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Middle School Literacy Educators' Views About Student Texting and Its Impact on Student Writing

by
Rehana Lynda Mohamed Hussain

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
and School of Criminal Justice in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

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2022

Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Rehana Lynda Mohamed Hussain under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Linda Gaughan, PhD
Committee Chair

Gloria Kieley, EdD
Committee Member

Kimberly Durham, PsyD
Dean

Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

Where another author's ideas have been presented in this applied dissertation, I have acknowledged the author's ideas by citing them in the required style.

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Rehana Lynda Mohamed Hussain
Name

July 29, 2022
Date

Acknowledgments

I begin in the name of Allah (Subhanahu wa ta'ala [SWT]), the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. All praises to Allah (SWT) and His blessings for allowing me the opportunity to complete my dissertation.

I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaytan.

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Most Gracious, Most Merciful;

Master of the Day of Judgement.

You do we worship, and Your aid do we seek.

Show us the straight way,

The way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who do not go astray. (*The Qur'an*, 2012, 1: 2-3)

First and foremost, I thank Allah (SWT) for the health, strength, and guidance bestowed on me to accomplish this milestone. My deepest gratitude to my parents, husband, and daughter for standing beside me through this journey. Your unconditional love, understanding, support, and encouragement were unbelievable. Words cannot express how blessed I am to have had your support. May Allah (SWT) grant you all health, strength, sabar, barakah, taqwah, imaan, riqz, Rahmah, forgiveness, and all that is best in this world and in the Hereafter.

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Abstract

Middle School literacy Educators' Views About Student Texting and Its Impact on Student Writing. Rehana Lynda Mohamed Hussain, 2022: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: text messaging, textisms, textspeak, textese, instant messaging, netspeak, cyber speak, socially interactive technologies (SITs), spelling, literacy educators, middle school students, students' writing, qualitative study

This applied dissertation investigated middle school literacy educators' views about the impact of text messaging on students' spelling and writing abilities. Specifically, the researcher determined educators' views about the impact of text messages from Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and Short Message Service (SMS) on middle school student writing and spelling. The researcher interviewed middle school teachers about their experiences with student writing and whether text speak is present in students' writing and spelling.

Four research questions are posed: (a) To what extent do middle school teachers notice textspeak within student writing? (b) What do middle school literacy teachers report as the impact of textspeak on students' written work? (c) What are middle school teachers' attitudes about using features of texting, or textspeak, in written classwork? (d) How do middle school teachers describe student attitudes about using features of texting, or textspeak, in written classwork?

Following individual interviews with 12 educators, the researcher analyzed the data in search of patterns and themes in the responses. The results were both positive and negative. The participants reported that textspeak was beneficial because it increased students' personal efficiency in notes and group or team assignments. However, they reported the negative aspect of textspeak is it reduces students' writing expertise and students' grades.

Future research could expand on investigating the effects of textspeak on students' writing from kindergarten to 12th grade in all subjects. Additional research could determine if the use of textspeak in the media has influenced the quality of students' writing. Furthermore, future studies could analyze the effects of texting and typing on students' mechanics of penmanship and letter formation.

Table of Contents

Page

Chapter 1: Introduction 1
- Statement of the Problem 1
- Definition of Terms 6
- Purpose of the Study 8

Chapter 2: Literature Review 9
- Theoretical Framework 10
- Standard English 11
- Non-Standard English 13
- Florida Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards 14
- New State Writing Standards 17
- Recent Middle School Writing Assessment Results 18
- Impacts of COVID-19 20
- Projected Impact of Texting on Student Acquisition of Standards 21
- Textspeak 23
- The Effects of Textism in Academic Work 32
- Research Questions 36

Chapter 3: Methodology 37
- Aim of the Study 37
- Qualitative Research Approach 37
- Participants 38
- Data Collection and Instrument 39
- Procedures 40
- Data Analysis 41
- Ethical Considerations 41
- Trustworthiness 42
- Potential Research Bias 43
- Limitations 43

Chapter 4: Findings 44
- Participants 44
- Participants' Backgrounds 44
- Sequential Analysis Steps 45
- Data Analysis 46
- Research Question 1 47
- P1 Analysis 47
- P2 Analysis 49
- P3 Analysis 50
- P4 Analysis 51
- P5 Analysis 52
- P6 Analysis 53
- P7 Analysis 54

P8 Analysis 55
P9 Analysis 56
P10 Analysis 57
P11 Analysis 58
P12 Analysis 59
Themes for Research Question 1 60
Research Question 2 62
P1 Analysis 63
P2 Analysis 64
P3 Analysis 65
P4 Analysis 66
P5 Analysis 67
P6 Analysis 68
P7 Analysis 69
P8 Analysis 70
P9 Analysis 71
P10 Analysis 72
P11 Analysis 73
P12 Analysis 74
Themes for Research Question 2 75
Research Question 3 78
P1 Analysis 79
P2 Analysis 80
P3 Analysis 81
P4 Analysis 82
P5 Analysis 83
P6 Analysis 84
P7 Analysis 85
P8 Analysis 86
P9 Analysis 87
P10 Analysis 88
P11 Analysis 88
P12 Analysis 89
Themes for Research Question 3 90
Research Question 4 93
P1 Analysis 93
P2 Analysis 94
P3 Analysis 95
P4 Analysis 95
P5 Analysis 96
P6 Analysis 96
P7 Analysis 97
P8 Analysis 98
P9 Analysis 98
P10 Analysis 99
P11 Analysis 99

P12 Analysis 100
Theme for Research Question 4 100

Chapter 5: Discussion 103
Study Overview 103
Research Background 103
Research Questions and Findings 104
Limitations 105
Recommendations 106
Future Research and Implications 106
Conclusions 106

References 109

Appendix
Teacher Interview Protocol 120

Table
FSA English Language Arts Writing Domain Results 20

Figure
FSA Writing Domains Potentially Affected by Textspeak 22

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

One of the most distinctive features of every community is communication. People use language to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions to one another through writing and speaking. Language is the most frequently used mode of communication in every community, helping individuals interact with each other (Gumperz, 2009). To communicate most effectively, one must spell. Murray (1919) stated, "The apparent decline in spelling ability in the present generation of college students has been subject to various interpretations by parents and instructors" (p. 357).

With the introduction of the mobile telephone in the 1980s, text messages started to develop as a new form of communication. People began to use mobile devices to send written messages instead of using spoken communication, especially teens and young adults (Drouin & Davis, 2009). *Textspeak*, *textisms*, and t*extese* are terms used to refer to casual, abbreviated, and grammatically incorrect language used during text message communication (Durkin et al., 2011). Lenhart et al. (2015) of the Pew Institute noted many teens used texting as their primary form of communication with their friends. Lenhart et al. (2010) noted that the mobile phone was the favored mode of communication among most American teens. Later, Lenhart (2012) found that approximately 30% of teens sent hundreds of text messages a day.

Several researchers described the evolution of text messages into the written vocabulary of textspeak (Carrington 2004; Drouin & Davis, 2009). While studying how people communicated over the internet, Thurlow (2006) discovered two themes applicable to textspeak. In an analysis of over 100 news articles, they found themes of

statistical panic and *moral panic*. Statistical panic indicated the use of superlatives in statements made by text or instant messages. Moral panic is the idea that Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), Short Message Service (SMS), and Socially Interactive Technologies (SITs) were harming the standard English language by negatively impacting spelling skills.

