NEOLOGISMS OF INTERNET ENGLISH: SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Goda Rumšienė

Vilniaus universitetas, Kauno Humanitarinis fakultetas
Muitinės g. 8
LT-3000 Kaunas
Tel. (8-37) 225087
el.paštas: goda_rumsiene@one.lt

Introduction. Synopsis of Internet Language Explorations

Internet is a medium of virtual communication, the exceptional popularity of which has developed a new type of worldwide culture. It is based on shared beliefs and strategies of action within which a specific register of language has been formed. The basic peculiarity of the Internet language is its production exceptionally in written symbols. This specific mode of language compromising between features typical of both spoken and written language forms may be denoted for the unique processes within its vocabulary stock and the development of new lexical units. This paper aims at exploring morphological and semantic features of the specific vocabulary of Internet Relay Chat (*irc* further in the paper) English taking into consideration sociolinguistic issues of online communication. On the other hand, in order to achieve the goal it takes to discover linguistic and extralinguistic reasons for the development of neologisms in the Internet language.

Neologisms, along with non-verbal signs aimed at the expression of the paralinguistic elements of speech, represent the specific symbols of this mode of language. In this context, the issue is the principles of development of neologisms on the Internet, especially their morphological patterns in the context of the created semantic values. The analysis of this paper is mostly based on the author's personal observations, calculations and evaluations including the analysis of about ten-million-symbol-long texts from various accidentally selected chats substantially differing in their topicality.

The emergence of new form(s) of language is paralleled by the evolution of frameworks of linguistic analysis. Adam Bodomo and Carmen Lee developed an approach analyzing the distinctive features of tools and media in information and communication technologies, which allow pervasive changes in language forms and uses. Their method emphasizes bilateral causative influence exerted by the processes, namely: "new tools and media demand the creation of new forms and ways of communication, leading to changes in the way people use language in its various forms, including spoken and written forms" (Bodomo&Lee 2002, 12). The analytical method of the paper is based on the exploratory model by William Croft (Croft 2005), who views language as a

unity of components with their representative aspects, and sees morphology in the light of analytical works by Martin Haspelmath (Haspelmath 2002).

Apart from issues by Bodomo&Lee and Croft, who emphasize the methodological aspects of exploration, other key works mostly deal with distinct phenomena of practical language use. The exploration strategies of the Internet language may be roughly divided into two groups, the first of which includes those works which see their object in general or philosophical considerations and in many cases are concerned with tracing the origins of computer language. The works belonging to the first group (Davis&Brewer 1997; Hale&Scanlon 1999) mostly see it as a phenomenon which is strictly dependent on oral speech. The second group of works mainly deals with some peculiar aspects of computer language considering it to be different from spoken language. The positive attitude towards computer language leads to the development of comparative analysis of the two modes of speech. Representatives of this attitude in most cases explore the features of computer English. While both attitudes agree that computer language is an important social phenomenon, only the partisans of the second view address to the sociolinguistic issues of its use. The group is best represented by Crystal (Crystal 2001) and Shortis (Shortis 2001), who develop systematic analyses of Internet English, as well as by Baron (Baron 2000), Dery (Dery 1997) and Smith and Collock (Smith&Collock 1999). In most cases the authors take interest in the specific ways of Internet communication but ignore issues of lexicology and morphology. The only work of interest in this field is the above mentioned book by Crystal giving a brief analysis of the morphological features of neologisms of Internet English.

Internet Society and Its Creative Activity

Given that languages aim at fulfilling the needs of the user society, the specific features of the Internet language are to reveal the linguistic philosophy of the world of Internet users. The herein adopted technological perspective specifies that the Internet culture is not merely a culture of information, but complementarily develops a culture of the Internet discourse skill, in which the message contents are parallel to the message form (Rumšienė 2004b, 49).

The users of the World Wide Web can be specified as advocates of a particular culture with any ethnic, social, religious, etc. background and without any reference to their sex or age. Thus they are not united by specific cultural features. However, social and economic factors form a net of natural selection, and only prosperous members of any society of minimum technological level or almost any volunteers from advanced societies may pass through it (cf. Rumšienė 2004a, 354). These preconditions depict the average user of the World Wide Web as a typical representative of middle and upper classes of the society with his/her lifestyle, beliefs and biases and ways of communication.

