

THE LANGUAGE OF E-COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Every month, it seems like the Internet brings a new word or phrase into the language. Writers try and explain the meanings of these terms the first few times they are used articles or media presentations. Nevertheless, it's not uncommon to find yourself reading a technical article and wondering just what a *blog*, *podcast*, or *mash-up* really is. The past few years have witnessed the birth of quite a few samples of this new techno-jargon. So, in the spirit of full disclosure, the paper intends to discuss some of the terms most people come across while either reading the latest news, or when staying tuned to the various media channels. The world is evolving rapidly and we simply have to learn to communicate in a language we might not have imagined possible.

Key words: the Internet, jargon, communication, globalization

The emergence of the „global village” is bound to create not only a new architectural geometry of the world, but it will also open the perspective towards a new conceptualization of utterance, much more dynamic, cosmopolitan and flexible. This fascinating blend not only of cultures but also of different technologies and scientific outlooks, highlight the complexity and spectacular dimension of today's communicational framework, that could not have acquired such a peculiar shape, had it not been for the unprecedented development that mankind experienced over the last century.

Globalised, the transmodern communication entangles rapid, stunning, sometimes confusing and ambivalent processes, for communication is not only a means of personal and national emancipation, but also an instrument of control. Therefore, we need to rethink, to reconceptualise the whole human condition within the framework of interculturalism and of “web-autocracy”.

Within this document we refer to e-communication as referring to the language of the Internet (including websites, emails and electronic documents), the one that has shaped not only new style of communicating, but also a new style of living and perceiving the world. Interesting enough, this style of living comes with a new language, circumscribed itself to the language of the Internet, the very language of globalisation – *English*. The modern citizen of the planet is bombarded with loads of information every day, and much of this amount comes through the web, piercing the virtual space with sometimes puzzling, arbitrary signs whose meaning is sometimes evasive. This Internet jargon reshapes the contours

of today's communicational pattern, insinuating itself into our lives, with so powerful a force that in no time we come to realize that we are already using it, probably long before even totally mastering its meanings and implications.

“Generally, when people use jargon not to communicate but to impress their audiences with their importance or use it to announce membership in a group, communication suffers and the jargon can quickly degenerate into something close to the twittering of birds.” (W. Lutz, “*Jargon*” Oxford Companion to the English Language, 1992)

Famous for his taut, lucid style, the author of the equally famous novel *1984*, George Orwell, after illustrating “the decay of language” in his time (the 1940s), offered as an antidote six elementary rules, one of which says that “never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.” A piece of advice that is ignored nowadays, when English has dictated the language of the most important current means of communication, the Internet, to say nothing of the fact that English is also responsible for having replaced words with long-lasting tradition in many languages.

This jargon of the Internet moulds not only the way in which XXIst century people speak, but also the way in which they socialize, build collective networks and build their lives. The virtual dimension has taken over, the endless possibilities of expression, of creating and recreating the whole world that it entangles make the modern citizen take refuge within its framework and to start to recalibrate all his /her

interior space of communication. Consumed no longer externally, but internally, the contemporary web-dictated style of communication builds its bridges in a new manner, with a new *logos*

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In drafting this paper we have analysed a series of tech words that belong to this so called internet jargon, and we have done that over the last years with a view to highlight the most important terms that have become now part of our lives, for most of these are terms that have come to shape the way in which we connect not only with the world, but also with ourselves, not little being the number of those who keep track of their most personal recollections within the virtual area of the cyber space. We follow a diachronic thread of the phenomenon, by pinpointing the moment of birth of some of the jargon terms, and we intend to synchronise it to the extremely dynamic and changing outlook of our century.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Some of the terms and abbreviations used in Internet jargon appear to derive from *fanspeak*, the slang of *science fiction fandom*; since a significant number of computer programmers and users have historically been science fiction readers. Many items of Internet jargon cross from computer-mediated communication to face-to-face communication. Many terms used in *fanspeak* have spread to members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Renaissance Fair participants, and internet gaming and chat fans, due to the social and contextual intersection between the communities. For example, "The New York Times" "Buzzwords of 2008" article includes: "FAIL", "longphoto", (a term used for videos less than 90 seconds long), "DWT" (Driving While Texting) and various terms starting with "tw-", inspired by the web service Twitter.

In our diachronic voyage through the linguistic dimension of the cyberspace, 2004 seems to be as a very important year, especially rich in what the new techno-jargon is concerned.

Blog - surprisingly enough, there are still people that do not know what a blog is, although it is common nature that teenagers, young people and not only use it everyday. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "blog" topped the list of words that people looked up at its site in 2004, beating out tongue-twisters like *defenestration* and *sovereignty*.

It is but natural to ask ourselves what a blog really is. According to the same Merriam-Webster, online dictionary, "blog" is a noun that means "a Web site that contains an online personal journal

with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer". Instead of writing confidential entries in a book that no one is supposed to see, people now can share their personal feelings and experiences with thousands of people around the world.

At the same time, "blog" is also commonly used as a verb. "To blog or not to blog?" - that is the question, if we are to humorously paraphrase Hamlet's dilemma. Thus, those who use the blog as a favourite means of communicating with the others, known or unknown, and here comes the beauty of e-communication, are known as *bloggers*. The world of blogs is known as the "blog-o-sphere", while "moblogs" are group online journals. Short for "Web Log," this term refers to a list of journal entries posted on a Web page. Moblog. While blogs first appeared in 2004, in 2005 blogs and blogging went mainstream, especially with the introduction of these *moblogs*. With the increased demand for consumer and business mobile devices, there is no wonder that *moblogging* has gained substantial popularity.