This study was conducted to determine the influence text messages have on current middle school students' spelling and writing capabilities in general from literacy teachers' perspectives. The design and implementation of this generic qualitative study with middle school teachers in the southeastern United States revealed teachers' views of students' writing, including spelling, in academic work and the influence of text messaging.

In the literature on the effects of textspeak on students' writing, mixed reactions and views were present regarding the impact of textspeak from CMC, SMS, and SITs on the writing and spelling academic achievement of middle school students. Text messaging has caused a *texting craze*, which started an outcry among both parents and educators (Visco, 2008). However, Visco (2008) noted that the increase in texting led linguists and learning theorists to investigate the resulting written vocabulary of *textese*. In 2008, Plester et al. stated that texting had an inverse relationship with literacy. Drouin and Davis (2009) discussed the need for further research on the decline in literacy among younger populations due to the increased use of CMC and SMS. Conversely, some researchers have found textspeak has positively influenced the language and reading skills of children (Cheng, 2009). Kemp (2010) claimed that texting has no relationship to literacy, while Drouin (2011) showed positive relationships between literacy and texting.

Conflicting conclusions to date may have occurred due to many factors and variations (Drouin & Driver, 2014), but there is not much research about teachers' views on the dominance or lack of textism in their students' work.

Some educators stated that they understood their students' writing even though they were using textism (Rogers, 2008). Textspeak can affect students' formal writing skills and maybe even decrease their understanding of formal written communication (Moore et al., 2010). Now that texting has become commonplace among students, it is time to hear directly from literacy teachers about students' current academic writing in terms of textspeak.

Phenomenon of Interest

Kemp et al. (2014) noticed that texting, emailing, and other uses of social media resulted in the increased use of textism entering typical language and made observers worry that this mode of communication was causing spelling skills to decline. As noted earlier, Thurlow (2006) found themes of *statistical panic* and *moral panic* when analyzing articles about the increase of text instant messaging harming language usage and diminishing student writing and spelling ability.

Previous studies which used different data sets and student populations indicated positive relationships between students' writing-related outcomes and text messaging (Bushnell et al., 2011; Cingel & Sundar, 2012; Drouin, 2011; Durkin et al., 2011; Kemp, 2010; Kemp & Bushnell, 2011; Kemp et al., 2014; Plester et al., 2008; Plester et al., 2009). However, other studies demonstrated an inverse relationship between student writing ability and textspeak (DeJonge & Kemp, 2012; Drouin & Davis, 2009; Grace et al., 2014; Varnhagen et al., 2010). A few studies indicated no adverse effect of textspeak

on student writing or spelling abilities (Drouin & Davis, 2009; Kemp, 2010; Shaw et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2011).

Background and Justification

The first text messages began to be sent in the early 1990s on personal computers. The launch of mobile phones increased text messaging dramatically, producing a global influence on people's communication (Kemp & Bushnell, 2011). Cingel and Sunder (2012) reported that texting is a preferred form of communication. People can now send text messages to communicate instead of having to make phone calls or send written communication. In 2009, Crystal suggested to educators that this form of communication would continue until something easier, faster, or more character-efficient came along to replace it.

Media headlines reported the use of textspeak beginning to surface in student academic writing and significantly affecting academic writing skills (Thurlow, 2006). Some media concentrated on the negative opinions from both parents and teachers concerning the text messaging frenzy or the written vocabulary that had emerged (Thurlow, 2006; Visco, 2008). International media focused on critics' beliefs that text messaging lingo was leading to the demise of formal standard English writing (Crystal, 2009). Adams (2007) described teachers complaining about their students' writing, including the decreased quality of their formal papers, under the influence of abbreviations and misspellings commonly observed in text messaging. Ross (2007) explained that teachers viewed text messaging as both damaging students' language abilities and being evident in their writing. Alternatively, Wood et al. (2013) suggested that textism has a positive, not negative, effect on students' literacy by developing their

reading, phonological awareness, spelling, and grammar skills. Some studies explored the positive effect of textspeak in enabling students to express themselves more freely in their writing (Ross, 2007; Wray, 2015).

Since existing research has led to many findings on the negative and positive impacts of textspeak on students' writing and literacy skills, further research is needed on educators' perceptions of the impact on literacy among students due to text messaging (Imtiaz, 2017; Nunez-Roman et al.; 2022; Wray, 2015). Much of the previous research focused on texting in relation to informal assessments, students' texting habits, texting language usage among students, and the frequency of texting. There is limited research on the effects of textspeak on adolescent students' writing.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

Over the years, a great debate about the effect of text messaging on student writing has continued. Educators' perspectives of textspeak in students' writing have been sparsely studied. Text message usage among teens has increased over the years. Minimal research attention has been provided to educators' perceptions of the effect of textspeak on their students' academic work. However, according to several studies, texting has been linked to a negative effect on student academic writing (DeJonge & Kemp, 2012; Drouin & Davis, 2009; Grace et al., 2014; Varnhagen et al., 2010), while others saw a positive effect on the students writing (Bushnell et al., 2011; Cingel & Sundar, 2012; Drouin, 2011; Durkin et al., 2011; Kemp & Bushnell, 2011; Kemp et al., 2014; Plester et al., 2008; Plester et al., 2009). To best understand the current effects of text messaging on students' writing abilities in the classroom, the best population to consult was literacy teachers.

Audience

The findings from this study will be helpful to educators in the classroom setting. The information gathered from this study can help determine the effect textspeak has on students' writing based on what is observed in the classroom from teachers' perspectives. The results from this research will stimulate conversations concerning the need for students and teachers to be mindful of the use of textspeak in student writing. The data collected will be helpful for administrators as well as educators. Teachers will be able to use the data to create accommodations in their lesson plans. This study could lay a foundation for the development of strategies and guidelines to aid students in appropriately completing written assignments. The findings could help to develop a plan to maximize student writing and reduce any negative aspects of textspeak in students' academic writing.

Definition of Terms

Definitions for the following terms specific to this dissertation are listed below.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) refers to any form of a communicative transaction that is occurring with the use of two or more networked computers. Other communications from text messages, instant messages, e-mails, and chat rooms that occur via computer-mediated formats have also been considered forms of CMC interactions (Thurlow et al., 2004).

An emoticon is created by using keyboard characters to convey emotions associated with facial expressions. The simplest form represents basic positive or negative attitudes (Crystal, 2009).

Instant messaging (IM) is a type of CMC which is a synchronous, written medium

that mimics face-to-face conversation by using abbreviations, overlapping messages, and great speed so the conversation keeps going without a limit to the number of characters permitted (Adams, 2007; Godwin-Jones, 2005; Lewis & Fabos, 2005).

Socially interactive technologies (SITs) include instant messaging and text messaging which are being redefined by social networks because they offer fast-paced, inexpensive, online communications (Bryant et al., 2006).

Short Message Service (SMS) is a form of text communication service used through a phone, web, or mobile communication system which allows for an exchange of short text messages between other phones, web, or mobile devices with a limit of about 160 characters (Crystal, 2009).

