

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INTERNET  
LANGUAGE AMONG RUSSIAN- AND ESTONIAN-SPEAKING SECONDARY-  
SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**MA Thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

The present thesis focuses on the knowledge of the Internet language among Russian- and Estonian-speaking secondary-school students. The aim of the study is to compare the knowledge of the Internet language among the students in three schools with Estonian and Russian languages of instruction on the basis of a questionnaire.

According to the National Examination statistics (Innove 2013), Estonian-speaking students have better results in the English language exam than their Russian-speaking counterparts. Therefore, the hypothesis proposes that Estonian-speaking students are more competent in the use of the Internet language.

The thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter provides a general overview of the Internet language – a recent variety of English – and its characteristic features. The second chapter concentrates on teaching the Internet language, and gives some examples of the exercises found in the coursebooks. The third chapter includes the description of the questionnaire, the background of the respondents, and the analysis of the results.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: background information on the use of the Internet; shortening the sentences using the Internet language, and decoding a poem written in the Internet language. Altogether 111 10th-year students with both Estonian and Russian native languages participated in the study. There were 56 Estonian-speaking students and 55 Russian-speaking students.

The study revealed that Russian-speaking students are less active users of Internet-based communication for the purpose of English language practice than Estonian-speaking students, and generally they spend less time on online communication.

The study demonstrates that there is no strong correlation between the time spent online and the ability to shorten the sentences, but those who spend more time communicating online managed to decode more words. For both Estonian- and Russian-speaking students the most difficult method of shortening the words is the use of numbers as parts of the words. The most popular shortenings are replacement of the word with similarly pronounced letters and numbers.

The results of the study confirmed the hypothesis that Estonian-speaking students are more competent users of the Internet language than their Russian-speaking counterparts.

Apart from the use of the Internet, the study revealed several grammatical problems – both groups of students have a similar misunderstanding of the functions of the verb *have* in English grammar.

## **CONTENTS**

ABSTRACT .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	5
CHAPTER 1. INTERNET LANGUAGE AND ITS CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES ..	7
1 INTERNET LANGUAGE .....	7
1.1 Languages on the Web .....	10
1.2 The Internet Language – a new variety of English .....	10
1.3 Use of the Internet language.....	12
1.3.1 Instant messaging .....	13
1.3.2 Social networking.....	15
1.3.3 E-mailing.....	16
1.3.4 Chat rooms .....	17
2 CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE INTERNET LANGUAGE .....	18
2.1.1 Pictograms and logograms .....	18
2.1.2 Initialisms.....	19
2.1.3 Omitted letters .....	20
2.1.4 Nonstandard spellings .....	20
2.1.5 Blends and compounds.....	21
CHAPTER 2. COURSE BOOKS AND THE INTERNET LANGUAGE .....	22
2.1 English World .....	23
2.2 Global.....	23
2.3 Insight.....	24
2.4 The Real Life.....	25
CHAPTER 3. QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE RESULTS .....	26
3.1 Description of the questionnaire .....	26
3.2 Analysis of the questionnaire .....	28
3.2.1 Internet language and Estonian-speaking students.....	29
3.2.1.1 Social networking and instant messaging services.....	30
3.2.1.2 Shortening the usual sentences.....	30
3.2.1.3 Decoding the poem written in the Internet language.....	39
3.2.2 Internet language and Russian-speaking students .....	40
3.2.2.1 Social networks and instant messaging services .....	41
3.2.2.2 Shortening the usual sentences.....	41
3.2.2.3 Decoding the poem written in the Internet language.....	50
3.3 The comparison of the questionnaire results .....	51

CONCLUSION .....	55
REFERENCES .....	59
APPENDIX 1 .....	63
APPENDIX 2 .....	64
APPENDIX 3 .....	65
APPENDIX 4 .....	66
APPENDIX 7 .....	69
APPENDIX 8 .....	71
APPENDIX 9 .....	72
APPENDIX 10 .....	73
APPENDIX 11 .....	75
RESÜMEE .....	77

## INTRODUCTION

During the past twenty years our life has changed considerably – the widespread of the Internet connection has influenced our lives in all the spheres, including the way we communicate with people. The emergence of social networks has changed the concept of the Internet usage from being rather content consuming to content producing (Seargiant, Tagg 2014: 2). We use social networks like *facebook.com* and instant messaging clients like *Skype*, *WhatsApp* and *Viber* to contact people.

The Internet has brought a bigger amount of information presented and shared among people. In such an environment of constant information flow it is necessary to be able to read and write quickly. Thus, a new variety of English has appeared. This language variety has several names, such as the Internet language, Netspeak, Textspeak, and Weblish. The latter is defined by the Collins dictionary (2013) as “the shorthand form of English that is used in text messaging, chat rooms, etc”.

Fifteen years ago, such phrases as *N2m* or *BOCTAAE* would have been meaningless for the majority of people. Nowadays, on the other hand, the use of *u* instead of ‘you’ is widespread in student essays. This is the main reason why the present paper focuses on the topic of the Internet language. Knowing the background of such errors may help teachers to explain the students where and how the Internet language should be used.

The first chapter of the present paper concentrates on the characteristic features of the Internet language and provides a short overview of the most widespread methods of shortening words. The second chapter deals with the analysis of a questionnaire, which was carried out in three Estonian schools among the 10th-year students who study English as the first foreign language. The idea was to compare the knowledge of the Internet language among Estonian- and Russian-speaking students. The hypothesis proposes that Estonian-speaking students are more competent in the use of the Internet

language than Russian-speaking because the examination scores show (Innove 2013), that in general Estonian-speaking students cope with the English national exam better, than Russian-speaking students. It made the author of the present thesis suggest that Estonian-speaking students know English better, and therefore they are more likely to use it to communicate on the Internet.

The paper could be of interest for the teachers of older generations, as it gives examples of different shortenings, which help teachers to understand from where the errors come. It can also be of interest for the students themselves.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTERNET LANGUAGE AND ITS CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES**

The present chapter of the thesis focuses on the popularity of English language on the Web and the Internet language as a recent variety of English. It also includes the historical background of the domains where the Internet language can be used, such as instant messaging software, social networks, e-mails, and chat rooms. In the second part of the chapter the characteristic features of the Internet language are discussed in greater detail.

### **1 INTERNET LANGUAGE**

The Internet language, also known as Netspeak, Textspeak, Weblish, etc, is a new variety of English which emerged as a result of growing popularity of the Internet-based communication. Crystal (2010: 414) regarded Internet situations as domains; the latter include e-mails, chat rooms, instant messaging clients and social networks, different forums, and online game rooms. Crystal (*ibid.*414) suggested the broader term *computer-based communication (CBC)*, which includes most aspects of the notion. He adds that even this term does not fully describe the notion because it does not cover the use of other electronic devices, such as mobile phones, for example, which are widely used for communication as well. Thus, Crystal (*ibid.*414) considers that the best term that covers all the features and devices is *electronically mediated communication (EMC)*

The Internet language can be considered an offspring of texting language which emerged in the mid-1980's (Crystal 2009: 4). The first pagers were able to transmit only 20 characters, so the birth of a compressed language variety was inevitable. In some circumstances sending a message was preferable to calling a person, for this reason its

popularity increased rather rapidly. In the book *Txtng: Gr8 Db8* (2009: 4) Crystal claimed that it took five years for the text messaging to gain its popularity. The first message was sent in 1992, and by the end of 2000 the number of messages sent worldwide reached a billion, and in 2001 it was already 17 billion.

The Internet language is characterized by different ways of compressing words and whole phrases, which include pictograms and logograms, initialisms, omitted letters and nonstandard spellings. All the above-mentioned characteristics are discussed in detail in the present thesis. There are also individual rules of punctuation – each user independently decides how to use different punctuation marks, and there are even users who choose not to use any punctuation at all.

Explaining the reason why the Internet language is popular, Crystal noted in his speech *Twenty-first century English*: “With so many people spending so much time on the Internet, especially in an interactive way, the effect on language is bound to be immense – and immediate” (2001: 2). Indeed, not only native speakers of English use English on the Internet, many ‘other-language-speakers’ use English in their everyday communication with partners, co-workers, and most of the communication takes place on the Internet. This is the reason a simpler and shorter version of the informal writing is needed. Another reason for the popularity of the Internet language is the tempo of our lives. The cities become bigger, people spend half of their lives in metros or trains and buses, they rush from work to the gym and then home to spend at least an hour with their families. In such conditions it is difficult to find time for writing a long and grammatically correct text in the traditional sense.

According to Crystal (1998: 27), the Internet has three functions. It is a message transmission service – one can send a message to any other Internet user by e-mail. It is a forum for discussion – one can join an online chat group and talk all day to people who

share the same interests. It is also the World Wide Web – a facility which permits any computer to make its data available to any other computer. It is difficult to disagree with him because the Internet seems to have a vital role in our everyday life, whether it is reading e-mails over a morning cup of coffee or checking the temperature outside.

Crystal (2002: 94) regarded the Web as a part of a new animated linguistic channel – more dynamic than traditional writing, and more permanent than traditional speech. He also mentioned that it is neither speech nor writing – it is part of a new medium. The author sees the Web pages as a “different kind of revolutionary development” (2002: 94). He compares it to the pages of a book where nothing can be changed, but in the case of a Webpage you can see it changing in front of your eyes.

According to Crystal (2003: 114), three-quarters of the world’s international organizations use English as their official language of communication. It makes English a truly global language. Since a significant proportion of communication takes place online, and a third of the Internet users are English-speaking (Graddol 2006: 44) it makes English the global Internet language. Crystal (2002: 94) writes that the Internet language being something between speaking and writing, or more precisely, having features of both at the same time has become the fourth medium. Now it is appropriate to use the terms ‘written language’, ‘spoken language’, ‘sign language’, and ‘computer-mediated language’. In such a situation Li Wu and Dan Ben-Canaan (2006: 3) thought it necessary to integrate the Internet language into the process of teaching English. Otherwise the difference between general English and its Internet version may make it impossible for the people with different backgrounds (here the author has in mind Internet users and others) to understand each other. In addition, since spoken language, as well as written language, constitute a part of the curriculum for both mother-tongue and foreign-language teaching, it is necessary to start preparing the students for the Internet communication as well.

The present chapter provides some background information about the different communication tools where the Internet language can be used and also the main characteristic features of the Internet Language.

### **1.1 Languages on the Web**

For a decade, the English language has held its leading position as the language of the Internet. According to David Graddol (2006: 44) 85% of web pages were in English in the year 1998, but by the year 2000 the percentage dropped to 68%. In 1996 there were 80% of Internet users whose first language was English, but within six years their number decreased to 40%.

At the beginning of the new millennium the Internet gradually started becoming multilingual. According to Crystal (2010: 417), within eight years (from 2000 to 2008) the number of English-speaking users of the Internet has grown 203.5 percent. At the same time the number of Chinese-speaking Internet users grew 755.1%, which is almost four times more than the growth of the English-speaking users. However, the Chinese language is not the only language to become more popular on the Internet. For example, the number of Arabic-speaking Internet users has increased 2,063.7%, which makes the growth ten times higher than in the case of the English-speaking Internet users. Other languages that have become more widespread on the Internet include Spanish (405.3% growth), French (458.7% growth), and Portuguese (668.0% growth). However, the English language still maintains its first place among the most widespread languages used on the Internet.

### **1.2 The Internet Language – a new variety of English**

David Crystal writes in his book *Language and the Internet* that “a language variety is a system of linguistic expression whose use is governed by situational factors” (2006: 6). In the case of the Internet Language one can point out several situations of language use

such as the previously mentioned: e-mails, chatrooms, forums, etc. According to Crystal (2006: 8), a language variety has five main distinctive features. The distinctive features of a written language are graphic, orthographic, grammatical, lexical, and discourse features. Further, the author of the present thesis aims at analysing the factors from the perspective of the core features of the Internet language.

Graphic features include “the general presentation and organisation of the written text including illustrations, page designed spacing, etc.” (Crystal 2006: 8). A significant proportion of Internet language use occurs during the exchange of instant messages; it makes the interaction similar to oral speech because there is always a certain addressee who the speaker knows. In this case the use of emoticons or smiles is inevitable in order to show the reaction and the mood of the speakers. These are combinations of signs and letters aimed at expressing the emotions of the speaker to his or her interlocutor, because the people included in the interaction usually cannot see the faces of each others. Thus, the emoticons may be considered an illustration of the Internet-based communication. In addition, all the users choose the font and the background they feel comfortable with, making each interaction look unique.

Orthographic features mean “such factors as distinctive use of the alphabet, capital letters, spelling, punctuation, and ways of expressing emphasis (italics boldface, etc.)” (Crystal 2006: 8). These are the most important features of the Internet language. For example, the majority of the words are shortened in the Internet language and have their own unique spelling, which differs from traditional English. The notion of punctuation is also relevant because while talking on the Internet people create their own punctuation rules, and some of them even choose not to use any punctuation marks at all. The emphasis is usually expressed by capital letters and larger size or with extensive question/exclamation marks.

Grammatical features are defined as “the distinctive use of sentence structure, word order, and word inflections” (Crystal 2006: 8). Probably the main feature in this case could be omission of auxiliary verbs in questions and much shorter and often compressed sentences.

