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Vocabulary of Computer-mediated Communication in English

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Studentka se ve své práci bude zabývat specifickými rysy počítačové komunikace. Pozornost zaměří především na výskyt charakteristických lexikálních jednotek se zvláštním důrazem na používání zkratk pro toto medium typických. Na základě studia odborné lingvistické literatury bude obecně charakterizovat styl počítačové komunikace a podrobněji se bude poté věnovat slovní zásobě a používání specifických lexikálních jednotek v závislosti na účelu těchto textů. V analytické části bude zjišťovat, zda studenti angličtiny na určité úrovni své cizojazyčné kompetence tyto výrazové prostředky znají, používají je a zda si uvědomují jejich stylovou příznakovost, která jejich použití limituje pouze určité druhy textů.

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

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ANNOTATION

The thesis focuses on the specific features of computer-mediated communication and its developing vocabulary. It deals with new elements of electronic language, mainly with popular abbreviations and acronyms of CMC. The theoretical part presents the characteristics of the new communication medium and introduces some special lexical units that are typical for various kinds of computer-mediated communication. The goal of the practical part is to prove or disapprove a theory that Czech students of English use and are able to use these English special lexical units correctly and accurately. Additionally, it is observed whether frequent usage of CMC lexical elements has or has not an impact on discourse of Czech students of English. Moreover, the analytic part investigates the knowledge and understanding of such elements among the participants of the study.

KEYWORDS

computer-mediated communication, English, vocabulary, abbreviations, frequency, accuracy, language variation, discourse

NÁZEV

Slovní zásoba počítačové komunikace v angličtině

SOUHRN

Tato práce se zabývá rozvíjející se slovní zásobou a specifickými rysy počítačové komunikace. Sleduje nové elementy vyskytující se v elektronické komunikaci, a to hlavně oblíbené zkratkové podoby slov. V teoretické části práce jsou představeny hlavní typy a znaky počítačové komunikace a speciální lexikální jednotky pro tato media typické. Hlavním cílem výzkumu praktické části bakalářské práce je potvrdit či vyvrátit teorii, že Čeští studenti anglického jazyka používají speciální anglické lexikální jednotky v závislosti na správnosti a účelovosti daných textů. Dále je také zkoumáno, zda-li časté používání zkratk a zkratkových slov typických pro počítačovou komunikaci má či nemá vliv na vyjadřování a projev českých studentů anglického jazyka. Analytická část práce se také zabývá znalostí a frekvencí těchto lexikálních jednotek používaných mezi účastníky studie.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

počítačová komunikace, anglický jazyk, slovní zásoba, zkratková slova a zkratky, frekvence, přesnost a korektnost, jazykové variace, projev

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to observe the developing vocabulary of computer-mediated communication in English. In addition, it investigates and specifies different types of text-based computer-mediated interaction. The work is divided into two parts – theoretical and practical part. To begin with, the theoretical part explains the issue of computer-mediated communication and introduces various styles of electronic communication and its tools. It also provides information about the Internet language and related slangs, its specific lexical features and properties. To create a supportive theoretical background, the first part of the thesis often refers to long-term researches and studies of well-known linguists like David Crystal, Laurie Bauer or Naomi Baron. The combination of different conceptions and opinions helps to create a new impartial perspective on a particular issue. The fundamental part of the subject studied is vocabulary. To give background information and clarify the issue, one chapter dedicated to word-formation processes presented. However, the focus is centered on forming abbreviated forms of words and phrases. Theoretical part also deals with the style and variation of language in different types of CMC and is therefore completed by a great deal of examples and demonstrations related to the topic.

My personal motivation of choosing this topic originates from my interests in a rapid global and technological development. Very often I ask myself whether these changes are for the good or for the bad, considering all the aspects of our lives. Simply speaking, the same question is applicable to the rapid development of English language corpora.

The practical part of this paper observes whether Czech students of English, at various levels of their second language competence, are aware of new lexical elements that are typical for Internet language and whether they are able to use these expressions correctly and accurately. The research will mainly examine whether the students actively use the special lexical items (such as acronyms and abbreviations of CMC) in their online (and face-to-face) conversations and whether they are aware of their exact meanings. Based on a complex online survey, it will be also proved or disapproved whether usage of such lexical elements has or has not an impact (positive or negative) on students' written and spoken discourse.

1 Computer-mediated Communication

There are many significant features by which computer-mediated communication (CMC) differs from ordinary face-to-face communication. The consistent arrival of new technologies enormously affects the way we communicate. Face to face communication is a direct exchange of a message; we orally send or receive information. However, language is just one of the tools for communication. Apart from the language, we employ extra linguistic nonverbal features that can provide listeners additional information about our message, e.g. the tone of our voice, body language or facial expressions. In order to communicate effectively with other people, we have to be present at the same place or/and at the same time, using our speech and hearing. On the other hand, in computer-mediated communication, we can interact with others directly from our bedroom without leaving our home. We can communicate with any person in the world who can access the technological devices (computer, Internet) and who masters some basic technological skills. Therefore, Thurlow et al. (2004) says that “the meaning of messages does not reside in words, but is much more fluid and dependent on the context, shifting constantly from place to place, from person to person, and from moment to moment”.

John December, a well-known Web specialist and online publisher, defines CMC as “the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems (or non-networked computers) that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages” (December, 2013, [online]).

To compare, Susan C. Herring, an American scholar and linguist, defines CMC as follows:

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers. (...) Text-based CMC, in which participants interact by means of the written word, e.g., by typing a message on the keyboard of one computer which is read by others on their computer screens (1996, 1).

To summarize, computer-mediated communication is a type of social interaction which can work only under several conditions. These are for example the functioning technological devices, the technological skills and abilities or the knowledge of relevant language codes acquired.

2 Types of CMC

This thesis will focus on text-based CMC. However, it is relevant to mention all the varieties that today’s technologies offer. Such interactive environment which the Internet medium represents possesses numerous electronic communication channels which are specified by their own

rules and characteristics. It is possible to communicate via computers either online or offline. Specifically, online communication requires an Internet access, offline does not. The CMC world offers a variety of video, audio and text-based interaction programs. The computer conferencing – as we may summarize all the video and audio forms of the Internet communication – are relatively new as opposed to text-based formats. To compare, the first email message (text-based communication) was transmitted in 1971 and the first video call with audio as we know it today was transmitted in 1995 (Nefsis 2014). Naturally, due to the development of technologies and high-speed Internet access, all the possible forms of CMC are being constantly updated and improved. Furthermore, as in a real life, different people prefer different ways of communication. Some favor written kinds of communication, some would always raise spoken type of conversation. However, we also distinguish CMC according to synchronicity and audience criteria which will be discussed in the next subchapters.

2.1 Scope of Synchronicity

Besides the text and audio video distinction, scholars mainly distinguish computer-mediated communication in terms of synchronicity. In fact, they compare the type of communication that takes place in real time (sender and receiver are both online in order to exchange the messages) and the one that does not have to involve simultaneous interaction. Basically, users do not have to be online simultaneously; they can read or send messages whenever they want. As Baron (2010) points out “it is common to speak of asynchronous versus synchronous communication as if the two are polar opposites, in actuality they fall along a continuum”. Considering this statement, even for scholars is difficult to give a fixed and consistent definition of synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication.

2.1.1 Synchronous CMC

We consider synchronous computer-mediated communication to be an interaction where one can communicate with others in real time without major delays in receiving or sending messages (Baron 2010). Synchronous CMC have some similar features like conversation. We interact with others in a real time, reply immediately and may comment on responses simultaneously.

Later in the text we will read that Baron (2010) also distinguishes *one-to-one* and *one-to-many* synchronous types of CMC. The most popular types of synchronous CMC are for example Instant Messaging (IM) services, chats or computer conferencing systems. As Crystal puts it; “an instant messaging service allows electronic conversations between people who know each other”

(Crystal 2006, 14). One of the most well-known IM programs was established in 1990's and is called *I Seek You (ICQ)*. Each user can make up his or hers own *buddy list* – a list of friends he or she wants to communicate with. Instant Messaging may be defined as a type of communication service that allows users to create a kind of private chat room with another user. Their text-based communication takes place online, in real time, and via Internet. When a user logs on his or hers instant messaging program, it regularly alerts when somebody on the private buddy list is online. You can then contact that person via IM and initiate conversation (Webopedia 2014). The second user-favored service is called chat. Among the first chat services established was a program called *Internet Relay Chat* (abbreviated IRC) which supports both the *one-to-one* and *one-to-many* interaction. Above all, this communication software was mainly designed for group communication – as opposed to ICQ service. Chat servers usually offer various *chat groups*, in other words discussion forums, which users can enter or follow. Participants can read the other users' comments as well as contribute to the conversation. In comparison with instant messaging our comments are not private and can be read by any visitor of that particular chat channel.

According to Baron (2010, 49), the flow of the messages in synchronous CMC has similar features like speech. "It turns out that in IM conversations participants frequently break their written messages into chunks" (Baron 2010, 49). We may understand this statement as follows; in synchronous CMC we usually interrupt each other's discourse by posting another comment – e.g. "we utter a sequence of smaller chunks" (Baron 2010, 49) – as we do in ordinary spoken conversation. Since we want to express some thoughts or feelings, we adjust the language and words to our demands.

2.1.2 Asynchronous CMC

Asynchronous computer-mediated interaction is, simply speaking; every electronic communication in which it is up to the recipient and sender when they will read or send messages (Baron, 2010). Similarly, Crystal says that asynchronous interactions take place in "postponed time" (2006, 11). In my opinion, Crystal's explanation is the most accurate one; "in an asynchronous situation, the interactions are stored in some format, and made available to users upon demand, so that they can catch up with the discussion" (2006, 12). The most common asynchronous tools for computer-mediated communication are emails, blogs or even texting. Texting on mobile phones is usually classified as a type of CMC (Baron, 2010). The

messages and responses sent via these types of asynchronous CMC can be transmitted intermittently, in other words irregularly. The specific style, language and vocabulary used in synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters of this thesis.

2.2 Scope of Audience

Baron (2010) presents another distinction of CMC: *one-to-one* and *one-to-many* communicative dimensions. In *one-to-one* text-based conversation in CMC we can communicate for example via email or the so-called *instant messaging*. The *one-to-one* conversation allows the sender to contact one person at a time. On the other hand, the *one-to-many* text-based conversation enables the sender to contact more users at once. This type of communication can be performed via various chats or message services on social websites. Besides these two types of CMC, Vin Crosbie (in Pavlicek 2010, 94) adds one more type of CMC that considers the audience factor – the *many-to-many* interaction. It is used especially in social networking where many can address to many with individual approach maintained. Due to the fact that we can differentiate synchronous one-to-one and one-to-many communication and at the same time asynchronous one-to-one and one-to-many communication, there is no doubt that the CMC differentiation is rather complicated. Nevertheless, in the next two subchapters, we will narrow down the characteristics of CMC in terms of synchronicity and will focus on the special lexical units that appear in that form of communication.

3 Computer-mediated Language

To make the conversation fluent, people have proven their ability to establish new words and lexical units that are now considered typical for computer-mediated communication. What characteristics does computer-mediated language possess? Thanks to the significant speed with which are the technologies developing, we want to keep up with the process. Let us observe if there are any special features or characteristics of Internet language that people use when communicating through Internet media. Every language varies according to its origin, region or stylistic features and so does the Internet language. In this case of study we will only

focus on the text-based language of CMC in English; we will not deal with the language of computer conferencing programs or other similar systems.

During the time, electronic communication was referred to as for instance *Cyberspeak*, *Netspeak*, *Weblish* or *Netlish* (Crystal 2006). The term *Netlish* is according to Crystal (2006, 19) “plainly derived from English”, however, he also claims that the Internet environment becomes widely multilingual and as a consequence the use of this term simply decreases. Nevertheless, most importantly it is not the name of the language but the features of the languages that we take into account. One of the main features of Internet language is its special form. There is a following subchapter dedicated to this issue.

Crystal (2006) distinguishes the varieties of Internet language based on the ongoing “Internet situations”. He points out that whether we speak, write or communicate via Internet, we should follow some rules that are expected from us to obey. He claims that in case of breaking these rules or standards in particular situation we should be expecting some kind of judgment. In the event of various Internet situations, Crystal refers to it as to a variety of electronic communication systems and their grammatical, lexical and discourse features. He mentions electronic emails, chatgroups, virtual worlds, instant messaging services etc. (Crystal 2006).

In this age of technological revolution our time is becoming an extremely valuable commodity. This fact has of course a great impact on the Internet language. People have proven their ability to adjust the languages according to their specific needs. For instance, one of the major tasks in Internet communication is to keep the conversation fluent and meaningful at the same time. Writing (or in this case *typing*) is, however, more of a time-consuming type of communication. Since the Internet revolution took place, Internet users among themselves have invented numerous symbols, lexical units and abbreviations. Usually, these special symbols function as time-saving units in electronic communication. There are also cases when a wide range of symbols was created in order to create a secret-coded language. Are these new varieties of electronic language benefit to the standard language – in our case English – or the opposite? Crystal (2006) argues that “the Internet has encouraged a dramatic expansion in the variety and creativity of language”. In this case, according to Crystal’s broad and long-term studies, I would share his opinion, taking the positive side of the statement. To support this opinion, Baron claims that “online and mobile language is empowering and emboldening us” (2010, 29).

The attention in this thesis is mostly paid to the presence of some special lexical units, or symbols, that are specific for modern electronic communication. Stated above, abbreviated forms of words or phrases are one of the most common features of Internet language vocabulary. Another typical element of computer-mediated language includes keyboard symbols, also known as *emoticons*. As Crystal (2006, 39) explains, *emoticons* are “combinations of keyboard characters designed to show an emotional facial expression: they are typed in sequence on a single line, and placed after the final punctuation mark of a sentence”. Susan C. Herring (1996, 3) comments on CMC language register as follows:

The computer-mediated register has unique features of its own, such as the use of “emoticons” (smiley faces composed of ascii characters) and other graphics, as well as special lexis (“lurking”, “flaming”, “spamming”) and acronyms (FAQ, IMHO, RTFM).

