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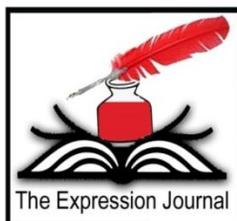
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CT3SM: A LEXICAL STUDY OF CHANGING TRENDS IN TEEN TEXTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

Face-to-face interaction and socialization is now being increasingly substituted by chats on social media, especially by the youngsters. They are so engrossed in it that lexis and syntax in English are now in a state of flux. Users have become quite casual; code mixing and code switching are common; new words and acronyms are erupting quite frequently in such chats. The abbreviation above and many more such contracted forms are common coinages by users who do not care to get any authentication from a lexicographer or other such source for their usage. Once an abbreviation is found to be convenient, the trend to use it picks up and it automatically gains recognition. It is due to this rapidity and frequency that dictionaries are also becoming accommodative to keep pace with the changing lexical trends to substitute words with acronyms, emoticons, and symbols. As a result, messages are getting contracted. The paper focuses on how messages sent by teenagers on popular platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, Tumblr, Whats App are keeping the users on their toes to keep themselves abreast with the latest acronym trend to comprehend the communication. A lexical analysis of data collected from twenty teenagers through Whats App has been undertaken in the paper and suggestions towards the end have given to let the readers know the way forward.

Keywords

Lexical Analysis, Acronyms, Lexicographers, Symbols, Abbreviation, Teenagers, Social Media Platforms.
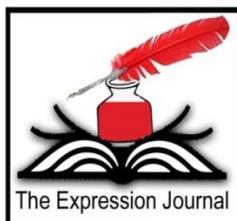
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Introduction

Today we are in a fast changing world of technology, communication and imparting information. Social media has brought about a drastic change in the manner in which we socialize and communicate. It has minimized personal meetings and maximized virtual ones. Letters which were initially substituted by e-mail a few decades ago with the spread of the internet, have now got substituted by instant messages through various social media platforms. Ever since this happened, the whole English language scenario underwent a drastic change. There were times when in the non-native countries like India, there was lot of emphasis given to Standard English (initially the King's English and later on the Queen's English). But these platforms which are readily accessible to all those who can afford a smart phone have changed English both lexically and syntactically.

This paper explores how social media is constantly bringing about changes in the field of lexis by adding new words and abbreviations. The abbreviation used in the title of the paper, CT3SM (a self-coined acronym) stands for 'Changing (C) Trends in Teens Texting (T3) on Social Media (SM)', is suggestive in itself as it examines how words used in social media interaction are changing regularly because of the users who are mainly youngsters. A major reason of these instant exchanges is the eagerness of the young users to respond to messages received. Another reason is that they are engaged in interacting with multiple people at the same time. So, to economize on time they take the help of acronyms to handle simultaneous chatting. One interesting fact about these chats is that these acronyms are now becoming common in the academic field also.

The impact of technology on modern generation, especially on teens is such thatithas redefined their mode of oral and written communication. The borderline between formality and informality is fading off in both the modes and no one takes offense to it. Also, teen engagement on social media has affected the structure of the language employed in communication (both

academically and professionally) on these platforms. New linguistic forms and vocabulary are replacing the existing ones, for example, "OMG"' for "oh my God", "lol", for "laugh out loud", "g9t" for "good night'', "4ever" instead of "forever". In this regard, Guth (1980) advocates the need for technology to create more abbreviated forms, which open the gate for new expressions and slangs. These will help create new linguistic features called textese1 (Elvis, 2009).

In this research paper, the researcher tends to explore the familiarity of teenagers on vocabulary used in social media through a brief online questionnaire administered to 20 teenagers from Alwar district of Rajasthan.

Review of Literature

Earlier it was a telegram that helped the people deliver messages very fast from one place to another, but it was with minimal words. The use of text messaging on cell phones started in1993. At the beginning of the 21st century, a new emerging form of text messaging became famous worldwide, which was confined to a limited set of high-class people. As time passed, the newly emerging phenomenon opened the gateway for all, especially for researchers like Crystal (2009) and Thurlow (2003). They researched to explore these text messages and the social motives of individuals and teens. Until recently, sociolinguists have studied the impact of text messaging on the writing skill of the individual (Crystal, 2009).

