

## **ON SOME ASPECTS OF INTERNET SLANG**

Having spent some time in virtual space during the last few years, reading messages, emails as well as commentary and statements made by different social site users, I have observed many changes and irregularities in verbal and non-verbal means of communication. As a philologist I was especially interested in different types of abbreviations, punctuation marks, spelling changes, grammatical and spelling mistakes, various icons that are mostly used by teenagers and students on the worldwide web. That was the reason I started to carry out a research on the subject.

The fact that the Internet has radically changed global communication is beyond controversy. With instant access to messaging and email, the ability to circulate commentary and opinion has significantly changed the way people communicate nowadays. This has had an impact on the spoken and written language. The Internet is now an integral part of contemporary life, and linguists are increasingly studying its influence on language. However, people still debate on the scope of these changes, and whether or not they are for the better.

The given paper is devoted to the study of some aspects of Internet slang, its peculiarities and manifestations. We know that keeping up with current internet trends can be tough, especially for parents and elderly people who do not get online much. That is why we feel need for some helpful resources to help people further understand internet slang, online acronyms, net trends, and overall internet etiquette.

Professor David Crystal is a British linguist, leading language authority and author of over hundred books. Crystal says the dynamic nature of the Internet makes it difficult for comprehensive analysis of its effects to stay up-to-date. But Crystal believes that the impact of the worldwide web on language remains minimal. In his book “Internet linguistics” David Crystal presents the area as a new field. Crystal addresses the online linguistic issues that affect us on a daily basis, incorporating real-life examples drawn from his own studies and personal involvement with Internet companies. He provides new linguistic analyses of Twitter,

Internet security, and online advertising, explores the evolving multilingual character of the Internet, and offers observations about a wide range of online behaviour, from spam to exclamation marks. Including many activities and suggestions for further research, this is the essential introduction to a critical new field for students of all levels of the English language, linguistics and new media /Crystal, 2011/.

Erin Jansen, founder of Netlingo, an online dictionary of Internet and text messaging terms, also says the new technology has not fundamentally changed the existing language but added immensely to the vocabulary. Jansen has worked in the Internet industry since 1994 and agrees with Crystal that what we are seeing is more ways to use language to communicate. "The main effect of the Internet on language has been to increase the expressive richness of language, providing the language with a new set of communicative dimensions that have not existed in the past. Basically it is a freedom of expression "she said. (www.netlingo.com)

Adams B.Bomodo in his book "Computer-Mediated Communication for Linguistics and Literacy: Technology and Natural Language Education" details the many issues of CMC and Human Language Technology, and guides the reader through the way language is used in various media of technology and the implications this has for learning to speak, read, and write languages" /Bomodo, 2009/.

With the existence of greater computer/Internet mediated communication systems, coupled with the readiness with which people adapt to meet the new demands of a more technologically sophisticated world, it is expected that users will continue to remain under pressure to alter their language use to suit the new dimensions of communication. As the number of Internet users increases rapidly around the world, the cultural background, linguistic habits and language differences among users are brought into the Web at a much faster pace. These individual differences among the Internet users will significantly impact the future of Internet linguistics, notably in the aspect of the multilingual web.

The emergence of a new branch of an academic discipline does not take place very often, but the arrival of the Internet has had such an impact on language that the time is right to recognise and explore the scope of putative Internet linguistics. The latter may be observed as the synchronic analysis of language in all areas of Internet activity including

email, the various kinds of chatroom and games interaction, instant messaging, SMS messaging (texting), Web pages and other associated areas of computer-mediated communication (CMC). The speed of change in the past two decades has been such that it is possible to see a diachronic dimension to this subject as well. The internet allows us to follow language change in **vocabulary, grammar, spelling** and **pronunciation**.

The Internet is on its way to becoming a more diverse multilingual Web, with a wider variety of languages being used. In the last decade Internet penetration has experienced its greatest growth in non-English speaking countries such as China, Russia, Ukraine, India and so on, resulting in more languages apart from English penetrating the Web. The interaction between English and other languages will be another important area of study. As global users interact with each other, possible references to different languages may continue to increase, resulting in the formation of new Internet stylistics that spans across languages. Thus, it is possible to see the rapid evolution of a comparative Internet linguistics as the medium becomes increasingly multilingual.

Today many linguists attribute the growing misuse of the language to the explosion of electronic communication. In fact, text messaging has made students believe that it is far more acceptable than it actually is to just make serious spelling and grammatical errors. Students over the past several years, have increasingly used a more informal English vocabulary in formal assignments. University-level research papers are now being filled with casual phrases and informal usages that were absent in the past.