Not to forget to mention, CMC language also differs in the characteristics of messages transmitted. When online communication takes place, there is a higher tendency to omit punctuation marks, capital letters or to make grammar and spelling mistakes (Maly, Rybka, 33). From a linguistic point of view, Baron (1998) defines the text on the Internet as a kind of “fragmentary language” which may be lacking coherence, punctuation or may contain typographical mistakes. There is one more issue of computer-mediated language that is left upon a discussion. In the following chapter, a general overview of whether CMC is a strictly written or spoken form of communication will be given.

3.1 Written or spoken form?

Even though we mainly use the keyboard to express ourselves through CMC, it is not agreed on whether CMC is particularly written type of communication. There are opinions that CMC is a combination of writing and speech. According to Herring (1996, 3), language of computer-mediated communication “is typed, and hence like writing, but exchanges are often rapid and informal, and hence more like spoken conversation”. During the research, some authors have determined the Internet language as a form of “written speech” (Dewitt 1994 in Crystal 2006, 27). Foremost, we should state the main differences between written and spoken language. According to standard criteria, such as space and time relation, visual contact, function, richness, structure and spontaneity and modifiability, the spoken and written forms of language are contrasted. Spoken communication is usually face to face, time-bound social interaction that is loosely structured and mainly spontaneous. Whereas written

communication is structured, usually unnatural, space-bound and visually decontextualized tool for communication (Crystal 2006, 27-28). We can consider computer-mediated communication a mixture of spoken and written forms of a language. Given these criteria, computer-mediated communication features interesting characteristics. In sense of time and space relation, CMC is time-bound in different ways and space-bound with restrictions. It is variable in spontaneity, visually decontextualized and loosely structured. Its function is at the same time socially interactive (with some restrictions) and variably factually communicative. The last feature might be considered an advantage – the CMC’s function of immediate modifiability of the text (Crystal 2001, 45-47).

In conclusion, many would agree that it is problematic to unify the definition of CMC. It has both speech-like and written-like features of communication. However, there is no doubt that the rapid development of this popular medium of communication is a very controversial topic and is worth the effort studying.

3.2 Netspeak

It was Crystal who had come up with the term *Netspeak*. “Netspeak is better seen as written language which has been pulled some way in the direction of speech than as spoken language which has been written down” (Crystal 2006). Even though we can use many different titles for CMC, *Netspeak* became quite popular. We can even find a definition of this term in Cambridge Dictionaries Online. It defines *Netspeak* as the “words, abbreviations, etc. that people use when communicating on the Internet” (online). Why did Crystal choose such term to represent Internet language? He claims that “as a name, Netspeak is succinct, and functional enough, as long as we remember that ‘speak’ here involves writing as well as talking, and that any ‘speak’ suffix also has a receptive element, including ‘listening and reading’ (2006, 19). With the term introduced, it is time to ask the question whether Internet language, for instance *Netspeak*, somehow influences our written or spoken language. According to Naomi Baron’s research conducted in 2005, she claims that “the actual linguistic impact of electronically-mediated communication was surprisingly small” (2010, 29). On the other hand, Crystal argues that the influence of *Netspeak* is “mainly on vocabulary, with graphology affected in some written varieties” (2006, 21). To demonstrate, here are some examples of words from computer technology that people adapted in their spoken conversation:

It is my turn to download now (i.e. I've heard all your gossip, now hear mine)
She's multitasking (said of someone doing two things at once)
Let's go offline for a few minutes (i.e. let's talk in private)
Are you wired? (i.e. ready to handle this) (Crystal 2006, 21).

However interesting these language novelties are, nobody can predict whether they will become a stable part of our vocabulary or not. By this time, we can only analyze those lexical units that have already entered the Internet language register; and positively speaking, expect further development.

3.2.1 Netiquette

Netiquette, in other words *Network Etiquette* is a summary of social and moral rules that every user of any computer-mediated communication should obey. It covers a whole range of issues from violence and bullying to inappropriate language and privacy (Crystal 2006, 75-77). We also have to pay attention to the way we address the potential receiver of our message and mind our writing and check our messages before sending. *Netiquette* can help people to get familiar with the Internet communication rules and to become a responsible Internet user.

3.3 Internet Slang

“Slang is the term used to describe a variety of language with informal, often faddy, non-standard vocabulary. Slang is a major source of new words (typically with a very limited life expectancy)” (Katamba 2005, 169). Oxford Dictionaries Online define the term *Slang* as “a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people” (Oxford Dictionaries 2014). Various kinds of slang usually arise from the desire to somehow distinguish members of some group from other people that are not a part of that particular group. For the most part, these differences are of a social character. However, we may distinguish for example Cockney slang (an old, English rhyming working-class slang), prison slang, sexually-oriented slang or Internet slang (Katamba, 2005).

According to present studies, it could be said that all the special words, acronyms and symbols used on the Internet are understood to be a part of *Netspeak*, e.g. Internet Slang. However, I see a slight difference between these two terms. I consider the elements of

Netspeak a general register of the Internet language more or less available for every web user. On the other hand, I consider Internet slang a type of specifically coded language that is meant to be understood just by certain groups of people, e.g. online gaming communities, hacker organizations or groups of people with similar interests. To interpret some examples, the next two sub-chapters will briefly deal with two popular types of Internet slangs.

3.3.1 Leetspeak

First of all, I would like to present the topic of *Leet* communication. *Leetspeak* is a kind of Internet slang language that was established as a secret-coded tool for communication. It has its own alternative alphabet of the English language. It is presented as an “unbreakable code for elite (referred to as e-leet or ‘leet) computer users” (Ferrante 2005, 3). This secret-coded language creatively combines keyboard symbols and numbers which displace letters. This secret slang allowed some users to access special chat rooms and websites. This code, however, enabled them to have undisturbed, sometimes unlawful, conversations (Ferrante, 2005). To demonstrate how challenging the decoding of *Leetspeak* can be, here are some examples:

1337\$|>3/-\|< stands for *Leetspeak*

#3110 stands for *Hello*

/-\|_ _ ‘5 \V3|_ _ 7} {/-\|- 3\|)5 \V3|_ _ stands for *All’s well that ends well* (Ferrante 5,14).

3.3.2 Lolspeak

Another type of Internet special language that is worth mentioning is *Lolspeak*. It differs from some Internet slangs because such language alternation does not bring new words or terms to the language vocabulary. However, it is surprising how much popularity has *Lolspeak* gained over the past few years. It is difficult to find a uniform definition of this phenomenon; however, the main characteristics of *Lolspeak* are non-standard spelling and phonetic transcription. Anderson, Woods and Ward (2012) comment on *Lolspeak* as follows:

Lolspeak is a playful language game that developed (...) from the language used online for captions that accompanied funny pictures of cats – *LOL* as in lough out loud. (...) The aim is to deliberately write in non-standard English, to break the rules in order to amplify the cuteness of the image and to make the audience laugh.

Lolspeak is already a widely-known and popular language phenomenon. The evidence for that claim may be the publication of a book called *Lolcat Bible: In Teh Beginnin Ceiling Cat Maded Teh Skiez an Da Urfs N Stuffs* in 2010. This book is a simplified, parody-like version of a Bible, translated into *Lolspeak*. Even though these non-standard language forms do not create new lexical units that we would find in our dictionaries, there is no doubt they shape our language. Whether these special elements of language are of temporary or long-term matters, only the time will reveal.

5 Vocabulary of CMC

The biggest component of any language is its vocabulary. If we want to speak a foreign language, it is not just the knowledge of grammar or accurate pronunciation that we have to master; the most important aspect of any language acquisition is learning vocabulary. There is countless number of words in English and yet the number does not stop to grow. Nevertheless, it is extremely difficult to agree on one definition of what a word is. According to Plag (2003, 4) the word is “an uninterrupted string of letters which is preceded by a blank space and followed either by a blank space or a punctuation mark”. On the other hand, McCarthy (1990, 3) defines words as “freestanding items of language that have meaning”.

The English vocabulary is unique in its vastness and never ending development. Not forget to mention – the English vocabulary has enormously expanded over the past fifty years especially thanks to the technological progress. In the previous chapter we discussed some of the most common ways of making new words in English. The question is, however, what are the most common types of creating new lexical items typical for computer-mediated communication.

5.1 Word-formation Processes

The word-formation process as a whole is a frequent topic to discuss among language specialists. Furthermore, this issue has been observed since the seventeenth century. The constant development and update of any language gives bottomless opportunities to observe this scientific area. There are many approaches to the study of word-formation, e.g. phonological, syntactic or semantic (Bauer 1983, 5). Since this paper deals with the update of English language vocabulary, it should also comment on the word-formation processes in

general. Consequently it will be examined which of the word-formation processes are crucial and significant for creating new lexical units typical for electronic language.

Most of the English vocabulary arises by making new lexemes out of old ones – either by adding an affix to previously existing forms, altering their word class, or combining them to produce compounds (Crystal 2004, 129). A general overview of most common word-formation processes will be given in order to present and understand the differentiation in word-formation process significant for electronic language production.

5.1.1 Compounding

Compounding is the most productive word-formation process in English. The varieties of combining two items and creating new words and yet meanings are very diverse. A compound is a unit of vocabulary which consists of more than one lexical stem. On the surface, there appear to be two (or more) lexemes present, but in fact the parts are functioning as a single item, which has its own meaning and grammar (Crystal 2004, 129).

The majority of compounds in English are the combinations of nouns, verbs and adjectives. Furthermore, the possibilities of combining the word classes are immense. However, noun-centered compounds are the most common ones. To demonstrate, here are some examples: *a redskin, a doghouse, an armchair*. Since the language is so diverse, we can also distinguish compound verbs (*sky-dive*), compound adjective (*childproof*), compound adverbs (*over-night*) etc.

In connection with abbreviations, some popular compounded words are determined as syllabic abbreviations. For instance, let us introduce a commonly used electronic terms like *pixel (picture element)* or *bit (binary digit)*.

5.1.2 Affixation

The second common way of creating new words in English is affixation. “There are three possible types of affix: those which occur before the root or stem of a word (prefixes), those which occur after (suffixes), and those which occur within (infixes)” (Crystal 128). That basically means that we can create immense number of words just by adding a morpheme to an existing word. There is a great variety of prefixes that can indicate orientation (such as *anti-* in *antisocial*), negation (such as *dis-* in *disobey*), number (such as *multi-* in

multicultural), location and distance (such as *trans-* in *transatlantic*) or time and order (such as *re-* in *recycle*) etc.

On the other hand, suffixes can change the word class and alter the meaning of the word as well. We distinguish *inflectional* and *derivational* suffixes. To be more specific, *inflectional suffixes* have a grammatical function and can change the number or tense of a word; *derivational suffixes* can change the meaning of the word and especially the word classes (as in *treat* → *treatment*, *hesitate* → *hesitation*).

In association with electronic communication, there are several affixations that well-earned a popular place among others. “The Internet era has popularized *cyber-* “of computers or computer networks” and *mega-* “vast”, as in *cyberspeak*, *cyberspace* or *megapixel*. (Britannica 2014).

5.1.3 Conversion

One of the most productive ways of creating new words is called conversion. New words are created from already existing ones; however, we don't change them in their form.

Lexemes can be made to change their word class without the addition of an affix – a process known as conversion. The items chiefly produced in this way are nouns, adjectives and verbs – especially the verbs which come from nouns (e. g. *to bottle*) and the nouns which come from verbs (e. g. *a doubt*) (Crystal 2003, 129).

Other examples of conversion are for instance: *to bicycle* (noun to verb), *to dirty* (adjective to verb) or *free-for-all* (phrase to noun) (Crystal 2003, 129). Thanks to process of conversion, quite a lot of new words related to CMC are developing. These are for instance verbs derived from nouns: “*to mouse*, *to clipboard*, *to geek out* (‘talk technically’), *to 404* (‘be unable to find a page’)” (Crystal 2006, 89).

5.1.4 Back-formation

Back-formation is a process which is, simply speaking, the opposite of the process of affixation. We create new words from already existing ones that are falsely assumed to be their original derivatives. For instance, the word *editor* appears to be a derivative of the verb *to edit*, it is, however, the noun *editor* which was in the language first. Some more examples of back-formation follows: *television* → *televise*, *baby-sitter* → *baby-sit*, *exhibit* → *exhibitor*. According to available sources, back-formation does not belong among the most productive

word-formation processes and thus don't significantly influence the vocabulary of computer-mediated communication.

5.1.5 Clipping

Clipping, in other words *shortening*, is a word-formation process when the word is reduced to one of its parts. Algeo (1983) claims that "the simplest form of shortening is by clipping an expression at the boundary between its main parts (its primary morpheme boundary)" (Algeo 8). According to Bauer (1983), "clipping refers to the process whereby a lexeme (simple or complex) is shortened, while still retaining the same meaning and still being a member of the same form class" (Bauer 233). To sum up, clipping basically means that we cut off a part of a word but the meaning remains the same. It can't be predicted which part of the word will be clipped, however, it is clear that the clipped form of the word is always the shorter one. Examples of clipped words are: *refrigerator* → *fridge*, *airplane* → *plane* or *examination* → *exam*. In the English language, it is also possible to combine some word-formation processes; in this case, we combine clipping and compounding, as in *optical art* → *op art* and *organization man* → *orgman*. To demonstrate some of the most common clippings in CMC environment, here is an example: *Internet* → *Net* or *Application* → *App*.