Lexical features include “the vocabulary of a language, defined in terms of the set of words and idioms given distinctive use within a variety” (ibid. 8). The Internet vocabulary includes such new words as ‘to google’ (meaning to search something in Google) or ‘tweet’ (meaning to write in Twitter). David Crystal (ibid: 21) provided the following list of expressions which are distinct for the Internet language:

*Are you wired?* (i.e. ready to handle this)

*She is multitasking* (said of someone doing two things at a time)

*I'll ping you later* (i.e. get in touch to see if you're around)

*He's 404* (i.e. he is not around)

*That's an alt.dot way of looking at things* (i.e. a cool way)

Discourse features mean “the structural organization of a text, defined by such factors as coherence, relevance, paragraph structure, and the logical progression of ideas” (Crystal 2006: 9). The interaction in the chat rooms and instant messaging clients normally consists of short sentences because a limited amount of characters is permitted per message. Therefore, the texts are divided into short chunks of short phrases sent one by one.

### 1.3 Use of the Internet language

The purpose of the Internet language is to create an easier and faster way to express one’s thoughts and feelings on the Internet. A set of different means of communication, or domains, has been created within the last two decades. They can be tentatively divided

into the following groups: social networks, instant messaging, chat groups, voice over internet, and e-mails. In this part the author regards it necessary to give a short overview of each group.

There are two types of communication: synchronous and asynchronous (Ifukor, 2011: 36). The first one means that the messages are sent and responded spontaneously and in real-time. These are instant messaging and chat groups. Asynchronous communication means that the message is sent and read, or responded later. These are emails, forums, blogs, and SMS messaging (*ibid.*: 36). There are also domains which, depending on the situation, may be both synchronous and asynchronous, for example, social networking as well as *Gmail*, provide an opportunity to exchange instant messages if both the sender and the recipient are online, or if the latter is offline, then the messages are stored and when he/she appears online, the message can be read.

The information on the domains, which are the focus of the conducted questionnaire, will be provided in greater detail further in this section of the thesis, namely, instant messaging, social networking (including more detailed information about *Facebook* and *Twitter*), emails, and chat groups.

### **1.3.1 Instant messaging**

Instant messaging is another way for people to stay in touch. To use it, it is necessary to install the program and add the people to the list.

Nowadays there are several instant messaging (further IM) clients, such as ICQ and Skype, the latter was joined with another popular IM software MSN. Despite its popularity in the early 2000's, the BBC News reported (2010: para 1) that the number of active IM users is beginning to decline because of the influence of social networking.

ICQ is one of the most popular and oldest IM clients. Its history dates to 1996, when it was created by an Israeli software company Mirabilis (Hosch 2008: para 1). In 1998 it

was purchased by American Online, Inc. ICQ was the first text-based messenger to reach a widespread market of online users (Petronzio 2012: para 11). It was a fast spreading tool to connect people online reaching 175 million users by 2004 (Lambert 2005: 136). It used so called peer-to-peer connection, enabling the users to communicate with each other directly with no messages passing through the central server. Thus, the messages reached their destination quickly even if there were too many users online (*ibid.*; 136). In 2010 it was announced that ICQ was acquired by the Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov for \$188 million (Khrennikov 2014: para 1).

Windows Live Messenger, also known as MSN, was another popular IM software, to appear in 1999. It was Microsoft's successful attempt to have its own share of the IM popularity. MSN used the same principle of peer-to-peer connection as ICQ. It spread all over the world and had estimated 330 million users by 2009 (Gander 2014: para 5). Microsoft claimed that in 2010 people spent online more than 160 billion minutes a month (Duncan 2010: para 1). Windows Live Messenger used to have an easy-to use interface, which enabled to send messages, pictures, to play games, and to make video calls. However, in 2011 Microsoft decided to purchase Skype, and in October 2013 Windows Live Messenger stopped working.

Skype was first introduced in 2003 by Luxembourg-based Skype Technologies (Hosch 2009: para 1). Its original idea was to introduce the voice-over-Internet protocol. Although Skype was originally created as a telephoning tool, it also included an IM option, and has been widely used for both to make calls and send written messages. Similarly to ICQ and MSN, its popularity grew fast worldwide. By the time Microsoft decided to buy Skype it had more than 600 million users worldwide (Arthur 2011: para 4).

### 1.3.2 Social networking

The term social networking service, also called virtual communities, is now most commonly referred to the webpages that are created to divide people into specific groups, to find school or university members, share information one needs, and simply to stay in touch with friends. As noted, social networking has been overtaking the popularity of instant messaging. The reason might be the functionality of the modern social networks. Communicating online is no longer only an exchange of information. The social networks enable people not only to exchange instant messages, but also to send them offline. People may share pictures, comment on them, leave statuses, and follow what is new in their friends' lives. It crosses the boundaries of *Hello! How are you?* dialogues and gives an opportunity to learn about news without even asking.

Nowadays, one can find many different virtual communities with numerous purposes. For example, virtual communities for young mothers, travellers, school graduates, etc. The most popular among them are those with a general purpose: *Facebook.com* and *twitter.com*. Since these two social networks are the most popular among the members of different language communities, the author considers it useful to provide a short description of both.

*Facebook* was primarily focused on high school and college students. It was founded by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg as a hobby. It was launched in February 2004 and was intended as a network of certain colleges (Yadav 2006: para 1).

In 2006 it became publicly available for everyone (Facebook 2006). Nowadays almost everyone, who is older than 13, can become a member, which makes it the most popular virtual community. The idea of *Facebook* has become to connect people with friends, co-workers, study and life around them. It quickly gained popularity all over the world, and now people from different parts of the world are united under 'the umbrella' of this social network making it a multinational and multilingual site.

Twitter is the social community that allows sending short (140 characters long) text-based messages, also known as ‘tweets’. According to *Business Insider* (2011: para 3), it was launched in February 2006. The Washington post (2011: para 1) wrote that in 2011 the number of users was estimated as many as 100 million, with half of this number logging in every day. However, about 40% of the users sign in not to post but to read, which makes it still one of the most popular networks to date.

### 1.3.3 E-mailing

Sending an e-mail is an easy and fast way to transmit one’s thoughts without the necessity to even leave the house and wait for a week or so for the message to reach its addressee. According to Crystal (2001: 93), misspelling, omitting capitalization and punctuation are no longer considered to be a matter of illiteracy when it comes to writing an email.

When sending an e-mail people do not need to use the name of the person whom they are writing to or mention who they are as the sections ‘from’ and ‘to’ provide this information. In the same article Crystal (2001: 94) discusses what is revolutionary about emails. The first feature that he mentions is ‘framing’. When one receives a message containing a few different points, while giving a reply and feeling the necessity to comment on each of them or to add more information, it is possible to do with each point by splitting the text into parts and inserting one’s ideas and sending back the version containing both ideas. The kind of e-mail looks like a dialogue.

Writing an e-mail is not a part of simultaneous dialogue, one can take as much time to write it as needed, and carefully think through the wording and check the spelling and punctuation. Nevertheless, when it comes to writing an informal e-mail, they can include abbreviations as in text messages, emoticons to express the feelings of a sender, and informal greetings and solutions (Crystal 2013: C28).

### 1.3.4 Chat rooms

Real-time Internet discussion groups are another feature of the Internet considered revolutionary by David Crystal (2001: 94). He called it neither speech nor writing. It allows seeing hundreds of messages coming from different parts of the world at the same screen. Participating in such a discussion is like having two eyes instead of ten ears because while being in a real room with 20 people in it; one can listen and understand what only one person is speaking at a time

The history of chat rooms goes back to 1973 when Doug Brown wrote a computer program based on PLATO for the students of the University of Illinois, which enabled the people to send instant messages and chat as a group. It was named *Talkomatic*. But it was not yet the advanced chat room that we are used to nowadays. It had some shortcomings such as it did not allow choosing a concrete person to talk to; it was rather a spontaneous chat with a random person. *Talkomatic* became very popular and it was decided to create a more sophisticated program that would enable the user to choose a specific person to chat to. Thus ‘term-talk’ emerged. It enabled to choose a partner for communication but was limited to two people. Among the advantages of the program was the ability to chat and do something else at the same time. The person receiving the message could see a flashing message at the bottom of the screen (Woolley 1994: para 29).

The first public chat room was created by *CompuServe Interactive Services* in 1980. Its name was *CB Simulator*. It also provided a real time chat service and was available for all the people (2013: para 2). It gained some popularity, but when instant messaging tools like ICQ and Windows Live messaging came into use, the number of chat room visitors decreased.

## 2 CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE INTERNET LANGUAGE

The present section of the thesis discusses the word-formation methods used in the Internet language on the example of the two classifications made by David Crystal. As noted, the usual language offers limited possibilities for computer interactions and texting. In order to type the words faster, it is necessary to make them shorter; therefore all the word-formation methods discussed further are aimed at shortening and economy of time and space.

The following methods of shortening come from David Crystal's book "Txtng. The G8 Db8", which was published in 2008. According to Crystal, nothing new has been invented by the Internet users, and the methods used have been used for centuries (2008: 43). There are five distinct ways to 'translate' words and phrases into the Internet language: pictograms and logograms, initialisms, omitted letters, nonstandard spellings, and blending and compounds. The more detailed explanation of each follows.

### 2.1.1 Pictograms and logograms

Pictograms and logograms are the most noticeable features of text orthography (Crystal 2009: 37). Both pictograms and logograms are widely used in the Internet language as well. The words can be substituted by a single letter, numerals, or typographical symbols, which are pronounced in the same way as the original word, in this case they are known as logograms (*Ibid.*).

For example:

A number 4 may reffer to a preposition *for*

A single letter *r* stands for *are*

A sign + means *positive*

The logograms can be also used to replace a part of the word, another part of the word is written after or before the logogram, for example:

*2morrow* stands for *tomorrow*

*@mosphere* stands for *atmosphere*

*+ly* may be used to shorten *positively*

When the words, or parts of the words, are replaced by a symbol or picture, they are named pictograms (ibid., p. 38). The most popular widely used pictograms are emoticons, a combination of punctuation marks, numbers, letters, and other symbols expressing emotions. For example:

: ( means ‘sad’

: X means *silence*

8-) may reffer to ‘*being clever*’

### 2.1.2 Initialisms

According to Crystal, the second noticeable feature of the internet language is the reduction of words to their initial letters (2009: 41). Although usually proper names are reduced to the initialisms (FBI or USA), in the Internet language all the words or phrases can become initialisms or acronyms. Acronyms are pronounced as words and initialisms as single letters (Algeo 1993: 9). One can find initials that denote single words (y = yes, n=no), compounds (*BF* = *boyfriend*), parts of phrases (*LOL* = *lots of laugh*), whole sentences or phrases (*BRB* = *be right back*).

There are also some initialisms that are spelled like usual words but have their own meaning. Thus, a usual word ‘*hand*’, typed as *HAND* may be an acronym for ‘have a nice day’, or another example: *KISS* may refer to ‘keep it simple stupid’, *MUD* may also mean ‘multi-user dungeon’.

### 2.1.3 Omitted letters

Initialisms and acronyms are not the only ways to shorten words. Another option for shortening the words is clipping, a process of shortening of a lexeme, keeping the original meaning and the word class (Bauer 1993: 233). Crystal mentions that usually vowels, final consonants, especially ‘silent’ letters are dropped, and double consonants are also written as single letters (2009: 45).

In the book *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8* David Crystal provided the following examples of this notion (2009: 46):

plsed	pleased	msg	message
bunsn brnr	bunsen burner	txtin	texting
messin	messing	getn	getting
comin	coming	englis	English
rite	write	xlnt	excellent

Some other examples of clipping (Sun 2010: 99) include front clipping: *cause* for *because*; front and back clipping: *cuz* for *because*, and back clipping: *bro* for *brother*.

It is interesting to note that one and the same word, for example ‘because’ can be shortened in several ways depending on the imagination of the writer.

### 2.1.4 Nonstandard spellings

There are also a number of words, which seem to be deliberately misspelled by the writers and are usually written the way they are pronounced. Such shortenings are useful as they help to save time on typing, and in the case of the limited amount of characters per message, it also helps to include more words in one message.

The following examples are from David Crystal's book *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8* (2009):

cos, cuz	because	fone phone	luv love
omigod	oh my god	ova over	shud should
skool	school	sum some	thanx thanks
thru	through	wot what	ya you

### 2.1.5 Blends and compounds

Blends and compounds are two more methods to form new words in the Internet language. They are similar in their task, therefore are viewed together. Blending is the process of combining parts of two words to form a new word (Hadžiahmetović-Jurida 2007: 204).

For example, Internet + citizen = *Netizen* (a person who spends time in the Internet), Internet + etiquette = *netiquette* (a set of rules to be followed in the Internet), Crap + applet = *crapplet* (a computer application that is not working properly), and Web + English = *Weblish*.

Compounds are formed by joining two words to form a new word (ibid.: 203). The compound can be written solidly as one word, separately as two words, or with a hyphen (Liu 2014: 25).

