

The Morphosyntactic Properties of English Textspeak in Social Media and Digital Communication

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the morphosyntactic properties of English Textspeak which is a highly informal and abbreviated register of English written communication used in social media and online digital communication. The study employs a descriptive analytical approach, utilizing data collected by the researcher from social media and online digital communication platforms and posts. The study finds that English Textspeak demonstrates the rule-governed creativity and flexibility of human language. It shows that Textspeak's words, exemplified by 'lol', 'asap', 'omg', etc. demonstrate key morphosyntactic properties of English individual lexical items, including lexical integrity, lexicalization, lexical category, 'inflectionality', 'referentiality' and 'mobility'. The study reveals that Textspeak primarily modifies and shortens established English words and phrases through productive and systematic morphological processes to adapt to the brevity needs, speed up typing, fast-paced text messaging and efficiency requirements of new technologies. Furthermore, Textspeak's sentences maintain the core-linguistic system, preserving the fixed word order (SVO), hierarchical structure and phonological features of Standard English. The analysis of the data collected also uncovers that the key syntactic properties of Textspeak include the extensive use of ellipsis, and punctuation and capitalization variations to convey tone, emotion, intended meaning and emphasis. The study concludes that Textspeak is not a degradation or deterioration of Standard English. It applies the morphological and syntactic rules of Standard English in a productive and creative way to cope with the requirements of new technologies. The extensive use of shortening processes and ellipsis highlights its systematic optimization for brevity, speed and fast-spaced social media and online digital communication. This study constitutes a foundational contribution to the discipline of morphosyntactic studies, providing significant insights that enhance scholarly understanding.

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1. Introduction

This study analyzes English words and sentences' structures used in social media and online digital communication to find out their morphosyntactic properties and identify the word formation processes and syntactic rules followed to create them. One of the most characteristics of human language is its rule-governed creativity (Chomsky, 1966; 1986). Social media and digital communication platforms influence the development of English giving rise to a linguistic phenomenon called Textspeak. It is a highly informal and abbreviated register of written communication that primarily emerges in the context of social media and online digital communication, particularly among younger generations. This study contends that Textspeak exemplifies the rule-governed creativity inherent in human language, which is regarded as one of its defining characteristics (Chomsky, 1966; 1986; Karubaba et al., 2024; Weda et al., 2022).

Chomsky (1966) emphasizes the productivity of language as a unique characteristic of human beings, that is, it is species-specific. He (1986, p.30) argues that language involves "an infinite use of finite means". According to him, productivity is rule-governed creativity. On the same line, Lyons (1977) argues that creativity indicates to the originality and brevity of the construction of language, and productivity is the ability of the speakers to use words in entirely original utterances which they have never encountered before. According to both, Chomsky (1966; 1986) and Lyons (1977), from

a limited set of rules, speakers of language can generate a potentially infinite number of new well-formed constructions that are morphologically and syntactically conditioned.

This study examines the morphosyntactic properties of English Textspeak resulting from speedup typing, brevity needs, fast-paced text messaging and efficiency required by social media and online digital communication to uncover the rules it follows. This study aims to identify the word formation processes and syntactic rules followed by the speakers of English to create Textspeak. Crystal (2001) insists that Textspeak is a new register of language, and it is not a degradation or deterioration of standard form of language; it only demonstrates the creativity and flexibility of human language. It has been observed that younger generations systematically combine, modify, and transform established words and phrases in a productive manner to communicate effectively and expressively within social media and online digital communication platforms. They use the established word formation processes and syntactic rules in a productive and flexible way to cope with the brevity needs and speedup typing of new technologies. This study highlights these processes and rules by examining the morphosyntactic properties of Textspeak used in social media and online digital communication. It attempts to indicate how younger generations use the limited attested processes and rules to create unlimited new well-formed constructions.