An Internet community is not necessarily a community of native speakers of English; many participants have learnt it as a foreign language. This fact explains the tendency of standardization. Although non-native speakers usually master the language through regular practice, they still want to see it as a set of rules or as a standardized unit. Consequently, certain patterns are taken and exceptions are modified to fit into pigeon-holes. As the process is parallel to the trends of contemporary word building, native speakers willingly accept it and the Internet style evolves towards the development of universal rules (cf. Rumšienė 2005a, 328).

Individual freedom should be the main reason of multidirectional creativity in Internet English. It is intensified by the absence of any elements imposing the use of a universal system of signs on representatives of various cultures. Thus, anthropological differences lead to slight variations even in case of interpretation of fundamental laws. This explains not only the abundance of neologisms in Internet English but also the variety of their nature. In fact, practice shows that no essential problems of (mis)understanding arise between native and non-native speakers as well as between representatives of different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, it is possible to claim that there exists some universal code, the adherence to which ensures mutual understanding throughout the communication process. On the other hand, any violation of the code demonstrates one's non-adherence to the (sub)culture As separate cases represent the philosophy and the unwritten rules of Internet English, it is possible to explore the general trends of word formation and validate the results of the analysis.

From the sociolinguistic perspective, adherence to neologisms is motivated by the emphasis on the social group one belongs to; Internet community largely favours and even foregrounds innovativeness. As a large part of neologisms substitute the "outdated" lexical stock, it is not purely semantic reasons that make the Internet society change the thesaurus. It may be explained by foregrounding, shortening, standardization, xenophobia, etc. but on the whole alterations are largely introduced for the sake of alterations themselves, just as an act of economy and amusement.

While a user of a "traditional" language is expected to operate within the thesaurus and the established grammatical-syntactical regulations, a Net speaker is allowed and even expected to change the language in terms of culturally motivated limits. Hale and Scanlon believe that because of the nature of Internet conversation, its participants should play with voice, i.e. their utterances should reflect linguistic inventiveness, creativity, play in the form of new words and odd constructions. In addition, online language users should aim their discourse at the audience and share its background and style (which is actually emphasis on the fact of collective creativity) (cf. Hale&Scanlon 1999, 3-22).

An important feature of innovations is the demonstration of one's sense of humour, which is usually shown through punning. Thus it is common to rename *Microsoft Explorer* into *Microsoft Exploiter*. In some cases it also leads to the development of new words, e.g. a human is called *a Homosapian* playing on the resemblance of the Latin term *Homo Sapiens* and the suffix –ian referring to a nation (e.g. Italian, Iranian). On the whole, the culture of the Internet shows a positive attitude towards unsuccessful attempts of creation of lexical units and set phrases but is extremely intolerant towards cases of failure when using the accepted code inappropriately (cf. Dery 1997; Shortis 2001).

Strategies of Neologism Production

The present paper deals with specific features of *conversion*, *compounding* and *word-building* making emphasis on the patterns which are considered unacceptable within the scope of standard language.

The main motifs for development of new forms are:

– non-represented meaning values;

– irregular forms or forms with atypical affixation;

– long word forms (too many symbols);

– need for parody or foregrounding experienced by a Net user (cf. Rumšienė 2005a, 327-8).

As a result, the development of new lexical units may either stem from the absence of a necessary word or be motivated by the unacceptability of already existing words. Alterations are commonly triggered by stylistic issues.

Of all the neologisms used in the process of analysis of this paper (331 lexical units and their derivatives), 38,36% are compounds (127 words), 22,66% are affixation-based neologisms (75 words), 16,01% are words containing new roots (53 words), there are 26 cases of conversion (7,86%), shortenings and parody-based cases of mixed types of derivation make 5,44% (18 words) each, and other types of derivation when more than one strategy is employed produce 4,23% of total usage of neologisms (14 cases).

Patterns of Internet English Word Building

The process of word creation is extremely rapid in Internet English. While in Standard English it may take centuries to get a lexical unit converted to a different part of speech via zero affixation, on the Internet it proceeds almost automatically. One of the most common research engines is *Google*, and the act of research acquires the name of the program: <xero_> Hey I tried *googling* Guess I just wasn't typing in the right thing or <deex> did you *google* at all for this?