Standard English (SE) is the use of the English language in academics using syntax and vocabulary (Drouin, 2011).

Text messaging, or texting, is the exchange of written text of no more than 160 characters between mobile phones by using SMS functions (Crystal, 2009).

Textese uses abbreviated forms of words including initials (e.g., lol for laughing out loud), letter and number homophones (e.g., gr8 for great), shortened words or contractions (e.g., cuz for because), symbols or emoticons (e.g. :(for sad), and the omission of punctuation, capitalization, or unnecessary words (Carrington 2005; Thurlow 2003; Varnhagen et al., 2010).

Textisms are writings resembling SMS and text messaging using abbreviated non-standard written forms (Lenhart et al., 2008).

Textspeak is a form of writing that follows standard English syntax but includes acronyms, abbreviations, emoticons, and omitted letters and punctuation (Drouin &

Davis, 2009).

This researcher uses the terms textspeak, texting, and textism interchangeably when referring to the form of writing used in addition to the act of sending an SMS message.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of middle school literacy teachers regarding the influence of text messaging, textspeak, and textism on students' spelling and writing ability. Due to the increase in text messaging among students, it was important to examine educators' perspectives on the impact it is having on their students' writing in class. It is useful to examine the advantages and disadvantages of these new forms of written language among students from the educators' perspectives. Specifically, this researcher questioned middle school literacy educators about the extent of textspeak within student writing, the impact of textspeak in student writing, and teacher and student attitudes about textspeak in academic writing.

The study was designed to provide a better understanding of teachers' views on how text messaging is appearing in student work due to the increase of text messages among students. It is important to examine the teachers' views on the advantages and disadvantages textspeak is having on students' academic writing. Since text messaging is a growing trend, the information from this study will inform schools about the possible impacts of texting on student writing from the viewpoint of literacy instructors.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Text messaging started about 20 years ago, and the use of text messaging started to become more frequently used when the service became more affordable and more accessible to students. When the use of textspeak started to be seen in students' writing, research began to develop about the influence of and relationship between text messaging and student literacy. Varnhagen (2010) noted that electronic communication exchange is very popular among adolescents and the use of some textspeak has even been incorporated as acceptable words in dictionaries as Standard English.

This chapter includes the theoretical framework, a description of the literature search strategy, explanations of how textspeak has evolved, and, importantly, current educational standards in the researcher's southern state. The standards will help to set an understanding of the backdrop against which teacher explanations of textese in student writing may impact student acquisition of writing skills necessary to meet the state's academic standards.

The review of literature begins with the understanding of what standard English and non-standard English are in relation to textspeak. The review includes writing habits based on the use of standard English in relationship to textism in the middle school classroom. The overview will provide an understanding of students' writing abilities and skills in the classroom based on teachers' perspectives. The evolution of textspeak and the positive and negative impacts that text messaging has on students' literacy skills are discussed as are current studies related to previous research. The databases used included ERIC (ProQuest), Educational Research, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. Keywords and phrases included writing, literacy, text messaging, textspeak, texting, textism,

standard English, principle of least effort, and middle school. Literature searched includes sources written in English and published between 2015 and 2022. However, the search was expanded to start from 2005 to find relevant literature on text messaging.

Theoretical Framework

Text messaging began to be habitually utilized around 20 years ago in 2002 and continues to persistently be utilized today. This led to initial research efforts to determine the effect text messaging or textspeak on students' literacy skills. The theoretical framework grounding this study is the principle of least effort (PLE). The principle of least effort was first formulated and formalized by George Kingsley Zipf, a Harvard linguist in 1948. Zipf's principle of least effort, also known as the path of least resistance, is known as Zipf's Law (Nordquist, 2019). Essentially, the theory, or principle, holds that people will use the easiest and most effective way to communicate available.

The principle of least effort is straightforward because it is based on the idea that all effort should be as minimal as possible; the principle of least effort is grounded in achieving more by doing the least amount of work (Zipf, 1948). The principle of least effort is simply that if a person is trying to solve an immediate problem, he or she will view it against possible future problems and will try to resolve the problem by minimizing the work that must be done to solve the problem (Zipf, 1948). Zipf (1948) hypothesized that humans are naturally governed by their tendency to reduce effort and explained that "each individual will adopt a course of action that will involve the expenditure *of the probable least average of his work,* by definition least effort" (p. 543). He emphasized that least effort is exactly what it sounds like: the shortest possible way or a shortcut; however, it is not always the simplest way, but is a way to minimize the total

effort expended (Zipf, 1948).

The principle of least effort has been used in various fields of science. It illustrates the inadequacies of least work and the relation to least effort (Zipf, 1948). Zipf (1948) stated that some people believe that the least amount of work is the bare minimum of the living process. It is related to individual human beings as well as entire social groups and all facets of human activity. Zipf (1948) went on to say that an individuals' every behavior is based on minimizing effort.

Danesi (2009) stated that language develops with the purpose of being efficient. Danesi (2009) further stated that the principle of least effort can provide a behavioral and mental framework for understanding the change in communication styles using electronic modes of communication. The principle of least effort plays an important role in shaping languages because it recognizes the existence of language in all domains of human activities. The principle of least effort is easy to understand and is self-explanatory. It has frequently been used in linguistics.

Tsizhmovska and Martyushev (2021) analyzed the sentence length of the inaugural speeches of the U.S. presidents from 1789 to 2021 and realized that speech sentence length on average declined over the years. They stated that Zipf's principle of least effort explained how language has progressed so users can communicate with ease to produce and comprehend sentences of a few short words.

Standard English

In the United States today, standard English is the use of language in a writing environment using distinctive linguistic features in relation to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). Trudgill (1999) claimed that

standard English is a specific dialect and not a language by itself. Even though standard English is viewed as a dialect, English is taught in classrooms around the world and is used by educators. Standard English is accepted as a more appropriate form of English in a formal setting and is widely acknowledged as customary wherever English is spoken and understood (Campbell & Mixco, 2007). It is used "in all academic, business, and professional fields" (Hacker & Sommers, 2011, p. 161).

Standard English, whether written or spoken, is identified as being a prestigious language identified by the usage of proper vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. English is not the same as it was hundreds of years ago and it will continually change in the coming centuries regardless of whether it is written or spoken (Crystal, 2009). Standard English is defined by Crystal, (2009), as:

- Being focused on grammar, vocabulary, and orthography (spelling and punctuation).
- It is recognizable by well-educated citizens and carries social prestige.
- It is used in community institutions such as government courts and schools.
- Standard English is understood by many yet produced by few.
- Most people use Standard English for specific writing tasks, such as formal writing.
- It is found mostly in print (pp. 16, 19-21).

Standard English is a common language that is used internationally to communicate efficiently and effectively. Students must be able to communicate clearly using standard English. As the subtleties of English go through a natural cycle of change because of new technology and inventions, new words and terms are added. Due to these

new technologies, a shift in the English language is taking place (Nawaz et al., 2021).

Understanding that students may inappropriately use standard English in their formal writing because of text messaging styles is linked to the prominent features which exist between textism and standard English. It is important for students to distinguish the difference between standard and non-standard English text messaging characteristics in their written assignments. Grace et al. (2015) claimed that the increase of instant messages and textism in media over the previous years has decreased the quality of students' formal writing and is intruding into standard English.

