak is because they often see the examples of abbreviations and emoticons on the Internet Websites, blogs and on social networking sites which they all use on a regular basis.

Teachers' familiarity with Netspeak illustrates that my interviewees are aware of the linguistic changes which the Internet has brought into the English language. As stated above, this category precedes and introduces further categories of the research which provide the insight into teachers' attitudes towards Netspeak in the English language teaching.

2. Awareness of the existence of Netspeak in the classroom

This category stands for the experiences of the English teachers with the use of Netspeak among the university and high school students. In order to examine teachers' attitudes towards the use of Netspeak in the classroom, it is important to first examine their awareness and noticing of the existence of Netspeak in the classroom, i.e. their awareness of the use of Netspeak among the students in writing assignments and compositions, papers, feedback forms, and other similar written course work.

The data analysis reveals that all the interviewed teachers are fully aware of the existence of Netspeak in the classroom. English teachers from both countries notice the students' use of Netspeak in the classroom and they give the examples for this occurrence. Further analysis of their examples leads to the creation of three specific categories: (a) observation of emoticon use; (b) observation of abbreviation use; (c) observation of variations on words and spelling.

(a) Observation of emoticon use

Many respondents declare that the most visible sign of the existence of Netspeak in the classroom is the use of emoticons. They exemplify smilies as the most often used emoticon among students. It is very important to report that the majority of informants point out that students' use of emoticons is present in casual communication, i.e. on feedback forms, emails, or at the end of short compositions in specific written assignments where the task allows the use of informal language. In addition, both university and high school teachers' experiences show that students are more formal in their papers, and that they know that they are expected not to use emoticons for specific assignments and papers. As an example, one high school teacher demonstrates: "In non-verbal informal communication, students very often express their facial expressions through emoticons. But in the academic writing, they know they should be formal, and when it is appropriate to use emoticons, and when it is not" (I1).

However, two Finnish teachers mention that they might have seen the appearance of emoticons in papers and written assignments. “It is interesting that ‘smilies’ might occasionally appear in written assignments as well”, informant 6 notes. The other one claims: “I may have seen one or two emoticons in papers, but this was really an exception” (I8). I single out these two statements because of the different findings which emerge from the information provided by these teachers. It can be concluded that the use of emoticons in students’ academic work is a rare practice and that only two respondents reported that students had used emoticons in such occasions.

Besides noticing students’ use of emoticons, in my data, the majority of both Finnish and Serbian English teachers often add that they also use emoticons in informal communication with students. One respondent points out: “Students tend to write quite formally for course work, but in casual email communication, students (and myself) will use, e.g. ☺” (I10). This and similar statements indicate that the educators from both countries use emoticons in informal communications with their students.

Some respondents explain that they have noticed that students apply emoticons in order to smooth the tone of the message or transmit specific feeling in the message. On the basis of my analysis it seems that the interviewees understand the purpose of the use of emoticons in students’ written communication. They perceive it as one more way for students to express their feelings or mood in written forms. On the other hand, the teachers are aware that students know the difference between formal and informal language, therefore the use of emoticons in students’ writing in the majority of cases is well thought through. Similarly to the findings of the previous category, there are no major differences between answers and experiences of the English teachers from the two countries or from the English teachers and professors working in high schools and at the universities.

(b) *Observation of abbreviation use*

When it comes to teachers' observation of the use of abbreviations in students' linguistic expressions, the data analysis demonstrates similar results as in the previous specific category. That is to say, teachers delineate that together with the use of emoticons, abbreviations and acronyms are also present in the classroom. However, there is one significant difference between the use of emoticons and the use of abbreviations reported by the teachers. The number of respondents who have encountered the use of abbreviations in written assignments is bigger than in the case of emoticons. In my data it is found that more than half of the interviewed English teachers have come across the use of abbreviations even when compositions do not allow using of slang of any kind.

Nevertheless, this finding does not imply that students use abbreviations all the time or as often as they use standard English words. To illustrate this conclusion, I give the examples of teachers' assertions which indicate that the use of such forms is not dominant comparing to the use of standard English words: "Sometimes students use abbreviations such as be4, str8, l8r" (I1), or "I have noticed some abbreviations: OMG, LOL, BTW, BFF, used in everyday language and written assignments" (I3). According to the informants, the use of abbreviations among university and high school students may indicate that such use is occasional with narrowed choice of the most widespread abbreviations.

Analyzing respondents' experiences with the abbreviation use in the classroom, it is a noticeable fact that many respondents express their opinion about the reason why this usage is present among the students, even though they were not asked this specific question. The common standpoint on this matter is that teachers believe such use of abbreviations is the students' way to show that they are "cool", i.e. they find the use of abbreviations a "cool way" to express themselves in a written form. One high school teacher states: "I guess students use abbreviations occasionally because it is their way to show they are young and fun" (I15). Interestingly, one informant asserts that not all the students know the meaning of the Netspeak

abbreviations. He/she explains: “I use IMO all the time, and one time some students did not know what it meant” (I11). It can be concluded out of this statement that even though the majority of students of today are digital natives, not all of them are familiar with Netspeak abbreviations. This may imply that those students do not use abbreviations in everyday language. Still, the majority of teachers’ responses indicate that the majority of students do use abbreviations and acronyms in everyday language and they also use them in English language classrooms.

Some of the interviewees consider the use of abbreviations in writing papers as an indicator that students did not achieve a sufficiently formal style in writing. As in the case of the emoticon use, the majority of teachers emphasize that in general students are formal in their papers. The occasions in which abbreviation use indicate that students do not achieve a sufficiently formal style in their writing assignments are not omnipresent. This conclusion derives from the teachers’ statements in which they often use words such “sometimes I see some abbreviations...” (I2), or “occasionally it might happen that some students use such-and-such abbreviations” (I10). In my data, the informants also assert that they tend to make clear remarks on the inappropriate abbreviation use. Their goal is to explain to the students the difference between the informal and formal language use. There are no indications in the data that teachers perceive Netspeak abbreviations as wrong per se, but they only make remarks on the use of such linguistic forms in particular academic contexts.

To summarize, the analyzed data suggest that teachers’ observations and the standpoints on the frequency and the ways of Netspeak abbreviation use are similar among the teachers from both countries and from various educational institutions. It is also visible in the data that teachers who work with high school students report more information and encounters with abbreviations, which may indicate the more often use of abbreviations among high school students than in the case of university students. This occurrence can be attributed to the assumption that high school students tend to use the informal language more often due to their age and academic requirements.

The analysis of the university teachers' experiences demonstrates that university students are challenged with more formal language requirements; therefore they are more aware of the appropriate use of abbreviations in different writing and academic contexts. However, this is the overall finding derived from the major part of the respondents' answers. A small number of data shows the exceptional appearances of abbreviations and acronyms in the academic work of university students, as well. However, the reports of such appearances are few and exceptional.

In the end of this specific category outcome, I give the examples of abbreviations and acronyms which teachers notice in students' writing papers (see the table below).

Table 5.1. Abbreviations and acronyms noticed by teachers in students' academic papers.