Examples of compounds written as one word include: name + waster = *namewaster* (a person who makes a nickname and does no use it), snail + mail = *snailmail* (as opposed to an email, a usual paperback mail), right/left + click = *right-/leftclick*

Examples of hyphenated compounds are *click-and-bu* and *one-click*

## CHAPTER 2. COURSE BOOKS AND THE INTERNET LANGUAGE

In one of his interviews about the Internet language David Crystal (2010) mentions that over the years *Twitter* has become the fastest tool to present information. Whatever happens in the world, *Twitter* is the first place to find information about it. Since most messages on *Twitter* are written in a shortened way, one needs to know the shortenings to understand the information. On the other hand, the Internet language is also widely used for communication especially among the younger generation. Taking into consideration these two factors, it is logical to assume that the newest course books should provide the students of English as a foreign language with the basic knowledge about the Internet version of English language as well as other parts of language. Therefore, the present part of the thesis provides a short overview of tasks focusing on the Internet language. Since the present paper focuses on the knowledge of the Internet language among the students of the secondary level, the overview is based on the course books of the upper-intermediate level.

Since the Internet Language is a relatively new aspect of teaching, the most recent coursebooks (first published over the last decade) have been chosen for the overview, namely *Gateway*, *English World*, *Beyond*, *Global* (Macmillan), *On screen*, *Prime Time* (Express Publishing), *Insight*, *Solutions* (Oxford University Press), *The Real Life*, *Keynote* (Pearson Longman), *Full Blast*, *Traveller* (MM Publications). All the coursebooks are available in Estonia.

Out of twelve books, eight (*On screen*, *Prime Time*, *Gateway*, *Beyond*, *Keynote*, *Solutions*, *Full Blast* and *Traveller*) do not have any exercises or texts on the Internet Language. Other student's books present the notion of the Internet language, or have one or more exercises connected to the topic.

## 2.1 *English World*

Macmillan first published the *English World* Upper-intermediate coursebook, by Mary Bowen, Liz Hocking, and Wendy Wren in 2013. It is the last part of a ten-level course.

Although, this coursebook does not contain an independent chapter on the Internet language, it has a topic “I am writing to say...” (2013: 16–17), which is connected to the use of Internet language (see Appendix 1 for details). The topic discusses the different ways of communication among people in written form, including text messages, emails, and social networks. It also states that “texts, Informal emails and social networking messages are usually brief with short forms and abbreviations. Not much attention is paid to the quality of the writing” (2013: 17). Thus, if the teacher considers it important to give an overview of the Internet language, it is possible to give the students a worksheets on the Internet language, or ask them to write a small messages to the classmates.

In the start-up exercise of the topics there are some questions leading into the topic, one of them is “What do you think are the main differences between letters, emails and texts?” (2013: 16). It is quite possible that nowadays students will come up with such differences as the abbreviations and shortenings, which are a common feature of the Internet language. Even if the students fail to name the differences, the teacher still can lead to the Internet language and engage the students into the discussion on the Internet language.

## 2.2 *Global*

*Global* is a six-level series of coursebooks aiming at the students from the beginning to the advanced level. The course book was first published by Macmillan in 2011. The authors are Lindsay Clanfield, Rebecca Robb Benne, and Amanda Jeffries.

Similarly, to the *English World* coursebook, the *Global* coursebook does not provide any direct information about the Internet language. However, it has a subsection

dedicated to Global English, and if the teacher considers it necessary, the Internet language can be discussed.

There are a few texts related to the languages in the students' book including: "Languages Alive and Dead" (2011: 15), "Trade Language" (2011: 39) and "The Rise and Fall of English" (2011: 111). However, none of them directly or, indirectly cannot be connected to the topic of the Internet language. Even though none of the texts lead to the Internet language, it is still possible to place the notion of the Internet language into the context. For example, the text "The Rise and Fall of English" (see Appendix 2 for details) narrates about the popularity of English and the reasons it became an international language, and it also questions whether English is able to keep its status in the future. In this context it is possible to discuss whether the Internet language is a rise or a fall of English, as well as the possibility of becoming a new "future" English.

### **2.3 *Insight***

*Insight* is a five-level series of student coursebooks from the elementary to advanced levels. It was published for the first time by Oxford University Press in 2014; the authors are Jayne Wildman and Fiona Beddall.

The *Insight* coursebook mentions the notion of the Internet language and has a relevant task on it (2014: 58). One of the units in the coursebook called "Words" has a fill in the gaps task (see Appendix 3 for details) about texting in Facebook with the help of abbreviations. It gives a few examples of the Internet language, which is considered one of the versions of English, and called 'textspeak'.

Another discussion of the Internet language can be found in the Workbook (2014: 36) with a task (see Appendix 4 for details) asking the students to replace the phrases with the shortenings. As an additional task on the Internet language, a teacher can also ask the students to talk about the use of acronyms while texting, and probably, make a list of the

short forms students know or use in their texts. In case some students are not familiar with the term, it would give them a short overview of the Internet language.

#### **2.4 *The Real Life***

The Real Life is a five-level series of student coursebooks from the elementary up to the advance levels. It was first published in 2011 by Pearson Longman; the authors are Sarah Cunningham and Jonathan Bygrave.

The Real Life is another coursebook that includes the topic of the Internet language and provides additional tasks for students. There is a module called “Global Network” which concentrates on the usage of the Internet, and specifically, communication on the internet, and how it has affected the languages. The text titled “English is Changing INNIT?”<sup>28</sup> (2011: 28) discusses the way technology influences the languages (see Appendix 5 for details) and also mentions some abbreviations used in the Internet language as examples of the changes. It provides the reasons why people start using shortenings and refers to the Internet Language as “Globish” (*ibid.* 28).

The Real Life Resource Book provides an additional worksheet on the Internet language (2011: 61), which consists of three tasks (see Appendix 6 for details). In the first task students are expected to match the shortenings with full words. The second task is to rewrite the shortened messages with correct spelling and punctuation. The last task asks the students to talk about the Internet language and answer the following questions:

1. Do you think the text language is a good or a bad thing?
2. Does it cause students to write with bad spelling and punctuation?
3. Do you think it will change the way we write in the future?

## CHAPTER 3. QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE RESULTS

This part of the thesis is dedicated to the description and the results of the questionnaire. To make the results easier to follow, they have been divided into smaller sections concentrating on the separate phrases used in the questionnaire.

The hypothesis proposes that Estonian-speaking students are more competent in the use of the Internet language than Estonian-Speaking students.

### 3.1 Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three main parts (see Appendix 7 for details). In the first part the author aimed at receiving background information about the respondents: native language, which social networks and instant messaging services they use, how much time the respondents spend on online communication, and whether they have online friends to speak English to. The information was necessary to divide the students into groups, based on the amount of time they spend online, their native language, and whether they have the opportunity to speak English online.

In the second part of the questionnaire the respondents were given twenty sentences and were asked to imagine having an online conversation and rewrite the provided sentences. The aim of this part was to find out how many students use the Internet language and what are the most widespread types of shortenings they use.

The third part of the questionnaire was the poem written in the Internet language and published by David Crystal in his article *Texting* (2008: 77):

```
txt commndmnts
u shall luv ur mobil fone with all ur hart
u & ur fone shall neva b apart
u shall nt lust aftr ur neibrs fone not thiev
u shall b prepard @ all times 2 tXt & 2 recv
u shall use LOL & othr acronyms in conversatns
u shall b zappy with ur ast*r*skz & exc!matns!!
```

u shall abbrevi8 & rite words like theyr sed  
 u shall nt speak 2 sum1 face2face if u cn msg em insted  
 u shall nt shout with capitlts XEPT IN DIRE EMERGNCY +  
 u shell nt consult a ninglish dictnry

The students were asked to decode the poem and rewrite it using standard English. The poem consisted of different kinds of shortenings used in the Internet language. This part showed if the students were able to understand the text written in the Internet language.

Altogether 111 students completed the questionnaire: 56 Estonian language speakers and 55 – Russian language speakers, from 3 schools in Tartu and Tallinn.

#### *The pilot study*

In order to find out how widespread the Internet language is among the 10<sup>th</sup> graders a pilot questionnaire was compiled. The target group of the 10<sup>th</sup> year was chosen because at this stage according to the National curriculum (2011: 9) students should be at the B.1 level, which means, they are able to use the language in order to communicate with people.

A pilot study was also conducted to check whether the first sample of the questionnaire was accurate enough to provide the necessary data. It was completed by 15 students and showed that the questionnaire needed some modification.

First of all, not all the students knew the meaning of the word ‘weblish’, which was used to refer to the Internet language in the questionnaire, they did not understand what they were asked and seemed puzzled while completing the tasks. To solve the problem, a definition of the term was added to the questionnaire.

Secondly, the explanation of the second part was also misunderstood by the majority of students and, instead of rewriting the sentences with the appropriate shortenings, they

simply paraphrased them. In order to eliminate the shortcoming, a more detailed explanation was given, and an example was added.

It was also decided to make the second part longer. The first version of the task contained eight phrases, but the pilot study showed that it was not enough to draw conclusions. It was decided to add more sentences and the final number of sentences was 20. The phrases were taken from *A Glossary of Netspeak and Texspeak* by David Crystal (2004). Some of them were combined into sentences, and some other words were also added in order to make meaningful sentences. Some of the phrases and words were given without context.

Below one can find a list of the words and phrases taken from the glossary, as well as the shortenings given in the book.

Meaning	Abbreviation
too late	2 18
talk to you later	t2ul/
at the moment	atm
thank you	thnq/thnx/thx/tx
see you tomorrow	sy 2moro
be right back	brb
I will always love you	Iwlluvu
forever	4e/4ever
lots of laugh	lol
too good for you	2gd4u
at home	@home
at school at the moment	atm
dating	d8
boy friend	bf
happy birthday to you	hbtu
rolling on the floor laughing	rotfl
as far as I know	afaik
because	cuz/cos
also known as	aka
wonderful	1daful

### 3.2 Analysis of the questionnaire

As the key idea of the present thesis is to find out the differences in use of the Internet language among the Russian-speaking and Estonian-speaking students, the respondents

were first of all divided into two big groups according to their native language. As noted above, there were 56 Estonian-speaking, and 55 Russian-speaking students (see Appendix 8 for details).

Each group was then divided into two sub-groups depending on whether they had someone to speak English online or not. It was expected that students who did not have anyone to talk English to would be not familiar with the Internet language or were less familiar than those who had online friends to whom they spoke English.

Finally, since it would be logical to expect that the more students spend on communicating online the more competent users of the Internet language they are, the following division of these two groups was made on the basis of the amount of time spent on online communication: students who spend less than one hour talking online, one to two hours, three to four hours and more than four hours.

### **3.2.1 Internet language and Estonian-speaking students**

As noted, 56 Estonian-speaking students participated in the study. According to the results, 35 students had friends to whom they could speak English online and 21 students who did not have such friend (see Appendix 8 for details).

Among the students who have English-speaking online friends the majority spend 1–2 hours talking online per day, namely 14 students. 10 students told that they spent 3–4 hours, 6 students – less than hour, and 5 students spent more than 4 hours a day talking online (see Appendix 8 for details).

The numbers for the students who did not have anyone to speak English online are as follows: less than hour – 2 students; 1–2 hours – 9 students; 3–4 hours – 10 students. No one claimed to spend more than 4 hours a day speaking online.

### **3.2.1.1 Social networking and instant messaging services**

As expected the most popular social network for the Estonian students is *Facebook*. Almost all the students said they had a *Facebook* account (53 students out of the 56). The second most popular social network is *Orkut*, but the number of students, owning accounts there is very modest compared to *Facebook* users – only 10. Only 8 respondents mentioned *Twitter* in their questionnaires. The most surprising was that only 7 students have accounts in the Estonian social network *Rate* (see Appendix 9 for details).

It is worth mentioning that only two students claimed that they did not have any accounts in the social networks and one student did not answer the question. It means that 100% of those who have accounts are *Facebook* users.

In the case of instant messaging services the leader is also obvious – it is *MSN* with 51 users. The next is *Skype* with only 17 users.

### **3.2.1.2 Shortening the usual sentences**

This section presents the analysis of the results of the second part of the questionnaire phrase by phrase. The author concentrates on the Estonian-speaking students. As noted, 56 students participated in the study (see Appendix 10 for details).

#### *It's too late now, I have to go*

Four respondents did not provide their version of the phrase: 2 among those who have English-speaking online friends and 2 who do not have them. They are the students who did not use any live messaging service or have no social network accounts. There were also 6 students who simply rewrote the sentence the way it was given to them.

The most popular shortening (30 students) is the number 2 instead of the words ‘too’ and ‘to’. It is interesting to note that there were students who replaced both words, as well

as only one either ‘too’ or ‘to’ – 5 students out of 30 used the number in the case of ‘too’ only and 21 instead of ‘to’.

Another popular shortening appeared to be *I've* instead of ‘I have’. In total 11 students marked it in their answers. The reason may be that students are confused when it comes to such verbs, which have several grammatical roles. The students are familiar with *I've* when it stands for present perfect tense and may mix up the auxiliary verb ‘have’ with its lexical analogue which cannot be shortened as ‘ve.

