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«The language of texting: abbreviations and shortenings»

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**Introduction**

Language is a living thing. Therefore, changes over time are not only unavoidable, they also are common and expected. Language is not the same today as it was originated; it is not the same today as it was last week. Phrases become “so yesterday” and some expressions have been completely eliminated from language. There are a lot of reasons for this change such as culture, technology, events in history, but the most influential catalyst for change in today’s era is technology, the speed of development of which is increasing every day. Every day we witness new discoveries and achievements in different areas of life, including the sphere of communication and language itself. Things like email, texting, Facebook and WhatsApp have led to new words forming, new grammatical changes, and other modifications that are definitely noticeable. Technology could eventually help the language become easier to follow, growing similar to other languages. Language, though, is constantly developing with culture, and as technology becomes a larger and more influential part of our culture, it also becomes a larger and more influential part of the English language[[1]](#footnote-1).

While learning the English language students often come across with various abbreviations and shortenings. Apparently, English learners have difficulty in understanding these lexical units, which are not included into dictionaries.

The present research paper is entitled ***«The Language of Texting: abbreviations and shortenings»****.*

***The actuality*** of the given study is caused by the dynamics of the development of modern English and usage of abbreviations in every day communication. Abbreviations make our life easier. However, when using them, we shouldn't overdo it. The abbreviations***, the subject of study,*** are the most intensively developing units of English.Consequently, there is the distinctive interest to abbreviations in modern linguistics.

***The purpose*** of this paper is to detect peculiarities of process of abbreviation formation and correct usage of them in modern English.

***The objectives of the study*** are:

* to find out what the «language of texting» is;
* to classify abbreviations and shortenings, used in texting;
* to do experiment in order to find out how teenagers feel about the given topic;
* to give recommendations for students and make mini-dictionary of abbreviations and shortenings.

***Hypotheses of the study***: if students know how to use abbreviations correctly, they feel more confident while communicating with native speakers via the Internet.

***Methodology:***

* theoretical research;
* descriptive method;
* experiment;
* questionnaire.

***Significance of the study:*** It may have benefit for the students who want to text with foreigners using different types of messengers or social networks as well as better understand informal texts.

**Chapter I. Theoretical part**

**1.1 The Language of Texting**

The most prominent trend in the language is a direct result of the technological world in which we live: abbreviations. *Abbreviation* is a short form of a word or a phrase. Instant messaging and texting have created a need for our messages to be delivered now, and in order to make it faster, abbreviations came into existence. “OMG” in not only a coined phrase, but there are different variations to keep in use. Even punctuation symbols such as “@” have become a constant in not only typing , but also hand written papers. Though abbreviations allow for faster communication, sometimes they lead to a loss of understanding between people[[2]](#footnote-2).

In the article entitled “Texting” by David Crystal, he details the abbreviations that have been introduced into English language. David Cristal is a British linguist. Crystal is a proponent of a new field of study, Internet linguistics, and has published *Language and the Internet* (2001) on the subject. Crystal's book *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8* (2008) focused on text language and its impact on society. He is the author of numerous books on linguistics and the development of the English language, and he explores in detail how it is changing due to technology. He refers to the language of texting as “textspeak”, and explains why textspeak differs from traditional English in the following examples:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| B | Be |
| B4 | Before |
| @ | at |
| 2 | To, too, two |
| Sum1 | Someone |
| Lol | Laugh out loud |
| R | Are |

Punctuation marks and letters are adapted to express attitudes (the so-called smileys, or emoticons). Crystal explains that textspeak is like decoding a message; they require a different interpretation of the language because of the technology and the speed that messages can be delivered. There is a different adaptation of symbols and punctuation that the traditional language does not use, and it’s a whole new way of thinking about language that has never been used.

The nature of new technology is so innovative and an entirely new experience that in the world of computers, the Internet, and mobile phones, there is a lot of focus and debate over how it has impacted the English language. Because of the drastic nature of the change, there is a whole set of rules and concepts that are associated with “textspeak”. The poem by Norman Silver explores these new rules in a satirical sense, reflecting on both the nature of texting and the impact it has had on society:

1. *U shall luv ur mobil fone with all ur hart*
2. *U & ur fone shall neva b apart*
3. *U shall b prepard @all times 2 txt & 2 recv*
4. *U shall use LOL & othr acronyms in conversants*
5. *U shall b zappy with ur exc!matns*
6. *U shall abbrevi8 & rite words like theyr sed*
7. *U shall nt speak 2 sum1 F2F if u cn msg em instead*

The style of the piece reflects the character of a text message, and though it is dramatized in the poem, it is a rather accurate display of texting culture and language. Most importantly noted in the style are the uses of abbreviations and acronyms, the use of certain punctuation marks and numerous misspellings. Certain variations are becoming increasingly common, such as “2” for “to” and “too”. Other forms of abbreviations aren’t used as frequently, such as long acronyms that have not found their way into everyone’s language yet. However, the trends in «textspeak» are now becoming in themselves a new language, or a variation of the English language that a new generation is being introduced to and becoming more fluent in at younger age.