Non-Standard English

Campbell and Mixco, (2007) stated the only distinction between non-standard and standard English is that the proper and correct form of standard English when used formally is recognized as standard English when used in a formal setting, while textspeak, a non-standard form of English, is not. Non-standard English mimics the characteristics of textspeak (Crystal, 2009). Cook (2010) stated that errors are ever-changing. Defining and identifying errors depends on how words are used in students' writing. Understanding what signifies an error or non-standard English can be problematic. Errors can come from the lack of understanding of English rules, poor instruction, ignorance, or can be attributed to a learning disability. Instructors can define non-standard English when students' writing constitutes errors in the conventions of their writing and style.

Thurlow (2006) stated that the use of textspeak in writing is "reprehensible, depraved, criminal, apocalyptical, and pointless," (p. 677) and is putting a negative view on proper written English. Lenhart et al. (2008) reported that approximately 64% of

students use textism in their academic writing. This, therefore, translates to 64% of students using informal writing including informal punctuation and misuse of grammar in their formal written assignments. Considering this information, it is relevant to see that non-standard writing is becoming a part of students' formal written assignments.

Haas and Takayoshi (2011) stated that language is drifting away from being an academic language to an everyday language and this is causing a dramatic change in writing habits. Language and grammar rules are no longer important because everyone is considered a writer. Language turns out to be less about the technical characteristics and attributes of writing and more about expression The transformation that the English language has gone through is due to the increase in technology.

Florida Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards

The governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, issued executive order 19-32, which called for new English Language Arts (ELA) standards by the Florida Department of Education (Exec. Order No. 19-32, 2019). This order resulted in the release of the Florida Department of Education new Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) standards (Florida's B.E.S.T. Standards, 2020). These standards were created by Florida teachers to best meet the needs of Florida students. The purpose of the B.E.S.T. standards is to guide teachers to educate students in the best way possible. The introduction of the B.E.S.T. standards includes a quote by Frederick Douglass about the purpose of education, which connects the goal to the ELA standards. The Florida claim is that "The implementation of these standards will encourage schools, districts, and educators to adopt and build a rich, deep, and meaningful curriculum that uplifts the soul" (p. 5). Within the standards, there is a reference to educators using these standards as "educating

the hearts, souls, and minds of their students" (p. 5).

The standards are intended to be user-friendly, so every participant will understand what students are required to master. The benchmarks, clarifications, and appendices exemplify the expected outcomes for students in Florida by improving the quality of the instructional curriculum. The standards include innovative ways to streamline testing, require all high school students to take the Florida Civic Literacy Exam, and identify opportunities to equip all high school graduates with knowledge of American civics, a focus on the United States Constitution, and being good American citizens.

The B.E.S.T. standards provide a tangible guide for teachers to follow to carry out a high standard of learning in the classroom. They do not stand alone, nor do they focus on separate instructions, but they are combined with purpose. The new benchmarks are stackable with clear expectations for English language arts, reading, writing connection, and civics. They are focused on reading theories which support the learning and developmental growth of students, with an emphasis on written works. The standards include a booklist at every grade level and are intended to help transition students to college and the job market. The B.E.S.T. standards allow teachers to bring knowledge to the students. These standards emphasize that knowledge building is the beginning of learning by referring to "background knowledge" and stating that "literacy is not achievable merely through a skill-based approach" (p. 6). This knowledge building depends on the appropriate background knowledge rather than mastering reading strategies as outlined in the previous standards. This process will allow students to build their critical thinking skills. As explained about the standards, "We cannot think deeply,

creatively, or critically about a subject if we have little knowledge of it" (p. 6). This knowledge-building incorporates other subjects, such as history, art, and music, to create a "robust curriculum" (p. 6), which was neglected to emphasize reading strategies.

The importance of background knowledge appears in every grade level of the B.E.S.T. standards, including the standards rubrics for text complexity and student-centered scoring guidelines. Background knowledge also ties into the requirement that the ELA curriculum includes texts that build student civic knowledge. The civic components of the standards also focus on building background knowledge and vocabulary. This starts in the lower grades and builds into "a rich study in rhetoric, reasoning, and argumentation in the upper grades" (p. 168). Texts are chosen to reinforce what students learn in social studies classes. Different components are brought together to reinforce and reflect on what is taught in the classroom with appropriate materials and subsequently assessed to measure learning.

The B.E.S.T. standards are laid out in a vertical progression that provides a clear instructional guide for teachers by linking earlier grade standards to what will be taught in later standards at different grade levels. The standards are transparent and succinct and can easily be understood by every interested party. They provide explanations of each grade level concept with clear terms and appropriate examples. Instructors will no longer have to search elsewhere or online for examples of what to include when teaching the appropriate standards. This clarity will help teachers focus on what matters by clarifying what is expected for each lesson. In each grade level, the teachers can find charts that show the standards with examples of texts to support teaching those standards. The thought-provoking texts students are to read are meaningful and designed to prepare

students to be knowledgeable, civic-minded citizens of their community.

The B.E.S.T. standards provide a framework which connects texts on different grade levels to in-depth classroom conversations. This framework allows for more meaningful assignments for students to connect ideas between time and place. The standards are focused on reading by providing multiple opportunities to construct the foundation of early literacy skills. They include a recommended reading list from major literacy periods and historical documents. Florida touts being the first and only state to integrate two reading lists into educational standards for civics education and literature. These standards have specific, logical, and progressive approaches to teaching foundational skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension. The framework is designed for the students, parents, and teachers to be successful.

New State Writing Standards

Written English is a conventional way of communicating with others. Students must master critical aspects of written language, such as the basic parts of speech, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions; identifying elements of syntax in a sentence, including subject, predicate, and direct and indirect object; and recognizing correct pronunciation. As the B.E.S.T. standards are implemented, students are expected to enter middle school knowing these basic writing rules. In middle school, the teacher will improve students' effectiveness in their written communication skills since the B.E.S.T. standards framework uses a vertical progression and builds on students' already-acquired skills. Students will be required to learn how to write for a diverse audience and incorporate media and technology across all subjects.

The new standards are written to encourage students to use formal English in both writing and speaking. In addition, students should learn to make educated and competent choices as they express themselves through their writing. Communication skills, both written and oral, are expected for all individuals. The B.E.S.T. standards clearly outline the communication through writing skills for students in all grade levels. In middle school, students must be able to complete narrative, argumentative, and expository writing, and must be able to plan, revise, and edit their writing following standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling rules. Students must also be able to master the oral communication standards in each grade level because those standards are built on each other, and different components are added at each grade level (Florida B.E.S.T. Standards, 2020).

The B.E.S.T. standards suggest that students should be able to conduct research and answer questions, draw information from reliable and valid sources, refocus the inquiry when appropriate, and determine which information is important. Students are also required to utilize digital media to engage their audience both orally and textually by creating and collaborating. Additionally, the students must be able to integrate appropriate vocabulary when speaking and writing (Florida B.E.S.T. Standards, 2020).