Other shortenings were not so numerous, but also represented replacement of a part of the word by a number. For example, in the word ‘late’ a similar in pronunciation letter ‘8’ was used and the word looked like *l8*. But only 4 students out of 56 used this form. The number ‘2’ was also used by 3 students in the phrase ‘have to go’, which was paraphrased as ‘got to go’ and presented as *g2g*. Another version of this phrase was given by 2 students as *gtg*. Taking into consideration other sentences, these students generally seem to be quite competent Internet language users, because 3 out of 5 students used *l8* in the word ‘late’ and their versions of the other sentences were more varied compared to their fellow respondents.

#### *Bye. Talk to you later.*

As well as in the case of the previous sentence there were students who did not provide their version of the phrase or simply rewrote it. Altogether 4 students did not write anything.

Among those who reworded the sentence, 19 students used the number 2 instead of ‘to’. But it was not the most popular replacement. The number is smaller than in the case of the above-discussed sentence because 20 students simply escaped the use of ‘to’, or used the abbreviation *ttyl*, *ttul* instead of ‘talk to you later’ (4 students).

The most common shortening was the use of the letter *u* instead of the pronoun ‘you’ (21 students). It may be popular because it is easy to notice the similarity in the pronunciation of these two words, as was the case with ‘too/to’ and ‘2’.

However, the use of the number ‘8’ instead of the part of the word ‘later’ was not popular. In this case even fewer students (only 3) suggested alternative *l8r*. They probably were confused because of the *-r* ending and did not know how to combine both the number and the ending.

There were also 6 students who wrote *cya* instead of ‘talk to you later’. They probably did not read the task carefully enough, or simply this is an unusual phrase for them to use while talking online.

As for the word ‘bye’, most of the students did not suggest an alternative; however, there were few (6 students) who wrote *BB* instead, and 3 students used *by*.

#### *I don't want to talk to you*

This sentence was one of the most confusing for the respondents because 19 students did not provide any version of it at all and 4 rewrote it as it was given.

In general, the most popular shortenings were again 2 instead of ‘to’ (22 students) and *u* instead of ‘you’ (24 students).

Some participants (8 students) used *wanna* instead of ‘want to’. There were also those who suggested *don't wanna talk* instead of the whole sentence, omitting the use of ‘to’ and ‘you’.

#### *Are you busy at the moment?*

This sentence was one of the least difficult for the students since only 1 student did not shorten it and 8 did not write anything.

As in the case of the two previous sentences the most widely used shortening was *u* instead of ‘you’ (31 students).

Since most students used *u* instead of ‘you’, the author of the present thesis expected *r* to be the most popular version of the verb ‘are’. But only 8 students used some kind of shortening. There were 3 students who used *re* instead of ‘are’ among the respondents. One could explain it by the fact that, because it is used in English and they are used to using it and do not consider inventing anything new to be necessary. In some cases (2 students) the influence of the native language (L1) was discovered, for example, a few students used *a* instead of ‘are’. In Estonian the letter *a* is pronounced like the English letter *r*, so in order to make the word ‘are’ shorter, the Estonian students used *a* instead of *r*.

Another shortened phrase was ‘at the moment’, 13 students used @ instead and 9 – *atm*. The use of @ sing could be due the fact that Estonian people name this sing like that when dictating their emails, which must have been adopted by speakers of Estonian under the English influence.

There were also students (6 in total) who went further with the shortening and suggested *u busy?* or even simply *busy?* as the alternative of the whole sentence. Three of them used *g2g* in the first sentence and *l8r* in the second, which again shows that they are more experienced users of the Internet language. It is also worth mentioning that these students belong to the groups of students who spend 3–4 and more than 4 hours online, and all of them have English-speaking online friends.

#### *Thank you for your help*

This sentence was one of the least difficult ones for the students. There were only 9 students who wrote nothing or rewrote the provided version.

The shortening *u* instead of ‘you’ in this case was not popular; twice less students used it compared to the previous sentences. The reason for the phenomenon is that almost half the students (25 out of 56) omitted it using *thanks* (16 students) or *tnx* (9 students) for ‘thank you’, which does not require the pronoun. However, there were students who did not know it and used both *thanks/tnx* and *u*. But this mistake was not widespread - only in the case of 5 students.

Like in the case of the previous sentences the most popular shortening was a number instead of a preposition – 22 students replaced the preposition ‘for’ with the number *4*. The logic here is the same as with the number ‘2’ and the preposition ‘to’ – their pronunciation is similar. There also were 21 students who used *ur* instead of *your*, and 8 respondents who skipped ‘your’ in the sentence.

#### *See you tomorrow*

There were 12 students who did not suggest any kind of shortenings for this sentence, including 3 respondents who simply rewrote it.

The most popular answer was the phrase ‘see you’ – altogether 26 students shortened it. Among the suggested ways to make the phrase shorter were: *cu* (8 students), *cya* (4 students), *see u* (16 students), *see ya* (7 students), *si u* (1 student).

The integration of a number into the word was not very popular among the Estonian-speaking students. Only 11 students replaced the part of the word ‘tomorrow’ with the number ‘2’, writing *2morrow*. Other students probably were not able to follow the pattern and only the more experienced users of the Internet language did.

#### *I will always love you*

Altogether 42 students tried to make the words used in the sentence shorter, which leaves 14, who decided to change nothing.

The suggested shortenings included mostly *luv* for ‘love’ (14 students) and *u* instead of ‘you’. There were also 6 students who replaced the word ‘love’ with *<3* and ‘you’ with *ya* (*2 students*). The reason for such a modest result may be that ‘will’ is normally replaced by *ll* and it is difficult to shorten the word ‘always’, at least for non-native speakers. It is worth mentioning that there was one student who admitted spending more than 4 hours on online communication, who went further with the shortening and suggested *143* for *I love you*. It appeared to be the most advance shortening.

### *Friends forever*

This phrase confirmed the fact that the Estonian-speaking students do not feel the necessity to combine letters and numbers. Only 14 students used the shortening *4ever* for the word ‘forever’.

The majority of the respondents regarded this phrase as an abbreviation – 34 students wrote *FF* or *ff* instead of ‘fiends forever’.

### *Be right back, lots of laugh, rolling on the floor laughing, as far as I know, because, also known as*

When it comes to the phrases which can be easily abbreviated students feel free to do so. Therefore, the phrases discussed further were written by at least half of the respondents. Some of the phrases are quite widespread, for example, *LOL* has become almost an analogue of the American *OK* which is now used not only by the speakers of English. People tend to use *LOL* in order to show that something is very funny while speaking other languages as well.

Here is a list of abbreviations and the number of students who suggested them. Other students who did not use them either wrote nothing or simply rewrote the phrases.

*BRB* for ‘be right back’ – 35 students;

*LOL* for ‘lots of laughs’ – 52 students (another version :D 2 students);

ROFL for ‘rolling on the floor laughing’ – 35 students (the only version);

AFAIK for ‘as far as I know’ – 25 students (other a f a I know – 3);

AKA for ‘also known as’ – 35 students (the only version).

‘Because’ is a widely used word because people ask the question ‘why’ ten times a day, and give reasons for many things. As expected, the variation of the shortenings suggested for the word was remarkable:

*Cause* – 17 students;

*Bec* – 5 students;

*Bcuz* - 3 students;

*Cuz* – 9 students;

*Coz* – 6 students;

*Bc* – 3 students

#### *Too good for you*

There appeared to be 7 students who did not shorten this phrase. The author of the present thesis expected for the most experienced students to provide *2g4u*, and the expectation was almost confirmed since 22 students made this phrase as short as *2 good 4 u*, but all the segments were written separately. There were also 10 students who suggested *too good 4 u*. This evidence shows that foreign speakers of English are not brave enough to use the first letter of the words only. However, 4 students made an abbreviation *TGFY* out of this phrase.

#### *Dating a new boy friend*

Only 8 students did not write a shortened version of this phrase. There were no students to came up with the version of *D8ing* instead of ‘dating’. A number inside of the

word, again, appeared to be too difficult for the students. They seem to find it difficult to separate the sounds of the words and notice that a part of it can be replaced by a number. Some of the students, however, managed to shorten the word by omitting a letter: *datin* (2 students) or *dtинг* (1 student), and also *date* (3 students). For the rest of the answers the word remained unchanged.

The word *new* also turned out to be one of the least popular words to be shortened for the Estonian-speaking students. There were only 5 students who marked *nu* instead of *new*. The logic used for the shortening is similar pronunciation.

In this case the initialism was the easiest shortening. In total 41 students out of 48 who rewrote the sentences used *BF* to refer to ‘boy friend’. It is interesting to note that the author of the present paper expected the version *b(-)friend* to be also widespread, but only one student used it in his/her questionnaire. The reason might be that students prefer shorter versions because it takes less time to type them.

#### *Happy birthday to you*

Only 9 students did not provide their version of this phrase, because it is very often used and its shortened version is used not only online but also on postcards.

The shortening of the pronoun ‘you’ and the use of 2 instead of ‘to’ have already been discussed above, and there was no surprise in the case of this phrase either. Therefore the author will concentrate only on the shortenings for the phrase ‘happy birthday’.

Altogether 39 students out of 47 who suggested any kind of shortenings used the shortened version of the word ‘birthday’. The most popular way to make it shorter was *b-day* (28 students). This shortening is widely used not only on the Internet, but it also can be found on postcards. Therefore, for the students it was the most familiar shortening. Six students wrote this word as *b-d* and three as *HB*. One can see that students realize that the compound noun consists of two words: ‘birth’ and ‘day’, therefore the use of the first

two letters seems quite logical. As for *HB*, here students probably did not perceive ‘birthday’ as a compound noun and decided it would be enough to use the first letter *b* only.

### *Why are you late?*

There were 12 students who made no shortenings or did not write their version of the question.

Similarly to the previously discussed question ‘Are you busy at the moment?’ 8 students chose to use *r* and ‘*re* instead of ‘are’. It is interesting to note that in the case of ‘*re*’ it was joined with the question word *why*, and the pronoun was omitted. It demonstrates that students do not connect the verb *be* necessarily to a pronoun, they have joined ‘*re*’ with the previous word and do not hesitate to do so in the case of *why* forgetting to include the pronoun as well.

The use of the letter *y* instead of the question word ‘why’ was not very widespread, only 14 students used it, which surprised the author as the similarity in sounding of these two words is noticeable. No other variations were suggested, leaving 26 students who wrote ‘why’.

### *Today is a wonderful day*

This phrase turned out to be the most difficult for the majority of the respondents. Only 18 students provided any kind of shortenings for it, which were not various. Students also found it difficult to replace a part of a word by a number, hence only 10 students suggested *2day* as a version of a word ‘today’. However, the number is bigger than in the case of *l8* or *l8r*. The reason might be that the number replaced the prefix and not the root of a word. There is the word ‘day’, and the word ‘today’ is probably perceived by the students as a preposition plus a noun.

Concerning the other words of the sentence, only one student suggested *wond* for ‘wonderful’ and one student suggested – *wf*. Generally, students seem to be quite careful with the words which do not have obvious parts to be replaced by a number or that have to be removed.

### **3.2.1.3 Decoding the poem written in the Internet language**

If in the case of rewriting the sentences with shorter words the respondents were asked to use their imagination, in the third part they tried to understand what was hidden behind the shortenings invented by someone else. This part turned out to be more challenging for the students.

In this part a considerable difference appeared between the students who have English speaking online friends and those who do not have them (see Appendix 11 for details). It seems that those who do not use English for online communication simply invented the shortenings while completing the task. The majority of the students were able to decode most of the words, however there were some confusing shortenings for almost all the students no matter whether they had English-speaking online friends and how much time they spent talking online.

The less difficult shortenings which were decoded by more than 90% of the students among those who have English-speaking online friends were *u*, *luv*, *ur*, *mobil*, *fone*, *hart*, *neva*, *b*, *nt*, *afrt*, *neibr*, *thei*, *2*, *athr*, *@*, *LOL*. For those who do not have any English-speaking friends the most popular ones were also *u*, *luv*, *ur*, *neva*, *b*, *@*, *2*, and in addition *sum1* and *face2face*. The trend followed in the previous task is also observed in this case – students prefer to use pictograms/logograms and omit letters in order to make the words shorter.

Some of the words (such as *commndnmts*, *ast\*r\*sk*, *excl!mants*) were confusing for both groups of the students. Less than 40% students were able to decode them probably

because they did not know the words or were confused because of the “!” and “\*” marks in the words although they were supposed to give the students a hint.

There were also 3 students among those who have English-speaking online friends who managed to decode all the words in the poem. It is worth mentioning that two of them spent more than 4 hours talking online, and one spent up to 4 hours. It enables us to draw the conclusion that to a certain extent the amount of time spent in the chats can influence the knowledge of the Internet language.

Among the students who do not have English-speaking online friends online were no respondents who would be able to decode the whole poem. In addition to the above-mentioned problematic words, those who did not communicate in English online had problems with decoding such shortening as: *sed*, *thiev*, *zappy* and *abbrevi8*. Correct answers were suggested by less than 50% of the respondents.

### **3.2.2 Internet language and Russian-speaking students**

Altogether 55 Russian-speaking students took part in the study. According to the results, 29 students have English-speaking online friends, and 26 do not have anyone to speak English online (see Appendix 8 for details).