LOL	laughing out loud	BTW	by the way
OMG	oh my God	BFF	best friends forever
ROTFL	rolling on the floor laughing	ASAP	as soon as possible
IMO	in my opinion	TIA	thanks in advance
GF	girlfriend	BF	boyfriend
4ever	forever	str8	straight
gr8	great	be4	before
l8r	later	I 8	I ate

(c) Observation of variations on words and spelling

This specific category reveals the outcomes of the teachers' observations on Netspeak variations on words and spelling which are present in students' written communication. Variations of similar kind are illustrated in the in table 3.1 on the page 31, and some of the words found in the table are also reported by the interviewed teachers' who gave the examples of the words which they encounter in students' formal and informal language use.

Some respondent declare that they notice a few students writing "U" for "you" in email messages and sometimes in written assignments. Together with the use of U form, the use of "R" instead of "are" is also perceived by the teachers in students' language use. Another Netspeak spelling variation noted by interviewed teachers is omitting of vowels inside the words, e.g. bfore–before, afr–after, listn–listen, entr–enter. Also, some informants state that sometimes students tend to write "kool" instead of "cool", or they replace the plural –s by –z, e.g. filez–files, downloadz–downloads. Furthermore, it is noted by few respondents that occasional dropping of the last letter of the -ing form is also present. As an example of this occurrence, teachers spelled out words such as somethin, anythin, sayin, watchin, hearin. However, these kinds of variations on words and spelling are hard to be related strictly to Netspeak. They also can be categorized as a part of spoken and written language evolution.

Moreover, it is stated by one Serbian high school teacher that students use English verbs like share, download, subscribe, post, like, dislike with Serbian inflectional suffixes. By combining English verbs with Serbian suffixes, students pronounce and use grammatically newly formed verbs. The often use of these words tend to replace or take over the use of Serbian words meaning share, download, subscribe, etc. The informant reports that by doing so, many students do not even know the Serbian words for terms such as download, subscribe or post. The teacher also mentions that this kind of verb use is often heard in everyday language and that he/she thinks that the lack of students' knowledge of compatible Serbian words derives from the constant use of the Internet and computers outside the school.

In summary, Netspeak variation on words and spelling is a very broad characteristic, and, as stated by one respondent, “hard to judge as strictly Internet language influence” (I6). Conversely to the findings of the previous two specific categories on the use of emoticons and abbreviations, many respondents are of the different opinion on the matter of the variations on words and spelling. The majority of interviewees demonstrate that they have stricter approach on the use of variations on spelling presented above than in the case of emoticon and abbreviation use. As a reason for this standpoint, interviewee explain that presented spelling variations should be corrected in writing papers and language tests, and mainly estimate the use of such words as wrong in particular contexts.

Although the use of abbreviations in formal writing is also judged by teachers as not suitable for the formal language use, the variations on words and spelling are mostly perceived as “incorrect language use”. One interviewee claims that emoticons and abbreviations add an extra dimension to the ideas or feelings expressed in writing. In my data, this kind of opinion cannot be found when it comes to Netspeak variations on words and spelling. Interviewee are of the opinion that different spelling on words does not bring a new dimension to the ideas, but it mainly brings the changes in orthographic and grammatical rules, and such linguistic changes are not perceived and accepted as correct language use. Therefore, the majority of English language teachers evaluate the appearance of such language variations as inappropriate for the use in formal academic writing.

At the end of the second category, the teachers’ awareness of the existence of Netspeak in the classroom, I recapitulate the main findings deriving from the data analysis. The university and high school teachers from both countries notice and give examples of the Netspeak use among students in English language classrooms. The results show that the use of emoticons, abbreviations and non-conventional spelling and grammatical variations on words are encountered by teachers in students’ writing. However, the informants illustrate that the majority of students are aware of the difference between the informal and formal language use, therefore, their use of Netspeak in formal writing is rare. Furthermore, the informants make

clear distinctions on what they estimate as right and wrong language use. The students' use of Netspeak is accepted by teachers in informal language use such as in emails, on feedback forms or in written assignments where the topic allows such language use. Otherwise, in formal academic writing, the use of Netspeak is not tolerated and accepted as appropriate language use. In addition, many teachers also use emoticons and abbreviations in informal communications with students, e.g. when marking students' papers or sending emails and giving instructions to the students. In the end, I use this last annotation as a good introduction to the third category which deals with teachers' readiness to use Netspeak in teaching.

3. Readiness to use Netspeak in teaching

In this category, the interviewee's readiness to incorporate Netspeak in teaching is discussed. After the examination and findings of teachers' awareness of the presence of Netspeak in students written work, the results reveal that not only teachers notice the use of Netspeak among the students, but some of them also hint that they use emoticons and abbreviations in written communication with students. The results of the data about the willingness of teachers to implement Netspeak for teaching purposes show that the opinions of teachers on this matter are various. Twelve of the interviewed teachers use Netspeak for teaching purposes; five of them use it only in informal communication with their students; and the remaining six interviewed teachers do not use Netspeak either in teaching or in informal communication with their students.

From the data analysis, I made two specific categories deriving from the main one: (a) the presence of Netspeak in teaching; (b) the absence of Netspeak in teaching.

(a) The presence of Netspeak in teaching

The majority of teachers report that they use Netspeak in the classroom and/or in written communication with students. These teachers provided information on the approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching. The major difference in the use of Netspeak in teaching is that some of the teachers use Netspeak as a teaching medium, e.g. in language exercises, when giving instructions to students or marking students' papers, while the others use Netspeak only in informal situations such as in communication via email.

I demonstrate some of the statements given by informants who use Netspeak for teaching purposes. One respondent demonstrates: "British and American versions of slang are usually done in English classes, and then we also talk about Netspeak and make a list of new words and try to see how many new of them have been produced in the meantime. Sometimes we play some guessing games" (I18). Another teacher states: "I use the ironic emoticon ;) both in typing and in writing by hand when marking students' papers and giving instructions to students" (I16). As a reason for using Netspeak when marking students' work, informant 16 mentions: "When the comment might 'sound' too serious, I use emoticons to soften the meaning of the comment."

On the basis of my analysis, it seems that these respondents perceive Netspeak as a useful means for teaching out of several reasons. One of them is that they find Netspeak useful for transmitting messages in a wanted way. This is clearly illustrated by one respondent's explanation (I4):

"If you say something funny and ironic, and you want to be sure it is taken as such, it is easy and safe to add a ;). No one would ever write that ironic comment and then take the extra trouble to write 'What I just said is intended to be taken ironically' (unless someone reacted negatively to the statement,

and the person who said that ironic thing had to write an explanation to clarify the situation). So the emoticon saves time and prevents potential misunderstandings.”

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, some teachers use emoticons in teaching materials in order to soften the statement or to make a topic more interesting. “I like to include emoticons in teaching materials in order to make the text more interesting visually. It is an easy way to point out the meaning of the sentence”, informant 12 explains. Additionally, some of the teachers state that applying Netspeak in teaching results in the improvement of students’ vocabulary and creative thinking.

An important fact that emerges from the data analysis is that the teachers who use Netspeak for teaching purposes are the ones who also use ICT tools in their teaching. The teachers who have been using Netspeak via ICT tools and online learning platforms in their teaching have subsequently provided the teaching materials in which Netspeak use can be found. These materials are analyzed as second data set. It can be concluded out of the comparison of data on the use of ICT tools and Netspeak in teaching that the findings show a strict connection between those two methods used in teaching. Moreover, the results show that among the users of ICT tools and Netspeak in teaching there are teachers of English language both from Finland and from Serbia. In other words, the comparison between the answers of the respondents from two different countries again shows that there is no noticeable difference in the use of ICT tools and Netspeak in their teaching: the English teachers from both countries who have used ICT tools have also used Netspeak in their teaching.