Recent Middle School Writing Assessment Results

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a “congressionally mandated large-scale assessment” which is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The NAEP Writing Assessment delivers the largest recent assessment of students’ writing proficiency. The assessments are scored by trained readers who decide on a score ranging from 1 to 6 based on students’ writing strengths

and weaknesses as students write to open-ended prompts. Writing is scored in relation to specified writing rubrics. In 1984, NAEP began conducting student achievement assessments in writing. NAEP assesses student writing in three domains: accomplishing specific writing tasks, writing fluency, and the conventions of English which include spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The NAEP, the largest national assessment for student writing proficiency, is based on an average scale score where students' performance is scored at basic, proficient, or advanced achievement levels (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017).

National Middle School Writing Results

In 2011, the NAEP Writing Assessment was implemented on a new writing framework to assess students' writing skills using word processing software. To apply this framework, the NCES administered a digital writing assessment in 2011 to eighth and 12th-grade students and in 2017 to fourth and eighth-grade students. The 2017 eighth grade writing assessment changed from the 2011 assessment to using a tablet instead of a laptop. The results of the assessment of eighth-grade students in 2017 showed a lower pattern of performance than in previous years. However, the NCES determined there were many variables that might have affected student writing assessment outcomes, but there were not sufficient data to distinguish if the decrease in scores was due to the use of a tablet instead of a laptop (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017).

Florida Middle School Writing Results

Florida started to use the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) in the 2014-15 school year. This FSA ELA assessment was given to students in Grades 3 to 10 and measured students' ELA writing competency in Grades 4 to 10 (Florida Department of

Education, 2000-2014). The FSA writing standards included different strands for students in Grades 6 to 8. Within these strands were different text types and purposes (CPALMS, 2019).

From the spring of 2018, the FSA writing assessment was used to evaluate students on the statement of purpose, focus and organization, evidence and elaboration, and conventions of standard English (Florida Department of Education, 2022). In Spring 2022, the ELA writing assignment consisted of a variety of texts, and the students had to respond to a prompt. Whether testing on paper or on a computer, students were given three lined pages on which to write their responses. They were allowed a total of 120 minutes (Florida Department of Education, 2020-2021). The results of the FSA writing assessment for the last four years have shown no significant change in the mean points earned by middle school students who were tested. The table below shows middle school FSA writing results for 2018, 2019, and 2021.

Table

Florida Standards Assessments English Language Arts Writing Domain Results

		Points Possible		
		4	4	2
		Mean Points Earned by Writing domain		
Year	Grade	Purpose, focus, and organization	Evidence and elaboration	Conventions of Standard English
2018	6	2	2	2
	7	2	2	2
	8	2	2	2
2019	6	2	2	2
	7	2	2	2
	8	3	2	2
2021	6	2	2	2
	7	2	2	2
	8	2	2	2

Impacts of COVID-19

For the 2019-2020 school year, all statewide assessments from kindergarten

through Grade 12 were canceled because of COVID-19. All school facilities were closed, and teachers were expected to deliver educational services to students from home through virtual learning after returning from spring break (Exec. Order No 2020-EO-01, 2020). As the results above indicate, there was no significant change in the students' writing assessment scores from 2019 to 2021.

Projected Impact of Texting on Student Acquisition of Standards

The B.E.S.T. standards suggest that for one to be a good writer, the rules of communication must be followed to ensure understanding and avoid diversions. A successful writer identifies the context of the writing setting, the audience, and choice of style and language to enhance understanding and effectiveness. Effective written communication is structured on a variety of sentences to clarify the topic, communicate the purpose, and engage the reader. Text messaging could possibly affect the message the writer is trying to get across because the use of informal tone and misuse of grammar and punctuation can contribute to an ineffective way of communicating through writing (Florida's B.E.S.T. Standards, 2020).

Textspeak does not follow standard grammar usage and mechanics, which are essential for writers to effectively communicate in their writing. The misuse of grammar and its mechanics can distract readers and cause them to misunderstand what the writer is trying to communicate. The use of textspeak can influence the result in grammar, usage, and mechanics, which constitute large swaths of communication. The Figure below shows the relationship between textspeak, and student academic writing standards being tested.

Figure

FSA Writing Domains Potentially Affected by Textspeak

Note. This figure was created by the researcher, and it demonstrates the characteristics of the domains assessed on the FSA Writing Assessment 2021-22 Florida State Grade-Level Assessment Fact Sheet, (Florida Department of Education, 2021) and Textspeak characteristics as outlined by Crystal, 2009).

The figure above shows that textspeak may impact students' writing assessment results. The writing assessment standard domains tested are related to the specific errors found in textspeak. Even though not all the writing criteria are directly related to textspeak, the representation shows that textism has the potential to affect the performance outcome.

Ahmadi (2018) suggested that technology is providing students with many essential tools to facilitate learning. It also offers students new and exciting opportunities to learn new things. Al-Shariq and Abbasi (2020) stated that with the increase of new

technology, both parents and educators worry that tech-savvy students taint standard English with the increased use of textspeak becoming more present in students' assignments and obscuring the lines between formal and informal writing.

Textspeak

Danesi (2009) investigated changes in standard English. Specifically, Danesi examined changes resulting from cyber language and how they illustrate the principle of least effort which states that language develops with the idea of efficacy in communication and provides a background on understanding the beginning of textspeak. Plester et al. (2011) stated that the sending of a short, typed message between mobile devices using SMS is a form of text messaging or texting. Textspeak evolved into a very simple form of communication which was started by the invention of mobile device communications. Both standard English and textspeak are languages with unique variations, each exemplified by specific vocabulary and grammatical structures (Crystal, 2009). Textspeak uses simple spelling, acronyms, and omits grammar rules and punctuations, thus making it a more concise and efficient language.

As stated by Lenhart et al. (2010), young people are using text messaging at an expeditious pace. They are media literate and are re-inventing conventional language and communication practices. Text messaging communication has increased exponentially and is widely used across the globe by people of all ages (Dawson, 2010). Textspeak is often written colloquially as one speaks and the users often monitor themselves and others which helps to create the rules (Plester et al., 2009). Text messaging impacts the English lexicon, grammar, syntax, and morphology. The Oxford English Dictionary included lol (laugh out loud) and OMG (Oh my God) in their dictionary (Oxford English

Dictionary, 2022). Lenhart (2012) explained that textspeak is seen as corrupting standard, or formal, written English.

The characteristics that define textism are non-standard features such as contractions, other methods of shortening words, punctuation irregularities, acronyms, symbols, and emoticons, as well as lack of capitalization, and informal tone. The evolving research shows that textism is a form of words represented by letters, symbols, numbers, or pictures which also includes misspellings that are orthographically correct and symbols to express emotions. Individuals using textism in their writing do not worry about grammar or punctuation but focus on getting their message across. Examples that follow textism include the usage of numbers and letters such as CUL8R for see you later, LOL for laugh out loud; shortening of words brother for bro; using clippings of words such as doin for doing or hav for have; leaving out apostrophes in can't and using cant; contractions of plz for please; non-conventional spelling for school being skool; and using symbols and emoticons instead as @ for at, # for number, or even 😊 for expression (Carrington, 2004; Kemp & Bushnell, 2011; Plester et al., 2008; Plester et al., 2009; Thurlow, 2003; Thurlow, 2006; Wood et al., 2011).