Time-saving online abbreviations like *LOL*, *OMG*, and *IMHO* are now part of the official English language. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) announced the addition of several acronyms to its dictionary, adding some interesting trivia behind the origins of these Internet-associated expressions. OED explained that although "initialisms" like *OMG* (Oh My God), *LOL* (Laughing Out Loud) and *IMHO* (In My Humble/Honest Opinion) are strongly associated with the language of electronic communications, their origins are surprisingly predating the Internet era /[www.pcworld.com/](http://www.pcworld.com/).

For example, OED found a quotation for *OMG* in a personal letter from 1917, and *FYI* (For Your Information) originated in the language of memoranda in 1941. Also, apparently the *LOL* expression had a previous

life, starting in 1960, denoting an elderly woman (Little Old Lady). OED notes that some expressions like OMG and LOL are used outside electronic communication contexts as well, including print and spoken use, in the form of more than a simple abbreviation /www.acronyms.thefreedictionary.com/.

Slang is a phenomenon that has always existed in the language but it has been ignored by linguists for a very long time. Internet slang (Internet short-hand, Cyber-slang, SMS speak, netspeak or chatspeak) refers to a variety of everyday languages used by different communities on the Internet. Over the past few years, however, the interest towards this particular layer of vocabulary has risen. Appreciated by some, despised by others, they nevertheless are strong elements pertaining to the web since their birth to these days. The primary motivation behind using aslang unique to the Internet is to ease communication. Such terms often originate with the purpose of saving keystrokes or to compensate for small character limits. However, while Internet slang shortcuts save time for the writer, they take two times as long for the reader to understand. On the other hand, similar to the use of slang in traditional face-to-face speech or written language, slang on the Internet is often a way of indicating group membership. Slang creates, motivates and sustains online communities. Internet slang provides a channel which facilitates and constrains our ability to communicate in ways that are fundamentally different from those found in other semiotic situations. The Internet itself is ideal for new slang to emerge because of the richness of the medium and the availability of information.

Such linguists as V.A. Khomiakov, I.V. Arnold, G. Antrushina, R.S. Ginzburg, I.R. Galperin and many others have studied this phenomenon. In the English-speaking countries slang has been studied mainly by lexicographers. Many linguists such as B.K. Dumas, C. Eble, J. Lighter, E. Mattiello, E. Partridge, P. Kegan and others have also studied slang. One important peculiarity of slang is that it is a constantly changing open system. Actually, those definitions of slang that are used nowadays can be called contradictory. However, there are several peculiarities of slang that all linguists agree upon. First of all, slang is used by a restricted group of people, these can be either young people, teenagers, or people who belong to a certain profession. Secondly, slang

words usually have either amusing or pejorative qualities. Thirdly, it usually has a short life, while some of the slang words enter the literary language, others simply disappear.

V.A. Khomiakov defined slang as a stable for a certain period, widely used and stylistically marked lexical layer, common to colloquial language and existing as a part of a literary language. Some other definitions of slang identify it as a colloquial variant of a language peculiar to certain professional or social groups and underline that when slang words get into the literary language or are used by people outside those professional or social groups they receive special emotional connotation. In some cases slang is considered to be the same as jargon /Хомяков, 1980/.

Such variety of attitudes towards the notion of slang resulted in the fact that I.R. Galperin suggested that slang cannot be called a separate linguistic category and the word 'slang' can only be used as a synonym to 'jargon' /Гальперин, 1956/.

We can see the similar picture in the English linguistics. In Webster's "Third New International Dictionary" we can find the following definition of this term:

1. Language peculiar to a particular group as:

a) the special and often secret vocabulary used by a class (as thieves, beggars) and usually felt to be vulgar or inferior;

b) the jargon used by or associated with a particular trade, profession, or field of activity.

2. A non-standard vocabulary composed of words and senses characterized primarily by connotations of extreme informality and usually a currency not limited to a particular region and composed typically of coinages or arbitrarily changed words, clipped or shortened forms, extravagant, forced or facetious figures of speech, or verbal novelties usually experiencing quick popularity and relatively rapid decline into disuse /www.merriam-webster.com/.