Conversion is extremely common in Internet English; it is favoured because of its relative simplicity due to the adherence to the same basic stem, resulting in the lower numbers of separate words as well as in some economy of symbols. Such couples as *to vanish/ (a) vanish* (noun; meaning: disappearance or an act of disappearance, e.g. <gKw-X> yeah but you can only use *vanish* twice :/ or <BBS> if you have to waste *a vanish* it means you gonna die) are frequent. The process of conversion is bi-directional: while in case of *(a) vanish/ to vanish*, it is a verb-to-noun pattern, in the couple of *a message/ to message*, it takes the direction noun-to-verb: <joeblowgt> I don't need MoM-type *messaging*. It is natural that the new verb possesses the full paradigm including participles, e.g. *the messaged text* (Rumšienė 2005b, 5).

It would be wrong to assume that such processes occur only with computer- and game-related terms; any lexical unit belonging to the thesaurus of Internet English may undergo derivational processes, e.g. *a club* is used to create *to club*: <shaggy-h> fate: yeah, accidentally went out *clubbing* tonight://.

Conversion may occur even in such cases when the initial stem is suffix-laden. Thus, despite the standard pattern *to vend→a vendor* in comparison with *to sail→a sailor*, it is still possible to produce the verb *to vendor*: <subversv> then i just *vendored* them.

A separate case of zero affixation is the derivation of prepositional verbs. Thus, the noun *luck*, which has no corresponding verb in Standard language, serves to make *to luck out*: <Didymus> ok cool...you *lucked out*. The function of the preposition is not completely transparent here; the context suggests a reference to the fullness or completeness of the process, in analogy to such cases as *this species died out* or *the daffodils are out* (=their buds are fully open). A very similar example is *to freak out* (<pb24ss> i rely on that shit *to freak out* my co-workers), and a few others, e.g. *to use out*. On the whole, *out* seems to be the only preposition which is regularly used to derive new prepositional verbs, and its meaning(s) fit into a certain pattern. Consequently, preposition-based word forma-

tion is a systematic case of the word building processes aimed at creating the meaning aspect of finiteness.

Affixation is undoubtedly the most common method of word building in Internet English. Any word possesses a number of theoretically possible derivatives, and by using the principle of analogy, the Internet society adapts its vocabulary to the specific style of communication. Another important factor is the principle of parody; Standard language is mocked at, and a substantial amount of neologisms contain the ironic hue.

Affixes rarely change their meaning in comparison with Standard English, however, especially in case of two or more concurrent or sequential word building processes, affix meaning shifts occur, e.g. *–able* does not regularly occur in nouns of Standard English, but in computer English, after the process of conversion, the adjective *executable* was turned into a noun: <MXV> adaro: thing is there is no such thing as a java *executable*.

A number of affixes, e.g. *un-*, *-ment*, *-ship* and many others are so frequent that it is possible to claim that they constitute regular paradigms applicable with any representatives of a given part of language, e.g. *–un* in *untar* or *unarchive* (<smokey> you might have *to untar* it into a folder, and move the patch into ~/path/to/source, and issue again; <linuxn00b> so how *to unarchive*).

There are no restrictions as to what kind(s) of words may undergo affixation; even lexical units of foreign origin that are used in fixed phrases only are eligible for derivation. Thus, *alias* is turned into a verb by conversion (which is highly improbable even in informal spoken English), and further converted into a negated participle *antialiased* (<meeper> seems like the linux guys did finally solve the *antialiased* thing). Similarly, roots of foreign origin may be replaced, punned or otherwise altered, e.g. *anorexic* (Greek origin) is turned to *obeserexic* with a meaning shift (<jjava> obeserexic (1 of 2): One who is fat, but doesn't know it, or refuses to believe it; one who constantly wears tight clothing in which flab hangs out. A word of foreign origin may be slightly altered visually in order to make it look like an English word, usually preserving the semantic field it belongs to, e.g. *sociopath* is related to a pathology, but *a socialpath* adds the aspect of the way (i.e. path) one behaves as the initial root is Anglicized (<Viral> i'm a neurotic *socialpath* and i'm quite content). Even though the pattern is not new (colloquial English is full of such jokes as *The psychopath is a path [...]*), *socialpath* contains an original morphological interpretation. Consequently, this society by developing the statement that the language is to comply with the needs of the linguistic community has taken the maxim to the limit and performs any changes and innovations to express the required meaning value.

