



AN EVALUATION OF TEXTESE IN STUDENTS' SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING

JOHN JOSEPH H. VIVAS

Batangas State University

The National Engineering University

18-52841@g.batstate-u.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Texting language, often referred to as textese or textism, has a notable influence on the writing skills of students, both positively and negatively. As students frequently engage in digital communications such as social media, messaging applications, and online forums, they become accustomed to using informal language styles and strategies.

Through exploratory sequential research design, this study evaluated the use of textese in social media engagement among Grade 11 students from the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strand and its implications to English academic writing. The results revealed that students frequently used specific texting strategies in their online communication, including emojis, addition and omission of punctuation marks, non-normative capitalization, initialisms or acronyms, contractions, and truncated simplified syntax or abbreviation. In contrast, less frequently observed strategies included clippings, number/letter homophones and word value characters, apostrophes, phonetic spellings, and logograms or letter-numeral hybrids. These results reflect how digital communication practices can pose challenges for students when engaging in formal academic writing.

Additionally, the study determined the extent of textese use in academic outputs such as essays, research papers, reflection, and position papers. The results suggest that textism sometimes appears in these tasks. Students' experiences showed a merging of informal digital language practices with formal academic writing, highlighting the necessity for instructional

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guidance to help them differentiate between these language registers. In response, the researcher developed a set of guidelines based on learners lived experiences to promote context-aware language use.

Keywords: *Evaluation, Textese, Functionality, Implications, Guidelines*

INTRODUCTION

There is always a constant need for people to generate, organize, and pass information from one party to the next. Today, all communicating entities employ technology for their communication needs. With the use of smartphones and computers, people can communicate and receive feedback through calls, text messages, and emails. In view of this, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is a powerful tool that has changed the ways of people's daily life, work, communication, and learning.

In addition to improving the effectiveness of both personal and professional communication, this shift has created new chances for online learning, distant work, and international cooperation. Indeed, it has reshaped conventional communication methods and is still a major influence on contemporary society. CMC activities can be asynchronous, for example, in the form of writing emails, or posting responses to a discussion board online, or can be virtual synchronous conversations held in chat rooms, text messaging, and so on.

In the context of language learning, numerous studies and books have explored the role of computer-mediated communication (CMC), particularly in writing and composition. Much of this work highlights how digital platforms like emails, online forums, chat apps, blogs, and collaborative tools, make it easier for learners, teachers, and peers to interact through writing.

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At the same time, the spread of Short Message Service (SMS) has brought about new ways of using language that break away from traditional rules and transform everyday communication. Popular among younger generations, SMS has grown into a style of its own, creative and dynamic, though often challenging the norms of standard English.

Today, many high school students interact by sending short messages through mobile phones and instant messaging services, commonly referred to as texting. What makes texting particularly interesting is the emergence of a distinct language variety known as textese, marked by nonstandard spelling and grammatical shortcuts. Despite the growing body of research on texting and textese, only a few studies have examined how learners with communicative difficulties engage with this form of language.

Ekundayo (2016) highlighted that textese and emailse can serve meaningful purposes in writing tasks. The use of shortcuts can be particularly useful in notetaking, drafting minutes, or producing shorter word forms when working under time constraints in both academic and business contexts. It has been argued that textese influences users' writing skills in negative ways. Koross and Kipkenda (2016) support this idea, noting that many lecturers in Kenyan universities believe textisms negatively affect students' writing skills. They pointed out that constant exposure to the shortened and informal style of text messaging can make it harder for students to follow proper grammar rules and construct well-formed sentences, especially in academic and formal writing.

At a public senior high school in the municipality of Balayan, Batangas, it is common to observe students frequently using their mobile phones. Rather than dedicating their time to academic tasks and fulfilling subject-related requirements, many students engage in texting or browsing social media. Consequently, many students experience difficulties with grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure, which can negatively affect their academic performance.

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In response, the Department of Education (DepEd) emphasizes that no learner should be left behind, making inclusive learning a central priority of the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum. Aligned with this long-term goal, the present study evaluated textese in students' social media engagement and its implications to English academic writing. Specifically, it investigated students' textese strategies, small group language functionality, engagement functionality, and low filter functionality. In addition, the study identified the academic implications of textese evident in students' interactions and outputs, as well as their experiences in using textese within the context of academic writing.

The guideline, as an end output, will support instruction, making it easier to address issues related to language use and reinforce writing standards across different subjects. Ultimately, this is also intended to enhance overall literacy by cultivating students' ability to switch between informal and formal registers depending on the context, while also ensuring that their academic writing remains coherent, professional, and aligned with educational objectives.