In "Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary" slang is defined as:

a) very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language, especially used by a particular group of people, for example, children, criminals, soldiers;

b) the special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low or disreputable character; language of a low and vulgar type;

c) the cant or jargon of a certain class or period;

d) language of a highly colloquial type considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense  
[/www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/)

### **Types of slang**

Internet slang does not constitute a homogeneous language variety. Rather, it differs according to the user and type of Internet situation. Coming straight from SMS language, this is a way of replacing entire words or bits of words by their phonetic equivalent embodied into single letters or figures.

Here are some examples:

2: too, or to	4: for	
2moro: tomorrow	4u: for you	gr8: great
2nite: tonight	10q: thank you	da: the
u: you	10x: thanks	y: why

Other common Internet abbreviations and symbols include “<3” which resembles a heart and stands for “love,” using “@” in place of the word “@” and using the number “2” instead of typing “to” or “too” (“I <3 you.”, “I’m @ the store.”, “I’m going 2 school.”).

Although it is difficult to produce a clear definition of Internet slang, the following types of slang may be observed in the telephone and Internet mediated communication that we have been able to find in our researched materials from SMS, chat on FB and Twitter social networks. This list is not exhaustive.

### **Letter homophones**

This group includes abbreviations and acronyms. An abbreviation is a shortening of a word, for example "CU" or "CYA" for "see you (see ya)". An acronym, on the other hand, is a subset of abbreviations and is formed from the initial components of a word. Examples of common acronyms include "LOL" for "laugh out loud" or "lots of love" and

"BTW" for "by the way". There are also combinations of both, like "CUL8R" for "see you later".

### **Punctuation, capitalizations and other symbols**

Such features are commonly used for emphasis or stress. Periods or exclamation marks may be used repeatedly for emphasis, such as "....." or "!!!!!!!!!!!!". Grammatical punctuation rules are also relaxed on the Internet. "E-mail" may simply be expressed as "email", and apostrophes can be dropped so that "John's book" becomes "johns book". Examples of capitalizations include "STOP IT", which can convey a stronger emotion of annoyance as opposed to "stop it". *Bold*, *underline* and *italics* are also widely used to indicate stress.

### **Onomatopoeic spellings**

Onomatopoeic spellings have also become popularized on the Internet. One well-known example is "hahaha" to indicate "laughter". Onomatopoeic spellings are very language specific. For instance, in Spanish, laughter will be spelt as "jajaja" instead. Deliberate misspellings, such as "sauce" for "source", are also used.

### **Keyboard-generated icons and smileys**

Emoticon is a pictorial representation of a facial expression using punctuation marks, numbers and letters, usually written to express a person's feelings or mood. Emoticons are generally found in web forums, instant messengers and online games. They are culture-specific and certain emoticons are only found in some languages but not in others. The Western use of emoticons is quite different from the Eastern usage, for example the Japanese equivalent of emoticons, kaomoji (literally "face marks"), focus on the eyes instead of the mouth as in Western emoticons. They are also meant to be read right-side up, for example, ^\_^ as opposed to sideways, =) /[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emoticon/](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emoticon/).

### **Leet**

Leetspeak, or 1337, is an alternative alphabet for the English language which uses various combinations of ASCII characters to replace Latin letters. For example, Wikipedia may be expressed as "w1k1p3d14". It originated from computer hacking, but its use has been extended to online gaming as well.

### **Flaming**

Flaming, also known as bashing, is hostile and insulting interaction

between Internet users, often involving the use of profanity. Flaming usually occurs in the social context of an Internet forum, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), Usenet, by e-mail, game servers such as Xbox Live or PlayStation Network, and on video-sharing websites. It is frequently the result of the discussion of heated real-world issues such as politics, religion, and philosophy, but can also be provoked by seemingly trivial differences /[www.wikipedia.org/](http://www.wikipedia.org/).

As the above mentioned classification illustrates slang words are mainly created according to the common morphological principles of the English language. Thus, in the given paper we try to identify some of the most widespread means of word-building in the Internet language. These are derivation, compounding, shortening (abbreviation, clipping), blending, conversion, and sound imitation. And finally, we have analysed some lexical items that we have selected from messaging and Internet communication. Morphemes and words that are created with their help are considered to be the objects of morphology. Some linguists limit morphology to the study of morphemes solely, calling them the basic building blocks of meaning in language or the smallest units of form that bear meaning or have a grammatical function /Плунгян, 2000/.

As a branch of linguistics, morphology deals with the structure of the words and how their parts are related to each other, as well as how words are related to other words and how the structure of a word is dependent on other branches of linguistics, such as grammar, phonology, syntax or semantics /[www.grammar.about.com/](http://www.grammar.about.com/).