5.1.6 Blending

When distinguishing blends, we should be careful not to mislead them with compounds. As we know, compounds are combinations of two words, blends, however, consist of two words that are somehow changed, shortened or combined. These new words have meanings, usually adapted to the present development of various technologies, economic spheres and scientific technologies. To demonstrate, here are some examples provided: *motor* + *hotel* → *motel*, *channel* + *tunnel* → *chunnel* or *stagnation* + *inflation* → *stagflation*, etc. (Crystal 130).

The future popularity of blends in ordinary communication is questionable; however, it is true that over the twenty past years, blends became commonly used elements in media like TV commercials or radio advertisements. The reason is the eye-catching, original and sometimes exciting nature of these new lexical units. Here are examples that represent blends of computer-mediated environment: *electronic* + *mail* → *email*, *net* + *etiquette* → *netiquette*, *cyber* + *librarian* → *cybrarian*, *emote* + *icon* → *emoticon*.

Blending as a word-formation process supplements a high number of new lexical elements to the vocabulary of computer-mediated communication.

5.1.7 Borrowings and loanwords

Not to forget, English language supplies its vocabulary by borrowing words from other languages. According to Algeo (1991, 4), “a great proportion of the total English vocabulary is composed of words made from ultimately foreign elements”. Consider for example the word *pasta* of Italian origin, *cruise* of Dutch or *prince* of French origin. Since a major computer and technological development arises in English speaking countries, there are not so many words that English language would borrow from other languages.

5.1.8 Acronyms and Abbreviations

The last, most important type of word-formation processes for this thesis is a process of abbreviation. It may be difficult to agree on the consistent definition of this method, however, most of the definitions can be summarized as follows: abbreviations are usually shortened words or groups of words and that is done by taking their initial letters or syllables together. As Plag (2002, 161) describes it: “Abbreviations are most commonly formed by taking initial letters of multiword sequences to make up a new word”.

Abbreviations share some similar features with blending and conversion. When applying these methods, we somehow reduce the material of the word. Talking about abbreviations, we must take in consideration terms like *initialisms* and *acronyms*.

The difference between an acronym and an initialism is that an acronym is spoken as a word (scuba: self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) and usually written in lower case letters, whereas an initialism is sounded as the letters in sequence (e.g. BBC) and is usually written in capitals and sometimes with full stops between letters. Both word-formation processes are ways of being economical in the pronunciation of long compounds and noun phrases (Shortis 2001, 59).

Bauer refers to an acronym as to “a word coined by taking the initial letters of the words in a title or phrase and using them as a new word” (Bauer 1983, 237). On the other hand, in his book *English Word-formation*, he doesn't mention the term *initialism* in the topic-relevant chapter.

Based on the research, it can be assumed that all the words created by this similar way of production are abbreviations, but at the same time, we have to take into account the fact that

all abbreviations are not necessarily acronyms. To sum up, *initialism* (sometimes called *alphabetism*) is a method when the words are abbreviated by using initial letters which can be pronounced by their alphabetical sound – simply speaking, we pronounce the word letter by letter (e.g. *CD* or *TV*) (Algeo 2002, 9). On the contrary, acronyms are formed similarly, but with a different way of pronunciation – that is according to the usual standards of English orthography¹ (Algeo 2002, 9).

However, everything around us is constantly changing, and so is the language. Throughout the human history we could witness a great development in all possible aspects of our lives. The sustaining need to name every single object that is new around us is obvious. We can notice that our everyday lives have changed rapidly over the past few decades; that is thanks to the technological and scientific development. We don't have time to relax, spend some quality time with our families or even talk to our relatives and friends. We are basically too busy for everything. This problem has also affected the way we communicate. We shorten words, use various symbols (sometimes even secret-coded) and create new language elements in order to save ourselves some time. This thesis focuses on the development of special lexical units that occur especially in computer-mediated communication. This paper mainly focuses on the language elements that were created as abbreviations or acronyms. Since these elements of computer-mediated communication are quite new, the whole topic area appears to be rather unexplored. This "language evolution", however, has got various pros and cons. David Crystal, a British linguist, commented on the popularity of new shortened word-elements as follows:

The fashionable use of abbreviations – a kind of society slang – comes and goes in waves, though it is never totally absent. In the present century, however, it has been eclipsed by the emergence of abbreviations in science, technology (...) and media. The reasons for using abbreviated forms are obvious enough. One is the desire for linguistic economy (...). They also convey a sense of social identity: to use an abbreviated form is to be 'in the know' – part of the social group to which the abbreviation belongs (Crystal 120).

¹ "correct or proper spelling", mid-15c., *ortographie*, from Middle French *orthographie* (Old French *ortografie*, 13c.), from Latin *orthographia*, from Greek *orthographia* "correct writing," from *orthos* "correct" (see *ortho-*) + root of *graphein* "to write" (see *-graphy*)

5.1 Abbreviations and Acronyms in CMC

In this chapter, various acronyms and abbreviated forms of words used in CMC will be presented. The topic of word-formation process of these shortenings was already introduced in the preceding chapter, so it won't be discussed again. In fact, this chapter focuses on the occurrence of the most frequently used abbreviations and acronyms on the Internet.

For a real-time, computer-mediated communication, it is essential for users to express themselves quickly as possible. Christopher C. Werry (Werry in Herring 1996, 53) adds that “speakers are competing for attention; a potential respondent may get drawn into another conversational thread if too much time is spent producing a message”. Consequently, Internet users tend to economize their language and yet use syntactically-reduced words, such as acronyms (Herring, 53). According to Crystal, acronyms are “no longer restricted to words or short phrases, but can be sentence-length: AYSOS [‘Are you stupid or something?’], CID [‘Consider it done’]” (Crystal 2006, 90). He adds that “some are rebuses, in that the sound value of the letter or numeral acts as syllable of a word, or are combinations of rebus and letter initial: B4N [‘Bye for now’], CYL [‘See you later’]” (Crystal 2006, 90). In addition, some describe emotional acronyms as “textual translations of nonverbal behaviors” (Atifi, Gauducheau, and Marcoccia, 2008). Moreover, Shortis refers to this type of language as to “subcultural language of humorous mock initialism forms” (Shortis 2001, 60).

In August 2013, *The Oxford University Press* announced a quarterly update to Oxford Dictionaries Online (ODO). The most controversial words added to the register were some common Internet slang expressions and shortenings. This piece of information spread around and gave rise to passionate debates. Here are some words that were added to the ODO: *TL;DR* (too long; didn't read), *FOMO* (fear of missing out), *selfie* (a photograph taken of oneself, usually taken with a smartphone or webcam) or *srsly* which is an informal term used for the word *seriously* (Oxford Dictionaries 2014).

To give a list of top ten most commonly used abbreviations and acronyms of CMC; several websites' statistics were compared. The lists of the most popular acronyms and abbreviations used on websites, in text-messages, emails, chat rooms, blogs etc. were equated and therefore compiled a table number one. According to my brief research, here is a table of most commonly used abbreviations and acronyms in the Internet environment.

Table 1

Selection of Top Ten Popular Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASAP	As soon as possible
BRB	Be right back
BTW	By the Way
JK	Just kidding
LMAO	Laughing my ass off
LOL	Lough out loud
OMG	Oh my God
ROFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
TTYL	Talk to you later
WTF	What the fuck

The abbreviations containing letter and number homophones are intentionally omitted from this list due to the fact that the next two chapters are dedicated to this subject matter.

5.2 Letter and Number Homophones

In the *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, Crystal refers to homophones as to “words (e.g. lexemes) which have the same pronunciation but differ in meaning” (Crystal 1990, 149). In this case of study, the essential feature of homophones is the pronunciation of separate letters or numbers (Farina, Lyddy 2011, 146). In contrast, Crystal in his later book called *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8* (2009, 38) refers to these characters as to *logograms*. He defines this term as “a use of single letters, numerals, and typographic symbols” (Crystal 2009, 37) that represents words or parts of words. Even though this book is mainly devoted to text messaging, we can apply its content to this thesis because the language of text messaging and *cyberspeak* is closely related to each other. To add one more point of view, Katamba (2005) likens this language process to *rebus principle* of pictograms. According to him, letter and number-like abbreviated combinations are elements “whose phonological properties are exploited so that the abbreviations become pronounceable as though they were normal words or acronyms” (2005, 188). Crystal (2009, 38-39) also mentions the similarity between texting and rebus, however, he clarifies that “the letters and logograms of texting inhabit a totally different space from that of pictograms”. He adds that a rebus is “a message which, in its

original definition, consists entirely of pictures that are used to represent the sounds of words, rather than the objects they refer to” (Crystal 2009, 39). Obviously, letter and number homophones cannot be classified as pictograms since letters and numbers are no pictures. Even though the issue of pictograms is not essential for this thesis, it is closely related to CMC. Many would agree that the symbolic language, including the letter and number homophonic words or phrases, is similar to decode some kind of puzzle. It is important to note that language rebuses and the like are nothing new for the language history (Crystal 2009, 41). It can be said that the development of computer technologies and the like had suggested an expansion of these similar language-coded rebuses.

To introduce some of the most common letter and number homophones of the electronic communication, a similar table of top ten letter and number homophones was compiled as in the preceding subchapter.

Table 2

Top Ten Popular Letter and Number Homophones

2DAY	Today
4E	Forever
B4	Before
CU	See you
GR8	Great
IC	I see
NO1	No one
R	Are
U	You
Y	Why

5.5 Keyboard Symbols

This section will briefly introduce the phenomenon of *emoticons*. *Emoticons* are usually described as symbols that substitute the visual facial or gesture expressions in electronic communication (Maly, Rybka 2002, 23). As Crystal puts it, *emoticons* are “types of pictograms”, e.g. “graphic devices where the meaning is entirely a function of the shape of the

symbols” (2009, 38). Werry defines these symbols as “graphical representations of facial expressions designed to indicate the speaker’s tone and emotional state” (Werry in Herring 1996, 63). He also notes that emoticons function – as well as acronyms – as forms of abbreviation (Werry in Herring 1996, 55). Moreover, Crystal also says that an emoticon, e.g. “a smiley still allows a huge number of readings (happiness, joke, sympathy, good mood, delight, amusement etc.), which can only be disambiguated by referring to the verbal context” (Crystal 2006, 39). Even though *emoticons* are not exactly a textual variety of the Internet language, however, they carry similar function as paralinguistic features of face-to-face communication. According to Batliner and Schuller, paralinguistics, e.g. “alongside linguistics”, are concerns of “how you say something rather than what you say” (2013, Introduction). We can imagine the concept of paralinguistic features as all non-verbal aspects of face-to-face communication. According to Crystal’s *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, these are for instance facial expressions, tone of voice or intonation of speech (1990, 220). When applied to CMC, we notice that *emoticons* and the like supply the Internet language with these speech-similar features.

Emoticons are commonly read sideways, in some other varieties straight ahead (Crystal 2009, 38). Here are some examples of popular emoticons used in CMC with the most common meanings they carry.

Table 3

Popular Emoticons of CMC according to David Crystal

:-)	‘smile’
;-)	‘wink’
:-@	‘screaming’
;-)	‘crying’
:-o	‘confused’
:-*	‘kissing’

(Crystal 2004 and 2009)

6 Varieties of Language

A lot has been said about various words and special lexical elements that occur in computer-mediated vocabulary. However, this chapter will deal with division of these computer-mediated vocabulary units according to which medium they are most commonly carried through. This section will be divided into three subchapters. Each subchapter will deal with the language and vocabulary of one particular medium. For this thesis I have chosen to study these aspects in email, instant messaging and chat communication processes.

6.1 Email Communication

Email is a common tool for electronic communication and is considered to be an asynchronous type of CMC. It means that “the users do not have to be online simultaneously, as an email message can be composed, sent or read at any time from any Internet-connected computer” (Frehner 2008, 37). Above all, electronic email discourse has the least features of spoken conversation in comparison with other electronic communication forms of messages, e.g. instant messages. The form of email messages is subjected to specific rules and requires more structured formats than other forms of CMC. Crystal calls it “a fixed sequence of discourse elements” (2006, 99). Likewise in letter communication, the writing style is restricted by some rules, however, these rules change according to the type of letter we intend to write. We follow different rules when writing formal, semi-formal and informal letters. The same restrictions we may apply when writing emails. We use different language structure and vocabulary when writing a business email in contrast with a personal-like one. Besides that, we have to follow the so-called “functional elements” (Crystal 2006, 100). These elements may vary in form; however, they usually display similar function. For the most part, we determine heading, greeting, body of the message and farewell. In contrast, when writing a formal letter, much of our attention is paid to the stylistic format of the message. Luckily, in email writing style we don’t have to worry about strict paragraphing, letterhead typography or choice of notepaper (Crystal 2006, 126). For the purpose of this paper, the main interest in email communication is the vocabulary register. Are the Internet slang abbreviations and acronyms popular in email communication? Is the use of emoticons appropriate in such cases? Let us try to answer these questions. Crystal says about email communication that “there has been a tendency to highlight the informal features of messages – such as the use of contractions, loose sentence constructions, subject ellipsis (*Will let you know*), colloquial abbreviations (*bye, cos, v slow, s/thing*), and ‘cool’ acronyms (*LOL, CU*)” (2006, 127). Even

though Crystal confirms the presence of these special lexical units in email communication, he adds that these elements are not “indicative of the variety as a whole” (2006, 127-129). He makes the same conclusion about *emoticons*. “Stylistic conformity there may be among particular groups of e-mail users (e.g. undergraduates, teenagers), but in the variety as a whole the potential for significant group differentiation exists” (Crystal 2006, 129).