Compared to Estonian-speaking students, the difference in the length of time spent talking online is less variable (see Appendix 8 for details). Thus 7 students spend less than an hour speaking online and just as many students spend 3–4 hours on online communication. Six students spend online more than 4 hours a day, which leaves 9 more students who spend 1–2 hours on online conversations.

Those who have no one to speak English online showed the following numbers: 10 students spend less than an hour; 8 students spend 1–2 hours; 3 students spend 3–4 hours and 5 students – more than 4 hours a day on communication online.

### **3.2.2.1 Social networks and instant messaging services**

Popularity of the social networks and instant messaging services among the Russian-speaking students is not as great as among the Estonian-speaking students (see Appendix 9 for details). The questionnaire revealed that 7 students (out of 55 respondents) do not have any social network accounts. Since there is a popular Russian-language social network *vkontakte.ru*, it is the most popular one among the Russian-speaking students, namely 36 students out of 55 have an account in this network. The next in popularity, as expected, is *Facebook* with 35 students using this social network. The other mentioned social networks included *Twitter* (10 students), *Odnoklassniki* (6 students) and *rate* (2 students).

As for the instant messaging services, the results were not surprising as in the case of Estonian-speaking students, but there were differences in the degree of popularity. Thus, *Skype* turned out to be slightly more popular (39 students) than *MSN* with 37 students who use it. Five Russian-speaking students, as well as some Estonian-speaking students, also used *Gmail*, which is regarded as an instant messaging service. There were also students who use *ICQ* (4) and *Scream* (1). The questionnaire also revealed 4 students who do not use any of the instant messaging services, and 4 students did not mention anything in their answers.

### **3.2.2.2 Shortening the usual sentences**

In this section the author analyses the part of the questionnaire in which students were asked to shorten the sentences (see Appendix 10 for details). In order to make comparisons easier with the results of the Estonian-speaking students, the same form of analysis is used. As noted, 55 Russian-speaking students took part in the study.

*It is too late now; I have to go.*

Some participants (11 students) did not suggest any shortening for this phrase. Among them there were 4 students who have English-speaking online friends and 7 students who do not have them. There were also 4 respondents who simply rewrote the phrase as it was given. The reason why the number is higher than in the case of the Estonian-speaking students can be explained by the fact that fewer students use social networks and instant messaging services; also, fewer students have English-speaking online friends.

The majority of respondents used number 2 instead of the words ‘too’ (30 students) and ‘to’ (27 students). The majority (24 students) used the number instead of both words when paraphrasing the phrase. The rest of the respondents replaced only either ‘to’ or ‘too’ with the number.

The second popular shortening appeared to be *I've* instead of ‘I have’ (11 respondents), the possible reason could be the same as in the case of Estonian-speaking students – the widespread confusion of the roles that the verb ‘have’ plays in English grammar.

The third more numerous shortening was *l8* (7 students). Here again the number is used to substitute a part of the word, but it seems that the vast majority of the respondents are not able to provide the appropriate shortening. It is worth mentioning that three students do not have any English-speaking friends. These students probably happened to come across the shortening or simply have a vivid imagination.

Other shortenings suggested by the students included *tu* instead of ‘to’ (1 student), which does not make the word shorter, but rather reflects the pronunciation. One individual used *to* instead of ‘too’. There were also two students who went further with the shortening and came up with *g2g* instead of the whole phrase. Both students provided their own versions of the phrases in the questionnaire, neglecting the task which asked the respondents to use the same wording, only making the words shorter where possible.

These students probably wanted to show that they were more fluent users of the Internet language.

*Bye. Talk to you later*

In the case of this sentence, too, there were some students who did not provide their version of the phrase (10 students), or simply rewrote it (3 students). Five of them had some English-speaking friends, and eight students did not have them.

The most popular shortening, as well as in the case of the previous phrase, appeared to be number 2 instead of ‘to’; however, there was one student who did it in the previous phrase but not in this case. Thus, 26 students suggested such an option.

The second popular shortening was the use of a similarly pronounced letter instead of a word; 25 students suggested *u* instead of ‘you’. It seems that the Russian-speaking students followed the same logic as the Estonian-speaking students.

The replacement of part of the word ‘later’ by number 8, making it *l8r*, turned out to be difficult for the students; only three students suggested it as an option. The reason might be the same as for Estonian-speaking students – they were confused by the ending - *r* and could not guess how the number could be integrated into the word.

As for the word ‘bye’, unlike the Estonian-speaking students, their Russian-speaking counterparts provided several options for the word in their questionnaires. For example, 11 students suggested a rather common version of *bb*, two students wrote *by*, two students suggested *bi*, and two more students suggested *bie*. As for the *by* and *bi*, students probably used this version because in their opinion it sounds the same but it is shorter than the original by one letter. As for *bie*, it is difficult to find a logical explanation for the suggested variant since it does not make it shorter, and the student did not provide a reason for the change.

*I don't want to talk to you*

Russian-speaking students found it difficult to provide different versions of this phrase. Nineteen Russian-speaking students did not provide any shortening for this phrase.

Among those 36 respondents who rewrote sentence, 26 used 2 instead of ‘to’, which is 1 student less than in the case of the previously mentioned phrases; for some reason he (or she) was among those who did not paraphrase the sentence. The reason might be that this person is friendly and does not consider this phrase to be important. Exactly the same number of students (namely 26) replaced the pronoun ‘you’ by the letter *u*. There were also 3 students who used *wanna* instead of ‘want to’.

*Are you busy at the moment?*

Altogether 18 students were not able to come up with any shortenings for it. The proportion between those who have English-speaking friends online and those who do not have them turned out to be similar, namely 9 students from each group did not paraphrase the sentence.

The most popular shortening appeared to be again the use of the similar in pronunciation letter *u* instead of the pronoun ‘you’ (29 students). It is less than in the phrase ‘Bye. Talk to you later’ because in the latter case some students simply omitted the pronoun. The notion was popular among both groups of students – those who have online friends (19 respondents) and those who do not have them (13 respondents).

The auxiliary verb ‘are’ turned out to be a challenge both for the Estonian- and Russian-speaking students. The Russian-speaking respondents followed the same logic as their Estonian-speaking counterparts. Namely, they suggested three ways to shorten the auxiliary verb: *r* (9 students), *a* (5 students), and *re* (2 students). The reasons for the substitution have already been discussed in the case of the Estonian-speaking students and may be applicable to the Russian-speaking students as well. It is worth mentioning

that 4 students among those who do not have English-speaking online friends suggested the shortened version of the word, and one of them even wrote *ar* instead of ‘are’.

The phrase ‘at the moment’ was paraphrased by 19 students. Five students used @ instead of ‘at’, and all of them had online friends. In this case we can notice the influence of the Estonian-speaking society on the Russian-speaking group. Seven students, of whom one did not have any English-speaking online friends, used *de* instead of ‘the’, and 3 respondents replaced ‘moment’ with a shortened *mom*. There were also 3 students who found it difficult to come up with the kind of shortening discussed above, and they simply used the word *now* instead of the whole phrase.

#### Thank you for your help

This sentence was rather difficult for those who did not have any English-speaking friends, thus 9 out of 10 students who did not paraphrase the sentences were those who did not have any English-speaking online friends. In general, however, this sentence was not very challenging for the students, compared to the other sentences.

The use of the letter *u* instead of the pronoun ‘you’ turned out to be among the most popular shortenings again. Twenty students used it in the case of this sentence. It is less than in the above-discussed phrases because some students used *thanx/thanks* instead of ‘thank you’.

Twenty students used the shortening *ur* instead of ‘your’; five of them did not have any English-speaking online friends. It shows that students are able to draw a parallel between *you – u* and *your – ur*.

Almost half of the respondents (24 students) used the number 4 instead of the preposition ‘for’, which makes it the most popular shortening for the sentence.

#### See you tomorrow

The phrase was not more problematic than the previously discussed sentences. Almost a third of the respondents (18 students) did not come up with any shortening for the

phrase. The proportion of those who have English-speaking friends and who do not have them is equal – 9 students from each group.

There appeared to be 23 students who shortened the sentence. The most frequent shortening was *see u* (11 students), followed by *see ya* and *cya* (4 students for both). In this case one can once again see the replacement of the word by a similarly sounding letter, which is so popular among our students. There were also 3 students who suggested *si u* and one who wrote *s u*.

Surprisingly, the shortening of the word ‘tomorrow’ turned out to be equally difficult both for the Russian- and Estonian-speaking students. The same number of students (11 respondents) managed to come up with the version *2morrow*. In this case, as well as in the case of the word ‘late’, the substitution of a part of the word with a letter seems to be difficult for our students.

#### *I will always love you*

Out of 55 respondents 20 did not paraphrase the sentence. The number of those who did not shorten any word in the phrase was again equally divided among those who have and those do not have English-speaking online friends.

Out of 35 students who managed to somehow shorten the sentence, 11 respondents used *luv* instead of ‘love’. It is possible that they may have done so because they drew a parallel with such words as ‘but’, in which the letter *u* between two consonants is pronounced similarly to the letter *o* in the word ‘love’. There were also 2 students who simply omitted *e* and wrote *lov*, and 3 students wrote simply *l*. All five students who used the latter shortenings turned out to be among those who did not have any English-speaking friends.

It is surprising that among 4 students who used the advanced shortening *<3* instead of ‘love’ were 2 students who claimed that they did not have any English-speaking friends and another 2 spend less than an hour on online communication.

### Friends forever

‘Friends forever’ appeared to be among the less problematic phrases for both Estonian- as well as for Russian-speaking students. In total 43 students suggested a shortened version of the phrase. Russian-speaking students did not find it necessary to use a number instead of part of the word. The same phenomenon occurred in the case of Russian-speaking students. Out of 43 students less than half (16 respondents) managed to integrate the numeral *4* into the writing the word *4ever*. Another method of shortening this phrase appeared to be the use of the initialism or abbreviation; thus, the rest of the respondents (27 students) who suggested a shortened version of the phrase used *FF* instead of ‘friends forever’.

### Be right back, lots of laugh, rolling on the floor laughing, as far as I know, because, also known as

Contrary to expectations, the phrases which are usually shortened by an abbreviation appeared to be more challenging for the Russian-speaking students than for the Estonian-speaking students. It is worth mentioning that it was difficult for both groups – those who have English-speaking friends as well as those who do not have them.

Since most phrases were simply abbreviated, here are the results:

*BRB* for ‘be right back’ – 13 Russian-speaking students; *LOL* for ‘lots of laughs’ – 37 Russian-speaking students; *ROFL* for ‘rolling on the floor laughing’ – 36 Russian-speaking students; *AFAIK* for ‘as far as I know’ only 3 Russian-speaking students, and 3 students wrote *as far as I k* or *as far as I*; *AKA* for ‘also known as’ 12 Russian-speaking students.

Similarly to the Estonian-speaking students, the Russian-speaking students shortened the word ‘because’ in different ways. The most popular variant was ‘*cause*’ (11 students); the other shortenings were not so numerous:

*Cuz* – 6 students;

*Coz* – 5 students;

*Bcs* – 4 students;

*Becose* – 2 students;

*Bc* – 1 student.

#### *Too good for you*

There were 16 students who did not provide any shortened version of the phrase. The ways to make the make the phrase shorter were not varied. Namely, 14 students shortend it as *2 good for you*, and 2 respondents as *too good 4 u*. There was one student who wrote *ya* instead of ‘you’ and one student used *y* instead of the pronoun.

It is interesting to note that two students suggested the shortest version of the phrase *2g4u*. What is striking is that one of the students does not have any English-speaking friends, and another spends only 1–2 hours per day on online communication. Another abbreviated version *TGFY* was suggested also by a person who claimed not having any English-speaking online friends.

#### *Dating a new boy friend*

In the case of this phrase 26 students did not shorten it at all. There appeared to be a difference between those who have English-speaking friends and those who do not have them – 17 students who do not have any online friends and almost twice less (9 students) who have them.

As expected, the abbreviation was the most frequently used shortening; 21 students suggested *BF* for the word ‘boyfriend’. There were also 2 students who wrote *boyf* and *bfriend*.

The omission of *g* in the ending *-ng* was not numerous; only 2 students wrote *datin* instead of ‘dating’. Interestingly enough 12 students suggested *nu* instead of ‘new’. Here again the use of a similar shorter sound appeared to be the case.

Again, there were no brave students who would suggest *d8ing* instead of ‘dating’, proving that neither Estonian- nor Russian-speaking students are able to come up with such advanced shortenings. They may realize that the initial part of the word sounds like a number, but integration of a number in the middle of the word remains a difficult task for them.

#### *Happy birthday to you*

Since the phrase is widely used not only among people speaking English, it was expected not to be difficult for the students. The expectation of the author was fulfilled only partially because 14 students were not able to shorten it.

The shortening of the pronoun ‘you’ and the usage of 2 instead of ‘to’ have already been discussed above, and there was no surprise in the case of this phrase either. Therefore, only the shortening of the phrase ‘happy birthday’ will be discussed below. Students came up with only two kinds of shortenings: the abbreviation *HB* (15 students) and *Happy b-day* (24 students). Other students did not shorten the phrase but used the number instead of ‘to’ and *u* instead of ‘you’.