Objectives

This research focused on the evaluation of textese in students' social media engagement and its implications to English academic writing. It sought answers to the following objectives:

1. Evaluate textese in the student outputs and interactions in terms of:
 - 1.1 Student Textese Strategies
 - 1.2 Small Group Language Functionality
 - 1.3 Engagement Functionality
 - 1.4 Low Filter Functionality

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2. Categorize the academic implications of the textese found in students' outputs and interactions.
 3. Determine the experiences of students regarding the use of textese in English academic writing.
 4. Prepare guidelines for textese use in English academic writing.

Literature Review

Textese has emerged as a linguistic innovation widely adopted by students in digital communication, especially on social media and messaging platforms. It incorporates features such as abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons, phonetic spellings, and alphanumeric substitutions. Driven by the need for speed and convenience, this style allows users to exchange information quickly without relying on formal language (Manzolim & Cruz, 2024). For students, using common texting shortcuts not only makes communication easier but also strengthens their sense of connection and belonging within peer groups.

The use of textese thus reinforces group identity and social bonds. Greeley et al. (2022) emphasize that shared language styles within digital groups build unity and reinforce social norms. Similarly, Changani et al. (2022) note that students fluent in textese often feel more confident and engaged in online communication, which encourages active participation.

Beyond efficiency, textese also supports emotional expression (Al-Jahdali, 2022). Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram amplify this dynamic, where brevity and creativity are central to interaction. Despite these benefits, heavy reliance on textese can make it difficult for students to transition to formal academic writing. This phenomenon, often described as "low filter functionality," occurs when informal patterns seep into academic contexts, echoing Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that emotional comfort can both help and hinder language acquisition.

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Students may feel confident using textese in casual settings, but this familiarity can become a barrier when they need to meet the grammatical and structural demands of academic writing. Thakur (2021) observed issues such as omitted auxiliary verbs, use of alphanumeric symbols, and incomplete sentences in students' formal work, directly linked to their digital writing habits. The Department of Education's K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum seeks to address these challenges by strengthening communication skills as part of preparing students for higher education, employment, or entrepreneurship. This was a key driver behind extending the basic education cycle and introducing subjects such as Oral Communication in Context, which emphasizes communicative competence in real-life situations. Strategies such as simulation and task-based instruction (Willis, 2020) encourage students to apply what they learn in authentic contexts, while academic writing serves as a foundation for building arguments and engaging in scholarly discourse. As Wilson (2022) explains, academic writing is inherently analytical and requires originality, moving learners from simply receiving knowledge to creating it.

Subject courses like 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World also play a vital role by fostering creativity, empathy, and critical thinking (Fatimah, 2019). Together, these subjects aim to sharpen learners' adaptability and resilience in a fast-changing world. Improving academic writing is central to this goal, as it enhances critical and analytical thinking, communication, and engagement with diverse perspectives.

In line with these efforts, this study examines the role of textese in students' social media engagement and its implications for English academic writing. It explores textese strategies, its functions in peer interaction, its academic impact, and students' experiences in navigating between informal and formal writing. Strobl et al., 2019 highlighted that the need for instructional materials and guidelines to address challenges arising from social media language. Findings from Gamilo and Aggaba (2019) further emphasize that the support of peers, teachers, parents, and school administrators is essential in improving learners' writing

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performance, underscoring the importance of stakeholders' involvement in curriculum design and development.

Research on textese across different contexts provides useful insights. For instance, Songxaba (2019) linked WhatsApp use to errors in English writing among South African students, while Sunengko and Afifi (2021) and Megawati and Ikawati (2020) argued for structured writing guidelines and feedback systems to improve competence. Moreover, Hilte et al. (2021) also found that students adjust their textese use depending on their audience, a trend consistent with this study's participants—Grade 11 students from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Strand.

More recently, Antipasado (2024) showed that textese affects spelling, grammar, and reading differently depending on age and academic background. Antony (2023) observed that textese often carries emotional weight through emojis, acronyms, and slang, while Khanam (2023) pointed out that, although it can build digital literacy, it may also disrupt the mastery of formal writing conventions.

The present study aligns with these perspectives by highlighting how textese influences English academic writing and by proposing structured guidelines to help students transition smoothly between informal and formal contexts. Such guidelines are intended to equip learners with the ability to balance expressive digital communication with the demands of academic writing, ensuring they are better prepared for both educational and real-world challenges.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To examine the use of textese in students' social media engagement and its implications for English academic writing, the researcher employed a mixed-methods design. According to Feters et al. (2019), the exploratory sequential approach begins with qualitative

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data collection and analysis, followed by quantitative data gathering, and ends with the integration of findings.