This study investigates the morphosyntactic properties of English Textspeak within social media and digital communication, arguing that these forms represent a rule-governed, dynamic adaptation to technological constraints rather than a degradation of standard linguistic norms. By analyzing the word-formation processes and syntactic rules governing Textspeak, the study seeks to fill a gap in formal linguistic literature while providing a valuable resource for educators and researchers to understand how digital brevity and efficiency affect contemporary lexical evolution. Consequently, the scope of this study focuses on the systematic emergence of new lexical items and sentence structures, ultimately aiming to highlight the functional creativity of modern digital discourse and its contribution to the broader growth of the English vocabulary in a globalized era. This study is a cornerstone to the e-learning of social media and online digital communication Textspeak.

1.1 English Textspeak in Social Media and Digital Communication

English is a global language with over 1.5 billion speakers worldwide. It is the most widely spoken language in the world. It is considered the lingua franca of the world because it is a common bridge language for communication among speakers of different native languages. The rise of English as a lingua franca in social media and online digital communication is due to a historical confluence of factors: the legacy of the British Empire, the cultural and economic influence of the United States and the Internet's early development in English-speaking countries. This results in a reciprocal linguistic influence between English and other languages. Moreover, the education system is in a period of dynamic change which witnesses a digital revolution imposed by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak through teleconferencing, online lectures, online examinations and communications in virtual environments (AlSoud & Harasis, 2001; Prihandoko et al., 2019; Said et al., 2021).

The advent of social media and digital communication gives rise to Textspeak or textese, which is also called 'fingered speech', a hybrid of spoken and written forms of a language, which has developed naturally among younger generations. The growth of texting among younger generations quickly leads to the development of this form of English language. This study examines the productivity, creativity and flexibility of English Textspeak in social media and online digital communication, which is considered a relatively recent but rapidly growing field of linguistics.

The English language has developed through human communication and undergone continued development and significant changes in its lexicon, terms, concepts, sentence structure, driven by the ever-changing world and its evolving demands (Jatowt & Tanaka, 2012; Yaumi et al., 2024; Youngsun et al., 2024). It has kept pace with society's rapid growth by extensive transformations in grammatical structures, word forms, lexemes and meaning particularly with the emergence of Textspeak. Harga (2016) asserts that language change occurs due to adaptation and development in social life systems and technological advancement. This internet globalization significantly accelerates the spread of English development and adaptation in today's interconnected world. English Textspeak's words and sentences offer valuable insights into the dynamic natures of the English evolution.

While English Textspeak gained prominence with the rise of short message service (SMS) in the late 1990s and early 2000s, its roots can be traced to earlier forms of communication. The need for brevity and ellipsis is not new. It existed in the age of the telegraph, where charges were by the word, and early forms of online communication like internet relay chat (IRC) and instant messaging.

Ellipsis and brevity distinguish human language from other systems of communication. Particularly speaking, linguists see language as a precise and concise system of communication by which humans do multiple functions. Human beings always try their best to express themselves or explain things around them by different ways without saying much so that they avoid redundancy. According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), ellipsis and brevity are used to achieve cohesion by dropping out words originally occur in the preceding discourse or known from the context.

Carnie (2000, p.5) argues that the rules which generate human language constructions are "a subconscious set of procedures (like computer programs). These procedures are part of [human beings'] minds ... [The role of linguists] is to model these procedures ... rules ... tell [the speakers] the order in which to put [their] words ... these rules [are regarded] like command lines in a computer program. They tell [the speakers] step by step how to put together words into sentences."

It has been observed that the use of Textspeak demonstrates a high level of linguistic awareness. Textspeak is characterized by brevity, speed efficiency and informality, which leads to a host of unique morphosyntactic properties and use of conversational orthography. Heavy texters tend to incorporate phonetic and abbreviated spellings into their writing. To effectively use abbreviations and other shortcuts, one must have a strong understanding of how the English language works. It is a sign of a person's ability to code switch between different registers of language which is a crucial skill for effective communication.

Morphology deals with the internal structure of words and word formation processes. Textspeak's words are modified, changed and created to save time and space, so most of them are shortened into abbreviated forms, initialisms or acronyms as illustrated by the following examples:

a. Examples of Abbreviated forms

1)you u

2)are r

b. Examples of Initialisms

3)to be honest TBH

4)be right back brb

c. Examples of Acronyms

5)laugh out loud lol

6)As soon as possible Asap

The above examples illustrate how the Textspeak's words are formed and created in social media and digital communication platforms. These words are lexicalized and become parts of English Oxford Dictionary and Merriam-Webster. Dickinson states that "A word is dead when it is said, some say, I say it just begins to live that day." Thus, these words become frequent and common words not only in Textspeak but also in English dialects.

