



## ORAL EXPRESSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE CAUSED BY THE USE OF NEW MEDIA

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### KEY WORDS

*Oral Expression of Young People  
Language of the New Media  
Abbreviations  
Dialectisms  
Written Communication*

### ABSTRACT

*The authors want to explore the extent to which the elements of the language of new media (abbreviations, omission, dialectisms, vulgarisms, anglicisms, etc.) are present in the speech of young Croatians (100 secondary school students in their final years) in their conversations due to the influence of the language of new media. The results of the research have shown that young people use a large number of the elements of the language of new media in their mutual communication, but it is much less than in their written communication.*

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## 1. Introduction

Today's youth is in full sense of the word a net generation. It is impossible to imagine any of their representatives whose life would not be centered around the computer, smartphone or the internet, regardless of the fact whether they use them to surf through social networks for private purposes in their spare time or as tools or apps for learning or enhancing teaching processes at school or outside school. This generation of young people is constantly being referred to their pets (primarily the smartphone). This fact has certainly played a major role in the emergence of the language of new media that is used by young people to such an extent that it affects not only their writing in leisure time, but to a certain extent their writing for school purposes as well. It is therefore not surprising that as early as in 2006 Crystal pointed to the fact that the emergence of the new media had led to the social and linguistic revolution as well as that he had coined the expression *Netspeak* for the language that is characteristic of a variety of Internet services.

*Netspeak* was a completely new use of language that Storrer (2001) had called "typed speech". It is a spontaneous written language with characteristics of oral speech. There are unclear boundaries between the written and the oral language whereby the interaction of the two concepts of literacy can be noted that Koch and Österreicher had pointed to in 1994 and that can be applied to the language of new media: conceptual literacy and conceptual orality.

Social networks in general (Facebook, WhatsApp), as well as other services are extremely popular among young people because of their combinations of text, images, animations, sound and graphics. Vidak (2014) e.g. in her paper dealing with *Facebook* mentions that this social network (that has reached 2 billions users) is primarily used for communication, informing, sharing of information, publishing of photos, browsing information and last but not least for playing games. Communication by mobile phone is today an inevitable part of everyday life, especially of young people who write messages, search the Internet, listen to music, post photos, etc.

Lately, there have been several research studies that have dealt with the new media and the language of new media both in Croatia and in the rest of the world. Research studies that have dealt with the language of new media in the English language include Crystal (2006, 2008, 2011, etc.), Yusuf et al. 2016, Hering and Androustopoulos (2015), and many others. Among the research studies dealing with the same topic from the German speaking area the following have to be mentioned because of their outstanding results: Dürscheid et al. (2010) and Dürscheid (2016),

Schlobinski 2012, Keus and Corr 2013, König and Bahlo 2014. The following authors from Croatia have focused their research on the description of the language of new media itself: Filipan-Žigniċ (2012, 2013, 2015), Filipan-Žigniċ, Legac & Sobo (2015, 2016), Žic Fuchs & Tuđman Vuković (2013), Vrsaljko & Ljubimir (2014), Pavličević-Franiċ (2005, 2011), Graniċ (2006), Vlasteliċ & Vrbaneċ (2014), Vilke & Medved Krajinović (2006).

