Abstract

This thesis focuses on the Internet slang or so-called netspeak and how this type of language manifests itself in various spheres, including the physical space. Physical and virtual worlds are generally considered to be separate and are not ascribed the same value. However, I want to show through my work that these spheres are not only interconnected but they can even be perceived to be equal while taking into account that interactions taking place in the virtual environment cannot be described as less real or valuable. Therefore, the research took place in the Internet environment, which is the homeland of netspeak, and also in the physical space. I specifically observed high school students because these age groups are generally considered the most typical (social) media users, therefore they come into contact with netspeak frequently. The methods of collecting data included non-participant observation in the physical space of classrooms (during lectures and study breaks), and also in a teachers' office, interviews with students in both physical and virtual forms of communication, and analysis of various visual materials. For my research, I applied a combination of theoretical concepts and methods of socio-linguistics, digital anthropology, and netnography. These fields, together with other theoretical works (including resources on netspeak and social media), contributed to shaping this work and also helped to identify relevant problems to study through my research.

Keywords: internet slang, netspeak, social media, virtuality, language, communication