Syntax deals with the external relationships between words and how sentences are formed. Although English Textspeak's sentences may deviate from standard English for the sake of brevity and speedup typing, they are generated on the basis of phonological and syntactic rules of Standard English. For example, ellipsis is a specific grammatical and rhetorical device used to achieve brevity which is the quality of being concise and precise and to the point. It refers to the use of as few words as possible to convey a clear message without losing meaning. Shakespeare (1601) argues that "brevity is the sound of wit". Ellipsis is a key tool for achieving brevity. It allows a speaker or writer to remove redundant information without losing the sentence's meaning. Chomsky (2000) and Citko (2014) provide a framework for understanding how words could be missing from a sentence's surface form yet still be present in underlying, more abstract, representation.

Winkler (2005, p.10) states that ellipsis "refers to the omission of linguistic material, structure and sound" and Aelbrecht (2010, p.1) defines ellipsis as the omission of elements that are inferable from the context and thus constitutes a mismatch between sound and meaning. When one utters an elliptical sentence, its interpretation is richer than what is actually pronounced.

Textspeak's sentences are characterized by the omission of punctuation marks and function words, unusual use of capitalization and punctuations, ellipsis, incomplete or fragmented sentences, relaxed sentences, etc. The following examples illustrate the structure of Textspeak's sentences.

- 7)gonna be late!
- 8)I dk what u mean, lol!!
- 9)cya 18 r!
- 10) smh, that was crazy!

As the aforementioned examples illustrate, the function words are deleted and capitalization and punctuation marks are used in an unusual way in Textspeak. However, Textspeak is not a random degradation of English language, it is rather a deliberate and systematic form of communication driven by the need for brevity, speed, and efficiency. The key features which distinguish Textspeak from standard English are the extensive use of abbreviations, acronyms, initialisms, shortcuts, contractions, ellipsis, homophones, emoticons, symbols, unusual use of punctuation marks and capitalization, etc. to save time and space, and to convey the intended meaning, emotion and tone of the texters. It is also characterized by the visual-phonological features of English sentences. This study aims to identify the morphosyntactic properties of Textspeak in social media and digital communication to highlight the finite means used to create the Textspeak's words and sentences.

There are a number of studies on the influence of social media on language evolution such as Olu and Adeniyi (2024), etc. However, these studies focus on a single platform, making it difficult to draw conclusion about how different social media and digital communication platforms influence language. They do not focus on the rule-governed creativity of Textspeak. Social media and digital communication are powerful agents of language change contributing to a more adaptable and creative lexicon on the basis of the system of language. This study focuses on the morphosyntactic properties of Textspeak in social media and digital communication in general to show the productivity and flexibility of English to cope with new technologies' needs and requirement.

It confirms Crystal's opinion (2006) that Textspeak is a new register of a language and not a degradation or deviation of it. Crystal explores how English has adapted and changed with the rise of the Internet. Baron (2008) focuses on the impact of digital communication on language use. Virtanen et al (2013) present the effects of pragmatic language aspects. Thurlow and Brown (2003) investigate the linguistic features of text messaging.

2. Methodology

The study is based on a descriptive analysis of the data collected by the researcher from social media and digital communication platforms and text messaging. The data are grouped into two classes: morphological properties and syntactic properties which help to indicate the morphological processes and syntactic rules used to form Textspeak. Radford (1997, p. 265) argues that "a morphosyntactic property is morphologically and syntactically conditioned". It is a property which affects (or is affected by) relevant aspects of morphology and syntax.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Morphological Properties

The morphological properties of a word are the properties that distinguish a word from a phrase. They are based on the word's structure, function and relationship to other units of a sentence. A word is an individual lexical item that carries a specific meaning and grammatical function. It is the most fundamental unit of meaning in a language. It has a clear independent meaning. The following table (1) includes examples of Textspeak's words.