#### *Why are you late?*

This question provided almost no new information about the students’ ability to shorten the sentences by using the Internet language. All in all, 30 students did not provide any version of the question. Surprisingly, it appeared to be more difficult for those who had English-speaking online friends (17 students out of 30).

The most popular shortenings were again the use of *r* instead of ‘are’ (10 respondents) and *u* instead of ‘you’. There were also students who used *a* instead of *are* (4 students), and ‘*re* (3 students). No students were able to use the similarly sounding letter *y* instead of the question word ‘why’. There were only 3 students who attempted to shorten it: 1 student used *W*, and 2 students wrote *wy* instead of ‘why’.

Once again, the use of a number as part of the word was not numerous; only three students wrote *l8* for ‘late’. It proves again that students are not brave enough to use numbers in the middle of the words

### *Today is a wonderful day*

This phrase was rather difficult for the Russian-speaking students. There were 36 students who did not shorten the phrase at all. Thus, it leaves 19 students who managed to paraphrase it. An unexpected finding was that this phrase also turned out to be more problematic for the students who had English-speaking online friends (20 out of 36 who did not provide any version).

The most frequent shortening appeared to be *2day* instead of ‘today’ (14 students). There was also a student who suggested *t-day* for ‘today’, obviously s/he used the same logic here as in the case of *b-day* for ‘birthday’.

#### **3.2.2.3 Decoding the poem written in the Internet language**

As noted, this task was supposed to reveal whether students were able to comprehend a text written in the Internet language. The results turned out to be predictable and are presented below (see Appendix 11 for details).

The majority of the respondents did not have any difficulty with recognizing such shortenings as *txt* (24 students who have online friends vs. 12 who do not have them). As expected, *u* was also familiar to the respondents – 95% managed to write the full word. Out of 55 students 47 were able to decode *luv*, and 48 had no problem recognizing ‘your’ hidden behind *ur*. The shortenings *mobil*, *fone*, *hart*, *neva*, and *b* turned out to be also easy for approximately 80% of the students.

Among the most difficult shortenings to decode were *theiv* (only 8 students) and *ast\*r\*sk* (5 students). The second half of the poem (starting with *conversants*) turned out to be more difficult for both groups of the students.

Surprisingly, *LOL*, which is popular among young people, was recognised by less than half of the students. Concerning the other shortenings that appeared in the previous task, such as 2 instead of ‘to’, @ instead of ‘at’, etc. were all recognized by the same number of students as in the previous task.

This task revealed the difference between those students who have English-speaking online friends and those who do not have them. The majority of those who do not have any English-speaking online friends found it difficult to recognize most of the words, and there were no shortenings which would be easier for them than for those who have English-speaking online friends. A correlation was also found between the time spent on communication online and the ability to decode the sentences – those who managed to decode the poem better spend more time communicating online. However, in the case of the students who did not use English for online communication, no such correlation discovered. The reason may be because they really do not come across the shortenings and simply used their knowledge of English to decode the poem.

### **3.3 The comparison of the questionnaire results**

The first part of the questionnaire revealed that by comparison with Estonian-speaking students Russian-speaking students are less active in searching for English-speaking friends online. The reason here is probably the number of Russian-speaking people in the world in general, which makes it easier to find people from different countries who also speak Russian. The numbers show that Russian-speaking students spend less time on communication online than Estonian-speaking students, and they are less interested in speaking English online than their Estonian-speaking counterparts.

The questionnaire showed that in general Estonian-speaking students were more active to shorten the phrases and words in the second task. Thus, on average 13 Estonian

speaking students did not provide any shortened version of the words, compared to 19 Russian-speaking students.

For both Estonian- and Russian-speaking students the easiest way to shorten the words appeared to be the use of the letter *u* instead of the pronoun *you*, and substitution the prepositions *to* and *for* with similarly sounding numbers 2 and 4, the number 2 was also widely used instead of *too*. Another popular shortening for both groups of the respondents was the use of the letter similarly sounding to the word; for example, *u* instead of *you*.

The questionnaire also showed that Russian-speaking students are braver to use the numbers as parts of the words. There were more Russian-speaking students who wrote the words *late*, *forever*, *today* as *l8*, *4ever* and *2day*. On the other hand, Estonian-speaking students used abbreviations more actively than their Russian-speaking counterparts.

Also, the questionnaire revealed that Estonian-speaking students prefer abbreviations when it comes to such phrases like *friends forever*, *be right back*, *boyfriend*, etc. (see Appendix 10 for more details). In the case of some phrases almost twice more abbreviations were suggested by Estonian-speaking students.

The influence of the mother tongue and the Estonian/Russian alphabets were evident in the case of using the letter *a* instead of the form *are*, because they sound similar in both the Russian and Estonian alphabets. However, the auxiliary verb ‘are’ turned out to be a challenge for both the Estonian- and Russian-speaking students; only about 20% of the students from both groups could identify the pattern and managed to use a similarly sounding letter *r* instead of *are*. There were also attempts to shorten the verb form by using *a*, *ar* and grammatical shortening ‘*re*. It is interesting to note that the number of students who used *a* and *ar* was higher in the case of Russian-speaking students.

The sentence ‘Today is a wonderful day’ was the most difficult sentence for both groups of students. More than half of the respondents (38 Estonian-speaking students and 36 Russian-speaking students) did not suggest any shortened option; the main reason is inability to integrate the number as a part of the words.

The sentence ‘I don’t want to talk to you’ turned out to be the second most difficult phrase to make shorter for Estonian- and Russian speaking respondents. Nineteen Russian-speaking students and 23 Estonian-speaking students did not provide any shortening for this phrase.

One more confusing phrase, but only for the Russian-speaking students was Dating a new boyfriend; 26 Russian speaking students did not provide any short version, compared to only 9 Estonian-speaking students.

It is worth mentioning that only two of the students who did not provide any shortening for any of the phrases, which means that even the students who do not use English to communicate online they are still exposed to them on the Internet to a certain degree. They probably read blogs or had English-speaking online friends in the past.

The third part of the questionnaire appeared to be more difficult for the Russian-speaking students compared to the Estonian-speaking students. There were no phrases which would be decoded by a higher number of Russian-speaking students than their Estonian-speaking counterparts. It was also discovered that the more students spent communicating online, the better they were at decoding the poem. As the table in Appendix 11 shows, those students, who did not have any English-speaking online friends managed to decode fewer words/phrases than those who had someone to speak English online.

It is interesting to note that in some cases there were more Estonian-speaking students who did not have any speaking English online friends who managed to decode the

phrases, than Russian-speaking students who had English-speaking online friends (see Appendix 11 for details). For example the word *exc!matns!!* was decoded by three Estonian-speaking students who did not have English speaking online friends, but only one Russian-speaking student could decode it.

The easiest phrases/words to decode for Estonian-speaking students were: *u*, *@*, *b*, *ur*, *luv*, *neva*, *fone* with more than 90% of the students who were able to decode them. The most difficult cases appeared to be the following phrases: *ast\*r\*sk*s, +, *exc!matns!!*, *thiev* with less than 20% of students who decoded them.

Concerning the Russian-speaking students, there was only one letter ‘u’ which was decoded by more than 90% of the students; the result for the other words was more modest. Thus, more than 80% of the Russian-speaking students could decode the following shortenings: *ur*, *fone*, *luv*, *mobil*, *b*, *neva*. The most difficult shortenings were: *exc!matns!!*, +, *ast\*r\*sk*s, *thiev*. As can be seen from the results, the easiest and most difficult shortenings were the same for both Estonian- and Russian-speaking students.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, the present thesis compared the popularity of the Internet language between native speakers of Estonian and Russian.

The hypothesis proposes that Estonian-speaking students were more competent in the use of the Internet language than Estonian-Speaking students. The thesis consists of three chapters: the information on the Internet language; the appearance of the Internet language in the coursebooks; and the discussion of the study carried out in Estonian schools.

There are several situations (domains) where the Internet is used: instant messaging, social networking, chat rooms, e-mails, forums, etc. The most popular social networks to date are *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Their growing popularity has reduced the spread of instant messaging among young people mainly because today social networks seem to offer more opportunities, such as not only exchange of messages but also ability to see the pictures, places where person has recently been, or where he/she is at the moment, sending offline messages and leaving comments under the posts and pictures.

According to David Crystal (2009:37), the main characteristic features of this variety of English include pictograms and logograms, initialisms, omitted letters, nonstandard spellings, and shortenings. Language economy is an important principle; it is easier to type shorter words. Although the Internet language is rather a written variety it reveals some features of the spoken language as well. Interaction on the Internet reminds real-time conversation, and needs quick responses.

A short overview of the variety of tasks on the Internet language was given. It turned out that out of 12 coursebooks only 4 mentioned at least something about the Internet language.

The thesis analysed and compared the popularity of the social networks and instant messaging, as well as the knowledge of the Internet language among Estonian- and Russian-speaking students, who studied English language as the first foreign language. There were 111 students who took part in the study. They were divided into two big groups: Russians- speaking students (55 respondents) and Estonian-speaking student (56 students).

The study was carried out on the basis of a questionnaire, which consisted of three parts: the background information about students: how much time they spend on communication online and what domains they use; in the second task the respondents were asked to shorten the sentences, using the Internet language; and in the third task they were asked to “translate” the poem written in the Internet language.

The study revealed that Russian-speaking students are characterized by less active use of Internet-based communication for the purpose of English language practice. There were 35 Estonian-speaking and 29 Russian-speaking students who claimed having English-speaking online friends. A possible reason for this discrepancy is the large Russian-speaking community in the world, which makes it easier to find people from other countries who can communicate in Russian rather than in Estonian.

Another finding is that Russian-speaking students generally spend less time on online communication. However, among the students who claimed not having any English-speaking online friends there were no Estonian-speaking students who spent more than four hours a day on communication, but among the Russian-speaking respondents there were 4 students who spent more than 4 hours a day on communication online.

The Russian-speaking students turned out to be less active users of both the social networks and the instant messaging services. For instance, among the Russian-speaking students, there were seven students who did not have any accounts of any social network

compared to only two students among the Estonian-speaking respondents. The most popular social network for Estonian-speaking students is *Facebook* with 100% of the respondents who claimed having accounts while only 35 Russian-speaking students use this social network. The most popular network for the Russian-speaking students is the Russian social network *Vkontakte*. However, it is not as popular as *Facebook* among the Estonian-speaking respondents, and only 36 students have an account there. Concerning instant messaging clients, *MSN* was more popular among the Estonian-speaking students and the next in line was *Skype*. In the case of the Russian-speaking respondents *Skype* and *MSN* were almost equally popular.

In some cases, students who spent more time online showed better results in paraphrasing or decoding the Internet language. However, this finding does not mean that those who spend more time online have a better understanding of the Internet language. Rather, it is possible to conclude that the general competence of the English language could account for it. However, this was not the subject of the present study.

For both the Estonian- and Russian-speaking students the most difficult method of shortening the words was the use of numbers in the words. The most popular shortenings were the replacement of a word with similarly pronounced letters and numbers. Abbreviations turned out to be popular as well, especially among Estonian-Speaking students.

The results of the second part of the questionnaire did not reveal a close link between the amount of time spent on online communication and the ability to shorten the words. However, the third task revealed that those who spent more time online and had English-speaking online friends managed to decode more words in the poem than those who spent less time or did not have any English-speaking online friends.

Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of the thesis, it is now possible to claim that Estonian-speaking students of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade are more competent users of the Internet language than their Russian-speaking counterparts, because the study showed that even those who did not have any English-speaking online friends were able to come up with more shortenings for the provided phrases in the second task, and it was easier for them to decode a poem provided in the third task.

Apart from the use of the Internet language, the study revealed several grammatical problems. Thus, both groups of students have a similar misunderstanding of the functions of the verb ‘have’ in English grammar. The respondents of both groups erroneously used the shortening *I’ve to go* instead of *I have to go*; they did not understand the different uses of the verb *have* in the sentence.

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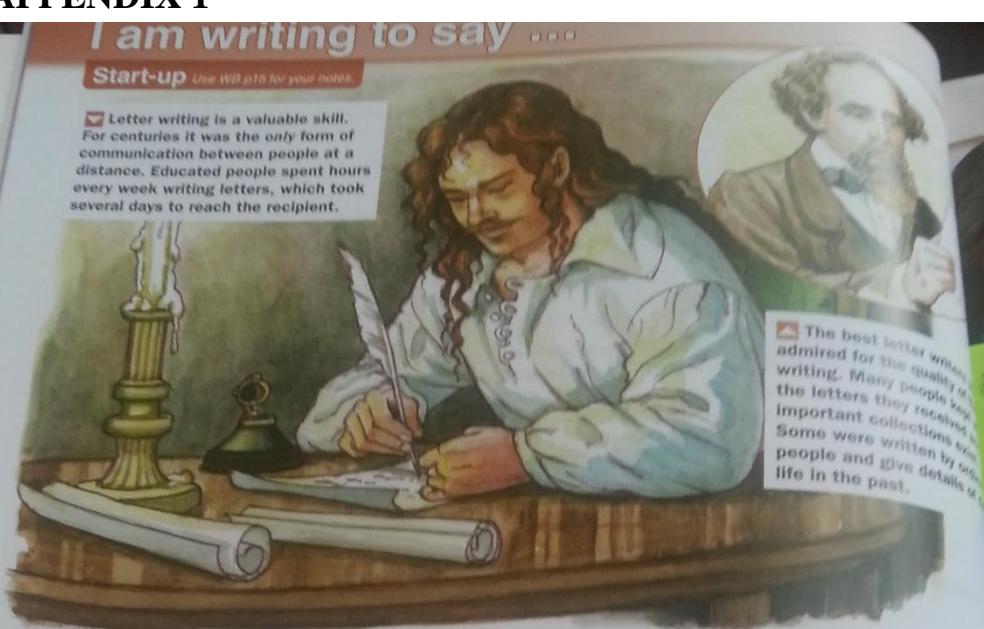
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## APPENDIX 1

**I am writing to say ...**

**Start-up** Use WB p18 for your notes.

**Letter writing is a valuable skill.** For centuries it was the only form of communication between people at a distance. Educated people spent hours every week writing letters, which took several days to reach the recipient.