Frehner (2008), on the other hand, claims that “lexical reductions abound in email messages”. She includes “clippings, initialisms, consonant clusters as well as letter and number homophones or ad-hoc abbreviations” and she classifies them as “non-conventional spellings” (Frehner 2008, 52). To demonstrate, she gives examples of common letter and number homophones: /u/ that stands for the pronoun ‘you’, /c/ that stands for the verb ‘see’, letter /r/ that refers to the finite verb form ‘are’, the letter /y/ to the question word ‘why’ and /b4/ for the preposition ‘before’ (Frehner 2008, 52). Nevertheless, according to her research, there were only 5.87 instances of homophones present per one thousand words and the most common homophone used in emails was /u/ homophone with 82%. In agreement with her research, letter and number homophones are typical for computer-medium communication, but they are not so frequent in emails (Frehner 2008, 53). Furthermore, she introduces another method of economizing the language – consonant spelling. “It is another effective economic means in computer-mediated communication (...) where words are spelt without vowels” (Frehner, 54). Again, the data showed that consonant spellings appear in only 0.78 instances per thousand words (Frehner 2008, 53). In Crystal’s words, “consonants carry much more information than vowels” (2009, 26) and I cannot agree more. He gives two examples:

This sntnc hsnt gt ny vwls [= This sentence hasn’t got any vowels].

I eee a o a ooa [= This sentence hasn’t got any consonants] (Crystal 2009, 27).

It is obvious that we are able to read the sentence with vowels omitted but it is not possible to do it vice versa.

According to Frehner, a little more frequent are “phonological approximations and other non-standard shortenings” with 5.81 instances per one thousand words (2008, 59). It is the “tendency to spell the words in such a way that they represent the specific pronunciation of their user” (Frehner, 59) that forces us to produce such shortenings. Examples are *eva* for ‘ever’, *nite* for ‘night’, *luv* for ‘love’ or *kinda* for ‘kind of’ (Frehner 2008, 59). Unfortunately, neither Crystal nor Frehner deals in greater detail with the occurrence of acronyms in email

communication. To sum up, we may consider email communication as the one most structured format of CMC. Most probably it is similar to letter writing with a major difference in its formality. However, we cannot claim that any of the special lexical elements that are discussed in this paper are significantly typical for email discourse.

6.2 Instant Messages

Instant messaging services have developed over the past twenty years. Its main advantage is its synchronicity. As opposed to emails, instant messages (IM) are transmitted immediately so they intensify the conversation flow. Other considerable benefits of IM are the possibilities to create personal profiles, set up buddy lists, choose a screen name and even communicate with many people at the same time. In the time of the biggest boom of IM, acronyms and abbreviations as *TTYL (Talk To You Later)* or *OMG (Oh My God)* have developed. It was perceived as a totally new “linguistic code” which was created and only understood by the young users of IM services (Baron 2008, 45-46). But how does the language of IM differ from the email one? Crystal point out that “an email exchange is not really a conversation in the sense of an exchange that can be carried on over an indefinite period of time” (2006, 247). Crystal also supports the idea that IM conversations cause the modification of a language. In his words, “it is the synchronous interaction which causes most radical linguistic innovation” (2006, 135). In 2003, an American linguist Naomi Baron led IM research study with her students. Besides other linguistic questions, she explored the lexical issues of an instant messaging program called AOL (America Online) Instant Messenger. She has collected 23 IM conversations containing 11 718 words (Baron 2008, 56). From the lexical point of view, Baron in her survey has included only electronically-mediated communication (EMC) abbreviations and acronyms. It means that she excluded abbreviations (like *hrs = hours*) and acronyms (like *US = United States* etc.) that are commonly used in offline spoken and written conversation (Baron 2008, 59). With regard to abbreviated forms, Baron has examined that only 31 out of 11 718 words were EMC abbreviations. Here is a table that demonstrates her findings:

Table 4

Electronically-mediated Communication Abbreviations in AOL Instant Messages

<i>bc (also b/c) = because</i>	5
<i>bf = boyfriend</i>	2
<i>cya = see you</i>	7

<i>k = OK</i>	16
<i>y? = why</i>	1

(Baron 2008, 59).

In comparison, acronyms gained more popularity in usage. The resulting number for EMC acronyms was 90 out of the total 11 718 words. The table showing the details follows (Baron 2008, 59):

Table 5

Electronically-mediated Communication Acronyms in AOL Instant Messages

<i>brb = be right back</i>	3
<i>btw = by the way</i>	2
<i>g/g (also g2g) = got to go</i>	2
<i>LMAO = laughing my — off</i>	1
<i>lol (also LOL) = laughing out loud</i>	76
<i>OMG = oh my god</i>	1
<i>Ttyl = talk to you later</i>	5

It is obvious that the acronym *LOL* gained the most popularity among users of AOL Instant Messenger. However, as Baron points out, the meaning of *LOL* didn't always refer to *laughing out loud*, but sometimes it stood for such conversation fillers like *OK*, *cool* or *yeah*. Baron also comments on the occurrence of contractions, emoticons and spelling mistakes. However, these elements won't be further discussed for they are not pivotal subjects of this thesis. To compare, I have chosen another extensive survey that took place between 2004 and 2006. The authors of this study were professors from University of Toronto – Derek Denis and Sali A. Tagliamonte. They set up a three-year research project called *Teen Talk in Toronto* which observed IM conversations of 71 teenage students. According to Denis and Tagliamonte, their study is with its “thousands of individual conversations donated (...) probably one of the most authentic pictures of teen language and inter-active CMC discourse in existence” (Denis and Tagliamonte 2008, 10). Let us introduce their result table of sixteen most frequent special lexical units like acronyms and abbreviations below:

Table 6

Characteristic IM Forms: Frequency and Proportion of Total Word Count

<i>Haha</i> (laughing)	16 183	1.47%
<i>Lol</i> (laugh out loud)	4 506	0.41%
<i>Hehe</i> (laughing)	2 050	0.19%
<i>Omg</i> (Oh My God)	1 261	0.11%
<i>Hmm</i> (thinking)	1 038	0.09%
<i>Brb</i> (be right back)	390	0.04%
<i>Tyl</i> (talk to you later)	298	0.03%
<i>Btw</i> (by the way)	249	0.02%
<i>Wtf</i> (what the fuck)	218	0.02%
<i>Arg</i> (frustration)	197	0.02%
<i>Hwk</i> (homework)	99	0.01%
<i>Nvm</i> (nevermind)	78	0.01%
<i>Gtg</i> (got to go)	68	0.01%
<i>Np</i> (no problem)	65	0.01%
<i>Lmao</i> (laugh my ass off)	63	0.01%
<i>Nm</i> (not much)	32	0.00%
Total	26 795	2.44%

To conclude, Denis, Tagliamonte (2008) and Baron (2008) have collected quite comparable scope of information. They have observed the IM communication among young users of CMC and achieved very similar results. As Denis puts it, “the use of abbreviations, short forms, and symbolic uses in IM is without a doubt a new vogue, but much rarer than the media have led us to believe” (2008, 12). The main point we can make about the computer-mediated language (to the extent of this chapter), concerning email and instant messages, is the fact that IM communication is much richer in language and vocabulary variation than the email one. The most popular items of electronic language are those of emotional expression, such as *Haha* or *LOL*. Both abbreviated forms express delight or laughter. However, according to the results mentioned above the essential information is that Internet language lexical elements (abbreviations and acronyms) are less common in use than it was considered.

6.3 Chat

Chat services are communication channels mainly designed for group interaction. Baron describes chat as “a synchronous platform for holding conversations with multiple participants” (2010, 22). Werry (in Herring 1996, 48) adds that chats are “social spaces made available (...) across the Internet in which people converse and interact”. Basically, every user of chat can virtually enter a channel or room which is dedicated to a specific topic or specific group of people. Chat room is described as “an electronic meeting place where participants can communicate with each other at the same time but in different places” (Giguere 2003, 16). Chat became a medium of frequent criticism – mainly for its safety. The chat medium gives an opportunity – as opposed to emails and instant messages – of great anonymity. With this in mind, it can bring a whole range of social issues. Users can freely and unobserved impersonate various identities and so trick other users. There were many reports of young people being lured or even seduced in real life by strangers from chat environment. This was the point when IM services began to gain more popularity as they offered more safety. Regardless of this issue, we will now concentrate on the lexical features of the electronic language used in chats. Since the process of sending messages via chat is synchronous, the need to keep the conversation flow goes hand in hand with the need to economize the language. It is convenient to mention Werry’s assumption that participants in chat sessions are competing for attention and consequently use such playful lexical units as acronyms and abbreviations (Werry in Herring 1996, 53). He names abbreviated forms, acronyms, deletion of subject pronouns, paralinguistic cues, capitalization and non-standard spellings as the main features of online chat language. An interesting point is made when he comments on concrete forms of abbreviation.

Certain forms of abbreviation have emerged that are native to certain Internet Relay Chat (IRC) communities. An interesting example is the word ‘re’. It is short for ‘hello again’, and is used to greet someone for second time, usually after they have recently left a channel and then rejoined (Werry in Herring 1996, 56).

To conclude, Werry says that thanks to the use of abbreviated and similar word-forms and the speed with which messages can be transmitted “the pace of the exchange is more like face-to-face” (Werry in Herring 1996, 56).

Abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons can be found mainly in chat rooms and instant messages where the messages have to be produced fast. Katamba (2005) also claims that there are several words that originated in the chat environment. For instance, the acronym *pona*

referring to ‘a person of no account’ (e.g. ‘a person who is not, or never has been online’) is a derogatory term for people that are not denizens of the Internet (2005, 187).

Also contractions of words is a typical feature of chat discourse, e.g. *wanna* (want to), *donno* (I don’t know) or *sorta* (sort of) etc. (Greiffenstern 2010, 48). It is also stated that such contracted words give the Internet communication the more speech-like character (Greiffenstern 2010, 49). It can be agreed that the use of abbreviated forms and acronyms (and emoticons as well) is an analogy to spoken discourse.

To sum up, a table demonstrating the top most common abbreviated forms of words (or phrases) and acronyms used in various chat rooms is provided. We can spot many similarities in usage of some word-forms, such as the very common *LOL* acronym which has occurred both in email, instant messaging and chat conversations.

Table 7

Popular CMC chat abbreviations and acronyms

Y	Why
U	You
C	See
BBS	Be back soon
BRB	Be right back
BTW	By the way
CWYL	Chat with you later
CU	See you
CUL8R	See you later
FWIW	For what it's worth
FYI	For your information
GIWIST	Gee I wish I'd said that
HHOK	Ha ha only kidding
HTH	Hope this helps
HTHBE	Hope this has been enlightening
IMHO	In my humble opinion
IMNSHO	In my not-so-humble opinion

IOW	In other words
IRL	In real life
ITRW	In the real world
LOL	Laughing out loud
M/F	Male or female?
OTP	On the phone
OTF	On the floor
OIC	Oh, I see
OTOH	On the other hand
POV	Point of view
ROTFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
RTFM	Read the fucking manual
TTYL	Talk to you later
U2	You too
WRT	With regard to

(CNET, Ewa Jonsson 1998)

7 Research

The practical part observes the knowledge and awareness of special lexical units used in computer-mediated communication among Czech students of English at various levels of their second language competence. The crucial question to observe is whether the use of electronic language – in this case the abbreviated forms of words – have or have not an impact on the students' written or spoken discourse in general. A quantitative type of research questionnaire was chosen as the most suitable data-collecting instrument. The survey is anonymous and contains 26 questions. The majority of the questions are of a closed format; however, in order to give the respondents more space for their own opinions, a few open-ended questions are used as well. To calculate statistical data easier, a high number of multiple choice questions are present in the questionnaire. Even though the respondents could be of any English language level and the whole survey is written in English, the questions were set up to be easily understandable. The questionnaire was designed online and was available on a website. The survey was restricted in only two aspects: the respondents had to be of Czech nationality and they had to possess some knowledge of English. During the research time, 158 questionnaires were collected. Analysis and interpretation of the obtained data are presented by graphs, charts and providing comments. Overall, the aim of the questionnaire is to answer these research questions:

1. Do Czech students of English use English Internet language (abbreviations etc.)?
2. Do Czech students of English use these lexical items accurately concerning the stylistic norms of communication?
3. Do they know and understand the exact meaning of such lexical elements?
4. Does the usage of Internet language in any aspect influence the students' written or spoken discourse? What do the students think?

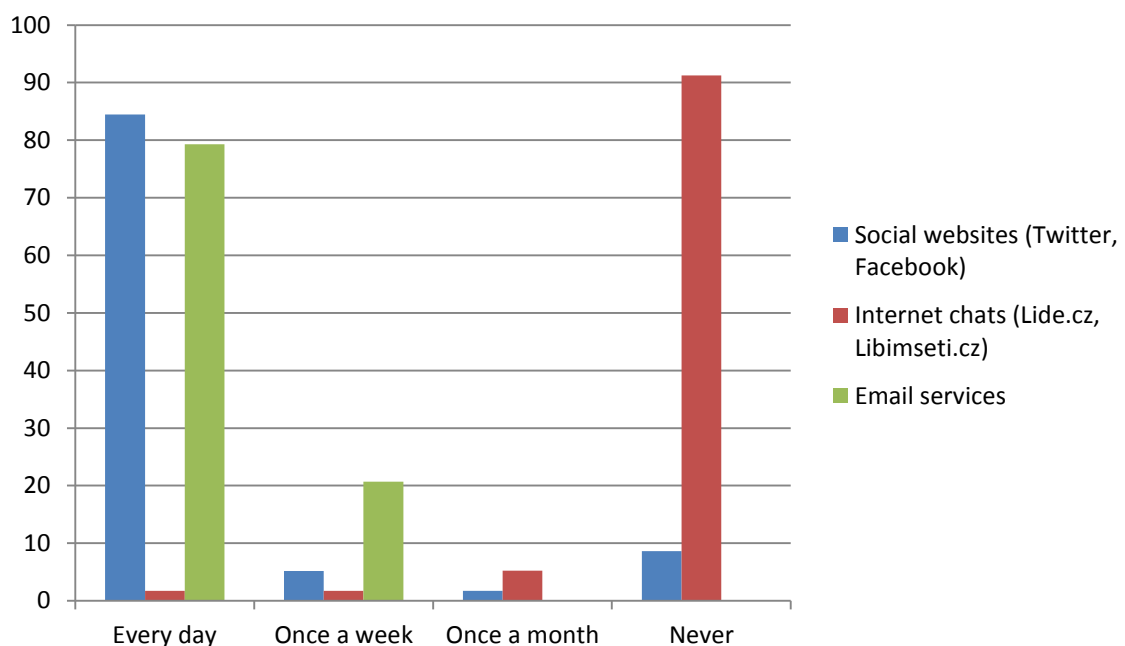
7.1 Data Analyses

The questionnaire was presented as an anonymous collection of questions which will be only used for the purpose of this bachelor thesis research. The first question finds out whether the respondents use Internet in order to communicate with others - the answer was *Yes* in all 158 filled-in questionnaires.