Table 1. Examples of Textspeak's Words

Textspeak Words	Phonetic Transcription	Lexical Category	Source	Word formation	Dictionary
Asap	/ eɪsæp/	Adverb	As soon as possible	Acronymy	Oxford English Dictionary Marriam Webster

Lol	/ ɫɔ:l /	Verb / Noun	Laugh loud	out	Acronymy	Oxford English Dictionary Marriam Webster
OMG	/ ɔu em dʒi: /	Interjection	Oh my God		Initialism	Oxford English Dictionary Marriam Webster
TMI	/ tɪ em aɪ /	Noun	Too information	much	Initialism	Oxford English Dictionary Marriam Webster
Brb	/ bi: a:r bi: /	Adverb	Be right back		Initialism	Oxford English Dictionary Marriam Webster

The above table (1) presents English Textspeak's words which are lexicalized and become parts of English dictionaries. Trask (1997, p. 30) argues that lexicalization is the process where a sequence of words is reduced to a single word. As has been observed from the aforementioned Table (1), English Textspeak's words are created by the morphological processes such as acronymy and initialism, which are used to create English new words by taking the first letter of each word in a sequence and the output is either pronounced as a single word or letter by letter.

It can also be observed from the examples in Table (1) that Textspeak does not invent a completely new word but rather modifies existing words through morphological processes. The meaning of these new words is entirely dependent on the shared understanding of the English origin. By analyzing these words, *asap* and *lol*, for example, the morphological properties can be presented as follows:

3.1.1 Lexical Integrity

A word is a complete unit that can be modified by adding affixes to but cannot be broken down into smaller parts without losing its meaning. Lexical integrity signals a major difference between morphological construction and syntactic one. Bloomfield (1933) argues that internal cohesion is the property that distinguishes a word from a phrase. Thus, nothing can break a word into parts or come in between them. Thus, the Textspeak's words, for example '*lol*', cannot be broken into smaller meaningful parts without losing their meanings. Moreover, nothing can be inserted inside them. The Textspeak's words are inflected for the grammatical features as a whole and the inflectional affixes are attached to the end of a whole word as the following examples illustrate:

- 1) I lolled at your joke.
- 2) We were lolling at your joke.
- 3) He lols at your joke.

As has been observed from the aforementioned examples the inflectional affixes are attached to the end of the verb '*lol*' to indicate its grammatical features. This indicates the uninterruptedness and inseparability of Textspeak's words' parts.

3.1.2 Lexicalization

It is the change from the phrasal category to the lexical one with concomitant loss of internal morphological, phonological, and semantic structure. Most of the words are lexicalized because of their frequent use. They become parts of a dictionary. For example, the words, '*lol*', '*asap*' and '*omg*' are found in many major English dictionaries such as the Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2011-2020), Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary and Collins English Dictionary because of their widespread use, and these acronyms have moved beyond electronic communication and used in both print and spoken English.

3.1.3 Lexical Category

A word belongs to a specific or lexical category as the examples in Table (1) illustrate. More illustration can be shown by using the Textspeak's word '*lol*' in sentences as follows.

- 4) I always lol when I see this meme.
- 5) I totally lolled when I saw that meme.
- 6) We were lolling at him.

The Textspeak's word 'lol' is used as a verb in the aforementioned examples and is inflected for English verb conjugation. It can also be used as a noun as the following examples illustrate:

- 7) That was a big lol!
- 8) The message gave me so many lols today.

The above examples show that the Textspeak's word 'lol' is also inflected for English noun declension. Thus Textspeak's words get lexical categories and inflected for their grammatical features.

3.1.4 Inflectionality

Inflection is a morphological process which indicates how the modification of a word expresses its different grammatical features. A word can be inflected for grammatical features such as tense, mood, aspect, voice, number, gender, person, etc. The following examples indicate how the words of Textspeak are inflected.

- 9) I lolled at your text yesterday.
- 10) We were all lolling at the video.

The verb 'lol' is inflected for tense and aspect in the above examples. It is inflected as a whole and the inflectional affixes are added to the end of a verb because Modern English is analytic.

3.1.5 Referentiality

A word is referentially opaque in that it is impossible to see inside them and refer to their parts. Although it is impossible to refer to the parts of a word, it is possible to refer to the whole word. The following examples show that.