Internet English violates some basic norms of affixation. Irregular patterns may be employed, thus, for example, the suffix *–ly* may be added to the noun/verb *chat* to get *chatly* (<jasper> just *"chatly"*).

Some affixes of foreign origin that are not actively used in the word building processes of Standard English are actively employed in the Internet language, e.g. the affix *–oid*, denoting resemblance or likeness to something in scientific terms, such as *alkaloid* or *planetoid*, in Internet English has developed clearly pejorative connotations, for example *a marketingoid* in <Trey> or studying to be *a marketingoid*?.

A separate case is a mixture of abbreviation and affixation processes, e.g. in *mfluery*, to refer to a noun, an appropriate suffix is added (<Tenchi> app server spotlight isnt big enough for ordain and *mfluery* together). Such neologisms occur in written texts only as they contain sequences of sounds

which are blocked in Standard language. As a result, there are more theoretically possible words in the irc language than in Standard English just because the latter is restricted by phonetic limitations.

Another specific case of affixation is the adjunction of a preposition to the stem, e.g. in *setup* or *dialup* (<distortio> or would it be most simple *to* just *setup* a directory under the /var/www and serve files http?; <g0ldfinGa> I havent used linux in 2 years and last time i did i either had *dialup* or comcast via ethernet [...]). On the whole, this pattern is so frequent that it seems that any postposition may be adjoined to the related word.

One of the most characteristic features of Internet English is the tendency towards writing specific terms without breaks between words. The main reason of compounding in the lexical field of computer-related technologies is to emphasize the meaning of the whole unit which already exists as a collocation. Numerous examples of this type may be presented, e.g. *GetConnection*, *hostbased*, *controlfile* or *statuslines* (<meeper_> ian: the various *getConnection* methods that return a Connection?; <FoxHunter> which is better to use or sshd2? *Hostbased* auth or *publickey* auth?; <Tenchi> ORA-00235: *controlfile* fixed table inconsistent due to concurrent update; <bougyman> i'm just playing with *statuslines*, etc.). Usually, if a word is hyphenated according to the standard spelling, the hyphen is dropped as it is a redundant intra-morphemic element not contributing to the development of the word meaning value. Besides, a hyphenated word may be automatically divided into two and thus it hampers reading if it occurs in the line-final position. Finally, an additional symbol always requires the consumption of some time. Thus, within a society where economy of time and space belongs to major values, surplus elements are eliminated. Surprisingly, some users preserve capital letters even within such compounds, e.g. *OutOfMemory* in <chriz_> [...] *OutOfMemory* error despite the fact that precise capitalization requires more time than it is saved by gap eliminations. Thus, style features may prevail over the law of economy and as this is not the only case where a decorative element is preferred (e.g. in some cases of affixation, the neologism is longer than the replaced word), the irc society may be seen as stylish and inconsistent.

It is evident that technically-oriented vocabulary is restricted to a limited number of collocations, and *format* may occur in such cases as *pageformat* or *formatA*, there is no real need for the independent existence of a word which may acquire all of its basic meaning values in a series of set phrases gradually turning into compounds. By this long-term process, a number of free morphemes may turn into affixes.

A specific case of compounding is punning based on phonetic similarity or identity of the juncture sounds, e.g. *japanimation* (Japanese + animation; * bunny chears *japanimation* style with the lil asian school girl [...]). This type of compounding is usually targeted at producing irony effects.

As Internet English is closely related to oral speech and users seek to achieve some economy of symbols to increase the speed of communication, shortening is a widely established derivational process in Internet English. A substantial part of terms are of foreign origin being polysyllabic words, and at the same time their initial syllables are sufficient to make them understandable and distinct. Thus, it is not surprising that *a directory* is curtailed to *dir* (<bop1> hi if i want to put an email in a user message box so he can read it remotely, in which *dir* should i put the file or <paul—> [...] not manually having to get every *dir* by hand), or *to defragment* becomes *to defrag* (<Talbain> Having enough free HD space to *defrag*...). It is of interest that even those lexical units that are not computer-specific may undergo this process, e.g. *different* becomes *diff* (<Jason> in suse it must be

diff). Unfortunately, it is very difficult to distinguish between spoken and digital varieties of language, and the argument that shortenings simply are taken to Computer English as a ready-to-use product is probably impossible to beat. Only those cases of shortenings which are impossible to pronounce may be related to the digital forms of language, e.g. *acct* standing for *account* (<Xara> I had one *acct* banned for botting) or *appt* replacing *appointment* (<Trish'> i got *an appt* on wednesday to see what all the tests say [...]), but they are shared by the language forms of emails, short messages and irc. Consequently, shortenings fit into the spirit of the Internet language but are more likely to be borrowed rather that created specifically in the process of irc communication.