What is common to many researchers of the language of new media in the world and in Croatia are almost identical results of the research related to the features of the language of new media both in English and in German and Croatian. They have all pointed to the common features of the language of new media (frequent disrespect of orthographic norms, use of only small, capital or mixed letters, repetition of punctuation, media-mediated errors, graphostylistic elements, use of smiles and many other characters) and have also shown that writing in the new media does not have a negative influence on the literacy of young people, although this has been a very common claim in all the free mentioned language areas. The results of several research studies (Crystal 2006, 2008, 2011; Dürscheid /et.al./ 2010, 2016; Filipan-Žigniċ /et. al./ 2012, 2015, 2016) have shown that changes have been noticed at all linguistic levels of the written language. At the orthographic level they include the following: improper use of punctuation marks, use of lower case letters, use of upper case letters, use of mixed letters, repetition of the same graph, errors caused by the media. Changes that have occurred at the graphostylistic level can be primarily seen in the frequent use of emoticons. They are used to express things that are otherwise usually expressed by particles, exclamations, prosody, mimics and gestures in oral speech. Changes occurring at the morphological level are primarily reflected in deviations in the creation of abbreviations (btw, CU, ILU; lp, poz, dns). Changes at the syntactic level are characterized by frequent use of many ellipses, whereas those occurring at the lexical level by use of English loan words (e.g. cool, sorry, ok, happy...), use of dialectal expressions and use of vulgarisms and profanities. It could be concluded that many of the above characteristics have most often been the consequence of language economics and technological limitation resulting in the disrespect of the norm as their main feature. In any case, it is a kind of the language that does not show any lack in creativity. This creativity is implied even in the titles of many articles and books dealing with this topic: e.g. *I h8 txt msgs* (Humphrys 2007), *2b or not 2b* (Crystal), *2 abbrevi8 or not 2 abbrevi8: A Contrastive Analysis of Different Space- and Time-Saving Strategies in English and German Text Messages* (Bieswanger, 2007), *(...)/ dont 4get 2 txt me plz! Linguistic and Discoursal Features of*

*Short Message Service by Female Texters* (Yusuf et al., 2016).

All of the aforementioned research studies have been studies of the writing of the young people in the new media. However, to the best of their knowledge the authors of this article are not familiar of any paper or book that would have dealt with the research of the speech of the young people with regard to the influence of new media through the analysis of transcripts of speech of young people. This is the reason why the authors of this paper have conducted that kind of research and its description is given here below with the aim of pointing out the specific characteristic features of such language and of comparing it with the written language of young people.

## 2. Aim, participants, hypotheses, methodology

The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which the elements of the language of new media (abbreviations, omission, dialectisms, vulgarisms, anglicisms, etc.) are present in the speech of young Croats in their conversations due to the influence of the language of new media, the so-called Netspeak.

The starting hypotheses were the following:

H1 - In their mutual conversations in leisure time young people use a large number of abbreviations,

H2 - In their mutual conversations in leisure time young people use a large number of dialectal expressions,

H3 - In their mutual conversations in leisure time young people use a large number of vulgarisms and profanities,

H4 - Of all the elements of the language of new media in the oral speech of young people used in leisure time most common are abbreviations,

H5 - Young people use more elements of the language of new media in their leisure time in written than in oral communication.

Our sample consisted of conversations of 100 secondary school students in their final years. Initially, youth conversations were recorded, then the transcripts were digitalized into a word document, and finally a corpus analysis was made by means of Oxford WordSmith Tools 6.0 (by using its option called *Compare two lists*) with regard to the elements of the language of the new media in order to establish their representation in student conversations.

The survey was conducted in the summer and autumn of 2017 on young participants from the three Croatian counties (Varaždin, Međimurje and Karlovac).

For this article the authors analysed only those elements that had earlier been analysed in the

language of written media (Facebook or SMS), with the difference that some are immanent only in the written language and could not be explored in speech, e.g. orthographic or graphostylistic elements (from 2-7 – written in bold letters) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Elements that were analysed in the writing and in the speech of young people (those from numbers 2-7 only in writing)

1. abbreviations (btw, lol, fkt, dns, nmg, odg. etc.)
2. emoticons (:), :(, itd.)
3. only upper case letters (NEĆU DOĆI, etc.)
4. only lower case letters (marko je bio u zagrebu, etc.)
5. mixed letters (unuTar rijEći, etc.)
6. multiple punctuation marks (?????; !!!!!, :::::, ..... etc.)
7. other signs (*****, @, @, (((, &&&, →→, , etc.)
8. exclamation marks and signs of laughter (oooohooo, uuuuuujjj, haaaaahaa, etc.)
9. syntagmas without a subject (bio kod tebe, etc.)
10. syntagmas without auxiliary verbs (ja čuo ti jučer stigla ... etc.)
11. the use of <i>aorist</i> & <i>imperfekt</i> tenses instead of the <i>perfekt</i> (dođoh, etc.)
12. the use of regional dialectal expressions (kaj, napravil, plac, etc.)
13. the use of English loan words (šeram, lajkam, forvardiram, fejs, etc.)
14. vulgarisms (j... se, u pm, etc.)