**Shortening (acronyms and abbreviation)** is the most productive way of word-building in English. There are hundreds of chat abbreviations. The large group of lexical items created this way was coined in order to save time during online chatting; these are whole phrases and sentences. And, of course, there are abbreviations of special Internet terms. According to Merriam Webster dictionary “an acronym is a word formed from the initial letter or letters of each of the successive parts or major parts of a compound term (eg. NATO, radar, or snafu). These components may be individual letters (as in CEO) or parts of words (as in Benelux and Ameslan) /[www.merriam-webster.com/](http://www.merriam-webster.com/).

In English and most other languages, such abbreviations historically had limited use, but they became much more common in the 20th



century. Acronyms are a type of word formation process, and they are viewed as a subtype of blending. Acronyms have always been an integral part of computer culture, and they have since spawned a new language on the Internet. Commonly thought of as a series of letters that make up a 'word' there is a distinction between acronyms and shorthand. The online practice is to refer to shorthand, initialisms, or abbreviations as acronyms.

Online enthusiasts think that shorthand terms are in fact called acronyms, but this is incorrect. The difference between acronyms and shorthand is that with acronyms, you pronounce the letters as a new word (for example, 'FUBAR' is pronounced 'foo-bar' and 'RADAR' is pronounced 'ray-dar'). In contrast, shorthand pronunciations are like an initialism (a set of initials) in which you say the letters one-by-one (for example, 'ESP' is an initialism for 'extra sensory perception' whereas '*esp.*' is an abbreviation for *especially*). There are hundreds of acronyms, and their research is a hard task because of multiple definition of one and the same acronym or shorthand. In addition, the analysis may be somehow subjective because of the constantly changing material and endless field for research.

However, we would like to draw your attention to some of the most widely used acronyms and shorthand terms, that we have identified from our researched Twitter and Facebook chat samples:

ASAP: As Soon As Possible

BBL/BBS: Be Back Later/Soon

B4N: Bye For Now

BFF : Best Friends Forever

BFFL: Best Friends for Life

BRB: Be Right Back

CYA: See You

DBEYH: Don't Believe Everything  
You Hear

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

FB: Facebook

FYI: For Your Information

GF: Girlfriend

BF: Boyfriend

BTW: By The Way

KTHX: OK, Thanks

LOL: Laughing Out Loud

L8R: Later

NM: Nevermind

NP: No Problem

OIC: Oh, I See.

OMG: Oh My God

OTOH: On the Other Hand

ORLY: Oh Really?

ROFL: Roll On the Floor  
Laughing

GR8: Great  
HTH: Hope This Helps  
ILY: I Love You  
IMHO: In My Humble  
Opinion  
IDK: I Don't Know  
J/K: Just Kidding  
IRL: In Real Life

SMH: Shaking My Head  
SFW: Safe for Work  
TMI: Too Much Information  
TTYL: Talk to You Later  
W/O: Without  
WYSIWYG: What You See Is  
What You Get  
YW: You're Welcome

**Clipping**, a common means of reducing or shortening words without changing their meaning, is another common linguistic means of word formation found on the computer and telephone mediated communication. Some frequently used examples are: *advertisement – ad, examination – exam, telephone – phone, website – site, photograph – photo, statistics – stats, hamburger – burger, graduate – grad, teenager – teen*.

**Compounding** is also widely used to create a great deal of lexical items. We have been able to identify several words that are very common in compounds that belong to Internet slang; they are *line, name, down, up, dot, net, spam, bookandweb* (for example *online, offline, webcam, website, webpage, download, downshift, update, upgrade, net book, note book*).

When we were analysing words from the point of view of **derivation**, we were able to identify several prefixes and suffixes that are the most productive in creating Internet slang words. The prefixes are *cyber-, de-, en-, giga-, hyper-, inter-, meta-, micro-, multi-, pre-, un-, techno-*. We have identified only two suffixes that are the most productive in creation of Internet slang words: **-ise/ize and -ware**.