To ensure accuracy and reliability, results from both phases were validated through methodological triangulation, which, as Denzin (2015) explains, cross-checks data from multiple sources and methods to reduce bias and confirm that themes are consistent.

The study began with a qualitative phase that explored the details of textese through linguistic content analysis. Trends, patterns, and themes from shared posts about textese strategies were identified and then used to inform the second, quantitative phase. This phase involved survey questionnaires designed to gather data that would help develop guidelines for the appropriate use of textese.

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents, as recommended by Campbell et al. (2020) for obtaining rich and focused insights. The criteria for selection included: (1) students must be enrolled in the STEM strand, which requires frequent academic writing such as lab reports, theses, and research papers; (2) they must be active users of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Messenger, or TikTok, where textisms are commonly used; and (3) they must be available and willing to participate, particularly in completing survey questionnaires about their social media habits and academic writing experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study showed that Grade 11 STEM students commonly employ six textese strategies in their digital communication and environment: emojis, addition and omission of punctuation marks, non-standard capitalization, initialisms or acronyms, contractions, and shortened or simplified syntax. These strategies reflect the students' preference for fast, expressive, and efficient communication in online settings.

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In contrast, strategies like clippings, letter and number homophones, word-value characters, apostrophes, phonetic spellings, and logograms were found to be less common. This suggests that students depend on strategies that are easier to use, more widely recognized, and more practical for everyday peer communication.

The persistence of these features in students' writing demonstrates how deeply integrated textese has become in their communication practices. Despite being aware of the standards expected in formal writing, students' habitual use of textese in casual digital exchanges seems to influence their academic work. This finding aligns with earlier studies suggesting that informal digital habits can blur the line between personal expression and academic conventions, posing challenges for learners when they are required to shift between different writing contexts.

The weighted mean score of 2.70, with a standard deviation of 0.68, further supports this observation by indicating that students sometimes integrate textese into academic writing tasks such as essays, theses, reviews, reflection papers, and position papers. While this level of use is not overwhelming, it is significant enough to warrant concern for educators, as it points to a subtle but recurring influence of digital language on academic performance.

These results highlight the need for deliberate instruction on code-switching between digital and academic registers. Rather than discouraging textese altogether, educators can guide students in understanding when and how particular forms of language are appropriate. By explicitly teaching the purposes, expectations, and tones required in different contexts, students can become more flexible and effective communicators. Language should be seen as dynamic and adaptable—an essential skill for navigating both academic demands and the realities of digital interaction.

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Conclusions

Based on the findings presented, the following conclusions were formulated:

1. The frequent use of emojis, punctuation marks, non-standard capitalization, acronyms, contractions, and shortened syntax shows that textese is deeply embedded in students' daily communication. By contrast, less common strategies suggest limited familiarity or practicality.
2. The presence of textism is evident in essays, theses, research papers, reviews, reflections, and position papers. However, many students still struggle to shift consciously between informal and formal registers, revealing a gap in adapting their writing to academic standards.
3. Students often use textese not to disregard rules, but to simplify tasks, reduce pressure, and keep ideas flowing. In academic writing outputs like reviews, reflections, and position papers, textisms allow learners to write more authentically, share opinions confidently, and connect with readers. In this way, informal textese helps them bridge everyday expression with formal writing, making learning feel both accessible and meaningful.
4. To address this, the study prepared guidelines to help students know when and how to move between digital and academic forms of expression. These guidelines aim to build not only proficiency in academic writing but also flexibility in communication, preparing students to participate effectively in personal, social, and academic contexts.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions, the researcher proposes the following recommendations:

1. Because language use always depends on context, educators in both public and private schools should guide students to consider purpose, audience, and platform when choosing

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between informal and formal expression. One practical approach is to design lessons that compare informal and academic responses to the same prompt.

2. To address the study's limitations, its scope could be broadened to cover more language features and a wider range of students. Exploring less common forms of textese would provide a bigger view of how digital language evolves across generations. Likewise, including learners from other strands, year levels, or even college would strengthen the reliability and relevance of the findings for a broader educational context.

3. Since the study shows that textese already appears in academic writing, future research should explore its origins more closely. A valuable approach would be to compare students' social media interactions with their classroom writing, highlighting how digital language patterns influence academic work and whether students adjust their register based on context.

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August 2025

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