On the basis of my data, it seems that the connection between teachers’ use of ICT tools and Netspeak in the classroom can be explained through their readiness to include technological innovations in teaching practices. The results show that the interviewees who have the experience with the use of ICT tools feel comfortable to use Netspeak for teaching purposes

mostly because they look forward to keeping up to date with both new technological teaching tools and new forms of language which are influenced by the digital era. For these teachers, the use of Netspeak in the English language classroom is a suitable and useful modern teaching approach, as it is the use of online teaching platforms and ICT tools.

To continue, the other group of respondents uses Netspeak only in informal communication with their students. These teachers do not implement Netspeak in teaching materials or when they mark or comment students' work. The respondents mostly assert that they use emoticons or abbreviations in communication with students via emails when discussing different issues about the studies which do not include marking or commenting of students' written work, language tests or assignments. Some of the respondents who belong to this group have mentioned that they do not use Netspeak for teaching purposes simply because they have not thought about it. As an example, I add the statement of one teacher: "I use emoticons mostly when I write e-mails to 'color' the tone of the text, but I have never thought of using emoticons in teaching materials" (I17). The other informant declares: "I use it in informal communication, but I am just not used to using it in teaching" (I13). Similarly, the rest of the teachers affirm that they have not yet considered the possibilities and ways how to include Netspeak and its features into teaching approaches and materials, but they use it in informal communication with their students.

In my data, one of the main reasons why these informants use Netspeak in casual written communication with students is the common attitude that Netspeak fills a need to communicate briefly and succinctly. One informant points out: "In casual communication I am all for clear language, and what could be easier to understand than a happy face? ☺" (I9). On the other side, some of these teachers do not perceive Netspeak as suitable to be used for teaching purposes, and some of them simply have not yet thought about its usage outside the informal communication with students.

(b) *The absence of Netspeak in teaching*

As stated above, six respondents express that they have not used nor implement Netspeak in their teaching or in communication with students. The results show that the majority of teachers who do not use Netspeak mostly do not use ICT tools in teaching, neither. On the contrary, two respondents who have never used Netspeak with their students report the use of online teaching platforms in teaching. Therefore, the results regarding the use of ICT tools and the use of Netspeak do not show strict causality between these two actions. However, the findings show that the major part of teachers who do not use Netspeak neither do use ICT tools in teaching. Again, IQCA of my data indicates that teachers from both Finland and Serbia are among the respondents which form part of this category.

On the basis of my data, the main teachers' reason for not incorporating Netspeak in teaching practices is the inclination towards more formal approaches in language teaching. As an explanation for not including Netspeak in his/her teaching, one teacher illustrates: "I haven't been using Netspeak in teaching. Somehow, I haven't yet noticed the implications for the use of Netspeak in the classroom" (I14). Another teacher who has not used Netspeak in teaching says: "At this stage, I would not want to read, for example, LOL in the middle of an academic journal article, but when it is used in an informal context, it can be a positive impact on communication" (I15).

One informant discloses an important point on the use of Netspeak in teaching by saying: "There should be an understanding of Netspeak as an integral part of the language and its use should be contextualized. I mean: 'How can I use Netspeak if I do not know if my interlocutor speaks it?'" (I2). I connect this point to the question of the definition of Netspeak which is discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis. At this point, there is not one clear definition of Netspeak, and subsequently, Netspeak still has not been accepted as an integral part of the English language. Therefore, this observation of the teacher indicates that it is hard to implement Internet language variations which are not known and used by everyone. I also

connect this point with the already listed statement of one teacher who mentions that he/she uses IMO all the time, and one time some students did not know its meaning. In conclusion, one of the reasons for omitting Netspeak from teaching can be the possible concern over the lack of understanding of Netspeak words and phrases among students.

In the end, the rest of the interviewees do not point out the reasons for not incorporating Netspeak in their teaching practices. After all, not all of the interviewees have been thinking profoundly on this subject, and some of them add that after the interview, they will start to think more about Netspeak and its implications for the use in English language teaching. This is a significant datum because it shows that teachers who have not yet used Netspeak in teaching are intrigued by the subject of the research and they express the interest in further examination of the implications for the use of Netspeak in teaching and communication with students.

All things considered, the findings show that the standpoints of teachers on readiness to use Netspeak in teaching are varied. The majority of the interviewed teachers use Netspeak for teaching purposes, while the minority of the respondents does not use Netspeak either in teaching or in informal communication with their students. The reasons for using or omitting Netspeak from teaching are presented in the description of the category. What I would like to mention here is that I had certain concerns about the results of this category. This research topic is relatively new and bigger studies on this particular matter have not been done or the smaller studies have shown mainly a lack of teachers' incorporation of Netspeak for teaching purposes. Therefore, the results of teachers' readiness to use Netspeak in teaching could not be predicted. An important fact is that the interviewed teachers are mainly aware of the phenomenon of Netspeak and they have shown the interest in the possible incorporation of Netspeak in teaching in today's digital era. Therefore, from the final analysis it can be concluded that this result of the research is a significant result which reveals that teachers from both Finland and Serbia show an interest and openness towards the use of Netspeak in the classroom.

4. Approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching

In my data, the results show that the teachers who use Netspeak in teaching are of the opinion that Netspeak can be used as a pedagogical tool in English language classroom. Additionally, the English language teachers provided information on the teaching approaches and their ways of the incorporation of Netspeak in teaching materials. Subsequently, the findings on the approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching are reflected in this category. However, there are no specific categories in this main category since the nature of the data is not suitable for the formation of specific categories. Hence, the approaches are presented individually. Figure 5.1a illustrates all five approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching which are reported and explained by the English teachers who participated in the research.

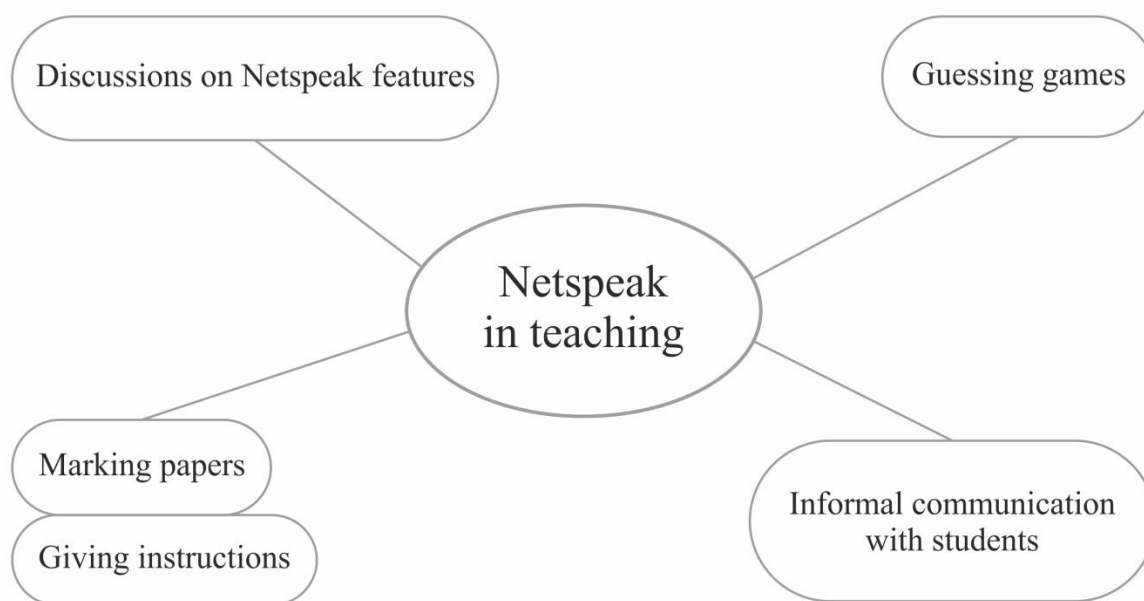


Figure 5.1a. Approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching.

