

My Textese

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Evidence

1. Talking about candy my boss gave me and my coworkers at work:
 - a. Me: But my boss brought in kit kats and Reece's it's lit
2. Talking about a change in date plans:
 - a. Me: We decided on a movie instead of science/Because science is expensive
3. Talking about the taste of kale and arugula:
 - a. Padin: Do you like arugula
 - b. Me: Who is that
 - c. Padin: Lmao
 - d. Me: Lmao I don't think I've ever had it
 - e. Padin: I don't like it/It's peppery
 - f. Me: Is it like kale?
 - g. ...
 - h. Padin: Different kind of diet
 - i. Me: Differnt
4. Asking if Padin will call me:
 - a. Me: hey fren you wanna call me/so that i can talk literature to you
5. Arguing about something insignificant:
 - a. Me: Don't be a rude I'm just trying to live me life
 - b. Padin: I'm not being rude I'm just saying you're overthinking it
 - c. Me: I overthink everything??
 - d. Padin: You're getting more offended than you need to be chill
 - e. Me: I'm getting more sass than I need to be,,
6. Talking about dresses where one of them was green:
 - a. Padin: I have never seen the first dress anywhere ever
 - b. Me: What's green/Sounds fake
 - c. Padin: Yellow but gayer/Which color is the gayest/Rainbow doesn't count
 - d. Me: I think yellow is gayer than green/Which is weird because yellow is ~gender neutral~

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Introduction

I've never tried to make the connection between how I text and what I'm feeling. Subconsciously, I know exactly why I said what I texted, but that isn't explicit knowledge that comes to my mind while I am typing. I don't sit there and think "I feel sad, so I'm going to use ellipses after everything I say." But I do use ellipses sometimes when I'm sad to express that emotion. Emotions are hard to convey through a screen, so I have to adapt my own idiolect to be as specific as possible in the delivery of my message to ensure that my recipient knows what emotion I am trying to display. Through my research, I have discovered many ways that my idiolect affects my texting. In this paper, I will (1) explain my intentional misspelling of words, (2) explore different uses of punctuation, grammar, and syntax, and finally (3), I will describe situations that I text where I could not find any data to match it.

Background

The first article I found towards my research is a book review by Agnieszka Lyons. In her paper, she reviewed a book called *SMS communication: A linguistic approach* by Louise-Amelie Cougon, Cedrick Fairon, and John Benjamins. The book focuses on how texting lingo, textese, is influencing the way younger people verbally communicate. This article is important because it taught me about the term "textese," which I will use in lieu of "texting lingo" in the rest of paper. The second article I found helpful is *So sick or so cool? The language of youth on the internet* by Salia A. Tagliamonte, Dylan Uscher, Lawrence Kwok. It details information about acronyms, short forms, initialisms, intensifiers, and future temporal references. This study is important because it shows a detailed descriptions of what components are included in textese. The third article is *Scraping the Barrel with a Shower of Social Misfits: Everyday Creativity in Text Messaging* by Caroline Tagg. It brought up a really good point about

how textese can't be used in most other contexts, or even other texting/instant messaging. This is directly related to the evidence I have gathered about my own idiolect. The fourth article I used in this paper is *A glossary: Usage abbreviations of mobile phone SMS* by Thotapally Anjaneyulu. This article details exactly how abbreviations are made in textese, which is important to this paper because I use many types of abbreviations. The fifth article I am using is called *Why drag it out?* by Jen Doll. This article is very similar to the paper that I am writing now. The author explains her own idiolect through texting and uses topics like word lengthening to explain what she is saying.

Methods

To gather data for this research paper, I didn't do anything differently than I do on any other day. I talk to my friend Padin on Facebook Messenger every day because she lives in Indiana and we can't talk to each other face to face. I scrolled back through various days of our conversations and took excerpts to use for this project. All of my transcriptions have the original unedited grammar, punctuation, and spellings of the conversations.

Data Presentation and Analysis

As promised, I will first explain my usage of purposely misspelled words. In example (3h), Padin says that the taste of kale is different than the taste of arugula. I replied with *Differnt* in (3i) so that *different* would be pronounced [dɪfɪnt]. This deletes some of the syllables in the correctly spelled *different*. Saying this did not add to the conversation's progression, but instead I said it to be funny. We were already talking about a kale and arugula in a humorous fashion, so I thought that in this context it was appropriate to say that. Jen Doll blames her odd texting habits on "ever-loosening standards for written language, our desire to express ourselves independently and uniquely, and the brief time we devote to creating an electronic message" (pg. 28). This is definitely the case for me. I said *differnt* to be

funny just as Doll says “Hiiiiii” to greet someone over a text message. I can also blame my own desire to be independent and unique. What kind of person responds with such a strange pronunciation of *different*? A unique one. Another purposely misspelled word I have is in (4a), where I call Padin *fren* as opposed to the prescriptive “friend.”