When it comes to classifying slangs and words, the issue raised much controversy among some sociolinguists like Crystal, Eckert, and Trudgill. They resorted to giving the topic a sociolinguistic interpretation as slang is different from a dialect. They confirmed that slang can never be considered authentic language, although it has its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. In this vein, Anderson & Trudgill (1992) maintain that:

There are perhaps a handful of features that could be regarded as typical of slang grammar, but there are very few compared to the enormous number of words belonging to slang. Hence, slang is first and foremost a question of vocabulary.

The study by Rahmatiis aimed to identify the influence of social media on English vocabulary development among university students in Malaysia. The primary focus of this study was to explore how social media influenced vocabulary skills. This paper also explored the positive and negative influence of social media on language acquisition skill. Before we go ahead, it is important to establish the context of the district from where the data for analysis has been collected.

Survey Context

In Alwar district of Rajasthan there are many dialects of Rajasthani which are spoken. It is a diglossia speech community where both the dialect and the standard language are spoken by the same set of speakers. This leads to code-switching and code-mixing. Youngsters adapt regional varieties which are mutually intelligible. At the same time, many of them can also adhere to English language and its varieties that have become a common part of day today communication of users. Ferguson (1959) says that "it (is) the wide variety (which) is employed in formal contexts like education, while other varieties which represent the low variety (like social media chats), are used in informal settings." With this it is ideal to move on to analyse the data.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The researcher created a group of 20 teenagers (08 girls and 12 boys) who were using social media apps for communication. The initial observation was that girls used abbreviated

forms more often than boys. Also, the boys used code mixing (English and Hindi) more often than girls. The pie chart below shows a graphic representation of the gender divide.
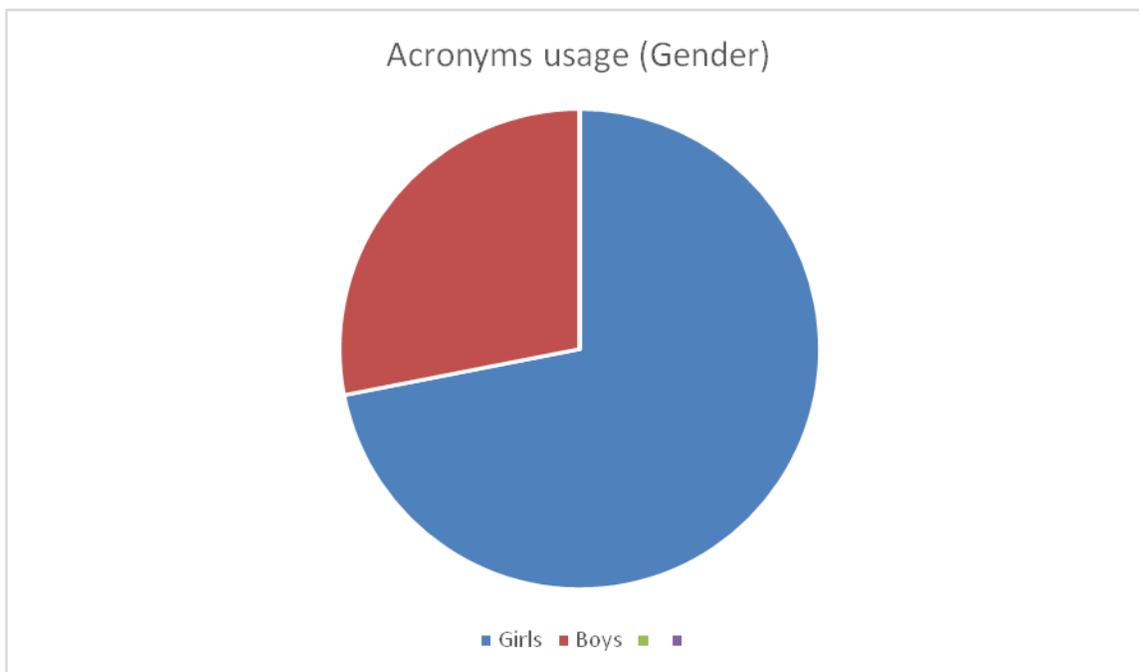
The questionnaire through which data was collected, contained two sections, the first one had the details of the participants (age, gender etc.) and the second one was devoted to testing their familiarity with abbreviated forms.