- 11) He used the word 'lol' in his formal presentation. It was highly inappropriate.
- 12) My little brother always uses the word 'lol'. It is his favourite word.

The pronoun 'it' is used anaphorically to refer back to the noun 'lol'.

3.1.6 Mobility

Julien (2007, pp. 211-212) argues that one of the word relevant properties is their independent distribution. Boas (1911, p.30), as cited in Julien (2007, p. 212), points out that when a certain sequence can appear, without substantial modifications; in a variety of positions relative to other elements in the sentence, it is considered as a separate word. The following examples show how Textspeak's words move in a sentence:

- 13) A good lol is yours.
- 14) I like your 'lol'.

3.2. Syntactic Properties of Textspeak

The syntactic properties of English constructions are defined by the rules that govern how words combine to form larger meaningful units. The core linguistic system is the same in both Standard English and English Textspeak. Textspeak operates on a modified set of syntactic rules, many of which are shared with Standard English.

3.2.1 Fixed Word Order

Textspeak's sentences preserve the Standard English word order constraints: Subject + Verb + Object (SVO). In English, a sentence is composed of Noun Phrase (NP) and Verb phrase (VP). Textspeak does not violate English word order constraints. Textspeak follows this fixed order of elements in English system. The following examples taken from social media and digital communication platforms and posts illustrate the structure of Textspeak sentences.

- 15) He gonna come late.
- 16) I LOVE this!
- 17) CU 2nite at 8.
- 18) I mma call u later.
- 19) Gimme that

20) r u coming 2 nite

21) idk what u r talking about, lol

It can be observed that Textspeak does not violate the syntactic rules of English, but it allows for more creative and flexible word order for emphasis and conversational tone of Textspeak which distinguishes it from its standard written form. Textspeak combines the phonological and grammatical features of English standard sentences. Textspeak is characterized by a high degree of flexibility, reduction, contractions ellipsis, assimilation, elision and linking.

3.2.2 Hierarchical Structure

Textspeak's construction is hierarchical. Every phrase is headed by a central word called a head and these phrases can be nested within one another as follows:

22) He gonna come late.

The above example illustrates how the verb phrase is headed by a verb and the noun phrase is head by a noun and both of them merge to derive the tense phrase which represents the whole sentence and headed by tense.

3.2.3 Phonological Features of Textspeak

Roach (2010, p. 89) argues that certain English words are shortened so severity (usually to a single phoneme) and so consistently that they are represented differently in informal writing. According to Roach, only functional or grammatical words, which do not have a dictionary meaning, have both strong and weak forms. Textspeak frequently omits function words. On the same line, they are elided by a phonological aspect of English connected speech, elision. However, it consistently retains the most critical elements of a sentence as illustrated in the following examples:

23) gonna watch a movie

24) pic me up

25) need help asap

In the spoken form of English, weak syllables always get elision (Roach, 2010). Moreover, the words and combination of words go under some phonological aspects of English connected speech such as assimilation, intrusion, linking, etc. These phonological aspects are represented in the written form of Textspeak constructions as the following:

26) gimme it

27) wanna go

In essence, Textspeak is a streamlined version of Standard English. It operates on the same basic phonological features and syntactic rules of Standard English, but applies these features and rules of contraction, reduction, ellipsis, elision, assimilation etc. for efficiency and be much like informal spoken form of English language. Just as people speak differently in a formal meeting than they do with friends, they also write differently for a text message than for a school essay.

3.2.4 Agreement and Concord

The grammatical features of Standard English construction, which are simplified in Textspeak, are employed in Textspeak constructions particularly when it is necessary for clarity such as verb tense and number agreement. However, the reliance on contextual cues often allows for the omission of these features. The following examples show that:

28) He's prob busy

29) That was a good idea

30) Imma call u later

31) I lolled at your text

32) We were all lolling at it

The above examples detect that the auxiliaries and main verbs indicate the tense and phi feature agreement.