The respondents who use Netspeak in teaching note these five methods which they apply for the teaching purposes. The methods are various: they include linguistic guessing games, discussions on Netspeak features, the use of Netspeak emoticons and abbreviations when marking students' papers or giving instructions, and the use of Netspeak on a regular basis in informal communication with students. The findings show that all of these approaches are used in traditional classrooms and/or in online teaching platforms.

Guessing games

To begin with, one of the listed approaches in the implementation of Netspeak in teaching is guessing games. One Finnish and two Serbian informants disclose that they use guessing games with their high school students. These teachers use guessing games both in live interaction with students in traditional classrooms and in online teaching platforms, as part of exercises intended for students' class and home work. Two guessing games are analyzed as second data set. In order to introduce the meaning of a language guessing game, I shortly define its meaning: a linguistic guessing game is a game in which the object is to guess some kind of information, such as a word, a phrase, or a title of an object.

The teachers report that the main reason for using these kinds of linguistic games is that guessing games can be very fun for students, and the teachers use them in order to enrich students' creative thinking and to add an interesting dimension into teaching practices. The teachers state that they mostly use abbreviations and acronyms in these games, leaving the students to guess the phrase hiding behind the abbreviation. Some respondents also report that they offer multiple choice of answers in which students try to find the correct one. Additionally, sometimes emoticons are being used, as well. In my data, the teachers find the guessing games very-well accepted by students; one of the teacher even reported that students themselves ask to include guessing games on abbreviations more often in the classroom teaching. This teacher mentions: "Students find these games interesting. Very often they come up with new meaning of the abbreviations, even if the meaning of the guessing abbreviation

was different. These games help them enrich their vocabulary and they certainly improve students' motivation in learning a foreign language" (I18).

Another reason for the use of guessing games as a teaching tool mentioned by teachers is that teachers themselves enjoyed the process of preparing word games and resolving it later together with students. There are several teachers' comments found in the data that indicate teachers' positive experiences with the incorporation of guessing games in teaching practices. One interviewee claims: "It is amazing how many combinations can be made from only one abbreviation or acronym. I like to challenge the imagination of my students. I also find these guessing games interesting to resolve, they are like rebuses" (I11). There were a few more similar explanations stated by teachers, and they all indicate that teachers enjoy making and applying these games in work with their students.

From the data analysis, one significant fact about the use of guessing games worth of mentioning emerges: teachers prepare these linguistic games on their own initiative. This datum indicates that even though Netspeak is not a part of language teaching curriculums, the teachers who are interested in Netspeak and see its pedagogical implications find the ways to include Netspeak in teaching. Therefore, they create and adapt linguistic guessing games, using abbreviations and emoticons which derived from Netspeak. The following two quotations illustrate this annotation: "The games are not included in standard teaching materials. But I like to add them because they are useful for students' vocabulary and students find them fun to play" (I11); "I like to add new kinds of exercises and tasks, and I use Netspeak emoticons to add a visual dimension to standard language exercises" (I18). It can be concluded that a big part in incorporating guessing games in teaching materials are teachers' initiative and self-motivation to refresh and develop the teaching practices in English language classrooms.

As previously mentioned, the data show that guessing games are used by teachers who work in high schools. There is no information in the data on the use of these games among the

university teachers. It is a noticeable fact that study curriculums and language requirements are different for high school and university students: at the university level, students deal with advanced language courses, which mostly include advanced grammar constructions and academic papers on various studying topics; on the other hand, high school students are challenged with intermediate language courses, and hence, the application of guessing games is more suitable for this language level than in the case of advanced one. Therefore, it is not surprising that the use of guessing games is present among the high school teachers.

Discussions on Netspeak features

This approach in the use of Netspeak in teaching is reported by four high school teachers. Among the respondents who apply this teaching method there are high school teachers from Serbia who are also applying guessing games. However, the interviewed teachers from Finland do not report this kind of teaching practice in the application of Netspeak in the English language classroom. This kind of teaching method consists of oral group discussions and written representations of the outcomes of the discussions on the classroom boards.

As an illustration of this teaching method, I include one informant's description of this approach: "Group discussions on Netspeak are usually done at the end of the class, if there is enough time to do so. I split students into groups, give them time to think of the abbreviations, and then one student stands in front of the board and write the groups' suggestions on the abbreviations, and then we all discuss them together" (I6). This teacher applies this approach because he/she thinks it is an interesting group teaching method which leads students to think of English words and pronounce them.

Other teachers who report the use of this method assert that Netspeak features such as emoticons or abbreviations are usually written on the boards, or sometimes students write them in their notebooks and subsequently read each other's notes and discussing them together with the teacher. "For example, the task is that a student draws emoticons on the board, and the rest

of the class develops a story connecting the emoticons and their possible meanings”, interviewee 9 notes. According to these teachers, the aim of the discussions on Netspeak features is to motivate students to talk and discuss, and they perceive Netspeak features as interesting objects of discussions.

Discussions on Netspeak features, together with guessing games, are the examples of the implementation of Netspeak as part of language exercises. Markedly, the analysis discloses that this kind of Netspeak incorporation in English classes is done in high schools. As already described in the case of linguistic guessing games, these kinds of language exercises correspond to the intermediate level of English language taught in high schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that guessing games and discussions on Netspeak features as methods are very similar in nature, and they are both applied in the form of language exercises.

The informants who use these kinds of language exercises in their teaching point out that they use Netspeak in order to motivate the students to think in English and to share their thinking with the rest of the class. Netspeak, as a language variety of digital era, is interesting to many high school students, as the experiences of the teachers show. Hence, it is a suitable tool for maintaining students’ attention. However, teachers mention that they stress to their students the distinction between standard linguistic forms and Netspeak. By doing so, students gain the knowledge on the proper use of English language in different contexts which may be formal or informal. Thus, the results show that the respondents who use Netspeak in language exercises pay attention to the clarification of formal and informal language to their students.

Giving instructions on students’ work or marking students’ papers

This approach is used by all seven respondents who report the formal use of Netspeak in English language classroom. Markedly, next to the high school teachers from both Finland and Serbia, this approach is also used by the university teachers from Finland. Considering the fact that linguistic games are not applied in teaching at the universities, my opinion is that the

reason for this lies in their inadequacy for the advanced language teaching methods. In contrast to the linguistic games, the approach of applying Netspeak when giving instructions on students' work or marking students' papers is more adaptable method for different kinds of language levels of English. This conclusion comes from the comparison and analysis of respondents' answers.