**The best letter writers** were admired for the quality of their writing. Many people kept the letters they received and important collections exist. Some were written by famous people and give details of life in the past.

**The letters of royalty, politicians and famous authors tell us their thoughts and feelings. Extracts are often included in biographies. They give insight into why and how significant events happened.**

Have you ever written a letter to somebody? Who was it? What kind of letter was it and why did you write it?

Have you ever received a personal letter? Who was it from? Did you keep it? Which form of communication do you use most, email or text messages? What do you use them for?

What do you think are the main differences between letters, emails and texts?

**Reading**

**In modern communications, information and messages are sent by email and with mobile phones. They leave the sender and reach the recipient in a matter of minutes or even seconds.**



**Texts, informal emails and social networking messages are usually brief with short forms and abbreviations. Not much attention is paid to the quality of the writing.**

- Grammar in use**
- You will hear a discussion about buying tickets for a concert and paying by credit card. What is a credit card? How is it used? Who can have one? What are the advantages and disadvantages of paying by credit card and not in cash?
  - You will study **figurative language**, which describes what something is like. Think of an ending to this sentence: *The setting sun glowed in the western sky like ...*
- Important information is still sent by letter. People write formal letters for business, for applying for a job or a course. A good quality of formal writing is**

## APPENDIX 2

### Global English

### The rise and fall of English?

by David Crystal



Why does a language become used internationally, or even – as in the case of English – globally? A surprising number of people think it's something to do with the language itself. They say that English has become a world language because it's more beautiful than other languages, or because it has a simpler grammar or vocabulary.

The reason is none of these things. Notions such as beauty are impossible to pin down. And, as any student of *Global English* knows, English has quite a complex grammar and a very large vocabulary! There are also aspects of English which make it more difficult to learn than some other languages, such as its irregular spellings. Yet this hasn't stopped its rise as a global *lingua franca*.

A language becomes a world language for one reason only: the power of the people who speak it. But power can be of many different kinds, and it's important to see which kinds of power fostered the growth of English over the centuries.

English started on its international career during the Middle Ages, when it moved from England up into Scotland and across the sea into Ireland. Soon after, it crossed the Atlantic, and then the Indian Ocean and beyond. Here we're talking about political and military power. When the British Empire became a global reality, English was described as 'a language on which the sun never sets'.

But military power is not enough, as political fortunes rise and fall. Today, English is still a world language, though the British Empire is a thing of the past. Three other kinds of power helped maintain its position. During the Industrial Revolution, we see the power of knowledge: English became the main language of science and technology. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we see it associated with economic power: if 'money talks', then the language it was chiefly talking about was that of the pound and the dollar. And during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we see it as the language of cultural power, used in everything from transport to advertising, from pop music to the internet.

Some people think that other languages could never match this combination of circumstances. But there is only one rule when it comes to talking about the rise and fall of languages: never say never.



## APPENDIX 3

- 5** Complete the text with the correct form of the verbs below. Then match them to meanings a–f in exercise 4. There are two meanings you do not need.

- throw on ■ cling on to ■ urge on ■ turn on ■ come on
- live on

My latest skill is really improving, thanks to all the practice it's getting. I <sup>1</sup> ..... my computer to check my Facebook account before I've even <sup>2</sup> ..... my clothes in the morning, and I update it all day on my smartphone. My texting speed is improving thanks to the use of abbreviations like *c u l8r* and *lol. dz ths mn im iliter8?* Of course not! I'm just fluent in two versions of English – standard English and textspeak. <sup>3</sup> ....., give it a try!

Some people think that, if we want the elegance of standard English to <sup>4</sup> ....., textspeak must stop, and teachers have been <sup>5</sup> ..... by panicky parents to ban mobile phones from schools. However, school rules are unlikely to stop a language from evolving – and why would we even want to <sup>6</sup> ..... an outdated language? Languages change to reflect the changing world. When they stop changing, they die.

## APPENDIX 4

### V Acronyms

3 Replace the phrases in italics with an acronym below.  
There are two acronyms that you do not need.

■ FYI ■ BTW ■ FWIW ■ TIA ■ IMHO ■ IDK ■ TMI ■ ASAP  
■ YOLO ■ LOL ■ AFAIK ■ BFN

- 1 That joke you sent me was great. *Really funny!* .....
- 2 *I'm not sure, but I think it's true.* .....
- 3 *I need to speak to you immediately.* .....
- 4 *You might like to know that John's leaving next week.* .....
- 5 Can you find out what the homework is for me? *Cheers for that.* .....
- 6 *I think videos of cats are really silly.* .....
- 7 *That picture of your toenail was disgusting. I didn't need to see that!* .....
- 8 You should definitely go to the concert. *Life's too short to worry about the cost!* .....
- 9 Is Jake going to the party? *I have no idea.* .....
- 10 I need to go now. *See you later.* .....

## APPENDIX 5

**3 global network**

### Reading & Speaking

**1** Discuss the questions.

- Do teenagers in your country have their own slang?
- Has teenage slang changed since your parents were young?
- Do you know any slang that English-speaking teenagers use?

**2** Look at the picture. What do you think the words and phrases mean? Read the article and check your answers.

**2.8**

## English is changing iNNiT?

<sup>1</sup> Millions of people around the world are learning English but how many of them realise that the English they are learning is constantly changing? New words are entering the language, existing words are developing new meanings and other words are falling out of use. <sup>1</sup> d So what drives these changes and should we try to stop them?

**New technology needs new words**  
Not surprisingly, technology is responsible for a lot of new words. Twenty years ago, no one knew what a 'blog' was but when people began writing web logs online, the phrase <sup>10</sup> was quickly shortened to 'blog' and the writer was called a 'blogger'. And nowadays, internet users are constantly warned about the dangers of 'phishing', where criminals try to get your credit card and bank details by sending fraudulent emails. <sup>15</sup> Criminals use emails to catch victims just like fishermen use worms to catch fish.

**New ways of communicating create new language**  
The arrival of texting on mobile phones created a quick and easy way to stay in touch with friends. It also created the need for a very short form of English – a text message is only 160 <sup>20</sup> characters long. Instead of writing 'see you later', teenagers started to write 'c u l8r' and when they found something funny, they wrote 'lol', instead of 'laugh out loud'. At the moment it is still wrong to use this language in essays, job applications and so on. <sup>25</sup> It will all change soon, I think, lol!

**The influence of teenagers**  
Teenagers use their own slang because it indicates that they belong to a group, that they are different from other people. Modern teens use 'sick' to mean 'great' and 'Wassup?' (*What's up?*) to mean 'Hello' but ask a typical middle-aged person what these phrases mean and they would probably have no idea. <sup>4</sup> A A school in Manchester recently banned slang in the classroom and exam grades increased dramatically!

**Human beings are lazy**  
<sup>35</sup> We all prefer things to be simple rather than complicated. A common phrase like 'I don't know' is often shortened to 'dunno'. In a similar way, some young people now use 'innit?' (short for 'isn't it?') to replace all question tags, for example 'He's gone home, innit?' <sup>40</sup> M Most adults see this as bad English and some complain loudly. But language has always evolved and although we all need to know the right language for each situation, surely it's better to enjoy the way English changes rather than complain about it?

**Global culture is changing English**  
<sup>45</sup> Globalisation has been an effective way of spreading English around the world. But now many people believe that non-native speakers of English are creating their own form of the language, which has been named Globish. With its limited vocabulary and simple sentences, this form of English enables a Spanish <sup>50</sup> businessman to communicate easily with a Chinese student, for example. Some people believe Globish will be the most commonly spoken language in the world one day. <sup>55</sup> S So if we could travel into the future, would we find people all over the world speaking a common language? Probably not but at least communication might be simpler one day ... innit?

## APPENDIX 6

### Resource 3C

- 1 These are popular text message words. Match the words and the meanings.

c u l8r	btw	b4	thx	b4n	2nite	gr8	n u
lol	ttyl	r u	wan2	up 2 u	2moro		

- |                                      |       |                                |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 and you                            | _____ | 8 tomorrow                     | _____ |
| 2 before                             | _____ | 9 bye for now                  | _____ |
| 3 want to                            | _____ | 10 by the way                  | _____ |
| 4 see you later                      | _____ | 11 it's up to you (you decide) | _____ |
| 5 talk to you later                  | _____ | 12 thanks                      | _____ |
| 6 laugh out loud (that's very funny) | _____ | 13 great                       | _____ |
| 7 are you                            | _____ | 14 tonight                     | _____ |

- 2 Now write the messages with correct spelling and punctuation.

- |                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| 1 how r u?                | _____ |
| fine thx n u?             | _____ |
| ok c u @ skool 2moro      | _____ |
| 2 wan2 go 2 cinema 2nite? | _____ |
| gr8 c u l8r               | _____ |
| 3 what do u wan2 do 2day? | _____ |
| up 2 u                    | _____ |
| ok ttyl bfn               | _____ |

- 3 In pairs, discuss the questions.

- 1 Do you think text language is a good or a bad thing?
- 2 Does it cause students to write with bad spelling and punctuation?
- 3 Do you think it will change the way we write in the future?

## APPENDIX 7

### Weblish Questionnaire

**Weblish** is the shorthand form of English that is used in text messaging, chatrooms, etc

**1. Please answer the following questions:**

Your mother tongue (please underline): Estonian /Russian

Do you have any accounts in the social networks? (if yes, please specify which)

---



---

Do you use any live messaging service? (if yes, please specify which)

---



---

How much time do you spend talking online a day? (please, underline)

Less than 1 hour

1-2 hours

3-4 hours

More than 4 hours

Do you have anyone to speak English online? (please, underline) Yes/no

**2. Imagine yourself talking online. Please write, how you would type the following sentences. Please use the provided words only. Do not paraphrase using your own words. Simply make the words shorter if you can:**

*Example: forget this boy, find someone new → 4get tis boy find sum1 nu*

It is too late now; I have to go. \_\_\_\_\_

Bye. Talk to you later. \_\_\_\_\_

I don't want to talk to you \_\_\_\_\_

Are you busy at the moment? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your help \_\_\_\_\_

Be right back \_\_\_\_\_

See you tomorrow \_\_\_\_\_

I will always love you \_\_\_\_\_

Friends forever \_\_\_\_\_

Lots of laugh \_\_\_\_\_

Too good for you \_\_\_\_\_

Dating a new boy friend \_\_\_\_\_

Happy birthday to you \_\_\_\_\_

Rolling on the floor laughing \_\_\_\_\_

As far as I know \_\_\_\_\_

Because \_\_\_\_\_

Also known as \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you late? \_\_\_\_\_  
Today is wonderful day\_\_\_\_\_