Question number two (Q2) investigates which of the Internet communication services (social websites, email services, chats, other) respondents prefer the most. The majority of respondents (70.69%) prefer to communicate via social websites and the rest of respondents voted for email services with 29.31%. It is surprising that chat as a communication tool didn't get any percentage in popularity.

The third question (Q3) aims to find out how often do the respondents use such communication channels. Again, the focus is on social websites, emails, and chat services. The following graph demonstrates the results:

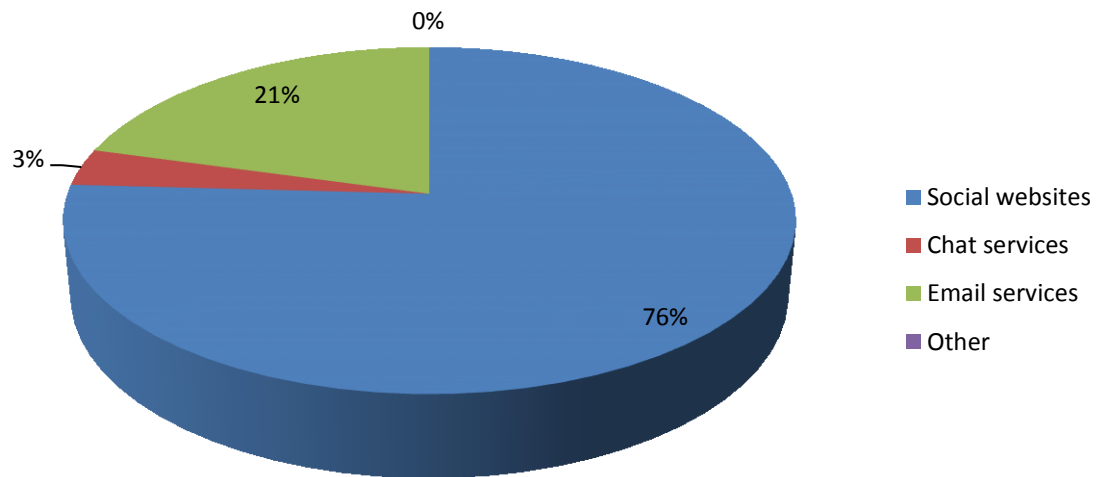
Graph 1 (Q3)



Considering the graph, we may claim that the most popular and often used type of communication channel is the one of social websites. 84.48% of respondents say they use such channels every day. Similarly, email services gained popularity in use up to 79.31%. In comparison, Internet chats from the respondents' point of view are the least common in use. The highest merit in this graph – 91.23% shows that the majority of respondents never use Internet chats to communicate with others. At this point already, we can assume that the specific vocabulary of Internet chats won't have a major impact on students' discourse since they almost do not use these communication devices. However, it is possible to predict that the vocabulary used in emails and instant messages programs may somehow influence the students' written or spoken discourse.

Question 4 (Q4) investigates which of the electronic communication devices respondents usually use in order to contact their friends. To compare, question 5 (Q5) asks how the respondents usually contact school or office authorities. The results received are very interesting. To demonstrate, here is a graph showing the results of Q4:

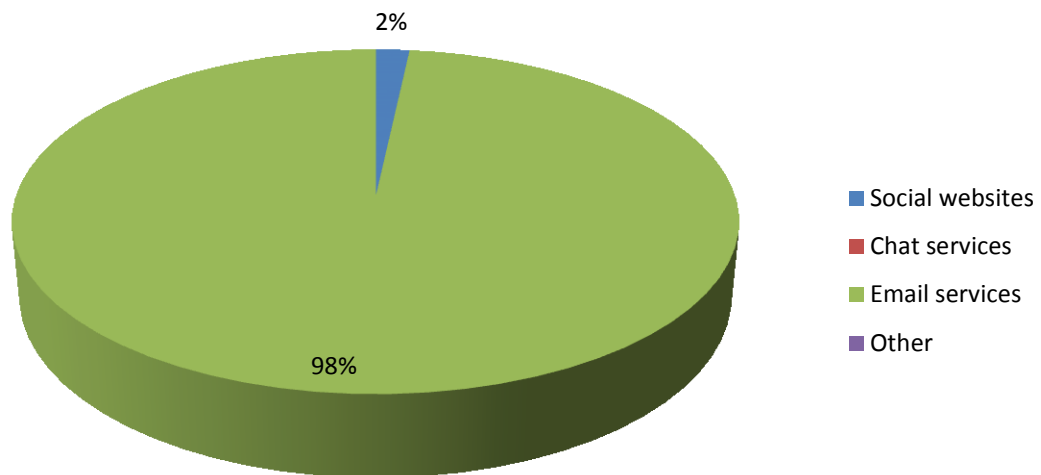
Graph 2 (Q4)



Most of the respondents prefer to communicate with their friends via social websites (76%) and only 21% of the rest use email services to contact their peers. A negligible number of the respondents (3%) contact their friends via chat services.

To compare, here is a graph to Q5:

Graph 3 (Q5)

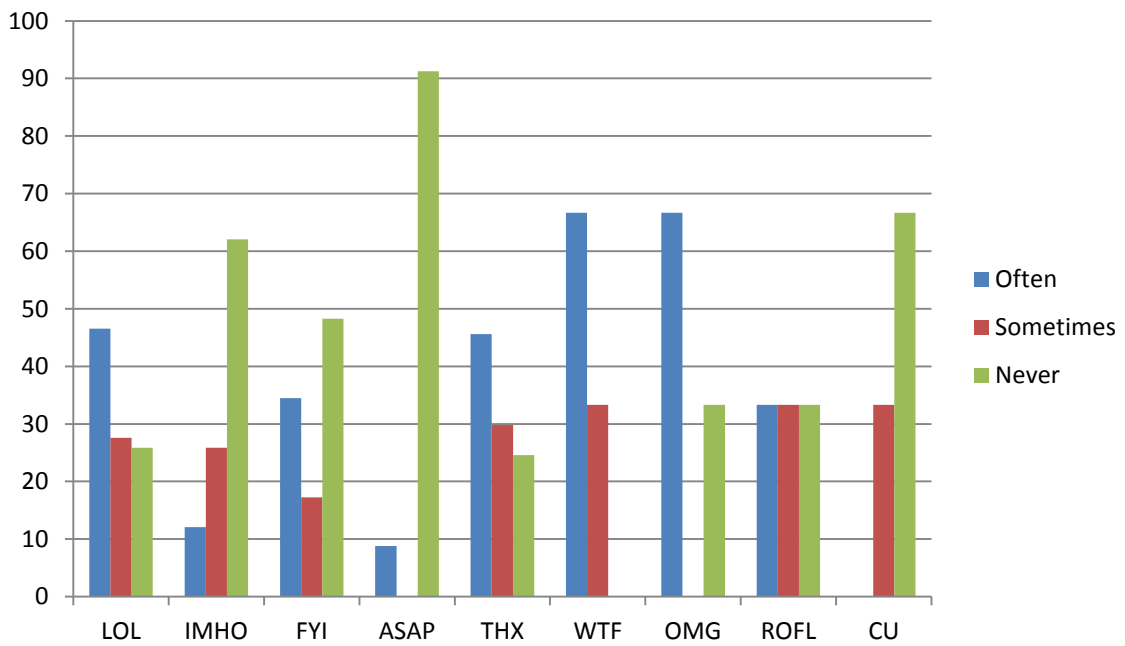


According to the results, it may be assumed that most of the respondents are aware of some kind of unwritten rule that we contact higher authorities through the email services that appear to be more formal. That should predict a possible statement that the respondents are able to size up a social situation and thus use an accurate electronic communication tool and the accurate language style and choice of vocabulary as well. Considering this data, we may predict that if there will be any change in students' discourse (in relation with CMC vocabulary) it will be most probably connected with the electronic communication among friends, not between a boss and an employee or a student and a school officer.

In the following question (Q6), a collection of most common Internet slang expressions were chosen to find out how often do respondents come across such special lexical elements. The list is, in addition to the list of most frequent Internet slang expressions by David Crystal, a mixture of these elements based on several top selections of most popular Internet abbreviations and acronyms published online. The expressions chosen for the purpose of the following question are:

LOL, IMHO, FYI, ASAP, THX, WTF, OMG, ROFL, CU

Graph 4 (Q6)



The data gathered suggest that the most frequently used Internet slang expressions among the participants of the research are *WTF* (*What the Fuck*), *OMG* (*Oh my God*) and *LOL* (*Laugh out Loud*). All of these are assumed to be rather informal abbreviated forms, as opposite to the *ASAP* (*As Soon As Possible*) which is often used in business emails. However, based on this research it appears to be the least common Internet slang abbreviation among the expressions mentioned above. As an outcome, it may be predicted that the participants of the research preferably use the informal slang expressions in comparison with the more formal-like ones.

Question 7 (Q7) is compiled to test the respondents' knowledge of various Internet slang expressions. For this purpose, a similar list of popular Internet slang expressions was designed:

LOL, IMHO, CU, TTYL, FYI, OMG, BTW, THX, BRB.

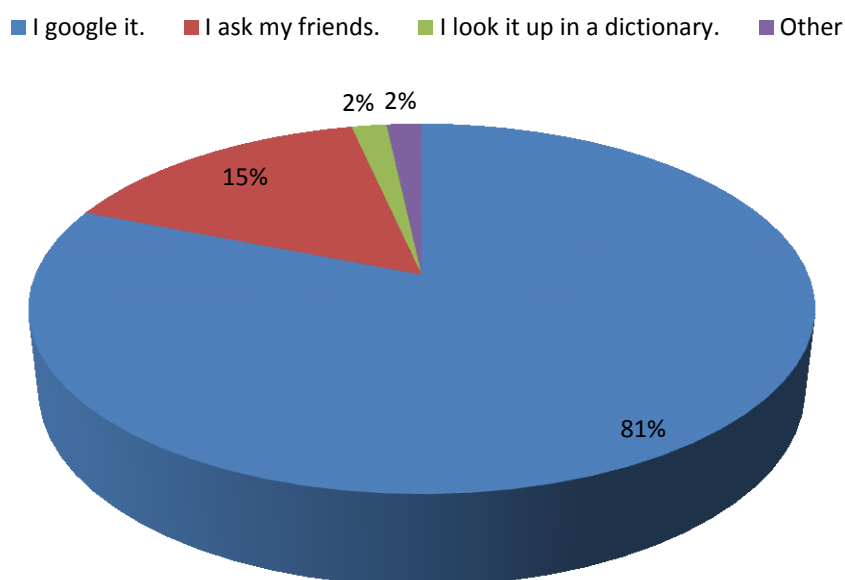
Some of these expressions have already appeared in the preceding question. It is on purpose so it can be observed whether the respondents actually know the exact meanings of the most popular abbreviations that they have selected.

On the basis of the results currently available, it may be suggested that the respondents are not 100% aware of the exact meanings of the Internet slang expressions they often use. In fact, they understand the rough meaning of the abbreviations but they are not able to transcribe or rewrite all of them correctly. Only one of the most popular Internet slang expressions *OMG* (*Oh My God*) was rewritten correctly in almost all cases. The second most successfully

transcribed abbreviation was *BTW (By The Way)*. This may suggest that the target group of respondents may not know the explicit meanings of the slang expressions they sometimes use in their electronic communication. The most problematic expressions to transcribe appear to be the abbreviations *TTYL (Talk To You Later)* and *IMHO (In My Humble Opinion)*.

To add more background information, question 8 (Q8) aims to find out how do the respondents learn the definitions or meanings of unknown Internet slang expressions. Here is a graph that shows the results:

Graph 5 (Q8)



The available evidence suggest that the majority of respondents (81%) search for the definitions on the Internet. 15% of the answerers prefer to ask their friends, however, the definitions might be misleading then. Only 2% would look up the expression in a dictionary and the last 2% claims that they would understand the definition from a context.