The above mentioned approach consists of the use of Netspeak abbreviations and emoticons in the occasions where teachers write or type instructions, or commenting and marking students' written work. Hence, it is an applicable method for being used for both high school and university language levels. As a significant factor attributed to the incorporation of Netspeak of this kind is the indication that these teachers implement Netspeak in teaching as part of their writing routine. The indication for this conclusion is seen in the data. One informant asserts: "Very often I use emoticons, such as :-), ;-), :-| and a few abbreviations both in writing by hand and in typing when I give comments or instructions on the exercises and different language tasks. I use these emoticons and abbreviations in everyday writing, too" (I10). Similarly, some of the informants also mention that they use emoticons and abbreviations on a regular basis, and they transfer this routine when giving instructions to students or marking students' papers. This is an important factor which shows that these teachers adopted Netspeak in their everyday writing routine, and such use of Netspeak features is subsequently transferred in their written or typed communication with students.

In any case, the informants reveal that this kind of approach in the use of Netspeak is a suitable approach for transmitting written instructions or comments in a wanted way. In other words, as already discussed in the section on teachers' readiness to implement Netspeak in teaching, teachers find Netspeak features a useful tool for transmitting the meaning of the statement in a clear and unambiguous way. For example, teachers state that they mostly use emoticons when they want to reassure the readers, i.e. students, that the comments were intended to be taken in a certain way. They perceive emoticons as perfect tools since they help preventing any misunderstandings of the written message. "It happens that my comment on a student's paper

or written assignment should not be taken too seriously, and instead of using words to express the meaning, it is easier to put one small emoticon”, informant 4 demonstrates. Similar statements are given by a few more respondents.

Moreover, some teachers apply this method because their intentions are to make the comments more interesting. It is seen in the data that teachers find emoticons very effective tools in a visual way, and therefore, they use them in order to complement written comments or instructions regarding to students’ work. By doing so, the written text gains a visual dimension, and it looks more interesting to the students. As an example, I illustrate one informant’s note: “For instance, when giving instructions to my students I may use emoticons at the end of the sentence by saying: ‘It doesn't hurt to hear it twice: once in class and once on paper, when you can read it at your own speed ;-).’ Here, I use the emoticon to complete the meaning and to add a new visual dimension to the sentence” (I8).

In addition to the reasons for using emoticons or abbreviations when giving instructions to students or marking students’ papers, informant 6 adds: “I use few abbreviations when giving instructions to students to save time. OK, well, maybe I also think that the students will take me for a ‘digital native’ if they see at least one Netspeak abbreviation, but the reality is probably that no one is fooled...☺” It is interesting that in this statement the interviewee uses the term “digital native” even though the specific term was not used in the questions during the interview. In addition, this teacher expressed that other than using abbreviations in order to shorten the process of writing, it is important for him/her to be seen as a member of digital culture by his/her students. Here we see the social inclusion of Netspeak and its function of creating closeness between teachers and their students. Moreover, this teacher believes the use of Netspeak abbreviations can be an indicator for his/her keeping up to date with the development of literacy in today’s digital age.

In the previous description of the factors which make teachers eager to use Netspeak when giving instructions to students or marking students’ papers it is also described how teachers

implement Netspeak within this teaching approach: by incorporating emoticons and abbreviations into written comments on students' work. Even though in many cases Netspeak forms part of teachers' everyday writing routine, this kind of implementation of Netspeak abbreviations and emoticons is an additional approach in teaching because Netspeak is used in academic environments for teaching purposes and it is related to students' work.

Informal communication with students

The last approach in the use of Netspeak in teaching found in the data is the use of Netspeak in informal communication with students. Twelve teachers assert that they use emoticons or abbreviations in informal communication with students, e.g. via emails or online teaching platforms when discussing different issues about the studies which are not related to marking or commenting on students' written work, language tests or assignments. Additionally, five out of twelve teachers use Netspeak only in informal communication with their students, and they do not use Netspeak for teaching purposes related to students' language work.

In this approach, the way how Netspeak is implemented in the text addressed to students is the same as in the previous approach on giving instructions to students or marking students' papers: the teachers use Netspeak abbreviations and emoticons in typed messages and texts which are intended to be read by the students. The main difference between the two approaches is that in informal communication with students, Netspeak use is not related to students' language work. This approach is illustrated in the following teacher's note: "In informal email communication with students I use emoticons quite often. They are fun to use and easy to understand" (I1). Another respondent notes: "In casual written communication, I do use Netspeak abbreviations and emoticons; mostly in emails and in online teaching platforms which are usually used for the group discussions" (I11). As emerged from the data analysis, teachers use this kind of approach mainly via information communication tools such as in online teaching platforms or emails.

The reason for this virtual use of Netspeak in informal communication with students is that nowadays the ICT tools are in common use in teaching, and they are suitable for written informal communication. Before the use of ICT tools in teaching, informal communication was conducted verbally between teachers and students. Since Netspeak features are used in a written form, the teachers use Netspeak in informal communication with students via listed ICT tools.

The reasons for incorporating Netspeak in informal written communication with students are very similar to the informants' reasons for applying other approaches in the use of Netspeak. On the basis of my data, the main reasons for applying this method are: Netspeak allows brief and succinct communication, it provides a fun way of communication, it saves time, and last but not the least, Netspeak is a part of literacy in the digital era.

All in all, considering the previously presented findings on the teachers' approaches in the use of Netspeak, it can be summarized that five different teaching approaches are in use: linguistic guessing games, discussions on Netspeak features, the use of Netspeak emoticons and abbreviations when marking students' papers or giving instructions to the students, and the use of Netspeak in informal communication with students.

The data analysis shows that linguistic guessing games and discussions on Netspeak features are the methods applied by high school teachers mainly from Serbia. Furthermore, the use of Netspeak emoticons and abbreviations when marking students' papers or giving instructions to the students is the method applied by both university and high school teachers from Finland and by high school teachers from Serbia, as in the case of the use of Netspeak in informal communication with students. Guessing games and the use of Netspeak emoticons and abbreviations when marking students' papers or giving instructions to the students is present in both traditional learning environments and in online teaching platforms; discussions on Netspeak features are done in traditional language classrooms; and the use of Netspeak in

informal communication with students is present in online teaching platforms or in emails. Following figure presents relations between approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching in traditional learning environments and online teaching platforms.