Question 1: Do you think that there is a difference in vocabulary used on social media by girls and boys? **Yes - No**

Table.1. Teenagers' knowledge of vocabulary differences

Answers	Boys	Girls	Percentage
Yes	32%	53%	85%
No	13%	02%	15%

The table clearly shows that most participants are fully aware of the differences between the words and expressions used by girls and boys on social media. At the same time, about 15% of them have no idea about it. From a more bifurcated perspective, it can be inferred that the girls seem to be more aware of this, probably because they use the language more consciously than the boys.

Question 2: What do the following acronyms stand for in the context of social media chatting? Tick the appropriate box.
Table-2

Gr8	Grey	Eight	Great	Grant
LOL	Laugh out loud	Laugh out late	Laugh out lungs	Laugh out long
CU	Central University	Come you	Call you	See you
LU	Love you	Leave you	Live you	Live long
JK	Jammu Kashmir	Just calling	Just kidding	Just killing

Out of the 5 abbreviations given, 82% of girls chose the right option (great, laugh out loud, love you and just kidding) whereas the boys were far below the girls; only 65% chose the right option. Still it can be seen that by and large a large majority of teenagers (both boys and girls) are much conversant with the abbreviations commonly used in communication on social media platforms.

Question 3: Why do you use abbreviations in your texting on social media?
 - come naturally
 - show trendiness
- save time

Table.3. Intention of using acronyms in texting on social media

Answers	Teenage Boys	Teenage Girls	Percentage
come naturally	24%	33%	57%
show trendiness	11%	05%	16%
save time	07%	20%	27%
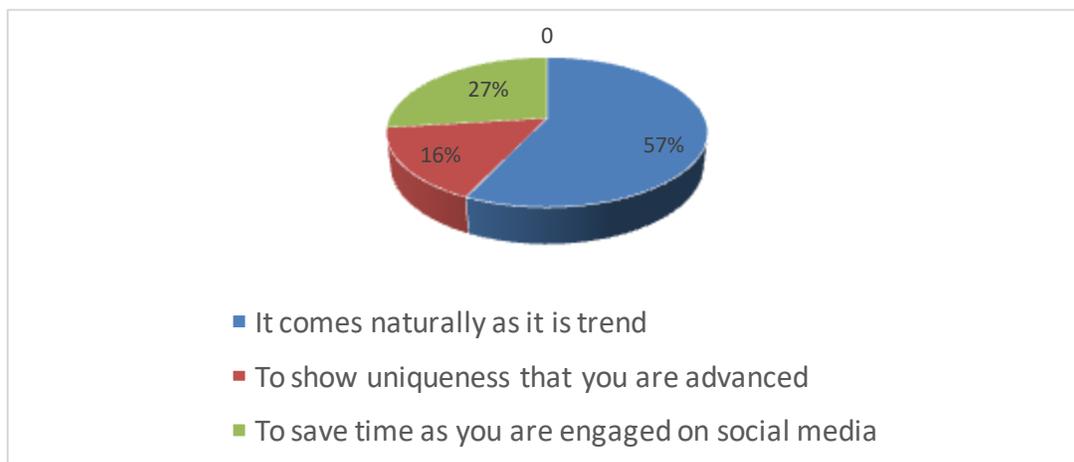
Fig.3. The intention of using coded forms in texting on social media

About half (57%) of the participants agreed that they use coded texting naturally as it comes from their communication with friends on social media platforms. On the other hand, about 27% of the informants confirmed that they used such expressions because they were too much engrossed in social media chatting with multiple friends at the same time because of which they used coded texts to save time and answer all as soon as possible. At last, 16% of the participants agreed that these expressions and linguistic features present before their friends their unique identity and distinguish them from older adults.

Question4: Which of the following do you adopt while writing text messages on social media platforms?