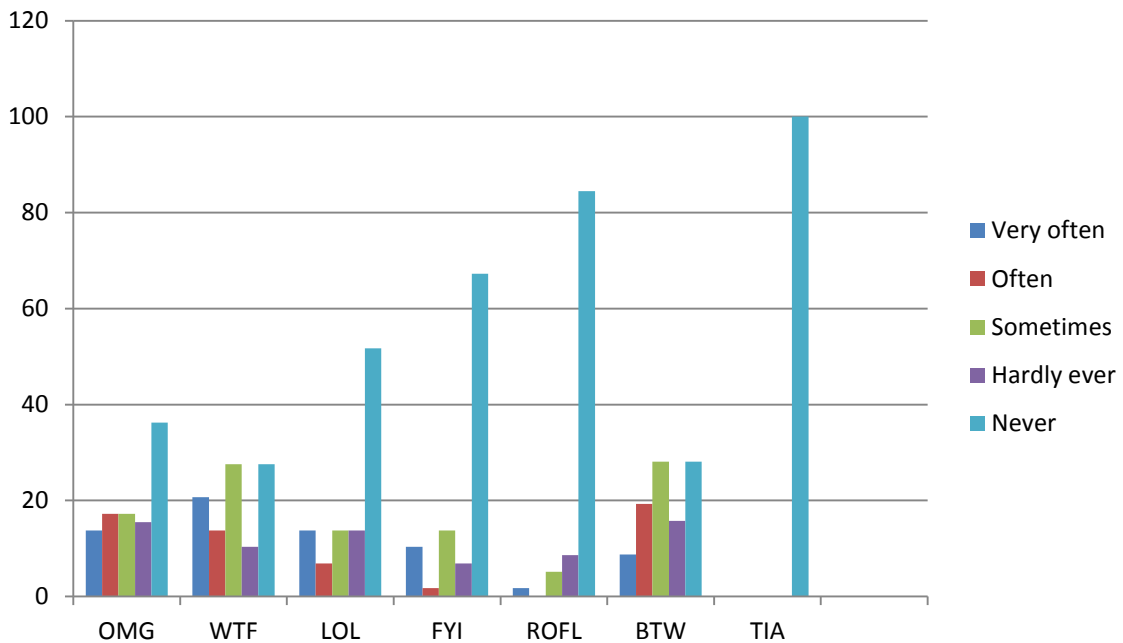
Question 9 (Q9)

Do you use Internet slang expressions in spoken conversation? (among friends, to express emotion etc.) Please tick how often.

This question aims to prove or disapprove the fact that the use of Internet slang expressions may have an impact on students' discourse – in this particular case on spoken discourse. Once

again, a trial list of abbreviations was compiled to serve the purpose. The following graph demonstrates the results:

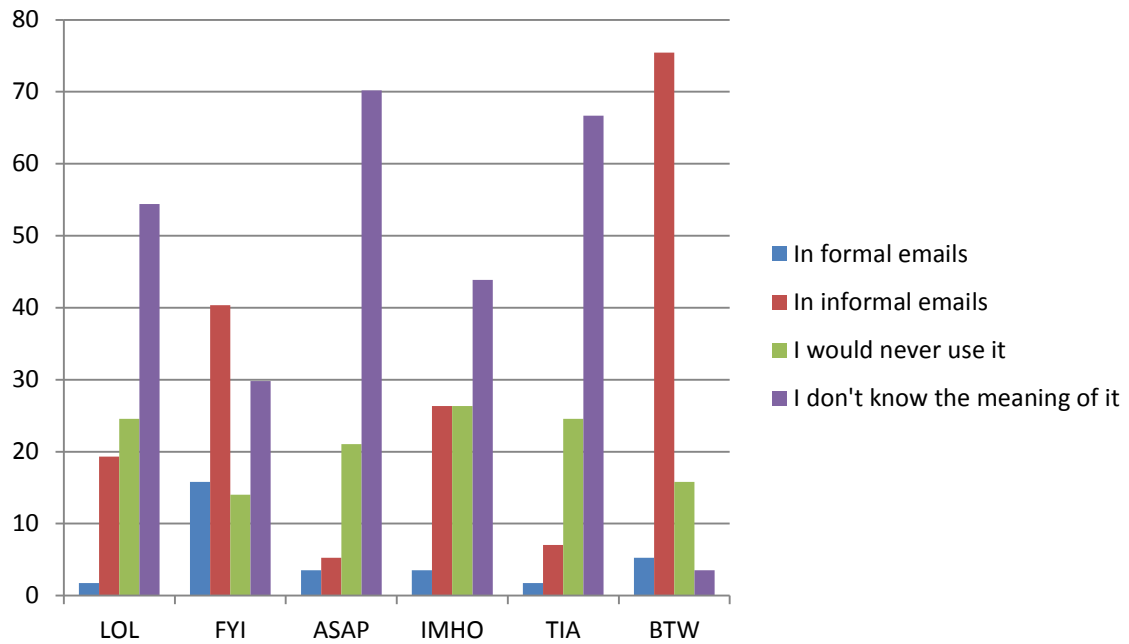
Graph 6 (Q9)



These results confirm that our respondents do use Internet slang expressions in their spoken conversations as well. A considerable group of respondents agree on using the abbreviation *WTF (What The Fuck)* and *OMG (Oh My God)* in spoken conversation. On the other hand, the abbreviations *FYI (For Your Information)*, *ROFL (Rolling On The Floor Laughing)* and *TIA (Thanks In Advance)* seems to be not suitable for oral or face-to-face spoken interaction.

The following question (Q10) investigates the issue of Internet slang accuracy. It should try to reveal whether the respondents are aware of some kind of appropriateness and suitability that using Internet slang expressions provides and whether they follow some stylistic rules. There are six abbreviations on which the question concentrates: *LOL, FYI, ASAP, IMHO, TIA, BTW*. Q1: *When would you use Internet slang expressions mentioned below?* The participants could choose from four possibilities: *in formal emails, in informal emails, I would never use it or I don't know the meaning of it*. The following graph demonstrates the outcome:

Graph 7 (Q10)



With the highest percentage (15.79%), the abbreviation *FYI (For Your Information)* was identified as the most suitable expression for formal emails. On the other hand, the abbreviation *BTW (By The Way)* was selected to be the most suitable one for informal emails (75.44%). A closer look at the data indicates that the respondents would rather use the abbreviations in informal emails as opposed to formal emails. This fact may help to prove the fact that the majority of respondents are aware of some kind of electronic slang accuracy, in other words, they sense when and in what relations they can use these special lexical elements.

In the following questions (Q11 and Q12) the participants were given a list of various Internet slang expressions. Moreover, some of the special Internet slangs like *Leet (l337)* and mixture of number and letter homophones (*C U L8R*) mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis were included. It is to check the respondents' knowledge of the more complicated electronic phrases and abbreviations. The outcomes of these questions only give additional information that may adjust the view on the whole issue.

The expressions of Q11 were:

<i>C U l8r</i>	<i>See you later</i>
<i>G2G</i>	<i>Got to go</i>
<i>an XPRT @ TM'ing?</i>	<i>An expert at timing</i>
<i>l337</i>	<i>Elite</i>
<i>10Q</i>	<i>Thank you</i>
<i>R U RDY</i>	<i>Are you ready</i>

The expressions of Q12 were:

<i>PEBKAC</i>	<i>Problem sits between computer and keyboard</i>
<i>TGBADQ</i>	<i>Try Google before asking dumb questions</i>
<i>IYKWIM</i>	<i>If you know what I mean</i>
<i>WYSIWYG</i>	<i>What you see is what you get</i>

The results indicate that the *Elite* slang is the most problematic expression of question 11 to decipher. Only 5% of the respondents were able to transcribe the expression. On the other hand, almost 90% of the respondents were able to rewrite the expressions *R U RDY* and *C U L8R* correctly. The collection of these expressions was compiled and based on the author's own Internet communication experience and interest.

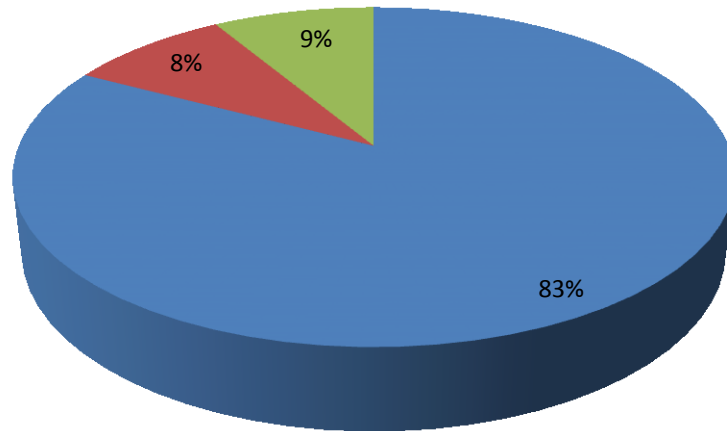
The expressions from question 12 are according to the results the most problematic ones to rewrite. Only 3 respondents were able to transcribe the abbreviations. Since the elements chosen for question 12 were longer in form as opposed to the ones used in earlier questions, it can be said that Czech students of English prefer to use short-formed CMC abbreviations since they are able to remember them better.

The following question (Q13) asks: *Have you ever used any kind of Internet slang in a formal piece of writing (e.g. in an essay etc.)?*

82.76% of the answers was *No*. That would support the belief that using Internet slang does not significantly influence the written discourse of the respondents. However, the rest of the answerers (17.24%) claim that they have used such expressions in a formal piece of writing. Here is a graph that demonstrates the results:

Graph 8 (Q13)

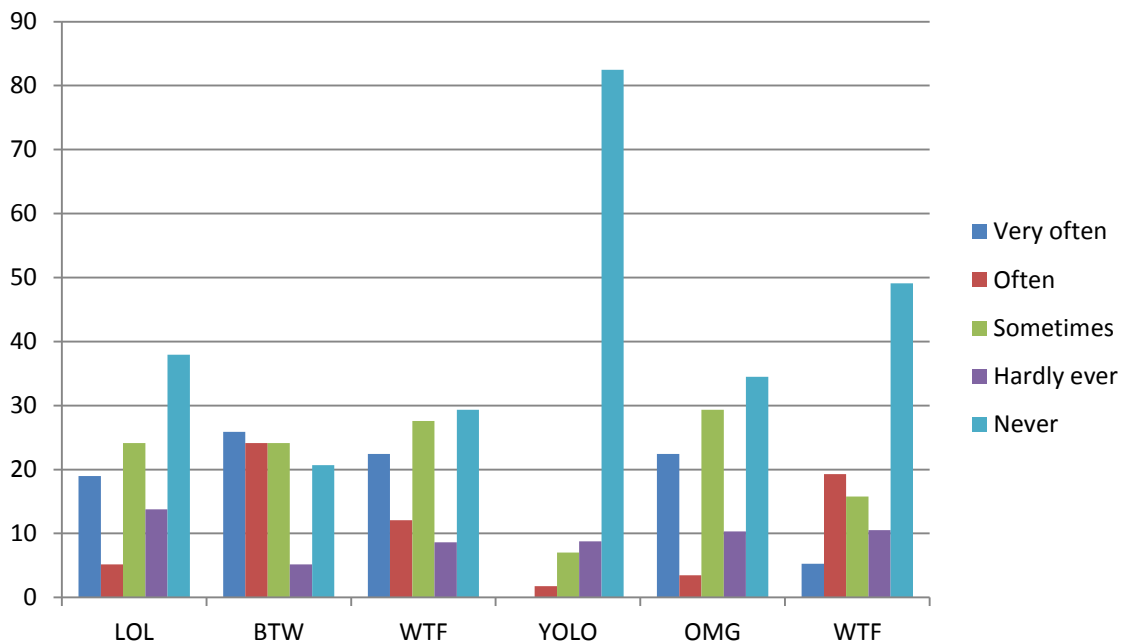
■ No, never
■ Yes, but I deleted them when re-checking
■ Yes, but I deleted them when re-checking



The following question was addressed to those whose answer was *Yes* in the preceding question. I have asked what expressions of Internet slang they have particularly used in the formal piece of writing. The most common expressions were *FYI*, *BTW*, *THX* and *LOL*.

Furthermore, question 15 (Q15) investigates how often do the respondents use Internet slang expressions mentioned below in electronic written conversation? (e.g. in emails, chats, messages etc.). The expressions observed here were *LOL* (*Laugh Out Loud*), *BTW* (*By The Way*), *WTF* (*What The Fuck*), *YOLO* (*You Only Live Once*), *OMG* (*Oh My God*) and *FYI* (*For Your Information*).

Graph 9 (Q15)



These results provide information that the abbreviations *YOLO* (*You Only Live Once*) and *WTF* (*What The Fuck*) are the least common elements in use among the respondents. In the section *Very often*, the abbreviations *BTW* (*By The Way*) and *OMG* (*Oh My God*) reached the highest percentages. According to these results, it can be assumed that the target group of respondents does use the Internet slang abbreviations in electronic communication, however, their use is rather occasional than periodical.

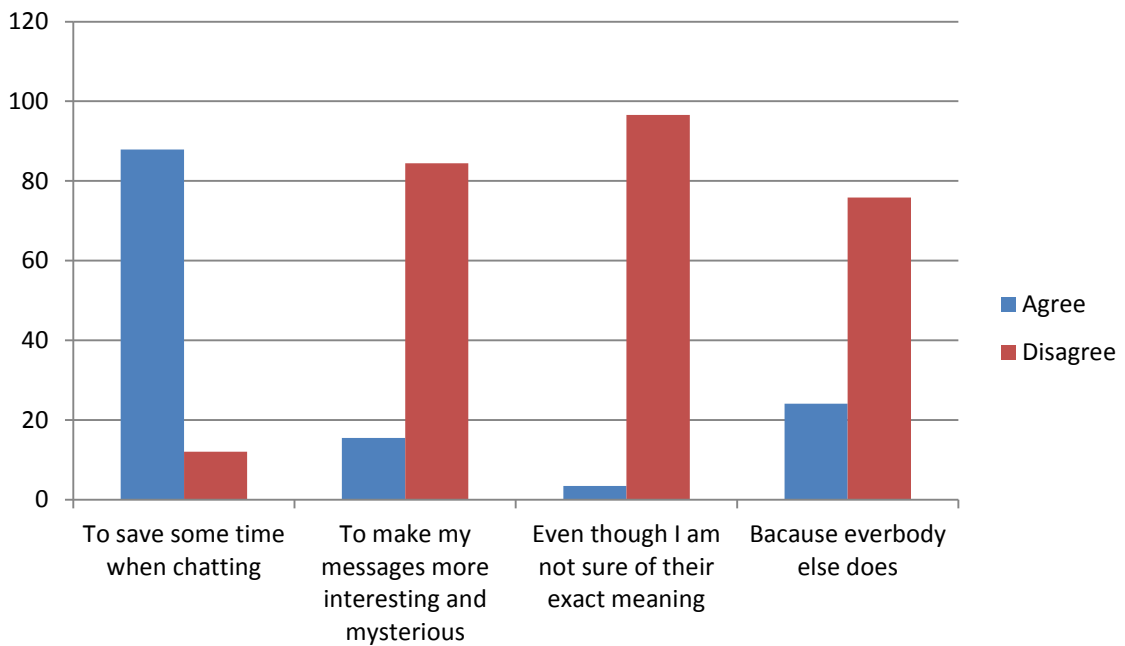
Questions 16 and 17 are both of closed-ended Likert-type enquiries. They examine the respondents' strength of agreement or disagreement to particular statements.