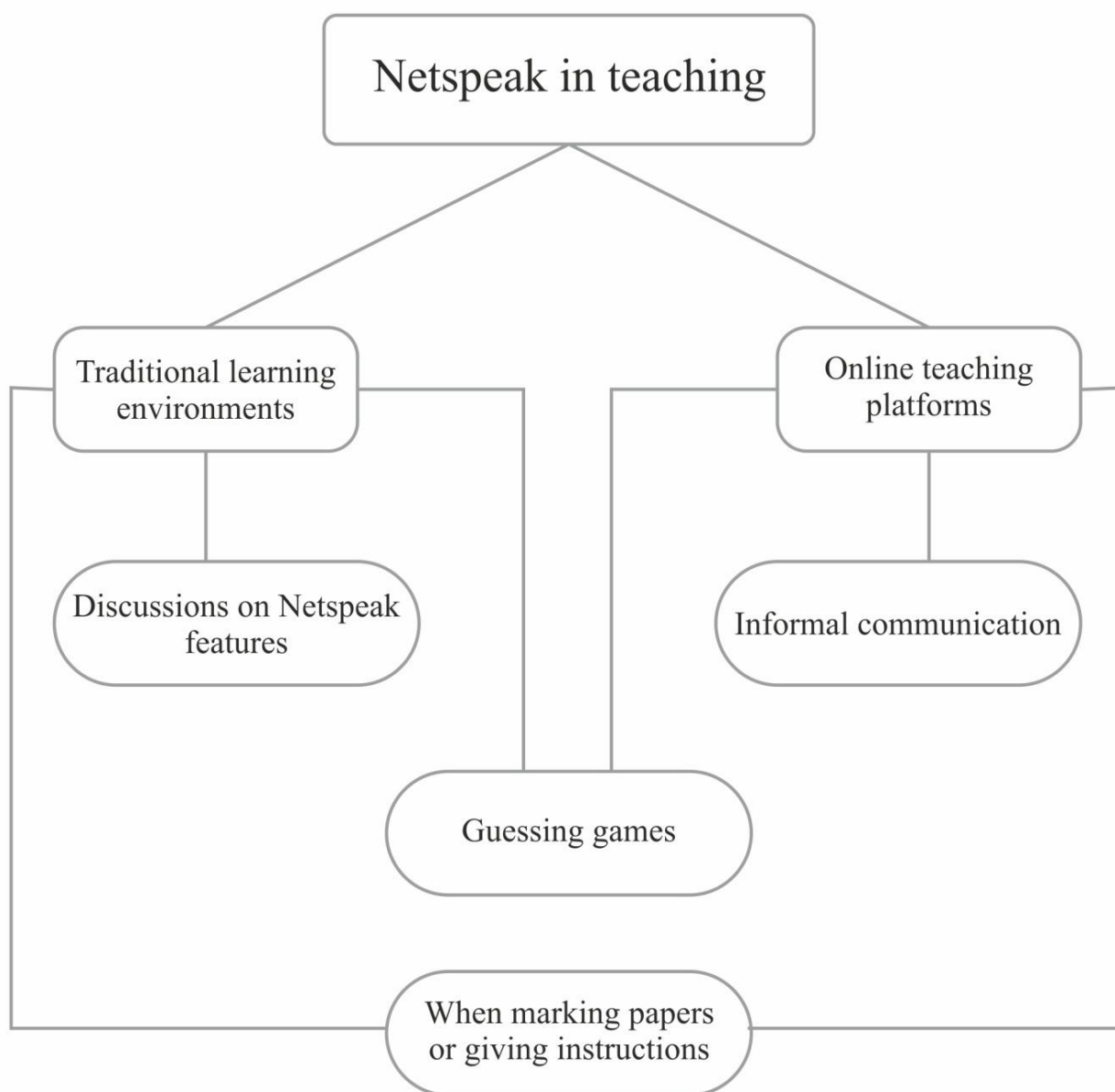


Figure 5.1b. Relations between approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching in traditional learning environments and online teaching platforms.

5. Opinion on Netspeak influence on the English language development

This main category deals with teachers' opinion on Netspeak influence on the English language development. This category is formed from the classification of the data which reflect teachers' opinion on this subject and it presents their ideas in a relatively short report. The category is related to teachers' standpoints on Netspeak in general, and, therefore, it is linked to teachers' opinion on the use of Netspeak in the English language classroom. In the same way, teachers' standpoints about Netspeak influence on the English language development reflect their attitudes towards the use of Netspeak in teaching.

From the data analysis, three specific categories are defined from this main category:

(a) English language in the digital era; (b) Netspeak as a tool for brief expression; (c) potential threat to existing expressions.

(a) English language in the digital era

This specific category emerges from the data analysis which reflects several similar standpoints of teachers' that English language development is not under the influence of Netspeak only. There are many statements in the data which indicate that teachers believe that in the digital era of today, many factors, together with Netspeak, influence the development of the English language. As an example, teachers list following factors: the use of foreign language words, the use of keyboards set to write in various languages, the language use in TV shows and movies, and the lack of writing in formal situations.

The informants link all of these factors to the digital era of today in a variety of ways. On the basis of the analysis, the conclusion emerges that many informants perceive that it is not a rare practice that foreign language words deriving from various languages such as Arabic, Spanish,

Chinese, etc. are being incorporated into the English language vocabulary. The informants mention that such interference is partially fostered by the use of digital technologies. Regarding the use of keyboards of various languages, some of the teachers explain that they think such use influences the orthography and punctuation of English because different language keyboards have different orthographic and punctuation signs and sometimes they are mixed when typing in English.

Moreover, one informant emphasizes the probable influence of American TV shows and movies on the students' use of the English language by saying: "Sometimes students do not achieve a sufficiently formal style in writing papers. I see things like 'Finnish contract law sucks' and 'Such-and such is totally awesome'. Is that attributable to reading Internet blogs and chat forums, or from watching American TV shows and movies? Who knows?" (I4). The same informant adds: "I would say that people's ability to express themselves (in writing) is limited by the fact that they don't write much in formal situations, so no one knows—especially when they are writing in English, a foreign language—that they really shouldn't say something 'sucks' or is 'awesome' in a paper." It can be noted that this teacher indicates that the influence on the use of English should not be attributed only to the use of Netspeak, but also to several other factors which are illustrated in the statement.

The emphasis on the several different factors which, in teachers' opinion, influence the use of the English language in the digital era besides Netspeak shows that teachers are mainly of the opinion that Netspeak influences a communicative competence of students. However, they do not perceive Netspeak as the only existing factor for such influence, but rather as one of the factors which influences a communicative competence of people in the digital era. As a result, it is found in the data that teachers' opinion on the development of English language in the digital era does not limit them in the use of Netspeak in English language teaching because by perceiving the influence of Netspeak on the language development, some teachers also see pedagogical implications of Netspeak.

(b) Netspeak as a tool for brief expression

There are a couple of indications in the data that some respondents perceive Netspeak as a linguistic tool for clear and brief expression, and thereupon, in the label for this specific category, Netspeak is named a “vehicle” for brief expression. Namely, some teachers state that Netspeak is the “product” or “language variety” of digital era, and as such, its features are used as suitable tools for better self-expression. One teacher declares: “I think Netspeak, meaning emoticons and abbreviations, enriches the language as a nice tool for clear self-expression, instead of limiting it” (I9). One more statement demonstrates similar idea: “I think Netspeak introduces new diverse terms, and it is a useful tool for expressing ideas clearly and concisely” (I17). It is visible that these teachers perceive positive impact of Netspeak in transmitting the meaning of the words in a brief and succinct way.

(c) Potential threat to existing expressions

The final specific category presents the opinions of some teachers that Netspeak may have potential threatening influence on existing expressions, structures and the use of more descriptive words. It is stated by one interviewee: “I think Netspeak has a positive influence because it introduces new diverse terms, but also sometimes it does not respect grammar rules and reduces the use of more descriptive words. So, its impact is versatile” (I7). Another interviewee says: “Netspeak might deteriorate existing expressions and structures. Then again, a language would not be healthy if it stayed the same all the time” (I16). From these statements, it is seen that these teachers recognize two aspects of Netspeak impact on the English language: one which indicates possible danger to the grammar and vocabulary of the standardized English, and the other, more defensive aspect of the impact of Netspeak on the English language development. In general, these teachers conclude in the interview that the use of Netspeak features in the classroom should be adjusted for the teaching purposes, and that the teachers should promote the use of descriptive words and more compact language forms.