As technology has advanced over the years and as the COVID-19 pandemic has created a need for employees to protect themselves by working at home or for students to be educated at home, the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was passed. This Act will provide over $65 billion in federal broadband financial support to increase access to broadband and 5G connectivity making accessibility to current forms of communication more common ("Newly Passed Bipartisan Infrastructure," 2021). Technology gives students essential learning tools needed to facilitate learning, offers

novel ways to develop language, encourages students' autonomy, and increases student motivation, which in turn makes learning student-centered, according to Ahmadi (2018). Al-Sharqi and Abbasi (2020) stated that the Internet is globally altering the way people learn, teach, and communicate.

Textspeak is linked to the widespread use of mobile devices, and this can lead to the goal of efficiency by altering standard English by increasing simple spelling habits or "Lazy Language" (Wood et al., 2013). Due to the increasing popularity of texting among adolescents, parents and teachers worry that textspeak is affecting their children's literacy skills. Even though text messaging is not new, textspeak's effects on students' middle school academic written work have not been concluded. Nawaz et al. (2021) concluded that the Internet-connected the world and influenced how people write, think, and communicate with each other. It transformed communication and is one of the main forms of communication among people. People cannot be blamed for writing using textspeak because it has been adapted to everyday writing styles and is now considered a dialect of the English language and if a person is able to communicate in standard English and textspeak they are considered bilingual (Nawaz et al., 2021). Some researchers believe textspeak has a negative influence on students' literacy skills while others see a positive impact.

There is limited research and mixed results on the effect of textspeak on adolescent writing. Much of the previous research focused on texting trends in relation to informal assessment, comparing texting habits, language usage in relation to textspeak, and the frequency of texting. The future of written and spoken sentence structure in formal and informal writing is still unclear because the influence of textspeak has created

blurred boundaries between formal and informal writing.

Positive Views

Crystal (2009) suggested that the belief about textspeak is wrong or debatable because the use is not restricted only to the young generation. He claimed there is evidence suggesting that textspeak increases rather than diminishes students' literacy skills.

Plester et al. (2008) investigated the impact of textism on literacy. They involved 65 students between the ages of 11 and 12 from the Midlands in England. The Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) was administered to determine student literacy ability. The students translated a sentence from standard English to textspeak and translated one message from textspeak to standard English. The results suggested that more textism was seen when students were translating from standard English to textism. The results also showed that few errors occurred while students were translating from textism to standard English, and verbal reasoning scores were higher.

Plester et al. (2009) included 35 10- to 11-year-old students and focused on the relationship between textism usage and students' performance on spelling and writing tasks. The students were asked to answer a questionnaire about their usage of mobile phones. In addition, the students completed the Spelling subtest of the British Ability Scales II. The students also had to translate passages from textism to standard English and standard English to textism. Information on the students' writing assessment abilities was also collected. The results showed that the ratio of phonological textism was positively related to spelling and the students who had the highest scores on the standardized reading test had more textism in the translation portion of the study. It was

concluded that the knowledge of textism does not have a negative association with students' written language competency and the association between textspeak and literacy skills has a positive or insignificant result.

Bushnell et al. (2011) conducted a study of 227 Australian children ages 10 to 12, to determine the relationship of traditional spelling ability in relation to text messaging practices. The authors learned that 82% of the students sent, on average, five text messages per day. In addition, students rewrote 30 conventionally spelled words as they would send them to a friend in a text message. The results showed many text message abbreviations generated by the participants. They then took the Wilde Range Achievement Test-4 (WRAT) which required students to spell 42 increasingly difficult words from dictation. The results were that using SMS had a positive impact on students' general spelling abilities.

Powell and Dixon (2011) studied the effects of textism, misspelling, and correctly spelled words on 94 British university students' spelling performance. The students were given a pretest that had words that were correctly spelled, incorrectly spelled, or spelled using textism. They were also given a spelling posttest with the same words as the pretest. Students' scores decreased from the pretest to the posttest after being introduced to the misspelt words and their performance improved after seeing the correctly spelled words and textism words. The results showed that being exposed to textism and correctly spelled words had a positive impact on student spelling, unlike misspelt words.

Van Dijk et al. (2016) led a study using 55 students between the ages of 10 and 13. They investigated if the use of textese influenced students' grammar performance and if texting was specifically related to grammar or language in general. The students took

tests of receptive vocabulary, grammar, sentence repetition, and other language tasks to determine students' text message usage. The results indicated that textism is positively related to children's grammar performance.

Ouellette and Michaud (2016) conducted research using 53 first-year university students in Canada. They investigated the frequency of textese and the relationship between text messaging to literacy. The participants were given spelling, reading, and vocabulary tests in addition to a text messaging questionnaire and two text messaging tasks. Their findings suggested that text messaging behavior has a positive association with traditional language and literacy skills.

Negative Views

Crystal (2009) and Plester et al. (2008, 2009) stated that SMS and textism have had a positive impact on student literacy skills; however other researchers suggested it is destroying standard English because it has a negative impact on student writing skills. Drouin and Davis (2009) investigated the effects of text messaging on 34 American undergraduate university students' spelling abilities. The experiment measured students' textism usage in various contexts such as writing formal and informal emails, textspeak proficiency by translating standard English to textspeak, knowledge of textspeak by translating textspeak to standard English, and misspelling of commonly used abbreviated textspeak words. The results indicated that students believe there is a negative effect of texting on their literary skills.

Varnhagen et al. (2010) studied 36 high school students to determine the relationship between texting and spelling abilities. All 36 students were administered the WRAT-3 spelling subtest. In addition, data were collected and analyzed from the

students' text messages which included acronyms and word combinations. The information from the text messages was correlated with the WRAT-3 results. Results yielded an inverse correlation between text messaging and student spelling abilities.

Geertsema et al. (2011) used questionnaires to determine the perspectives of 22 South African secondary school English teachers about the impact of texting on adolescent writing. Results showed that most teachers considered textese to have negatively influenced students' writing abilities. The teachers stated they noticed non-conventional spelling from textese in their students' writing. The teachers also stated that the students did not adhere to standard English forms when writing simplified and shortened sentences. The teachers noted that students did not use punctuation and spelling appropriately. Geertsema et al. (2011) concluded that textese had a negative effect on students' standard English usage and academic achievement.

DeJonge and Kemp (2012) studied text messaging's effect on literacy abilities using 52 Australian high school students aged 13 to 15, along with 53 Australian university students aged 18 to 24. The students were tested using morphological and orthographic awareness, spelling, reading, and a non-reading test. In addition, they translated sentences from standard English to textese. The results from this study showed that the quantity of SMS used by the students had an inverse correlation between literacy scores for spelling, reading, non-word reading, and morphological awareness. However, there was no significant correlation to orthographic. This result led the researchers to believe that texting may have a negative influence on the literacy development of students and allowed for incorrect spelling.

Grace et al. (2014) conducted a study in which they correlated text messaging and

literacy in 150 first-year undergraduate students. The students' text message examples were provided, as was a short questionnaire, and several spelling tasks. The results showed an inverse relationship between spelling proficiency and text messaging.