The published lists of abbreviations and emoticons are extensive – over 500 in each category have been recorded. Probably less than 5 per cent of them are ever used. But this has not stopped people swallowing whole the stories that appear from time to time in the press, asserting that youngsters use nothing else when they text. For example, in 2003 a story was widely reported that a teenager had written an essay entirely in textspeak, which her teacher was ‘totally unable to understand’.

The reported extract began like this*: My smmr hols wr CWOT. B4, we used 2go2 NY 2C my bro, his GF & thr 3 :-@ kids FTF. ILNY, it’s a gr8 plc.*

And it was translated like this: *My summer holidays were a complete waste of time. Before, we used to go to New York to see my brother, his girlfriend and their three screaming kids face to face. I love New York. It’s a great place*.

If we have a look at this short text, we can notice that some parts of the sentences are quite easy to understand. It is worth noting that the sentences use standard English grammar. Eight of the words are spelled normally. *Hols* and *bro* are common colloquialisms outside of texting. Most of us would have no trouble reading in the missing vowels in *summer*, though we might pause a moment over *wr, thr,* and *plc*. And nobody would have difficulty with ‘translating’ such forms as *2 as ‘to’*. The only real problems are the acronyms –*CWOT, GF*, and *FTF*, and perhaps *NY* and *ILNY* for people living outside the USA. They pose problems in any context where we are unfamiliar with the subject.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**1.2 Types of abbreviations and shortenings, used in texting**

**Logograms**

The most noticeable feature of text orthography – the use of single letters, numerals, and typographic symbols to represent words and parts of words.

*B – be @ - at x - kiss*

When graphic units are used in this way, they are technically known as logograms or logographs. Logograms in texting may be used alone, or in combination:

*b4 - before 2day - today xxx - kisses’ zzz - ‘sleeping’*

**Initialisms**

Probably the second most noticeable feature of texting is the reduction of words to their initial letters – what are known as initialisms. Initialisms are familiar in proper names, such as NATO and BBC. They are often called acronyms. What happens in texting – as indeed in other forms of computer-mediated communication, such as instant messaging – is that everyday words, rather than proper names, are reduced to their initial letters. We find initials used for individual words: *N- no; G - grin; Q - queue; W - with; Y- yes*; for elements of compound words: *GF- girlfriend; D- download; W/E- weekend*; for words in phrases: *CWOT - complete waste of time; FTF - face to face; NP - no problem; AML - all my love*; for words in elliptical or whole sentences: *JK - Just kidding; DK - Don’t know ; CMB - Call me back; SWDYT- So what do you think?; MMYT - Mail me your thoughts*; and for words in expostulations: *OMG - O h my God!; AB - Ah bless![[4]](#footnote-4)*

**Omitted letters**

An initialism is a word where all the letters are omitted except the first. Often less noticeable, but certainly more common, are the cases where texters shorten words by omitting letters from the middle (often called contractions) or dropping a letter at the end(often called clippings). Usually these are vowels, in accord with information theory[[5]](#footnote-5), but final consonants are often dropped too, as are ‘silent’ consonants and double medial consonants are reduced to single-tons. There are some examples: *plsed – pleased, msg – message, txtin – texting, messin – messing, getn – getting, comin – coming, rite – write, xlnt – excellent* . Other examples are *bt (‘but’), yr(‘year’), tmrw(‘tom-orrow’), hav (‘have’), thn (‘then’), and wil (‘will’)*. ***Almst any wrd cn be abbrvted in ths wy*** – though there is no consistency between texters. Abbreviated might appear in half a dozen different guises. For instance, *tonight* can be written as *tnight, tonyt, tonite, tonit, 2nt, 2night, 2nyt, and 2nite*, and there are probably several more variants out there. Similar variations can be found in other kinds of electronic communication.

**Nonstandard spellings**

Texters are also prone to misspell, both unconsciously and deliberately. They would not be able to use the mobile phone technology at all if they had not been taught to read and write, and this means they all had a grounding in the standard English writing system. Some texters will be good spellers; some will be bad. But on the whole, the deviant spellings we see in text messaging give the impression of people consciously manipulating the writing system, rather than making inadvertent errors. The list of nonstandard spellings used in texting is not very great, but they are certainly distinctive – and one of the main irritants to people who do not like this genre. They include the following: *cos /cuz - because, fone – phone, luv - love, o mi god - oh my god, ova – over, shud - should, skool – school, sum – some, thanx – thanks, thru - through, wot – what, ya - you*. They also include representations of informal or regional speech, such as: *bin/ bn – been, dunno - don’t know, gonna going to, sorta -sort of, wanna - want to, wassup, sup - what’s up wen ja - when do you, wotcha - what are you.* But, once again, how original are they? Several of these nonstandard spellings are so much part of English literary tradition that they have been given entries in the Oxford English Dictionary. *Cos* is there from 1828, *wot* from 1829,*luv* from 1898, *thanx* from 1936, and *ya* from 1941[[6]](#footnote-6).