At the end of this category, I would like to mention that the teachers gave their opinion on this subject in a brief review of their previous statements on the use of Netspeak in the English language classroom. Therefore, I classified it as a separate category which is connected to the previous four ones. On the whole, this category is based on the content analysis of overall opinion of Finnish and Serbian teachers of English about the use of Netspeak in English language teaching.

Summary

At the end of the interview results, I make a short summary on the previously presented findings of informants' standpoints on the use of Netspeak in the English language classroom. Five main categories emerge from the data analysis. They are listed and discussed in the text above. The findings regarding the use of Netspeak in English language teaching by university and high schools teachers from Finland and Serbia show that the interviewed teachers show a significant knowledge on the subject of Netspeak and the majority of teachers use it in their teaching. There are four teaching approaches reported by teachers related to the use of Netspeak in teaching. However, the minority of the interviewed teachers report the absence of the use of Netspeak in their teaching practices. The reasons for including or omitting Netspeak in teaching are discussed in the text.

Finally, the findings show that the use of Netspeak in English language teaching is present in traditional learning environments, i.e. in standard language classrooms and in online teaching platforms. The only difference that comes into view in the use of Netspeak between these two learning environments is that the use depends on the suitability of the teaching method for a specific environment—some approaches are suitable for the use in both learning environments, and some are suitable for only one of them.

All things considered, the findings discover that English teachers from Finland and Serbia recognize Netspeak as a part of contemporary language, and the majority of them perceive its pedagogical implications and implement Netspeak in their teaching. Moreover, the teachers tend to use Netspeak in contexts which make clear distinctions between the use of formal and informal language. By implementing Netspeak in such way, students acquire the knowledge on both formal English language and everyday English which is omnipresent outside the classroom and widespread by the use of new technologies.

5.2 Review of Written Teaching Materials

Some of the respondents who use Netspeak in their teaching provided the materials in which the use of Netspeak can be found. Written teaching materials are presented to exemplify the use of Netspeak in teaching by the interviewed teachers; they are a complementary set to the interview results. Three segments of written teaching materials are presented in this section: two linguistic guessing games and the examples of the use of Netspeak when giving instructions to the students. All three segments of written teaching materials are used in both traditional learning environments, i.e. traditional classrooms and in online teaching platforms.

Guessing games

The teachers provided two guessing games which they were using in work with their students. In my data, teachers confirm that both of these linguistic games and exercises were uploaded in online teaching platforms from where the students could download them, and they were solved and discussed in the classroom as a part of their homework tasks. The first example of a guessing game on Netspeak abbreviations is shown in the figure 5.2a on the following page.

Guessing game n.1

1. What could AOB mean? Translate the given choice of words.

- a) Absence of Bread
- b) Abuse of Bandwidth
- c) Apple or Blueberry

Think of new meanings and give your suggestions

2. Which of the following can be used as a substitute for AFK?

- a) BRB –be right back
- b) ASL - age/sex/location
- c) cya- a shorted version of "see you"

3. Give five options for the meaning of COD.

4. Guess the acronym:

B4U4GET

5. GAS means:

- a) gone away sadly
- b) game and stranger
- c) got a second

Correct answers:

- 1. It is a sarcastic name for an ugly or graphic-intensive site.
- 2. a
- 3. Change of dressing
- 4. Before you forget
- 5. c

Figure 5.2a. Guessing game on Netspeak abbreviations.

This guessing game is an example of the incorporation of Netspeak abbreviations and acronyms in English language teaching. As already stated, these kinds of linguistic games are used by high school teachers in English classes of intermediate language levels. In addition, the creation of these games is the result of teachers' recognition of the implication of Netspeak use in teaching. The informants outline that they use these games as an additional teaching material which is devised in order to enrich students' creative thinking and to add little fun in teaching materials and teaching practices. These exercises are created by teachers themselves, gathering the material from the Internet and adjusting it for teaching purposes. Also, the teachers mention that they enjoy the process of preparing word games and resolving it later together with students, which shows that they are motivated in the implementation of Netspeak in the English language classroom.

It is noticeable from the observation of the presented exercise that questions are formed in the way that some of them offer multiple choices of answers, some are open-ended questions and some are word rebuses. According to the teachers, they are devised to encourage creative thinking, and the purpose is not always to give the correct answer, but to encourage students to think of English words and to try to formulate them through different combination of phrases. Some of the acronyms are actually the word rebuses because they contain numbers, and they are suitable for practicing logical thinking and, at the same time, learning of the English language. It is important to mention that the teachers point out that when discussing these kinds of exercises with the students, they emphasize the proper use of these abbreviations in contexts which are suitable for the informal use of written language. This information indicates that teachers tend to make clear distinctions to their students when this kind of language should be used and in which contexts. In the figure 5.2b (p. 77) the second example of a guessing game is presented.

Guessing game n.2

Try to read the text replacing the smileys with sentences or phrases:

It was a very long day today. After I woke up, I 😊. After that, I started to 📖. That is why I am very 😊 now. I enjoyed studying, but I wanted to go to my friend's house because it is her birthday and she is making a 🎂. I was 🤔 when would be the best time to go and see her. The time was passing by and I was still studying, looking more 😊. In the end, I decided to 📅. Finally, I am 📅 now. I will buy her 🎁 and go there ASAP.

Figure 5.2b. Guessing game including Netspeak emoticons.

In the figure 5.2b, the incorporation of Netspeak emoticons in a written teaching material is presented. This kind of guessing game is another example of how Netspeak features are used in written teaching materials for teaching purposes. The emoticons are used here as a visual sign which should be replaced by words or phrases. The students should think of the proper tense use, the choice of words, and how to fit the words correctly into the particular context. This is another example of the implementation of the linguistic features of Netspeak into teaching materials which promotes students' creative thinking. The teachers declare that these kinds of exercises serve as good refreshment in the standard approaches seen in written teaching materials, and it is a nice way to add a visual dimension into written teaching materials.

Taking both of these written teaching materials into account, these linguistic guessing games reflect teachers' interest in incorporation of Netspeak in teaching, which is a very important finding in this research. The possibility to go through the examples of the use of Netspeak in teaching enables a clear insight into the methods in which teachers incorporate Netspeak in English language teaching. It is apparent that the teachers who implement Netspeak in written

teaching materials are open towards the use of Netspeak in teaching, and these linguistic games provide an insight into the ways how abbreviations and emoticons are used for teaching purposes.

The use of Netspeak when giving instructions to the students

Similarly as in the case of guessing games, some teachers provided the material in which they include Netspeak emoticons and abbreviations when they give written instructions to the students regarding the course work. The following text represents the examples of the use of these features in the text addressed to the university students. These sentences are instructions on the course work and on academic writing in English language. This last segment of written teaching materials is four sentences which are selected because of the use of Netspeak abbreviations and emoticons found in them.

Similarly, any dictionary which is so moralistic that it refuses to print a “dirty” word like that is also, IMHO, not serious and not worth buying.

Once you have performed the test and whatever slang words come to mind (try LOL, ROTFL and IMO, for example), look at the definitions of a few words to see how well you can understand them.

However, I was once present at a defence of a doctoral thesis (väitöstilaisuus) in Finland during which the examiner criticized the doctoral candidate for having put a smiley mark (known technically as an “emoticon”) in one of her footnotes... ☺

This is one area, at least, in which it is worth paying attention to the grammar checker😊.