- 3. Here is a poem written in weblish. Please, try to decode as much as you understand (if you cannot decode the whole line, please, decode the words you understand):**

txt commndmnts \_\_\_\_\_

1 u shall luv ur mobil fone with all ur hart \_\_\_\_\_

2 u & ur fone shall neva b apart \_\_\_\_\_

3 u shall nt lust aftr ur neibrs fone not thiev \_\_\_\_\_

4 u shall b prepard @ all times 2 tXt & 2 recv \_\_\_\_\_

5 u shall use LOL & othr acronyms in conversatns \_\_\_\_\_

6 u shall b zappy with ur ast\*r\*sk & exc!matns!! \_\_\_\_\_

7 u shall abbrevi8 & rite words like theyr sed \_\_\_\_\_

8 u shall nt speak 2 sum1 face2face if u cn msg em insted \_\_\_\_\_

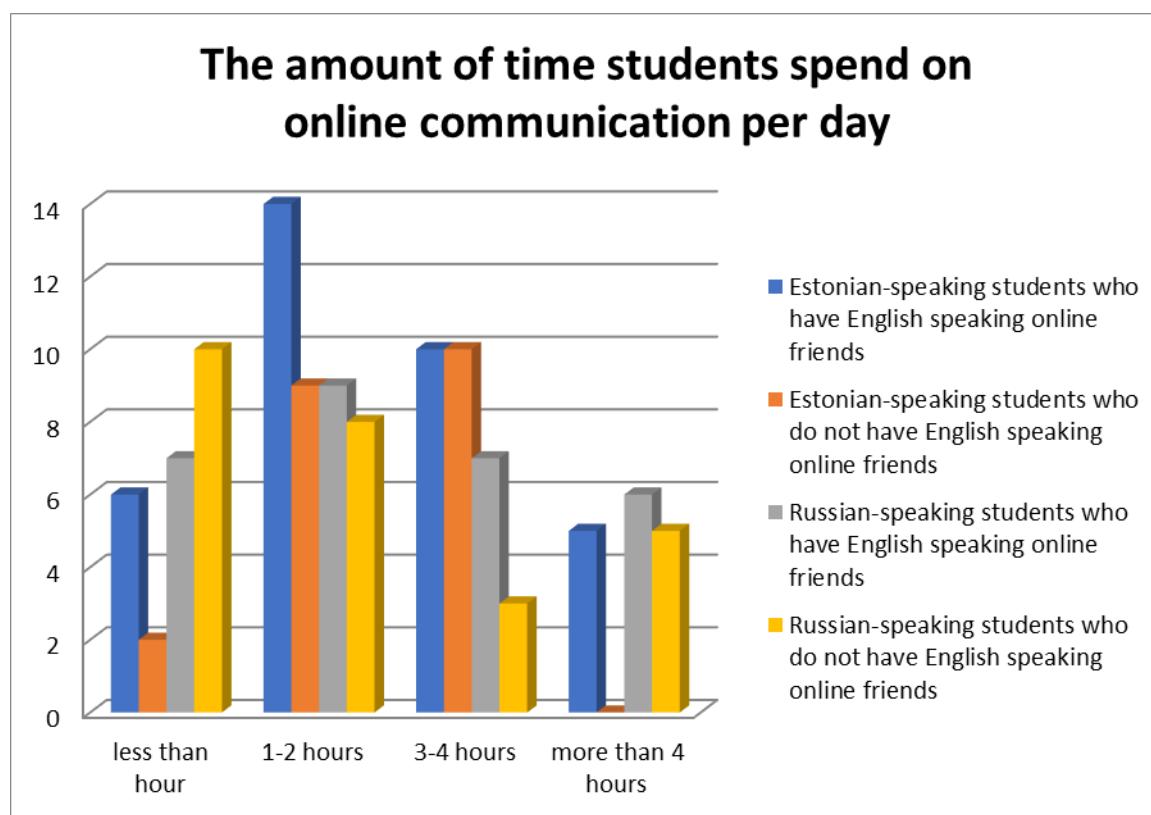
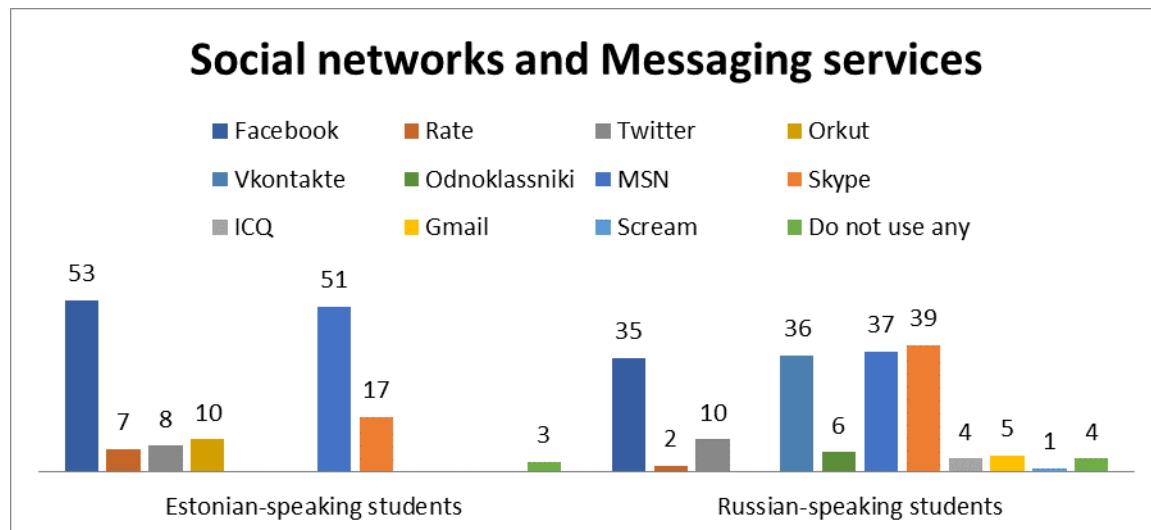
9 u shall nt shout with capitls XEPT IN DIRE EMERGNCY +

10 u shell nt consult a ninglish dictnry \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 8

	Estonian-speaking students	Russian-speaking students
Total amount of students	56	55
English-speaking online friends	35	29
No English-speaking online friends	21	26
Time spent online (English-speaking friends/no English-speaking friends)		
Less than hour	6/2	7/10
1–2 hours	14/9	9/8
3–4 hours	10/10	7/3
More than 4 hours	5/0	6/5
Social networks and Messaging services		
Facebook	53	35
Rate	7	2
Twitter	8	10
Orkut	10	–
Vkontakte	–	36
Odnoklassniki	–	6
MSN	51	37
Skype	17	39
ICQ	–	4
Gmail	–	5
Scream	–	1
Do not use any	3	4

## APPENDIX 9



## APPENDIX 10

	Number of students Est/Rus		Number of students Est/Rus
<b>It's too late now, I have to go</b>		You→u	32/25
No option	10/15	I love you→143	1/0
2→to	30/24	Love→<3	6/4
I have→ I've	11/11		
Late → L8	4/7	<b>Abbreviations</b>	
Have to go→ as got to go→g2g	3/2	Be right back→ BRB	35/13
To→tu	0/1	Lots of laughs→ LOL	52/37
		Lots of laughs→ :D	2/0
		Rolling on the floor laughing →ROFL	35/36
<b>Bye. Talk to you later</b>			
No option	4/13	As far as I know→AFAIK	25/3
To→2	19/26	Also known as →AKA	35/12
Ttyl, ttul	4/0	Because → cause	17/11
You→u	21/25	Because →bc	3/1
Later→l8r	3/3	Because →bec	5/0
cya	6/0	Because → bcuz	3/0
Bye→bb	6/11	Because →cuz	9/6
Bye→by	3/2	Because →coz	6/5
Bye→bi	0/2	Because →becose	0/2
Bye→bie	0/2	Because →bcs	0/4
<b>I don't want to talk to you</b>		<b>Friends forever</b>	
No option	23/19	No option	8/12
To→2	22/26	Forever→4ever	14/16
You→u	24/26	Friends forever→FF(ff)	34/27
Want to→ wanna	8/3		
		<b>Too good for you</b>	
<b>Are you busy at the moment?</b>		No option	7/16
No option	9/18	2 good 4 u	22/14
You→u	31/29	Too good 4 u	10/2
Are→r	8/9	TGFY	4/1
Are→'re	3/2	2g4u	0/2
Are→a	2/5		
Are→ar	0/4	<b>Dating a new boyfriend</b>	
At the moment→@	13/5	No option	9/26
At the moment→atm	9/0	Datin	2/2
Moment→mom	0/3	Dting	1/0
The→de	0/7	Date	3/0
		New→nu	5/12

<b>Thank you for your help</b>		BF	41/21
No option	9/10	bfriend (boyf)	1/2
Thank you→thanks	16/6		
Thank you→tnx(thx)	9/16	<b>Happy birthday to you</b>	
You→u	15/20	No option	9/14
Thanks/thx u	5/0	b-day	28/24
Your→ur	21/20	b-d	6/0
for→4	22/24	HB	3/15
<b>See you tomorrow</b>		<b>Why are you late?</b>	
No option	15/18	No option	12/30
See you→cu	8/2	Why→y	14/0
See you→cya	4/4	Why→W	0/1
See you → see u	16/11	Why→wy	0/3
See you→ see ya	7/4	Are→r	11/10
See you→ si u	1/3	Are →'re	4/3
See you→s u	0/1	Are→a	2/4
Tomorrow→2morrow	11/11		
		<b>Today is a wonderful day</b>	
<b>I will always love you</b>		No option	38/36
No option	14/20	Today→2day	10/14
love→luv	14/11	Today→t-day	0/1
Love→lov	0/2	Wonderful→wond	1/0
Love→l	0/1	Wonderful→wf	1/0

## APPENDIX 11

Shortening	Estonian- speaking students			Russian-speaking students		
	English speaking online friends	No English-speaking friends	Total	English speaking online friends	No English-speaking friends	Total
txt	31	14	45	24	12	36
commndmnts	17	7	24	8	3	11
u	35	20	55	29	24	53
luv	34	19	53	28	19	47
ur	35	18	53	27	21	48
mobil	33	17	50	28	19	47
fone	33	18	51	27	21	48
hart	32	17	49	24	18	42
neva	33	18	51	25	18	43
b	34	19	53	26	18	44
nt	34	15	49	20	12	32
aftr	32	16	48	17	12	29
neibrs	32	16	48	18	11	29
thiev	6	5	11	5	3	8
prepard	27	14	41	14	7	21
@	34	20	54	15	9	24
2	31	18	49	14	7	21
recv	25	16	41	11	7	18
LOL	30	15	45	13	11	24
othr	32	17	49	14	9	23
conversatns	24	11	35	9	9	18
zappy	19	12	31	7	7	14
ast*r*sk	6	2	8	3	2	5
exc!matns!!	7	3	10	0	1	1
abbrevi8	18	8	26	11	8	19
rite	28	16	44	10	8	18
theyr	23	10	33	8	4	12
sed	23	11	34	7	5	12
sum1	30	19	49	13	10	23
ace2face	30	19	49	13	10	23
cn	30	19	49	13	11	24
msg	27	17	44	13	10	23
em	27	14	41	9	6	15
insted	26	15	41	9	5	14
capitls	25	14	39	8	11	19

XEPT	23	11	34	9	6	15
EMERGNCY	22	13	35	9	5	14
a ninglish	25	16	41	9	8	17
dictnry	29	16	45	10	10	20
+	6	2	8	1	1	2

## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

[**Viktoria Bondar**]

**[A Comparative Study of the Knowledge of the Internet Language among Russian- and Estonian-speaking Secondary-School students/Vene ja eesti keelt kõnelevate güümmnaasiumiastme õpilaste internetikeele oskuse võrdlev uurimus]**

[Magistritöö]

[2018. Aasta]

Lehekülgede arv: 76

Annotatsioon:

Magistritöö eesmärk oli uurida ingliskeelse internetikeele oskust Eesti õpilaste seas ning võrrelda vene ning eesti keelt kõnelevate kümnenda klassi õpilaste internetikeele oskust.

Magistritöö koosneb kolmest peatükist. Sissejuhatav teoreetiline osa käsitleb internetikeelt kui hiljuti väljakujunenud keelekuju, selle erinevaid valdkondi (need tuleks loetleda hea mõte!) ning iseloomulikke jooni.

Teine peatükk annab ülevaate õpikutest, mis käsitlevad internetikeelt. Kokku vaadeldi 12 õpikut, nende hulgast ainult neli õpikut käsitlesid internetikeele teemat.

Magistritöö kolmas peatükk on uurimuslik. Töö hüpoteesiks oli, et internetikeelt oskavad eesti keelt kõnelevad õpilased kasutada paremini kui vene keelt kõnelevad õpilased. Väidetavalts suudavad eesti keelt kõnelevad õpilased omandada inglise keelt paremini kui venekeelsed õpilased. Seega eeldab autor, et nad on aktiivsemad vastava keele rakendamises ka veebi vahendusel. Kokku vastas küsimustikule 111 õpilast. Nende seas oli 55 vene ning 56 eesti keelt kõnelevat õpilast. Küsimustiku esimene osa uuris, kui palju aega päevas veedavad õpilased suhtlemiseks internetis, mis sotsiaalvõrke nad kasutavad ning kas neil on inglise keelt kõnelevaid sõpru internetikeskkonnas. Selgus, et eesti keelt kõnelevad õpilased olid aktiivsemad inglise keeles suhtlejad internetis. Kõigil neil oli konto Facebookis. Samas aga ainult üle 60% vene keelt kõnelevatest õpilastest olid Facebooki kasutajad, kuna nende seas levib populaarne venekeelne interneti suhtlusvõrgustik VKontakte.

Küsimustiku analüüsiga tulemusena selgus, et eesti keelt kõnelevad õpilased tunnevad ingliskeelset internetikeelt paremini kui venekeelsed lapsed. Küsimustiku teine ülesanne keskendus õpilaste lausetega lühendamise oskustele. Analüüs näitas, et ka lausetega lühendamisel olid eesti keelt kõnelevad õpilased aktiivsemad. Vene keelt kõnelevate õpilaste seas oli rohkem lauseid, mis jäid lühendamata. Kolmas ülesanne, kus õpilased

pidid selgitama lühendeid, osutus kergemaks samuti eesti keelt kõnelevate õpilaste jaoks. Seega leidis hüpotees kinnitust.

Märksõnad:

Inglise keel, internetikeel, keeleoskus, venekeelsed ja eestikeelsed kooliõpilased, internet, sotsiaalne võrgustik.

**Lihtlitsents lõputöö reproduutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

Mina, Viktoria Bondar,

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Tartus, **15.05.2018**

Viktoria Bondar