The second and last area that I want to explore is the different uses of punctuation, grammar, and syntax. When I talk with Padin, because we are so close, we need little to no punctuation to understand what we are saying to each other. My first instance of misused punctuation is in (1.a), where I say ...*Reece’s it’s lit*. To begin, “it’s lit” translates to “it’s great.” But other uses of “it’s lit” are usually used in a party atmosphere. You would describe a really fun party as “lit.” Here, I am saying that because my boss brought me and my coworkers candy, the party is really fun, even though there isn’t a party. Using *it’s lit* out of the normal party context opens the door to say that I am excited my favorite candies are at work. Now on to the punctuation aspect of (1a). I didn’t use a single comma, semicolon, or period in these two sentences. (1a) is two sentences because *My boss* and *it’s* do not refer to the same thing or person, making it impossible for the pronoun *it’s* to agree with the subject *My boss*. If I were to use prescriptive grammar rules to rewrite (1a), it would look like “My boss brought in Kit Kats and Reese’s. It’s lit.” Caroline Tagg says, “The language of texting tends to be described as creative, in that it emerges from texters’ exploitation of the written resources that are available to them in fulfilling these interpersonal and expressive functions” (pg. 487). This means that textese is creative because the writer of the text explored the possibilities. I was creative here by not including punctuation.

There are many other places in my evidence that I could have used correct grammar. I think another reason that I don’t include punctuation in my texts to Padin is because it is faster to type without punctuation. In (3b), I ask *Who is that* when Padin asks if I’ve ever eaten arugula, knowing that arugula is not a person and that *Who* does not correctly describe arugula. But in (3f), I use correct

grammar when I say *Is it like kale?* I do this because at this point I'm trying to be serious and ask if arugula tastes anything like kale. When I asked *Who is that* and did not include the prescriptive question mark at the end, it was because I was trying to be funny. I know that arugula isn't a person, but I still tried to talk about it as if it were. I believe that I succeeded in being funny when Padin replies "Lmao" (abbreviation for "laughing my ass off") in (3c). This kind of abbreviation is called an acronym which takes the first letter of every word in a phrase and puts it together (Anjaneyulu 144). These are used commonly in my own textese. The most common acronyms I use are *lol*, "laughing out loud;" *lmao*, "laughing my ass off;" *tbh*, "to be honest;" *tf*, "the fuck;" *omg*, "oh my god," and *idk*, "I don't know."

One punctuation change I do pretty often is the use of multiple punctuations. In (5e), I say *I'm getting more sass than I need to be,,* No, you aren't seeing that wrong and I'm not making a typo, I literally put two commas at the end of this sentence. Depending on the context, the commas could mean something entirely different than what I wanted them to mean here. Here, it was more of a warning of "if you don't calm down, I will probably get angry." Luckily, no one got angry after this little tiff. I do this again in (5c) when I say *I overthink everything??* I put the two question marks at the end to alert some kind of urgency. In other contexts not shown in this paper, the use of the double punctuation means different things, as well as the type of punctuation used.

Another grammatical misuse that I can't seem to find any kind of definition for is when I insert a word or leave them out to make my text sound funny. In (5a), I say *Don't be a rude* to hopefully defuse a small argument between Padin and me. Here I insert the article *a* to change the part of speech of *rude* from an adjective to a noun. My goal with saying it in this way was so to give the message that I am not angry. If I use improper grammar, I am not serious. If I told Padin "Don't be rude," she probably would have assumed I was mad and accusing her of being rude. Instead, I was trying to say "This argument doesn't have to be blown out of proportion." Another example for this is in (2a) where instead of adding

words, I leave a lot of information out, but my message is still perceived. I was explaining that I had changed plans with a girl I had scheduled a date with to go to the movies instead of going to the Exploratorium because the movies would be cheaper. To insinuate this, I said *science is expensive*. Here I am making the overgeneralization that all science is expensive, when really I just mean this random science museum in San Francisco.

Another unnamed use of weird grammar is the use of the tilde in (6d): *~gender neutral~*. The context that this is used is tricky. Here we are personifying colors by giving the human quality “gay,” and then we talk about the “gayness” of the colors green and yellow. Here, I say *gender neutral* in this fashion because I want to put emphasis that yellow isn’t supposed to be a “gay” color, but I associate it with “gayness.” Why did I think of it like this? I have absolutely no idea. It’s not like I, a lesbian, have worn yellow to signify to someone that I am gay. This goes on to show that over texting, sometimes you really don’t need a single reason to say something. Again, I feel like it would be impossible at my current level of knowledge to even try to figure out what term would fit this situation.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have found that my textese does mirror my own emotions. I also take into consideration my intentions when I send a message. For example, if I send a message with two question marks, I am trying to be urgent. I found that my intentional misspellings of words are very unique and allow me to express myself as I text. However, I have also found that there are many things I do when I text that do not make any sense to me, but Padin and I can understand each other when we speak in these ways. I am very curious to see if there are some actual terms that describe these anomalies, or if there is any research being done that will eventually label these findings.

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