From the previously presented text, it can be concluded that emoticons and Netspeak abbreviations can be found in the written instructions which form part of the teaching material which was used by one university teacher. The text itself is not of great importance for the analysis; on the other side, the existence of Netspeak in the text is important because it shows that Netspeak is used in written teaching materials. As seen in the text, simple emoticons are put at the end of the sentences, and they reflect the writer's opinion on the idea of the message. As far as abbreviations are concerned, it is noticeable that they are used in the sentences as integrated part of the written text.

The purpose of presenting these selected sentences of written instructions is to give a short insight on this approach in the use of Netspeak in teaching. The use of Netspeak in these sentences shows that the teacher who wrote this text perceives Netspeak features as an applicable tool for teaching purposes. However, these features are part of the informal language use, and as such, they are used in informal way of communication, meaning that they are not part of any formal scientific text. A student can clearly notice that the context in which Netspeak features are used is informal, which further means that informal words and expressions should be used in a proper informal style of writing. As a matter of fact, this teacher uses Netspeak features in the text in which he/she explains the rules of the style in academic writing.

Summary

On the whole, these teaching materials exemplify two approaches in the use of Netspeak in teaching: guessing games and the use of Netspeak when giving instructions to the students regarding their tasks and class work. These materials are important for illustrating the use of Netspeak in these two approaches which are explained and discussed in the section on the interview results. From the observation of these materials, the conclusion which emerges is that the use of Netspeak in teaching is linked to informal writing, and it reflects modern communicative competences used in English language and literacy teaching. The results also show that the use of Netspeak features is reduced to occasional implementation of emoticons and abbreviations in communication with students, as well as they show the use of these features in informal linguistic games which purpose is to promote creative thinking of students and to add new interesting methods in teaching and learning of the English language.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this last chapter of the thesis, I reflect on the overall working process on the thesis and its results. The purpose of this research was to prospect the use of Netspeak in English language classroom. As already discussed, the topic of the use of Netspeak for the teaching purposes has not yet been widely scholarly examined. In the beginning of the research, I was of the opinion that Netspeak, as a linguistic and electronic means of communication, provides a wide range of possibilities for its incorporation in teaching of English language and communication. However, after I had encountered a small number of studies on this particular topic, I got to the conclusion that the pedagogical implications of Netspeak were insufficiently discussed, and that the literature on this topic could only give me the surface insight into the matter. Therefore, I was even more curious to explore the current position of Netspeak in English language classroom and to find out the results of this study. However, due to the lack of the specific literature on the Netspeak use in the classroom, I was concerned how the teachers would perceive this topic, and whether the results would show teachers' motivation to implement Netspeak in their teaching.

All in all, the results of the 18 interviews and 3 segments of teaching materials show a significant awareness of English language teachers from Finland and Serbia concerning the pedagogical implications of Netspeak and its use in the classroom. The interviewed teachers show that they are familiar with the topic of Netspeak, and that they include it in their teaching. The significant outcome of the study is that the majority of my informants find Netspeak a part of the contemporary language, which is shown in their positive approaches towards the use of Netspeak in teaching. According to the attitudes teachers had on the implementation of Netspeak in English language teaching, it is seen that emoticons, abbreviations and other Netspeak features are perceived by teachers as applicable for the teaching purposes.

In some researches an assuming factor for the lack of scholarly motivation in using Netspeak for the language teaching was the age of the participants (Stavfeldt 2011, 24). The interesting fact coming out of my data is that the age of the respondents is not the significant factor in implementation or motivation of teachers to include Netspeak in the teaching practices. Regardless of the participants' age and/or gender, the data reveal that the interest of teachers do not depend on these factors. Teachers of different age and gender use Netspeak in their teaching and there are no major relations between these factors and informants' motivation in Netspeak pedagogical incorporation.

In my opinion, the topic of the use of Netspeak in English language classroom still has not gained sufficient attention among scholars, and this research and its result may serve as a good pointer at a fast-growing permeation between technology and education. On the whole, the conclusions deriving from the data collected in the research show significant teachers' interest and acknowledgement of the existence of Netspeak in English language classroom. Language and communication are affected by the use of the technology, and the results of this research demonstrate that English language teachers from Finland and Serbia are aware of that. I also think that the use of Netspeak among teachers reveals that they keep pace with the changes the English language has gone through due to the fast technological evolution. However, it is also seen in this research that teachers make a clear distinction between informal and formal language use. They allow the use of Netspeak in the classroom, but they categorize Netspeak as informal language and they use it in their teaching according to this classification.

Researching English language teachers' opinion on the use of Netspeak in the classroom has been an interesting experience, particularly at the moment when this topical subject has not been extensively explored. Additionally, the results demonstrate the interest of teachers to include Netspeak in their teaching, showing the ways how Netspeak is implemented in traditional and online learning environments. This is a new result regarding Netspeak and its existence in English language teaching. It is new partly because this subject has not been

sufficiently examined and partly because it reveals a positive result about the scholarly acceptance of the use of Netspeak in English language teaching.

The development of the technology will continue to affect the English language. In the future, the Internet and many technological tools will be used by more people. Students will be surrounded by many more linguistic properties coming from the use of the technology. It is difficult to predict what the exact development path of Netspeak will be, and how it will be accepted among language teachers in the future. This research discovers that Netspeak is present in English language classrooms, but it also leaves the room for the future researches on this subject. In my opinion, following the intertwining of the English language and technological development enable English language teachers a better understanding of the communicative competence of the students of today. The existence of Netspeak in English language classroom makes learning environments more versatile and the overall process of learning more fun for the students.

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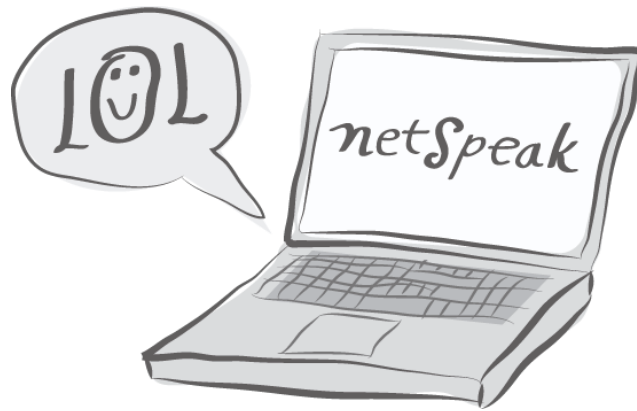
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APPENDIX 1



Questionnaire

Part 1

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. What is your age?

3. What is your country of origin?

4. What is your country of residence?

5. What is your level of education?

- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Student
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ PhD or professional degree student
- ☐ PhD or professional degree
- ☐ Other

6. What is your native language?

Part 2

- 1. How long have you been working as a professor of language and communication?**

- 2. Have you ever used any online platform, blog or similar ICT tools in your teaching? If so, which ICT tool were you using?**

- 3. Are you familiar with the term Netspeak or Netslang?**

- 4. Have you noticed the use of Netspeak among the students? Please, give examples.**

- 5. Are there any other Internet language influences that you observed among the students?**

6. Have you been using Netspeak in your teaching? If yes, how do you use it for teaching purposes?

7. Do you have more comments on Netspeak and its use in the classroom?

Thank you very much! ☺