The amount of new roots in Internet English is relatively low. In addition to abbreviations or acronyms turning into independent words, e.g. *rom* (read only memory) or *irc* (Internet relay chat), proportionally few cases may be mentioned. *To blag* (<shaggy-h> some cost assloads, some you can *blag* for free) refers to having some document sent. In spite of the existence of a number of synonyms in Standard English, *to blag* is created to denote a specific type of downloading. However, when a new root is adopted, it is flexible enough to be represented in different parts of speech, e.g. *to chmod* in <linuxn00b> what does *chmod* do? (noun) or <mnko> in most cases you will need *to chmod* + x (verb). It is likely that the main problem with the scarcity of new roots is the achievement of mutual understanding. While the ability of understanding a neologism produced by affixation or compounding relies on the general competence of language use, a new root can hardly evoke any analogies or specific associations. As a result, new roots will probably make an insignificant part of Internet English innovations.

Conclusions

To sum up, word building processes in Internet English are affected by the following factors:

1. The Internet society has developed a culture with a specific language. The functions of the Internet mode of communication require new frameworks of analysis.
2. Xenophobic factors, standardization trends, favour to parody, need for foregrounding and individual freedom of the participants of communication lead to the development of specific patterns of word building.
3. The main motifs for the development of new word forms are non-represented meaning values, irregularities, long word forms, parody and foregrounding. The created lexical units are regular grammatically and very flexible in terms of further derivation.
4. Five main methods of word building may be distinguished in Internet English: conversion, affixation, compounding, shortening (clipping) and introduction of new roots.
5. Conversion is a frequent method, it proceeds independently of the length of the original word; almost all parts of speech may undergo conversion; new verbs frequently acquire prepositions.
6. Affixation is very common and many patterns seem to turn to regular paradigms. Affixes may be used irregularly in comparison to Standard English. Not all derivatives are possible to pronounce.
7. Collocations are often converted to compounds, which are written exceptionally as single words. A number of frequently used roots tend to turn into affixes.
8. Lexical units created by shortening in Internet English are usually shared with other modes of language, and the contribution of specifically Internet English is insignificant.

9. Few new roots are created in Internet English; they are usually based on technical acronyms. Other kinds of roots are problematic to introduce because of difficulties with mutual understanding.

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INTERNETINĖS ANGLŲ KALBOS NEOLOGIZMAI: SOCIOLINGVISTINIAI RAIDOS ASPEKTAI

Goda Rumšienė

Santrauka

Internetinė anglų kalba suformavo specifinį raiškos kodą. Būdama naujo tipo komunikacijos priemone, ji yra ypatingai veikiama sociokultūrinių faktorių. Internetinė anglų kalba pasižymi naujo žodyno sudarymu konversijos, afiksacijos, dūrinių, sutrumpinimų bei naujų šaknų įvedimo metodais. Simbolių ekonomija, ksenofobija, asmeninė laisvė bei specifinis bendravimo būdas formuoja internetinę bendruomenę, kuri yra paremta kolektyviniais įsitikinimais ir naujus narius priima tik jiems pasiekus kūrybinės kompetencijos lygmenį. Šis straipsnis koncentruojasi į kokybinę Interneto pokalbių svetainių anglų kalbos neologizmų analizę, atsižvelgiant į bendrąsias elektroninio bendravimo tendencijas. Tyrinėjamos visų žodžių darybos būdų potencialios priežastys bei procedūriniai metodai. Prieinama prie išvados, kad nepaisant pasaulinio vartotojų bendruomenės masto bei žodžių darybos metodų gausos, galima nustatyti tam tikras bendrąsias tendencijas besiremiančias menamų visuotinai priimtų taisyklių egzistavimu.