However, social networking does not end with the blog, for who has not heard of *Facebook*, or *Twitter*? *Facebook* is a website that was originally designed for college students, but is now open to anyone 13 years of age or older. Facebook users are encouraged to create and customize their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves. Thus, their profiles can be browsed and other friends given the opportunity to write messages on their pages. Facebook provides an easy way for friends to keep in touch and for individuals to have a presence on the net!

2006 witnessed the birth of a new chirp in the cyberspace, known ever since as *Twitter*, which is an online service that allows the user to share updates with other people by answering one simple question: "What are you doing?" Twitter's origins lie in a "daylong brainstorming session" that was held by board members of Odeo company. During the meeting, Jack Dorsey introduced the idea of an individual using an SMS service to communicate with a small group. "We came across the word "twitter," and it was just perfect. The definition was "a short burst of inconsequential information," and "chirps from birds." And that's exactly what the product was, stated Jack Dorsey

Limiting each tweet to 140 characters, *Twitter* opens infinite gates towards communication, quite a lot of people use the service to blog about the news, politics, TV shows, or any other important topic. Some people even use it to share their thoughts on lectures or sermons. So Twitter posts are certainly not limited

to simply and merely answering the question, "What are you doing?"

As in the case of blog, twitter is not only a noun, for it can also act as a verb, with direct reference not to birds but to those who like to *chirp* over the Internet.

Who has not written a message of any kind, be it e-mail, SMS, and has not used that funny, tiny application that adds a drop of expressivity to its content, namely the *emoticon*? However, the little text-based faces and objects are not entirely a creation of the XXth century. The National Telegraphic Review and Operators Guide in April 1857 documented the use of the number 73 in Morse code to express "love and kisses". Dodge's Manual in 1908 documented the reintroduction of "love and kisses" as the number 88. A New York Times transcript from Abraham Lincoln's speech written in 1862 discovered by Bryan Benilous contains the ;) symbol, and ever since there has been some debate as to whether it is a typo, a legitimate punctuation construct, or an emoticon.

Typographical emoticons were published in 1881 by the American satirical magazine Puck. Emoticons had already come into use in science-fiction fandom in the 1940s. In 1963 the "smiley face", a yellow button with two black dots representing eyes and an upturned thick curve representing a mouth, was created by freelance artist Harvey Ball, and it was realized on order of a large insurance company as part of a campaign to boost the morale of its employees and soon became a big success. Now, almost everyone, regardless of their whereabouts on this planet uses not only the symbol, but also the word emoticon in most of their messages.

In the cyberspace architecture, the name of Microsoft creator was but impossible not to appear, and it has inspired the term *Gatesed*, that means that if someone encounters one of the unfortunate side-effects of using Microsoft technology, that someone has been "Gatesed."

From the medical world comes the corrupted term *mouselexia* – that refers to the inability to use a mouse correctly, which makes some people mouselexic. The same background accounts for another Internet jargon, *netlag*, respectively, that refers to the unfortunate physical side-effects of being online for an extended period of time. According to "The Chronicle of Higher Education", "the condition resembles jetlag, but can also entail eye and muscle strain".

Among the headlines of 2007 is the term *m-commerce*, as alternative to *e-commerce*, responding thus to a new dimension of electronic trade, much more dynamic and alert. Short for mobile e-commerce, m-commerce

describes the growing trend of using networks that interface with wireless devices, such as laptops, handheld computers or mobile phones to initiate or complete online electronic commerce transactions.

Not only technical terms manage to echo their resonance into the language of cyberspace, for there are such terms as *zombie* that could make us think of 3D PC games, whereas a *zombie* is actually by far more serious than that. In the world of UNIX, a *zombie* refers to a "child" programme that was started by a "parent" programme but then abandoned by the parent. *Zombie* is also used to describe a computer that has been implanted with a daemon that puts it under the control of a malicious hacker without the knowledge of the computer owner.

Another term that could raise anyone's eyebrow and would definitely strike as rather odd is *Cuckoo Egg*. Not only the term itself but also its definition is rather strange. Those who download copy protected songs may come across Cuckoo Egg. While downloading the favourite tune, within the first 30 seconds the modern cyber *pirate* may hear something other than the initial song - usually cuckoo clock sound effects or a series of random sounds and noises that are free of any copyright ownership. Cuckoo on all those who do not buy the original CDs in the first place!

Time is the essential dimension of the current century, with peculiar implications when it refers to communication, and thus we come across the term *Web collaboration*. Saving time and money was on the agenda for many small businesses in 2005, and Web collaboration means helping them to achieve this goal. Rather than racking up hours of long distance charges and paying large support teams, Web collaboration packages and tools offers the back-end software or service that allows people centre to share Web pages with customers while offering voice and text chat assistance or to conduct single or multi-user conferences and seminars.

The last decades have taught us that it is important not only to communicate, but also to shrink distances and compress them in seconds and simultaneous frameworks of utterance. *Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)* received the vote as "The Term" for 2005. From the capability to place a call to the other side of the world via the Internet connection for free, to large corporate and enterprise telephony savings it looks as if the mere buzz surrounding of VoIP restructure the whole concept of modern communication.

In a world that loves wireless, we were not at all surprised to see discussions run from VoIP to VoWiFi - which is essentially the wireless version of the technology which enables people to use the

Internet as the transmission medium for telephone calls). We certainly expect to hear a lot more buzz about VoWiFi in the coming years.

CONCLUSIONS

As we approach the end of 2010, it is a good time to take note of these new computer and technology terms, for they tend to shape the way in which we have to communicate nowadays. Technology, computer and Internet terms never go

out of style, but technology trends to come and go with the changing tides, shaping not only the world but also the way in which this world communicates.

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