Kemp et al. (2014) studied the relationship between text messages and poor performance on grammatical knowledge derived from having students translate grammatically unconventional text messages to standard English. The participants were comprised of 244 adolescents and young adults from the West Midlands in England. The research focused on text messages' effects on grammatical violations, if grammatical violations were linked to natural messages, and if participants could correct grammatical violations used in everyday text messages. At the end of the study, it was confirmed that texters violated the conventions of English grammar.

No Significant or Mixed Effects

Drouin and Davis (2009) studied the effect of textese on literacy using 80 American college students. The testing measure used for the study analyzed the use of textism in writing for formal and informal emails, translating textism into standard English and standard English to textism. The students' reading and spelling abilities were assessed using standardized tests. The results showed no significant difference in literacy scores and misspelling between students who used textism and who did not. However, when the authors surveyed the students about the effect of textspeak on the ability to use standard English, approximately half of the students said it impeded their standard English usage This led the researchers to conclude that there is conflicting evidence between the use of textism and literacy as well as the students' perceptions of how textspeak has affected their use of standard English.

Wood et al. (2011) studied 114 British elementary school students for the purpose of examining the relationship between texting and literacy. In this study, no participants owned a cell phone. Students were randomly divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group of students was given a cell phone and instructions on how to use it just for texting. The students were given pre and post spelling tests and their text messages were transcribed. The data showed no significant difference between the experimental or control group regarding textspeak and literacy skills.

Zebroff and Kaufman (2017) conducted a nonexperimental, quantitative approach which included cross-sectional, comparative, and longitudinal study. Ninety-three students between the ages of 15 and 17 were included. The authors set out to learn details connected to adolescent texting, reading, and writing practice on literacy by using a questionnaire. Students were asked about their texting habits, Internet usage, reading of books, and writing skills in both English and Mandarin. The results revealed that students' text messaging did not have a significant association with their literacy levels.

Summary

Three predominant views discussed above show that textspeak, textese, or textism can have a positive, negative, or no significant relationship with academic literacy skills. Textspeak can increase students' spelling abilities, hamper students' literacy skills, and make them bad spellers. Textism may not affect student academic writing at all, or it may impact language skills positively but hamper other language skills. Most research focused on quantitative methodologies to gather data by collecting survey data or analyzing written tasks. The available literature focused on different populations of teachers and the relationships between text messaging and textspeak, on student writing. The literature

also showed that technology is becoming an important part of the communication process.

Verheijen (2013) indicated that the studies done on the connection between textspeak and literacy displayed a mixed pattern. There is no sure way to determine literacy scores in relation to the frequency of texting, text usage, or knowledge of textspeak. However, they felt there may be a different way to correlate reading fluency and accuracy and writing and spelling scores to formal and informal writing skills based on textspeak.

The Effects of Textism on Academic Work

DeGennaro (2005) suggested that the use of instant messages be banned in school. The author identified that educators, parents, and students believe that textspeak is the cause of many academic literacy challenges seen in the classroom. Educators already have a difficult job and adding monitoring students' behavior on digital devices is stressful. Digital devices have their benefits to a student's educational learning by providing additional resources in the classroom. However, they are also a distraction and may encourage the use of informal language in the classroom.

Hicks and Hawley (2013) advised that prohibiting textspeak from the classroom will not lead to an improvement in students' writing skills. However, teachers should clarify the proper use of textspeak and its content. The educator should teach the students when textspeak should be used. The instructor should also educate the students about informal and formal written language and the appropriate audience and situations for either.

Lenhart et al. (2008) conducted several surveys and found that 71% of teachers

believed that the second greatest area of weakness was students' writing skills. They also reported that 81% of middle school teachers consider texting as having a negative influence on students' writing skills and achievements. Another survey reported that 1/3 to 1/2 of adolescent students reported using a variety of textspeak in their educational writing assignments.

Hawley and Hicks (2011) stated that regardless of educators' best efforts, students finish high school with low academic scores, weak money management skills, and are not ready to write at a college level. This is due to the students' inferior writing skills when leaving high school. Literacy is global; and everyone, not just educators have to care about how writing is taught in school. Cingel and Sunder (2012) asserted that educators can examine the effects texting and exposure to social media have on students' academic work and social skills.

Wilde (2008) examined the use of textspeak on student spelling in the classroom and asserted that middle school teachers are annoyed by students' spelling skills, and they do not have the time to commit to teaching spelling. Teachers should understand that spelling may be difficult for students because of their reading skills and their spelling ability. In addition, weak middle school readers will have difficulties spelling. Teachers should be sensitive when teaching spelling to students and remember that some people spell better than others and it is in everyone's best interest to improve students' spelling skills.

Kemp et al. (2014) advised teachers to educate students about conventional formal writing rules. They should also encourage classroom discussions in relation to the different ways language can be used as well as bring awareness to the context when it is

applied to the conversation. Wray (2015) conducted interviews to gain insight into the views of 27 primary school teachers about the impacts of texting on children's literacy development. Teachers were randomly selected from 25 schools near London to participate in an individual interview. The interview was semi-structured in nature and focused on five core questions which revealed the discovery of evolving patterns and themes. The data were coded using five specific questions, which resulted in seven apparent themes. The end results showed that most teachers expressed a negative stance on the effect textism is having on their student's literacy development. However, some teachers stated that many children were able to distinguish between textspeak and standard English and use appropriate standard English in class.

Imtiaz (2017) conducted qualitative research using data triangulation from two colleges in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, on Internet chat logs, SMS messages, exam scripts, and focus groups. Data were recorded for 30-minute intervals on chat logs and texts of chats from Internet chatrooms. A total of 100 text messages and 300 exam scripts were collected from undergraduate students. There were two focus groups which included 10 English teachers and 20 undergraduate students. The results from the students' perspectives regarding their textspeak usage included that almost all the students stated they used textspeak in their academic writing because it happens unconsciously. Some students were concerned because points were deducted for textspeak usage in their academic writing, and one student said that textspeak should be accepted by teachers. Regarding teachers' perspectives regarding student use of text speak in their academic writing, teachers unanimously stated that the standard of students' academic writing is declining.

Ali et al. (2019) studied 90 students from Aligarh Muslim University in India ranging from second-year college, bachelors, masters, and PhD level students. The goal was to understand the students' perceptions and attitudes of texting on their standard English usage and if they were aware of the impact of texting. The method used was based on a five-point scale questionnaire that included 16 items where the responses were fixed. Results showed that the students had a negative attitude towards texting, and they saw texting as having negative impacts on their standard English usage. They went on to say that the students believe texting destroys the English language.

Nawaz et al. (2021) conducted a study in two public universities in Punjab, Pakistan, based on the theory that continued exposure to media has a sizable effect on audience perception, and the greater the exposure to media the greater the agreement consumers had with the content. The authors utilized 10 teachers and 40 male and 40 female learners. The learners' questionnaire was designed to find the learners' perspectives on text message utilization, how often they used textspeak, and how textism had affected their academic writing. The teachers' questionnaire was designed to find their perspectives on the usage of text messaging in students' academic writing. The results showed that most teachers viewed text message usage as having a detrimental effect on the learners. However, the learners viewed textism as an easy and fast way of writing.