**Chapter II. Practical part**

**2.1 Difficulties of understanding the «language of texting»**

While learning or using the English language we often come across with different shortenings and abbreviations. Some of them are easy enough to understand or guess their meaning. However, there are some of them that can make a person feel confused. Although, these words are hardly ever met in school course-books, they are quite common in real life communication. Therefore, when a student has an opportunity to communicate with native speakers via social network or in chat rooms, the possibility of having misunderstandings arises. The language of texting sometimes appears to be quite unpredictable and difficult to understand. Moreover, there are no certain rules and every abbreviation can be interpreted by different people in different ways. The following example shows the result of the wrong interpretation:

**Message:**  
*Mom: Your beloved aunt just passed away.****LOL*** *Son: Why is that funny?  
Mom: It’s not funny, David!  
Son: Mom, LOL means****“laughing out loud“****.  
Mom: Oh my goodness! I thought it means “lots of love”...I sent it to everyone! I need to call everybody…*

I got interested in the given topic when I was given a book entitled «TTYL». At that moment I did not know the meaning of abbreviation «TTYL», so I searched for the meaning and found out that it meant «Talk to you later». The book was written in a friends’ texting way. While reading this book, I came across with various shortenings and abbreviations such as *CU, BRB, coz, R* and so on. Then I wanted to check weather young people from different countries use the language of texting or not. In order to do that, I registered on a website *www. interpals.net* and started texting with people from Sweden, Canada, Indonesia and some African countries. I have to admit that at the beginning of our communication I used to check a lot of things on the Internet. Sometimes I have nothing to do, but ask my pen pals for explanation. I would like to give some examples of frequently used words in texting:

* ***2G2BT*** ***- too good to be true****;*
* ***2nite*** ***- tonight****;*
* ***AFAIK*** ***- as far as I know***
* ***BTW - by the way****;*
* ***RLY*** ***- really***
* ***BRB*** ***- be right back***
* ***TTYL*** ***- talk to you later***
* ***IMO*** ***- in my opinion***
* ***SUP – what’s up***
* ***BC – because***
* ***CYT - see you tomorrow***
* ***RUF2T — Are you free to talk?***

Thus, if a learner wants to feel more comfortable while texting with foreigners it’s worth knowing at least the most common abbreviations and shortenings.

**2.2. Determining the level of knowledge of students in school № 12**

The experiment was conducted on 10th and 11th grade students of school № 12. Each student was given a sheet of paper with 3 short messages on it. (Appendix 1). Their task was to guess the meaning of the messages, containing different types of abbreviations and shortenings. In the course of the experiment, observations showed that students did this task with some hesitation, as they couldn’t get the meaning of all items. Some of them guessed these words with the help of the context or gave their own interpretation. But still it was difficult to give the correct answer. When they were presented with the correct answers, they were surprised as all phrases were quite simple and familiar.

The experiment involved 2 groups of students (30 people). The task was considered successful if the student was able to understand the whole message. According to the results, 2 students (7%) coped with the task, because they’d had an experience of using them in a real life communication. 10 students (33%) had difficulties only with initialisms. 15 students (50%) had problems with initialisms and non-standard spelling. 3 students (10%) had difficulties with all types of abbreviations and shortenings. (Appendix2)

The most difficult words to translate were:

*Initialisms*: CWOT (Complete waste of time), GF (girlfriend), FTF (face to face), ATM (at the moment), RUF2T (Are you free to talk?)

*Non-standard spelling*: wotcha (what are you), dunno (don’t know)

The easiest to understand were words with *omitted letters,* such as *smmr, hols, wr, plc, answr,* and *logograms* such as *b4, 2go2, 2c, gr8*.

This can be explained by the fact that students have already met these words in English lessons. Also when students pronounce them, everything becomes clear.

After calculating the results, we came to the conclusion that the initialisms are the most difficult to understand while texting. Only a small number of students know the meaning of the presented words. This means that the research work is relevant.

Also, in order to correct this situation, we have carried out work on familiarizing students with the "language of texting". During 3 weeks, we spent 5 minutes at the end of the lesson getting acquainted with different words in this category, giving examples, and analyzing situations that arise due to incorrect translation. Also students wrote their own messages, using abbreviations and shortenings.