## 3. Findings and Discussion

As we have already pointed out in the previous chapter to the different nature of written and spoken language, it is vitally important to compare the earlier research studies of the written language with our study of the spoken language even before the presentation of the results of that research study of the spoken language to highlight the most important features of the written and spoken language so that the results of the analysis of the spoken language could be properly understood.

Written language is a sign system that is subject to special norms and which exists in a written form that is manifested in texts. In the beginning there is always a word, thought, or an idea that are in the raw form only conditioned. Contrary to them, documents and written texts are available in physical condition. Recently, the so-called media-typical use of language has developed and its change is documented in the written form, i.e. by means of the written language. Instruments like the former typewriter, and today's computer have greatly simplified the recording of the spoken

language since it can almost literally be used to protocols with the aid of those instruments (this is what the authors have tried to do in this research study). And the result of the writing in new media (on the Internet, smartphone, i.e. on Facebook or WhatsApp) are the typed conversations or to put it differently a hybrid writing, i.e. the written text with elements of the speech.

On the other hand, spoken language implies all verbal utterances of a language produced by a human speaking apparatus. The spoken language is produced as a spontaneous, freely phrased speech in unmanaged, unobserved communication situations in conversation between two or more participants. The special conditions for the production of spoken language also include the reduced standardization, the attachment to a particular situation, interactivity and reduced speaking time. Presumably the most basic characteristic features of the spoken language – the ellipses i.e. speech in syntactically incomplete sentences, use of interjections, different phenomena of correction as well signals from the listener, pause signals, etc. Jozić and Rakovac also list the following: more frequent parsing, pauses and repetitions, interruption of communication, reduced vocabulary, a lot of nuances, phonetic reliefs, fast language, elaboration of the topics of the subject is disordered, more frequent use of dialect or regional "slang", use of non-verbal and para-verbal means, similarity to the "limited" code, a very specific and closed genre, full of occasional forms and expressions whose duration is very limited, the tendency to deviate from the norm, numerous new expressions, metaphors and phrases, regionally marked, depending on age and education, etc. (Jović, Rakovac 2007).

Below is the presentation of the results of the various elements of the research study. It should be noted that considering the fact that the study was about the Croatian language, all the given examples come from that language, but it is most likely that the study of the spoken language of young people in other languages would also show similar tendencies.

### 3.1. Interjections, exclamation marks and signs of laughter

Analyzing the transcripts of the conversations of young people in the three Croatian counties we have found that the following three elements (interjections, exclamation marks and signs of laughter) were intensively used in the speech of the youth, and as a confirmation for that a couple of examples are given below (see Table 2).

Table 2. Some interjections, exclamation marks and signs of laughter recorded in the speech of young people

Aha
Ha?
Aaa?
Aj
Ajde
Ohoho
Uj, juj, juj,
Hahahahaha
Je, je
Pa je
Eee
Ej
Ne, ne
Ooooo
Ajme meni...
Isuse Bože; Isuse; Ajoj Isuse; Bok te; Jaaaaj Bože...

### 3.2. Syntagmas without a subject; Syntagmas without auxiliary verbs and The use of aorist and imperfekt tenses instead of the perfekt

In our analysis of the speech of young people we have also noticed omissions of the subject. They occur pretty often and the following examples can be given as a proof for that (*stalno zaboravim; ja došla; ja rekla; kad si reko*).

It should also be noted that leaving out of auxiliary verbs is also present, but it does not occur as frequent as the omission of the subject and it can be illustrated with the following examples (*ti bez šećera; ja bila u Kauflandu; uvek bile i ostale*).