- **Initializing**
- **Vowel deletion**
- **Punctuation**
- **Word spacing**

Table.4. The primary linguistic forms used by youngsters

Answers	Boys	Girls	Percentage
Initialization	19%	08%	27%
Vowel deletion	16%	07%	23%
Punctuation	16%	13%	29%
Word spacing	12%	9%	21%
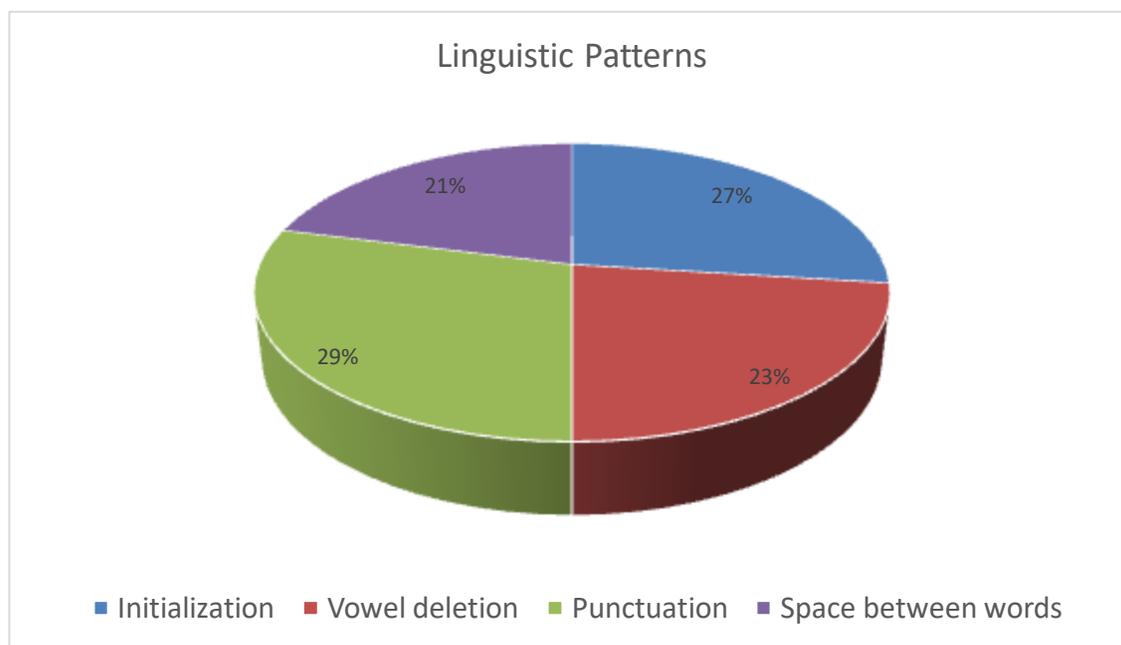
Fig.4. The primary linguistic forms used by youngsters

The findings show almost an equal number of responses to all the four options. Only useof initialization (27%) and punctuation marks (29%) like full stop and commas while chatting are used more.

On the basis of the responses received and the initial correspondence with the respondents on Whats App, the following abbreviations were found to be used more frequently. In this table, it is clearly visible that the abbreviated word forms save time and are easy to respond to.

Table-5

Abbreviations	Real Meaning
L8R	Later
RIP	Rest in peace
BB	Bye Bye
IC	I see
IS	I'm sorry
JJ	Just joking
JK	Just kidding
L8	Late
LU	Love you
2MORO	Tomorrow
CU	See you
BF	Boyfriend/ Best friend
B/W	Between
GM	Good morning
GN	Good night
FAB	Fabulous
CUL	See you later

Limitations

The present research gives an idea of teenagers familiarity with the changing trend in lexis used on social media. The researchers sent some questionnaires to the Whats App group for gathering, but the participants were not supportive. Only 20 out of 50 responded. Moreover, the gender balancing could not be done as the teenage girl respondents were reluctant. Another critical point is that the language used by teenagers on social media still needs further exploration because the current research covers only the abbreviated forms used by them in their chats. Another crucial point in this paper that future researchers should try to explore is the structure of the new coded forms.

Conclusion

The present research has tried to explore the familiarity with abbreviated lexical items used by teenagers in one of the districts of Rajasthan. From the responses received it is clear that when it comes to the use of abbreviated lexical forms in social media, girls have an edge over boys. Their familiarity with these acronyms is more than that of the boys. It is entirely a new genre in the making which is gaining popularity amongst the youth and due to the frequency of use, it is also finding wider acceptability. The district surveyed is a small town of Rajasthan; if data were to be collected from cities like Jaipur, the familiarity amongst both boys and girls would be higher. This gives a direction for future researchers to deal with a similar area with a larger number and a more extended survey. Linguistic analysis of text messaging trend in social media by teens can also be another viable area of future research. In short, this is just a basic survey conducted on a small set of respondents and may not be representative of the whole state because it is vast and has a large population. Despite the study not being more representative, it will pave a path for more research works in this direction with the alterations suggested above. Besides, a more thorough investigation from the perspective of gender with more diverse variables and a larger sample can be taken up.

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