**cyber-**: cyberspace, cyberlife, cyberchat, cybermarket, cyberlove

**de-**: deactivate, decode, delink, deregulate, deauthorise, delist

**hyper-**: hyperactive, hyperlink, hypermedia, hyperspace, hyperactive

**-ise/ize**: authorize, popularize, symbolize, computerize, socialize, auto-  
mize, globalize

**-ware**: emailware, bookware, software, SIMware, postcardware

**Blends**, words created by combining first element of one word with the final element of the second word, are also common for the Internet

language. Sometimes a blend includes elements which are common for both of the words. Depending on the kind of word-building linguists identify several kinds of blends. The most widely used are additives, when two independent stems are combined, like **French+English=Frenglish**, **Spanish+English=Spanglish**, **Breakfast+Lunch=Brunch**, **Smoke+Fog=Smog**.

Today there is a widespread belief among many linguists that the Internet has a negative influence on the future of language, and that it would lead to a degradation of standard. Some would even attribute any declination of standard formal English to the increase in usage of electronic communication. There was great condemnation of this style by the mass media as well as educationists, who expressed that this showed diminishing literacy or linguistic abilities.

On the other hand, descriptivists have counter-argued that the Internet allows better expressions of a language. Rather than established linguistic conventions, linguistic choices sometimes reflect personal taste. It has also been suggested that, as opposed to intentionally flouting language conventions, Internet slang is a result of a lack of motivation to monitor speech online. Hale and Scalon describe language in Emails as being derived from "writing the way people talk" and that there is no need to insist on 'Standard' English. Using and spreading Internet slang also adds on to the cultural currency of a language. It is important to the speakers of the language due to the foundation it provides for identifying within a group, and also for defining a person's individual linguistic and communicative competence /[www.theamericanscholar.org/](http://www.theamericanscholar.org/).

While the Internet's use of language might further change rapidly over the next few years, educators need to ensure that students maintain an academic understanding of the use and rules of language. One of the most significant things that should happen in relation to the Internet is that both children and adults should be taught to manage it.

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**Լ. ԲԱՐՍԵՂՅԱՆ – Ինտերնետային ժարգոնի մի քանի առանձնահատկությունների մասին.** – Ժամանակակից հեռահաղորդակցության տեխնոլոգիաների և հատկապես համացանցի բուռն զարգացումն ու տարածումը չէին կարող իրենց ազդեցությունը չունենալ լեզվի վրա: Ինչպես յուրաքանչյուր ենթամշակույթում, այնպես էլ համացանցում, առաջացել է յուրօրինակ լեզու՝ համացանցային ժարգոն /սլենգ/: Այն հիմնականում ստեղծվում է սահմանափակ հասարակական միջավայրի, հատկապես երիտասարդների և դեռահասների կողմից, ովքեր առավել շատ են օգտվում համացանցից և հաղորդակցվում են խաղերի, չատերի, էլեկտրոնային փոստի, սոցիալական կայքերի միջոցով: Համացանցի լեզուն գրավոր լեզու է, որի հիմքում ընկած է ժամանակակից խոսակցական լեզուն: Այն հակված է տեղեկատվություն հաղորդել առավել հակիրճ և սեղմ: Այս լեզվին հատկապես բնորոշ են հապա-

վումների, կրճատ ձևերի, բնաձայնությունների, մեծատառերի, կետադրական նշանների, հաճախարգչային նշանների լայն կիրառումը, որոնց օգնությամբ գրուցակիցներն արտահայտում են բազմապիսի հույզեր՝ գրավոր խոսքին փոխանցելով լրացուցիչ իմաստային երանգներ: Շատ հաճախ խախտվում են լեզվական նորմերը, հաճախ են հանդիպում միտումնավոր ուղղագրական, քերականական սխալներ:

**Լ. ԲԱՐՏԵԳՅԱՆ – *Օ որոշակի օրինակներում ինտերնետ սլենգի.***

Современные телекоммуникационные технологии и, в первую очередь, глобальная компьютерная сеть Интернет, являются одним из наиболее важных факторов в развитии мирового сообщества. Как и в любой профессии, субкультуре, в интернете появился особый сленг. Этот язык очень быстро развивается. Словесные новшества рождаются в непринужденной речи, в узкой социальной среде, чаще всего среди молодежи как сознательное нарушение нормы, когда известное, часто употребляемое слово приобретает общую экспрессивность и новизну. Все больше людей сталкиваются с необходимостью общаться «на языке сокращений» и терминов, заимствованных из английского языка. Особенностью языка виртуальной коммуникации является то, что он представляет собой письменную форму общения, в основе которой лежит современный разговорный язык и которая характеризуется стремлением к максимальному сжатию информации. Его характерными особенностями являются широкое использование аббревиатур и сокращений, тенденция к доминированию фонетического принципа письма.