With regard to the third investigated element, i.e. the use of *aorist* and *imperfekt* tenses (they are Croatian counterparts of the Latin preterite and in the past they were only used in literary texts) it should be mentioned that people have recently begun using them in the written language in the language of new media. This current research study of the speech of young people has shown that the use of *aorist* and *imperfekt* tenses can be noted, but it is seldom and of course much less frequent than in the written language (e.g. *Frajer pade*).

### 3.3. English loan words/Anglicisms

The speech of young people in Croatia points to the frequent use of Anglicisms, which is also very common in other European languages. Thus words of English origin are very frequent in the spoken texts of the speech of young people that have been analysed for the purpose of this paper (see Table 3 with some examples of English loan words).

Table 3. Examples of Anglicisms recorded in the youth speech in Croatia

<i>See you</i>
<i>Okey, ok</i>
<i>Fuck, fuck</i>
<i>What a fuck</i>
<i>Ignor(e)</i>
<i>Very similar</i>
<i>Moron</i>
<i>Nice</i>
<i>Frendica</i>
<i>Thank you</i>
<i>By</i>
<i>Irish</i>
<i>Facebook</i>
<i>Whats App</i>
<i>My space</i>
<i>Twitter</i>
<i>Ipad...</i>

### 3.4. Regional Dialectal Expressions

One of the characteristic features of language of young people, both in speech and in writing, is, of course, the use of regional dialectal expressions. This current research study has confirmed that this is also the case with the speech of the youth in our sample. Expressions from the Kajkavian Dialect are most frequent because two of the counties where the research was conducted belong to the Kajkavian Dialect and one to the Stokavian, and it is well-known that the speech of young people is characterized by the use of regional speech from their environment. It should be emphasized that there are three main regional dialects in the Croatian language: In addition to Kajkavian, there are also Cakavian and Stokavian (which served as the basis for the Croatian standard language). Table 4 gives confirmed regional dialectal expressions found in the speech of the young people.

Table 4. Croatian regional dialectal expressions used in the speech of young people

<i>E, buš ti došel</i>
<i>Kaj</i>
<i>Kaj je?</i>
<i>Kaj buš rekel</i>
<i>Pa je</i>
<i>Do kad budeš delala</i>
<i>Valda ništ ni dete jelo</i>
<i>Viš kak je teško...</i>
<i>De je to?</i>
<i>Di ono?</i>
<i>Neću nekaj standardno</i>
<i>Kam ideš?</i>
<i>Imal je istetovirano</i>
<i>Znaš kak bu mi jednu maznul</i>
<i>Ja ne razmim niš</i>
<i>Već mi je išel na živce</i>
<i>Ima san dvi (Čakavian Dialect)...</i>

### 3.5. Vulgarisms and profanities

Young people often attempt to strengthen their expression by using vulgarisms and profanities. This has also been confirmed by the results of this analysis of the speech of young people, i.e. it has been shown that young people extremely frequently use them. Young people have used almost all examples of vulgarism to focus their attention on themselves, to enhance their expression or to show their group affiliation. Table 5 gives some examples as illustrations to confirm this claim.

Table 5. Vulgarisms and profanities recorded in the speech of young people

<i>Jebo te</i>
<i>Jebi se</i>
<i>What a fuck</i>
<i>Fuck you</i>
<i>Zajebavaš</i>
<i>Jeba te mater</i>
<i>Ko ga jebe</i>
<i>Bog te</i>
<i>Ide mi na k****</i>
<i>Beži u k****</i>
<i>Boli me k****</i>
<i>Pun k****</i>
<i>Do jaja</i>
<i>Dok prdneš ... Nemoj jako... Samo prduckaj...</i>
<i>Sereš</i>
<i>Jebem im...</i>
<i>Isti k****</i>
<i>Neki k****</i>
<i>Jebo te, u p**** m*****</i>
<i>Jebem ti sunce</i>
<i>U šupak...</i>