At the end of the experiment, we developed a dictionary called «Language of texting» to help students and teachers (Appendix 3). Dictionaries were sent to students in electronic form, and several copies were printed for use in the classroom.

Thus, we can conclude that "language of texting" is able to mislead us. For real life communication we have to be ready to understand different forms of language. Nowadays Internet communication is a great way to practice the English language, so in order to feel more comfortable it is worth learning the «language of texting».

**Conclusion**

In this research paper, we systematize, analyze and classify abbreviations that are most common on the Internet. All this, of course, will be useful to those Internet users who want to fully and competently communicate virtually and, going to the "world wide web", do not get lost in guesses about the meaning of abbreviations found there.

***The first (theoretical) part*** starts with a detailed definition of abbreviations in general. Also, we try to describe the most distinctive features of the «language of texting» and classify abbreviations and shortenings frequently used in texting.

***In the second*** (theoretical) part we give examples of abbreviations and shortenings used in texting and identify the type, which is the most difficult to understand. We presented the results of the experiment conducted on students of secondary school № 12, and encouraged them to use these lexical units in a real-life communication.

The Appendix contains a list of words that were used for the experiment, as well as a dictionary called «The language of texting». This dictionary will help students to remember some abbreviations and shortenings, and teachers to make their lesson more interesting.

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Appendix1

*My smmr hols wr CWOT. B4, we used 2go2 NY 2C my bro, his GF & thr 3 :-@ kids FTF. ILNY, it’s a gr8 plc.*

* *Hi, Jane. Wotcha doin’? RUF2T?*
* *Busy ATM. SUP?*
* *Well, fone u l8er, thn. Xxx*

*I dunno th answr. IMO it’s rly diffclt qustn.*

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

**Logograms**

@ – at

@TEOTD – at the end of the day

& – and

^5 – high-five

?4U – question for you

121 – one-to-one

1ce – once

1dr – I wonder

2 – to, too, two

2b – to be

2c – to see

2day – today

2go2 – to go to

2moro/2mrow – tomorrow

2nite/2nyt – tonight

2u – to you

404 – I do not know

4ever – forever

4u – for you

B – be

B2W – back to work

B4 – before

BHL8 – be home late

Cr8 - create

CUL8R – call you later/see you later

D00D - dude

Db8 – debate

E1 – everyone

EF4T – effort

F2F – face to face

F8 – fate

G2G – got to go/good to go

G2GICYAL8ER – got to go I will see you later

G2R – got to run

Gr8 – great

H2CUS – hope to see you soon

I2 – I too (me too)

IA8 – I already ate

J00 – you

J00R – your

L2G – like/love to go

L8R – later

M8 – mate

**Initialisms**

AB – ah bless!

AFAIK – as far as I know

AFK – away from keyboard

ALM – all my love

ASAP – as soon as possible

ATB – all the best

BAU – business as usual

BC – because

BF – boyfriend/best friend

BSOD – blue screen of dead

BR – best regards

BRB – be right back

BT – bite this

BTW – by the way

CMB – call me back

CUL – see you later

CWOT – complete waste of time

D – download

DHU – dinosaur hugs (to show support)

DIY – do it yourself

DK– do not know

EOD – end of debate

FAAK – falling asleep at keyboard

FAQ – frequently asked questions

FC – fingers crossed

FOAF – friend of a friend

FTF – face to face

FYI – for your information

G – grin/giggle

GAS – greetings and salutations

GB – goodbye

GBU – god bless you

GD - good

GF – girlfriend

GG – good game

GL – good luck

GN – good night

GNSD – good night, sweet dreams

GT – good try

GTG – got to go/good to go

HAK – hug and kiss

HAU – how about you?

HAND – have a nice day

HBD – happy birthday

H-BDAY – happy birthday

HF – have fun

HIFW – how I felt when… (used with photo or GIF)

HOAS – hold on a second

HRU – how are you

**Omitted letters**

Bt – but

Comin – coming

Getn – getting

Hav – have

Msg – message

Messin – messing

PIC – picture

PLS/PLZ – please

Plsed – pleased

Prt – party

RGR – roger (‘I agree’)

Rite – write

Smmr – summer

Srsly – seriously

Sry – sorry

Tday – today

Thn – then

Tmrw – tomorrow

Tonit/tnight – tonight

Txtin – texting

Wil – will

Xlnt – excellent

Yr – year

**Non-standard spellings**

Bin/bn – been

Coz/cos – because

Dunno – do not know

Fone – phone

Gonna – going to

Gotta – got to

Lemeno – let me know

Luv – love

Ova – over

O mi god – oh my god

Orly – oh, really?

R – are

Shud – should

Skool – school

Sorta – sort of

Sum – some

Thanx – thanks

Thru – through

U – you

Wanna – want to

Wassup/sup – what is up?

Wen ja – when do you

Wot – what

Wotcha – what are you

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