In the first question the respondents should tick *Agree* or *Disagree* button according to their honest opinions.

I use Internet slang expressions...

- a) *to save some time when chatting.*
- b) *to make my messages more interesting and mysterious.*
- c) *even though I am not sure of their exact meaning.*
- d) *because everybody else does.*

Graph 10 (Q16)



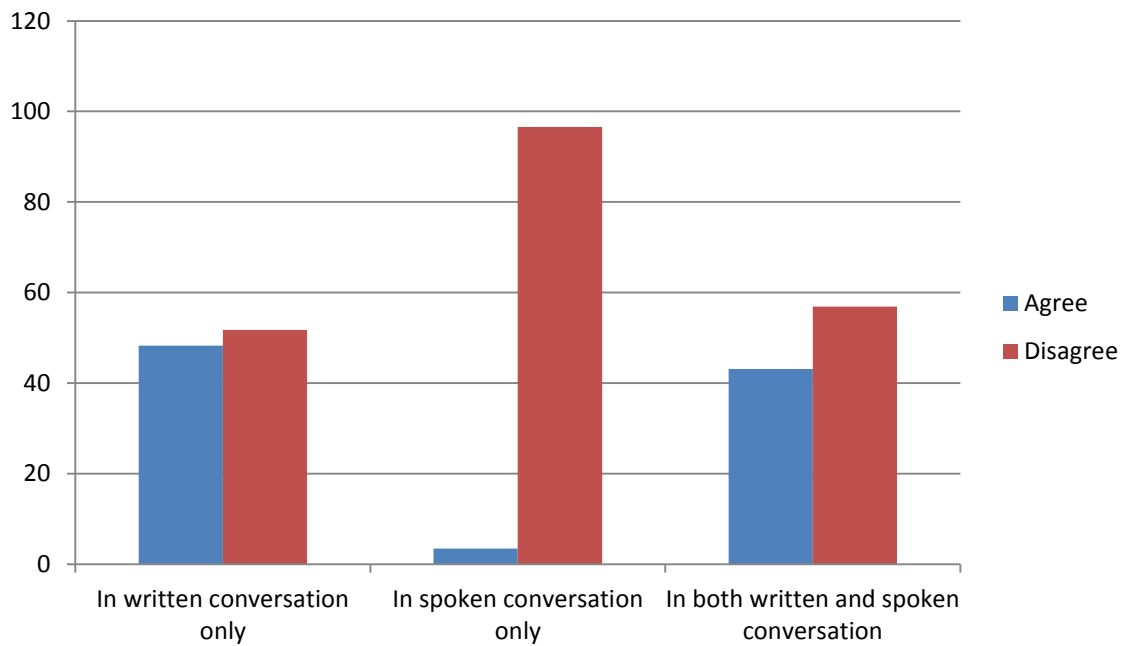
The data gathered prove that the majority of respondents use Internet slang abbreviations to save some time when chatting online (87.93%). An interesting point made almost 25% of the respondents who claim that they use Internet slang abbreviations because “everybody else does”. However, it seems to be true that the participants do not use these special lexical elements in order to make their messages more attractive. 96.55% of them disagree with the fact that they would use these abbreviations even though they would not know their precise meanings. Since the research is not scientifically supported, we can only assume that the respondents answered all the questions honestly.

Similarly, question 17 (Q17) tests the respondents’ agreement or disagreement with specific statements:

I use Internet slang...

- a) *in written conversation only.*
- b) *in spoken conversation only.*
- c) *in both written and spoken conversation.*

Graph 11 (Q17) demonstrates the outcome:

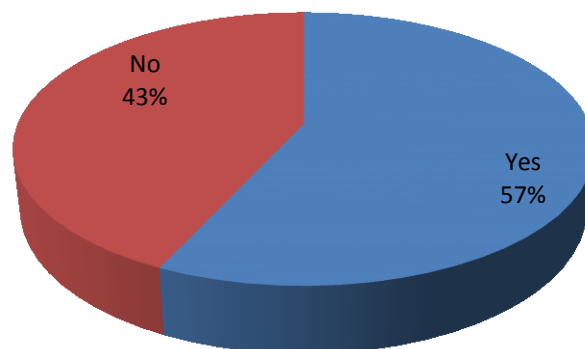


The available evidence seems to suggest that the target group of respondents is aware of the fact that the Internet slang is not suitable just for spoken conversation. However, it is surprising that the participants are divided into two almost balanced groups. One almost agree on the statement that Internet slang expressions may be used in written conversation only (48.28%) and the other group – similarly large (43.1%) – believe that the Internet slang expressions can be used both in written and spoken conversation.

Question 18 aims to find out whether the respondents consider using Internet slang expressions influential. To specify, the question is:

Do you think that using Internet slang expressions can influence your writing skills?

Graph 11 (Q18) illustrates the results:



It is significant that the majority of respondents (57%) do think that using special lexical items such as Internet slang abbreviations influence their writing skills. To specify the outcome, the respondents who answered *Yes* in the Q18 were asked to determine whether the influence would be positive or negative.

Approximately 15% of the respondents stated that the influence would be positive. Here is one of the arguments quoted: *“Positive, the slang is a part of every language and it’s always good to know that. You just have to know when it’s convenient to use it.”*

On the other hand, the 85% consider the influence rather negative. Some of the reasons why follows: *“I think the influence would be negative as I can forget how to write properly”* or *“Negative because I often use U for You in formal letters”*.

This outcome and further comments of the respondents suggest the possible fear of losing specific writing skills.

To compare, question 20 examines the respondents’ attitude to the influence of using Internet language that it may have on their speaking skills. The results suggest that 37.93% of the respondents actually think that using computer-mediated language can somehow influence their speaking skills. The majority of respondents (62.07%), however, think the opposite. To the question whether the influence would be positive or negative, only 5% consider the use of Internet slang expressions in spoken conversation a positive influence on their speaking skills. To demonstrate, here is one argument quoted: *“positive - in my view, one can become more fluent thanks to this stuff”*. On the contrary, others (95%) for example say that *“definitely negative...when someone uses the slang expressions while speaking to someone who doesn’t know them, it can disturb the conversation”*.

Both of these arguments are reasonable, however, it would be a long-term process to find out precise outcomes in this particular field of study.

In the question 22 (Q22), the respondents were asked to write down their most favorite or most frequently used Internet slang expressions and their precise meanings (transcriptions). The available evidence suggests that the top ten most popular and frequent in use Internet slang abbreviations would include: *LOL (Lots Of Laugh)*, *BTW (By The Way)*, *FYI (For Your Information)*, *ROFL (Rolling On the Floor Laughing)*, *ASAP (As Soon As Possible)*, *FU (Fuck You)*, *AFK (Away From Keyboard)*, *PLS (Please)*, *TIL (Today I learned)*, *BR (Best Regards)* and other less frequent as *GTFO (Get The Fuck Out)*, *MILF (Mother I’d Like to Fuck)*, *FFS (For Fuck’s Sake)*, *DIY (Do It Yourself)* or *MMT (Moment)*.

These outcomes prove that 80% of respondents (those who provided an example with an explanation) only use those Internet slang expressions of which' definitions they are sure.

The final set of questions (Q 23-27) examines the characteristics of the target group of respondents. To start with, the majority of respondents were female (55.22%) and the rest (44.78%) male. Regarding the age of respondents, the majority of them (55.22%) were 20-25 years old. The second biggest group represents 17.31% of respondents who were 26-30 years old. The next two groups (31-35 years and 36 years and more) achieved the same percentage of 11.94%. The smallest group of respondents (only 2.99%) represents teenagers from 14 to 19 years old. Considering the level of English language, the majority of people studied English seven years and longer (82.09%). 16.42% of respondents have only studied English from 4-6 years. The rest of the survey participants (1.49%) claim that they have studied English only for 1-3 years. Furthermore, the last question investigates the respondents' level of English language according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The largest group of respondents with 32.84% classified itself as a group of advanced users of the English language (C1). The same point of 26.87% reached the upper-intermediate (B2) and intermediate level-groups of (B1) students.

8 Conclusion

The main aim of the research was to prove or disapprove a hypothesis that Czech students of English at some level of their language competence use and are able to use electronic language expressions correctly concerning the accuracy and norms of language style and discourse. By electronic language expressions is meant a selection of abbreviations and acronyms that was compiled for the purpose of this bachelor thesis. To gather the necessary data, a complex questionnaire was used as a research instrument. Furthermore, an additional, unintentional point of investigation appeared to be an interesting part of the research study. It observes the possible negative or positive impact of using special lexical units on students' written and spoken discourse. And last but not least, it was fundamental to observe whether the participants of the research are able to explain and transcribe the abbreviations and acronyms they usually use. This would prove or disapprove the students' knowledge of the computer-mediated language expressions.

According to the research, the fundamental target groups of the survey became young learners from 20 to 25 years old who study English language for seven years and longer. Since all the respondents communicate via Internet, we can certainly assume that most of them have come across the Internet slang expressions. Current research seems to validate the view that Czech students of English use Internet slang expressions. Most often the respondents come across the abbreviations like *THX (Thanks)*, *LOL (Lot Of Laugh or Laughing Out Loud)* and *FYI (For Your Information)*. Research supports the view that the students are aware of some kind of style and accuracy requirements. The evidence shows that over 80% of respondents would never use electronic language abbreviations and acronyms in any formal piece of writing. However, some of the participants suggest that it would be acceptable to use abbreviated forms like *FYI (For Your Information)* and *ASAP (As Soon As Possible)* in, for example, formal emails. For informal emails they would mostly agree on the abbreviations *LOL (Laugh Out Loud)* and *BTW (By The Way)*. It is important to remind the fact that most of the Internet slang expressions appear in instant messages' and chats' conversations. Current research seems to validate this view. The majority of our respondents communicate via social sites (e.g. instant messages) and therefore sense what communication tool use for which occasion. For instance, the respondents state that they would contact their friends via social site; on the other hand, school and office authorities would be contacted by an email. This may imply that the students know what kind of language they should use when communicating with friends,

which is usually done via social sites and what language they should use when communicating with an authority, which is usually done via emails.

Given these criteria, the conclusion of the first hypothesis may be as follows: According to the results – and taking into account accuracy of language and writing style – the majority of Czech students of English aged 20 – 25 years old use and are able to use electronic English language abbreviations and acronyms correctly and accurately. The respondents are aware of the limitations that using computer-mediated communication provides.

To prove or disapprove the positive or negative impact of using Internet language expressions on students' spoken and written discourse became an additional point of this research study. It developed unintentionally; however, the researcher finds the information interesting and therefore wants to share the message with public. The majority of participants (52%) believe that using Internet slang abbreviations and acronyms can have an impact on their writing skills. Most of them agree that using such lexical elements negatively influence their written discourse as they fear they would lose the skills to write and spell properly. On the other hand, the majority of respondents (64%) do not believe that using Internet slang abbreviations and acronyms can anyhow influence their speaking skills.

There is insufficient research information on this topic to draw any firm conclusions, however, it presents an idea and provides inspiration for further studies and researches.

The students were also asked to test their knowledge of selected Internet slang expressions. The available evidence seems to suggest that the participants know the meanings of those expressions that they actually use and are more or less able to transcribe them correctly. According to the data gathered, it is less complicated for the respondents to transcribe and clarify the meanings of those expressions that are of three letters maximum (e.g. *BTW / By The Way*). On the opposite, expressions such as *PEBKAC (Problem Exists Between Keyboard And Chair)* and other multi-letter abbreviations were difficult to analyze for the majority of the respondents.

To conclude, the thesis revealed that Czech students of English (at various levels of their second language competence) use English computer-mediated language expressions such as various abbreviations and acronyms. It proved that the students are familiar with definitions of such elements and therefore showed their ability to adjust the language variation concerning the accuracy and style.

Resumé

Zkratky a zkratkové podoby slov jsou nedílnou součástí každého jazyka. V 21. století se však setkáváme s rozšířením těchto zkrácenin i do naší běžné komunikace. Rapidně se rozvíjející technologie nám umožňují být v kontaktu téměř s kýmkoliv a kdykoliv na celém světě. Tato moderní doba však vyžaduje náročný životní styl, kde hlavní roli hraje čas. Stejně tak je čas důležitým faktorem v elektronické komunikaci. Fenomén naší doby, Internet, umožňuje několik druhů komunikace. Můžeme komunikovat přenosem jednoduchých zpráv, tzv. emailů, chatovat prostřednictvím internetových služeb v reálném čase či vést video-hovory. Zkratky a zkratková slova v těchto případech zajišťují rychlou a efektivní elektronickou písemnou komunikaci.