### 3.6. Abbreviations

In the speech of young people one can also note abbreviation otherwise characteristic of the language of the new media; however, they are not as often used as it is the case with regional dialectal expressions and vulgarisms. English abbreviations are more frequent in the speech of young people (e.g. *omg, btw, wtf, lol, tnx, sms, pls, web, e-mail, gprs, USB*), but it should be mentioned that Croatian ones can be heard more often and the following have been confirmed as examples (npr. *dns, poz, fejs, nmg, nznm, jbt, bm k*). There are, of course, fewer abbreviations used in the speech of the young people than in their writing in the new media, because results of the previous research studies of the written texts of young people have shown that abbreviations are one of the main characteristics of

their written language in new media as well as that new abbreviations are being produced almost daily.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of this research study have shown that young people use some elements of the language of new media in their mutual communication, but it is much less frequent than in their written communication. As far as the first hypothesis is concerned (H1 – In their mutual conversations in leisure time young people use a large number of abbreviations) it should be emphasized that abbreviations occur much less frequent than the authors have expected, so this hypothesis has only been partially confirmed for they are the abbreviations that have come up with the language of new media (*omg, btw, wtf, lol, sms, e-mail, nmg, dns, poz, fejs*) and they differ from the earlier ones: *ok, etc., itd. i sl.*). With regard to the second hypothesis (H2 - In their mutual conversations in leisure time young people use a large number of dialectal expressions) it must be stated that it has been confirmed. The third hypothesis (H3 - In their mutual conversations in leisure time young people use a large number of vulgarisms and profanities) has equally been confirmed. With reference to the fourth hypothesis (H4 - Of all the elements of the language of new media in the oral speech of young people used in leisure time the most common ones are abbreviations) it should be noted that this is not the case, but that dialectal expressions are most common followed by vulgarisms and profanities and that abbreviations come last. So this hypothesis has thus not been confirmed by the results of this research study. Unlike the fourth hypothesis, the fifth hypothesis (H5 – Young people use much more elements of the language of new media in their leisure time in written than in oral communication) has been fully confirmed by the results of this research study. This has been shown by the results of earlier research studies of the written language as well as now by the results of the speech of young people

Therefore, it has to be concluded that the elements of the language of new media do exist in the speech of the youth but that in the spoken language there is no such apparent influence of the elements of the language of new media as it is the case with the written language (e.g. very obvious elements of the language of new media such as orthographic violations of the norms /use of only small or capital letters, mixed letters, repetition of punctuation marks /graphostylistic elements/, emoticons and other symbols/) whereas the most apparent influences in speech are actually abbreviations that have emerged with writing in

new media. Vulgarisms and regional dialectal expressions that are extremely frequent cannot be attributed only to the language of the new media since the language of the youth is generally characterized by the frequent use of dialectal expressions and vulgarisms. The same is true of English loan words.

Given that there is naturally a considerable difference between the written language and the speech resulting also in a considerable difference in the research of the two modes of language (as it has been pointed out in the description of the research itself), limitations of this research study have to mentioned. They were the following:

- a) The recording must be announced, i.e. it cannot be done secretly – it was noticeable that the participants in the recordings were concerned about the impression they would make on the researchers (e.g. They apologized when they realized that they had forgotten that everything was recorded and they used curses and other bad language too often)
- b) Being aware of this, the authors of this paper have tried to forestall such situations by secretly recording some of the material and then asking the participants later for their consent for the material to be used publicly (later the participants asked for some parts of the material to be deleted - e.g. the description of a couple's sexual life)
- c) It should, therefore, be concluded that in the research of the spoken language it was very difficult to achieve the objectivity that we had earlier been able to achieve in our numerous previous research studies of the language of new media (Facebook and SMS).

However, it was possible for us to see the prevailing visible tendencies in the youth's speech, i.e. whether any characteristic elements of the language of new media could be also observed in their spoken language. This current research study has indeed shown strong tendencies in the use of vulgarisms, regional dialectal expressions, Anglicisms and of those abbreviations that are characteristic of the language of new media.

Since the research of the written language in Croatian and the above mentioned languages has pointed to the same characteristic features, it would be advisable to conduct research studies that would deal with the speech in both languages (English and German) in order to explore whether the speech of young people shows the same tendencies in all three languages.

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