3.2.5 Ellipsis

Textspeak frequently omits the subject and sometimes the verb for brevity; however, the implied or underlying structure is still SVO. The recipient of the message can easily infer the missing parts because the core word order remains intact. Both forms of English, Standard and Textspeak, rely on content words to carry the primary meaning of a sentence. Textspeak may delete function words but it almost never deletes the content words. The shared syntactic rules are the framework that allows this process of inference and comprehension to occur efficiently.

Halliday and Hassan (1976) argue that ellipsis and brevity are used to achieve cohesion by dropping out words originally occur in the preceding discourse or known from the context. The following example illustrates how ellipsis is used in Textspeak.

33) Ali: coming 2nite

Ahmed: yep.

Ali: got the file

Ahmed: on it

Social media and digital communication context often allows dropping the subject and the verb of the sentence as the above examples illustrate since they can be inferred from the context. Ellipsis is employed in Textspeak to speed communication.

3.2.6 Variations of Capitalization and Punctuations

Varying capitalization and punctuations in textspeak helps tone, emotion, intended meaning and emphasis of the sentence visually. It reflects the stylistic use of language which indicates the expressiveable feature of language. The following examples indicate that:

34) I LOVE U!!!

35) THIS IS AMAZING!!!

The capitalization use indicates the emphasis and excitement of the words. The use of exclamatory mark expresses the strong emotion of the speaker. The following examples present more use of punctuation variations.

36) Coming 2nite?

37) 2be or not 2b tht is th?

The use of punctuation variation and numbers instead of words with similar sounds and meaning represents the casual spoken tone and style of a language for brevity to save time and space and to indicate the meaning of a sentence visually.

3.3 Word-Formation Processes in Textspeak

Within a language system, new words can be derived and expanded through numerous morphological processes called word -formation processes. Bauer, (1983), Trask (1999), Plag (2003), and Yule (2010), as cited in Sihombing (2021), emphasize that word -formation processes are the systematic generation of novel lexical items either through modification of existing lexical items or through complete innovation. These novel lexical items are integrated into the linguistic system and enter the lexicon. Hacken and Thomas (2013) assert that the word-formation processes indicate the application of specific linguistic rules to generate novel lexical units.

There are numerous morphological processes including affixation, compounding, reduplication, conversion, borrowing, acronymy, clipping, blending, etc, which are used to create new lexical items in English.

According to Bauer (1983), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), Lieber (2012), Nguyen (2014), Aarts, McMahon, Hinrichis (2021) and Thuy, 2024, word-formation processes can be divided into two categories: major or productive and minor or nonproductive processes. In other words, Finch (2000) points out that processes are productive if they are currently used to produce further instances of the same type. Conversely, a nonproductive process lacks this synchronic applicability. In terms of productive morphological processes, Pellicer (2022) identifies affixation, compounding and conversion as the most productive word-formation processes in Standard English. Minor processes or unproductive word-

formation processes include clipping, reduplication, blending, acronymy, onomatopoeia, coinage and black formation (Bauer 1983; Huddleston & Pullum 2002, Plag 2003, Lieber 2010, Nguyen 2014 and Aarts et al 2021).

Although derivational affixation, compounding, and conversion are recognized as the most productive word formation processes in Standard English (Marchand, 1969; Bauer, 1983; Plag, 2003; Dostert, 2009; Veselovska, 2017), shortening processes – such as acronymy, initialism, abbreviation, clipping, and blending – alongside conversion and multiple word formation processes, demonstrate a higher degree of productivity in English Textspeak. These word formation processes create new words from established ones as follows.

3.3.1 Shortening Processes:

These processes involve shortening the source words in some way as follows:

a. Abbreviation

Abbreviation is a morphological process which refers to the shortening of an existing word by omitting letters or parts of it while retaining the core meaning (Crystal, 2008). Abbreviation is a general term for any shortened form of a word or phrase. It simplifies pronunciation and writing.

It is the broadest category encompassing any shortened form of a word or phrase, regardless of how it is formed. It can involve taking initial letters, dropping parts of a word or using symbols and numerals, truncation, contraction or other types of shortening. It is an umbrella term for shortened forms of a word or phrase (Crystal, 2008).