Úkolem této bakalářské práce je představit rozvíjející se slovní zásobu počítačové komunikace se zaměřením na zkratky a zkratkové podoby slov. V teoretické části (kapitoly 1–6) jsou charakterizovány hlavní styly počítačové komunikace a specifické lexikální jednotky pro ně typické. Na základě lingvistických publikací je představena celková problematika tvoření slov včetně zkratk a zkrácenin. Cílem analytické části práce (kapitola 7) je potvrdit či vyvrátit hypotézu, zda čeští studenti anglického jazyka různých úrovní používají a jsou schopni správně používat tyto lexikální jednotky (zkratky) v závislosti na stylové příznakovosti daných textů. Výzkum má zjistit, zdali jsou si studenti vědomi určitých zásad a limitů, které je potřeba dodržovat při používání elektronických zkratk v písemné komunikaci.

Úvodní kapitola představuje téma této bakalářské práce. Seznamuje čtenáře s pojmem počítačová komunikace a vysvětluje základní pojmy.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá typologií počítačové komunikace. Autor reflektuje několik druhů elektronické komunikace na základě studia vybraných odborných lingvistických publikací. Tato část práce vysvětluje pojmy jako synchronní a asynchronní počítačová komunikace či představuje působnost aktérů elektronické komunikace. Zde jsou použity myšlenky předních světových lingvistů, jako je Naomi S. Baron či David Crystal.

Následující kapitola nese název Jazyk elektronické komunikace. Zde jsou popsány hlavní rysy a charakteristiky jazykové variace známé také jako Internetový slang. Jsou představeny další termíny (*Netspeak* apod.) úzce spjaté s tímto lingvistickým fenoménem. Dále jsou představena rizika, která mohou nastat při neadekvátním používání elektronického jazyka. Jedná se zejména o takové situace, kdy je třeba dbát na formální, gramatické či stylistické normy komunikace. Tento jev je v textu prezentován jako *netiketa*.

V následujících podkapitolách je nastíněna problematičnost určení jednotné definice počítačové komunikace. Především jsou zde kladeny otázky, zdali je počítačová komunikace ryze psaná forma komunikace či zdali sdílí jakousi podobnost s komunikací mluvenou apod. V zájmu určení bližší definice počítačové komunikace je tento jev posuzován jako nestandardní slovní zásoba jazyka, tzn. slang. Ve dvou dalších podkapitolách jsou představeny nejznámější druhy Internetového slangu dnešní doby doplněné příklady.

Pátá kapitola je středobodem celé práce, zabývá se totiž slovní zásobou. Na úvod jsou prezentovány různé definice a charakteristiky úzce spjaté s tématem slovní zásoba. V několika dalších sekcích jsou představeny nejčastější procesy tvoření slov v anglickém jazyce. Rozsáhlá část této sekce je věnována tématu zkratk, zkrácenin a zkratkových slov. Následuje podrobný rozbor těchto lexikálních jednotek, a to v závislosti na počítačové komunikaci. V této části práce jsou uvedeny seznamy nejpoužívanějších a nejčastěji používaných zkratk v elektronické komunikaci, ze kterých bylo později čerpáno pro dotazníkové šetření v analytické části. V této sekci je také vymezen prostor pro představení podobných lexikálních a dalších jednotek specifických pro elektronickou komunikaci. Jsou zde popsána oblíbená kombinovaná homofona či emotikony.

Finální kapitola teoretické části se zabývá jazykem počítačové komunikace, tentokrát z pohledu různých „Internetových situací“. Zde je zkoumána frekvence a používání různých zkrácených lexikálních jednotek v konkrétních typech počítačové komunikace. Výsledky jsou porovnávány v rámci Internetových služeb (instant messaging), emailové korespondence a chatové elektronické komunikace. Na základě několika amerických studií, které jsou v souvisejících podkapitolách porovnávány, bylo dosaženo zajímavého výsledku. Nejméně časté používání zkratk a zkratkových slov specifických pro počítačovou komunikaci bylo zjištěno u emailové komunikace. Znatelně větší popularitu mají tyto speciální lexikální jednotky mezi uživateli Internetových služeb (instant messaging) a chatů. Je nutné poznamenat, že byl prokázán fakt, že četnost používání těchto zkratk v elektronické komunikaci je mnohem nižší než se původně očekávalo.

Sedmá kapitola otevírá výzkumnou část práce. Cílem analytického výzkumu je zodpovědět základní čtyři výzkumné otázky.

1. Používají čeští studenti anglického jazyka anglické zkratky a zkráceniny počítačové komunikace?
2. Používají čeští studenti anglického jazyka tyto zkratky správně a adekvátně ve vztahu k stylistickým normám komunikace?

3. Znájí tito studenti přesnou významovou hodnotu těchto specifických jazykových jednotek?
4. Má používání tzv. Internetového slangu nějaký vliv na psaný či mluvený projev studentů? Jaký je jejich názor?

K zodpovězení těchto otázek byl použit rozsáhlý kvantitativní dotazník, který byl šířen pomocí webového odkazu na Internetu. Dotazník byl v anglickém jazyce a sběr odpovědí trval přibližně tři měsíce. Podařilo se nastřádat 158 vyplněných dotazníků vyhovujících k měření dat. Většina z 26 otázek byla uzavřeného typu s výběrem několika možných odpovědí. Přibližně 10% otázek bylo otevřeného typu s prostorem pro odpověď respondenta. Výzkumnou skupinou se po zprůměrování výsledků stali ve velké většině studenti ve věku 20 až 25 let studující anglický jazyk déle než 7 let.

Na první výzkumnou otázku lze odpovědět kladně. Čeští studenti opravdu používají anglické zkratky typické pro počítačovou komunikaci. Lze tak vyvodit z výsledků zmíněného dotazníku. Nejčastěji používanými zkratkami a zkratkovými slovy jsou *THX (Thanks)*, *LOL (Lot Of Laugh or Laughing Out Loud)* a *FYI (For Your Information)*.

Druhá otázka zkoumá, zdali jsou si studenti vědomi různých stylistických pravidel, které používání zkratk v elektronické komunikaci provází. Na tuto otázku nebyla nalezena jednoznačná odpověď, výsledky však spíše naznačují, že studenti chápou stylovou příznakovost Internetového slangu. 80% z nich uvádí, že by počítačové zkratky či zkráceniny nikdy nepoužili ve formálních textech. V rámci dotazníkového šetření je často porovnávána emailová komunikace s komunikací na sociálních sítích (instant messaging). Z výsledků vyplývá, že respondenti používají k volnočasové komunikaci (tj. komunikace s přáteli a rodinou) sociálních sítí a ke kontaktování školních či úředních autorit preferují emailovou komunikaci. Je prokázáno, že mnohem častěji se zkratky a zkráceniny používají v komunikaci na sociálních sítích oproti emailu. Na základě těchto poznatků lze vyvodit závěr, že studenti jsou si ve většině případů vědomi stylistických norem elektronické komunikace; pokud kontaktují vyšší autority, používají emailovou korespondenci a nepoužívají zkratk Internetového slangu.

Třetí otázka má za úkol zjistit, zdali respondenti dotazníku rozumí a znají přesných významů určitých zkratk a zkratkových slov typických pro počítačovou komunikaci. Tento jev byl zkoumán za pomoci několika doplňovacích otázek. Účastníci dotazníkového šetření byli požádáni o přesné přepsání vybraných zkratk a zkrácenin Internetového slangu. Tímto způsobem bylo prověřeno několik jazykových jednotek, které byly z části selektovány ze seznamů uvedených v teoretické části práce a z části byly libovolným výběrem autora. Na

základě výsledků lze tvrdit, že studenti znají většinu zkratk, které používají a které se shodují se seznamy v teoretické části. Tyto zkratky byly v 99% kratšího formátu, tj. o třech písmenech. Na druhé straně, znalost zkratk obsahujících čtyři a více písmen byla téměř nulová. Lze tedy předpokládat, že délka konkrétní jednotky ovlivňuje preference a zapamatovatelnost dané zkratky či zkratkového slova.

Poslední výzkumná otázka se zabývá potenciálním vlivem, který může mít používání zkratk a zkratkových slov na psaný či mluvený projev studentů. Tuto hypotézu se nepodařilo potvrdit ani vyvrátit. K určení konkrétních výsledků by muselo být použito rozsáhlejších výzkumů, které by vnesly větší světlo do této diskutované problematiky. Zajisté by se našlo mnoho odborníků, kteří by za použití vhodných zjišťovacích prostředků našli společnou odpověď na tuto otázku. Na základě výpovědí jsou k dispozici osobní názory respondentů. 52% účastníků dotazníku prohlašuje, že používání zkratk počítačové komunikace ovlivňuje jejich kvalitu psaní. Většina respondentů označuje tento vliv za negativní a vyjadřuje obavu ze ztráty schopnosti vyjadřovat se formálně a písemně správně. Na druhé straně, pouhých 36% respondentů si myslí, že používání zkratkových lexikálních jednotek může ovlivnit jejich mluvený projev. V tomto případě většina odpovídajících považuje tento vliv za pozitivní a dodává, že používání těchto slangových pojmů může pomoci jejich neformálnímu mluvenému projevu, aby zněl více přirozeně a plynule.

K dalšímu zkoumání bych doporučila otázku vlivu používání specifických lexikálních jednotek na psaný projev studentů českých středních škol. Nové moderní trendy, ať už v životním stylu či komunikaci, mají tendenci se nejdříve projevat mezi mladými lidmi. Díky rychlému vývoji a vzrůstající popularitě sociálních sítí považují dnešní mladou generaci za jednu z prvních, která se potýká s tak markantními rozdíly v mezilidské komunikaci. Předpokládám tedy, že by se zkoumáním této problematiky v rámci věkové skupiny středoškolských studentů dalo zjistit široké spektrum zajímavých odpovědí a hypotéz týkajících se tohoto tématu.

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Appendix

Internet Slang Questionnaire

Welcome to Internet Slang survey. This questionnaire should only take about 10 minutes of your time. It investigates the popularity and frequency of some specific abbreviations and acronyms used in electronic communication. Your answers are anonymous and will be only used for a bachelor thesis research. Thank you for participating.

1. Do you use Internet to communicate with others?

- a) Yes
- b) No

2. Which of the online communication channels mentioned below do you prefer?

- a) Social Websites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- b) Email Services
- c) Internet Chats (Lide.cz, Libimseti.cz, etc.)
- d) Other

3. How often do you use these communication channels?

	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Never
Social Websites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)				
Internet Chats (Libimseti.cz, Lide.cz, etc.)				
Email Services				

4. To contact your friends you usually use:

- a) Social Websites
- b) Email Services
- c) Internet Chats
- d) Other

5. To contact school/office authorities you usually use:

- a) Social Websites
- b) Email Services
- c) Internet Chats
- d) Other

6. How frequently do you come across these expressions of Internet slang?

	Often	Sometimes	Never
LOL			
IMHO			
FYI			
ASAP			
THX			
WTF			
OMG			
ROFL			
CU			

7. Can you try to explain (rewrite) the Internet slang expressions below?

(If you don't know the answer, please type letter "x")

LOL

IMHO

CU

TTYL

FYI

OMG

BTW

THX

BRB

8. How do you usually find out the meanings of such expressions?

- a) I google it.
- b) I ask my friends.
- c) I look it up in a dictionary.
- d) Other:

9. Do you use Internet slang expressions in spoken conversation? (among friends, to express emotion etc.) Please tick how often.

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
OMG					
WTF					
LOL					

FYI					
ROFL					
BTW					
TIA					

10. When would you use Internet slang expressions mentioned below?

	Formal emails	Informal emails	I would never use it	I don't know the meaning of it
LOL				
FYI				
ASAP				
IMHO				
TIA				
BTW				

11. Please try to rewrite the symbols below. If you don't know the answer, please type letter X in.

C U l8r

G2G

an XPRT @ TM'ing?

1337

10Q

R U RDY

12. Can you rewrite the symbols below? If you don't know the answer please type letter X in.

PEBKAC

TGBADQ

IYKWIM

WYSIWYG

13. Have you ever used any kind of Internet slang in a formal piece of writing? (e.g. in an essay etc.)

- a) Yes.
- b) Yes, but I deleted them when re-checking.

c) No, never.

14. If your answer was *Yes*, please share some examples with us:

15. How often do you use these Internet slang expressions in electronic written conversation? (e.g. in emails, chats, messages etc.)

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
LOL					
BTW					
WTF					
YOLO					
OMG					
FYI					

16. Please tick *Agree* or *Disagree* to each statement below: I use Internet slang expressions...

	Agree	Disagree
to save some time when chatting		
to make my messages more interesting and mysterious even though I am not sure of their exact meaning		
because everybody else does		

17. Please tick *Agree* or *Disagree* to each statement below: I use Internet slang expressions...

	Agree	Disagree
in written conversation only		
in spoken conversation only		
in both written and spoken conversation		

18. Do you think that using Internet slang expressions can influence your writing skills?

- a) Yes
- b) No

19. If your answer was *Yes*, would the influence be positive or negative?

20. Do you think that using Internet slang expressions can influence your speaking skills?

- a) Yes
- b) No

21. If your answer was *Yes*, would the influence be positive or negative?

22. Are there any Internet slang expressions that you use most frequently? Please share some examples with us and add definitions.

23. How long have you been studying English?

- a) 1-3 years
- b) 4-6 years
- c) 7 years and longer

24. What is your level of English?

- a) A1 - breakthrough or beginner
- b) A2 - elementary
- c) B1 - intermediate
- d) B2 - upper intermediate
- e) C1 - advanced
- f) C2 - proficient

25. What is your age?

- a) 14-19
- b) 20-25
- c) 26-30
- d) 31-35
- e) 36 and more

26. Are you male or female?

- a) Male
- b) Female

Thank you for your participation.