Table 2. Examples of Textspeak's Abbreviated Forms

Source	Abbreviated Forms	Lexical Category	Meaning	Usage
You	U	Pronoun	You	r u ok
Your	Ur	Pronoun	Your	ur book
Before	B4	Preposition conjunction	Before	See u B4 the movie
Because	Caus	Conjunction	Because	I'm staying home 2day caus I'm feeling sick.
Laugh out loud	Lol	Verb / Noun	Laugh out loud	I lolled so hard when I saw that video.
Be right back	Brb	Verb	Be right back	Hey, need to answer the door brb.
To	2	Preposition	To	Going 2 the store
A way from keyboard	AFK	Adverb / Adjective	A way from keyboard	Sorry, I was AFK.
Oh my God	OMG	Interjection	Oh my God	Omg, I can't believe we won the game!
Direct message	DM	Noun / Verb	Direct message	Just DM the details
Best friend forever	BFF	Noun	Best friend forever	She is my BFF

1) Acronymy

Acronymy is a morphological process which creates new words by taking the initial letters of multiword sequences that make up a new word called acronyms (Bauer, 1983; Brinton 2000; Plag 2003). Acronyms are articulated as a coherent word as illustrated in the following table:

Table 3. Examples of Textspeak's Acronyms

Source	Acronyms	Phonetic Transcriptions
As soon as possible	asap	/ei.sæp/
Laugh out loud	Lol	/lɒl/
Fear of missing out	fomo	/fɒmɒ/
On my way	omw	/ɒmau/
Oh my God	omg	/ɒmg/
In case you missed it	icymi	/aisimi/
In my opinion	imo	/emɒ/
I do not know	idk	/ai dɒnt nau/ /idk/
If you know, you know	iykyk	/ekik/

Some acronyms become widely used so quickly that their component meanings are no longer consciously considered by speakers (Yule, 2010) such as lol, omg, asap, etc.

b) Initialism

Initialism is a morphological process which is used to create new words by taking the initial letters of multiword sequences but pronounced letter by letter not as a coherent word (Bauer, 1983, Brinton, 2000; Plag, 2003). The following table presents examples of initialisms used in social media and digital communication.

Table 4. Examples of Textspeak's Initialism

The original	Initialism
Be right back	Brb
By the way	BTW
Talk to you later	TTYL
Let me know	LMK
Shaking my hand	SMH
To be honest	TbH
No problem	NP
Never mind	NM
Best friend forever	BFF
Right now	RN
Just joking	Jk

As has been observed from the above table, initialisms are pronounced letter by letter.

c) Clipping

It involves shortening an existing word while preserving its meaning and still being a member of the same word class (Bauer, 1983). Thus, it is a process where an existing word is shortened by cutting off part of it.

Table 6. Examples of Textspeak's Clipped Words

Source	Clipped Form
Picture	Pic
Text	Txt
Please	Pls
Thank	Thx
Tomorrow	Tmrw
Sorry	Sry
Because	Caus

d) Blending

Blending is a morphological process creating a new word by clipping and combining the clipped parts of two or more words together. A blend, called a portmanteau word, involves two processes, compounding and clipping, and the meaning of the two or more words (Brinton, 2000). In this process, two independent words are merged and blended together, typically achieved by truncating the end of the first word and the beginning of the second one as the following examples illustrate:

Table 7. Examples of Textspeak's Blends

Source	Textspeak's Blends
Stay vacation	Staycation
Information epidom	Infodemic
Breakfast + lunch	Brunch
Want + to	Wanna
Going + to	Gonna
Sup	Whatsapp

However, blends are rarely used in Textspeak.

e) Multiple Shortening Formation Processes

In Textspeak, texters tend to incorporate numbers and letters that sound like words or parts of words. Thus, Textspeak often involves phonetic replacements of full words either with numbers or letters as illustrated in the following table.

Table 8. Examples of Textspeak's Multiple Shortening Formation Processes

Source	Multi-Formed Words
Tonight	2nite
Before	B4
Great	Gr8
See you	Cya
Are you okay	RUOK
Ate	8
Too / to	2
For	4

It can be observed from the aforementioned table, whole words are often replaced with numbers and letters that share the same pronunciation.

f) Conversion

Conversion is also called zero derivation or functional shift (Trask, 1999; Lieber, 2010). Notably, there is no explicit morphological restrictions on the types of forms that can undergo conversion. This implies that acronyms, blends, initialisms, clipped forms, etc. are all viable candidates for the conversion process (Bauer, 1983).

Textspeak's words do not belong to a single lexical category. Their grammatical function, or lexical category, is determined by the full phrase or word they represent. They function as whatever the word they abbreviate would function as in a sentence. However, some of them can shift its original category as follows:

Table 9. Examples of Textspeak's Function Shift

Source	Textspeak's Words	Original Category	Function Shift
Laugh out loud	Lol	Verb	Noun
Direct Message	DM	Noun	Verb

3.4 Discussion

The morphological analysis of the collected data indicates that Textspeak's words exhibit key morphosyntactic properties that distinguish them as individual lexical items such as lexical integrity, lexicalization, lexical category, inflectionality, referentiality, and mobility. The following table indicates the morphosyntactic properties of Textspeak's words:

Table 10. Morphosyntactic Properties of Textspeak' words

Morphosyntactic Properties	Examples
Lexical Integrity	Lol
Lexicalization	Asap
Lexical Category	Lol (verb)
	Lol (Noun)
Inflectionally	Lols
	Lolled
	Lolling
Referentiality	His lol is great. I like it.
Mobility	Your lol is great.
	It is your lol.

These morphosyntactic properties, as illustrated by examples such as 'lol' and 'asap', demonstrate their successful integration into the broader English dictionaries such as English Oxford Dictionary and Merriam-Webster. Textspeak does not invent a completely new lexical items, but it primarily modifies and shortens established English words and phrases through productive established morphological word formation processes such as shortening processes: abbreviations, acronymy, initialism, clipping, etc. Although these shortening processes are minor in Standard English, they are the most productive word formation processes in English Textspeak alongside conversion and multiple shortening formation processes; blending is rarely used. The English word formation processes used productively to create Textspeak's words are presented in the following table:

Table 11. Textspeak's Word formation Processes

Word formation Process	Example
Abbreviation	U
Acronymy	Asap
Initialism	DM
Clipping	Cause
Blending	Wanna
Multiple Shortening Formation Processes	2nite B4

Textspeak systematically adapts to the brevity needs, speed up typing, fast paced requirements of social media and online digital communication.

Furthermore, the syntactic analysis reveals that Textspeak's sentences largely follow the core linguist system of Standard English, operating on a modified set of syntactic rules such as fixed word order, hierarchical structure, phonological aspects, agreement and concord, ellipsis and punctuation variations. Textspeak applies the same basic syntactic rules of Standard English in a productive and systematic way.

Table 12. Syntactic Rules of Textspeak's sentences

Syntactic Rules	Examples
Fixed word order	CU 2nite at 8 ru coming 2nite
Hierarchical Structure	He gonna come late
Phonological aspects	Gimme gonna
Ellipsis	Coming 2nite
Punctuation variations	THIS IS AMAZING!!!

The key syntactic features and modifications of Textsspeak's constructions include the extensive use of ellipsis (often omitting function words, subjects, and sometimes the verb for brevity), phonological aspects (elision, assimilation, linking) and variations in punctuation and capitalization to convey tone, emotion, intended meaning, emphasis and coherence.

4. Conclusion

In sum, the analysis of the collected data supports the conclusion that Textspeak is a streamlined, highly efficient and flexible written register of English that maintains a direct relationship with Standard English, and do not completely deviate its morphological and syntactic rules. It only uses them productively and creatively in a systematic and flexible way to cope with the needs and requirement of new technologies. The extensive use of shortening processes, ellipsis, phonological aspects and punctuation variations illustrates the needs for brevity, speed and efficiency in social media and online digital communication. The use of punctuation and capitalization variations helps convey emotions, feelings, intended meaning, emphasis and tone of the casual spoken form of English Textspeak visually, and the use of shortening processes and ellipsis highlights Textspeak's systematic optimization for fast paced social media and online digital communication. This study indicates that Textspeak is creativity within productivity constraints. It is a modified linguistic written register built upon the core structure of Standard English, using highly productive morphological processes to adapt the language for the demands of fast, informal and context dependent electronic communication.

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