Nunez-Roman et al. (2022) examined pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of textism on secondary students in Chile and Argentina. The authors used a transactional approach based on surveys and utilized a descriptive non-experimental research design. The result from this study showed that pre-service teachers considered

the use of textism harmful to secondary students.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed.

1. To what extent do middle school teachers notice textspeak within student writing?

2. What do middle school literacy teachers report as the impact of textspeak on students' written work?

3. What are middle school teacher attitudes about students using features of texting, or textspeak, in written classwork?

4. How do middle school teachers describe student attitudes about using features of texting, or textspeak, in written classwork?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to understand the perception of middle school literacy educators regarding text messaging, textspeak, textism, and the effects on their students' writing and spelling abilities. Since limited academic research was present for answering this question, a qualitative study design focused on middle school teachers' views of textspeak on student academic writing (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research was best suited for this research study since reports were solicited directly from those who experienced the phenomenon firsthand, middle school teachers (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Educators' perceptions of textism being present in their student writing may varied from one teacher to another because each class had a unique environment. Only a qualitative study could have accounted for the common theme present across middle school teachers. This author asked middle school teachers open-ended questions, which focused on educators' perceptions of how textspeak has affected their students' writing and spelling abilities. The participant responses lent themselves to analysis using qualitative coding. Collecting information from middle school educators shed light on the impacts textism has on student writing and spelling.

Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative data were utilized to answer research questions as they allowed middle school literacy teachers to describe, elaborate, and interpret information. An open-ended interview design was the most appropriate for this study to allow classroom educators the freedom to express their own views about their experiences with student academic writing and spelling. Most of the existing research focused on text messaging

among students from different countries around the world and the impacts on their academic writing skills. Drouin and Davis (2009) explained “textspeak” to be a new written vocabulary and addressed concerns that the increased use of text messages may yield to individuals who are unable to use Standard English. Plester et al. (2008) found positive relationships between the use of textspeak and children’s performance on standardized spelling and reading tests. Additionally, Plester et al. (2009) found a positive correlation between spelling ability and text abbreviations used by children to translate standard English into text messages.

However, limited research has been performed on educators’ perceptions about the relationships between text messaging, textspeak, and textism on student writing and spelling. The qualitative study found common themes in the participants’ interviews about the effects textspeak had on students’ writing and spelling. The perceptions of each study participant differed based on their classroom environment and student demographics because students’ writing in one class differed from that seen in another class. To account for such variations, qualitative research was best suited to gather teachers’ perceptions. Furthermore, this research utilized open-ended questions to analyze textspeak in student writing and spelling from the point of view of literacy teachers. The data was coded following transcription and member checking to identify shared themes and experiences that provided insight into the issue (Creswell, 2015).

Participants

The participants for this study were 12 full-time middle school literacy educators in the state of Florida. The participants had to meet two inclusion criteria to be considered for the study. The first required that participants be full-time educators

with at least one year as an in-classroom teacher, which ensured they had substantial exposure to students' writing. The second required that they have taught reading, writing, or English. The educators participated in a single interview focused on their perceptions of how text messages have impacted their students' writing ability.

Limited studies examining middle school literacy educators' perceptions on the effects of text messaging exist. The educators in this study were selected on a first-come basis provided they met the two inclusion criteria and were willing to volunteer their time to participate in the interview. The participating educators were selected with no limits on their age, race, or gender, although they were required to have taught for at least one year in the classroom.

To ensure that the participants were treated fairly, information about the study procedures, including step-by-step data collection procedures, along with the rights of every participant were provided to each educator. Furthermore, after participants had all their concerns about the study addressed, they were required to sign a consent form to participate in the study. Since the participants were aware of this study's goals, how data were analyzed, and their rights, they made an informed decision on whether they wanted to participate. Interview transcripts and recordings of results from the coded data analysis did not include participants' names or identifying information. The researcher recruited participants using educational social media platforms. Platforms included middle reading, writing, or English subject area public school educator groups.

Data Collection Instrument

The research lacked the perceptions of teachers on the impact of their students'

writing. The lack of research formed the foundation of the research questions and the development of the interview questions. The literature review revealed that more exploration was needed on the impact of textspeak on students' writing. The research questions were designed to probe the middle school educators about their perceptions of text messages and student writing. This researcher examined the middle school teachers' perceptions of the effects of textspeak on students' academic writing. The data collection instrument was a Teacher Interview Protocol created by the researcher based upon the review of the literature and the research questions (see Appendix).

Procedures

After the Nova Southeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted, recruitment for qualified participants began. A description of the study, an explanation of participants' rights, a breakdown of data collection and analysis procedures, and informed consent were sent through social media outlets. Middle school literacy teachers were solicited as potential participants. Self-report was utilized to ensure each participant met the inclusion criteria of being employed full-time and teaching a literacy-related middle school subject for at least one year. Once informed consent was granted, willing participants were contacted to establish a convenient date and time to schedule the individual interviews. The interview process was recorded via Microsoft Teams in addition to being recorded using the traditional cassette tape recorder. The interviews were transcribed using Microsoft dictate and sent back to the participants for review to provide them the opportunity to add additional information or suggest changes. The interviews were semi-structured using open-ended questions, which allowed the participants to control the flow of the conversation (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

After all interviews were completed, the data from the interview files were transcribed using Microsoft 365 Word Dictate. After the initial transcription was completed, each individual transcript was read to ensure no errors occurred. Then the transcripts were sent to the individuals to review for accuracy and to make any corrections, clarifications, or deletions, which allowed both the researcher and the participants to check for accuracy.

After all interview data were transcribed and checked by participants for authenticity the analysis began. This researcher coded each participant's data set according to the research questions. Related data from all the participants were classified according to patterns and themes that developed. The patterns were compiled and coded to uncover themes that emerged from the individual participants' transcripts.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations include the integrity of the researcher when conducting a study. Ethical considerations when conducting the study include the following. Each item was addressed during the completion of this study.

- Research participants should not be subject to harm in any way whatsoever.
- Respect for the dignity of research participants should be prioritized.
- Full consent should be obtained from the participants prior to the study.
- Adequate level of confidentiality of the research data should be ensured.
- Anonymity of individuals and organizations participating in the research must be ensured.
- Any type of communication in relation to the research should be done

honestly and transparently.

- Any type of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings is a biased way must be avoided. (Bryman & Bell, 2007, pp. 132-147)

The researcher ensured volunteer participants were safe to participate in the interviews and were permitted to withdraw from the study without penalty at any time, even during the interview process. The researcher ensured that the participants were not penalized for their responses because the interview questions did not have right or wrong answers; furthermore, the responses were based on their perceptions. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants prior to the interviews. Participants' names were kept confidential during and after the study was completed. Participants' names were only utilized to provide consent for participating in the interviews. After that, each participant was recognized as participant 1, participant 2, and so on, to maintain anonymity. The researcher was labeled as the researcher throughout the interview process. The researcher conducted all recorded interviews on Microsoft Teams, and the files were saved on an encrypted computer file under password protection to maintain data security. All works referenced were cited appropriately in the references, and the study upheld scientific ethical conduct by not falsifying or distorting any data.

Trustworthiness

The Teacher Interview Protocol was used to ensure all questions were asked in a similar manner to all participants. Moreover, to ensure trustworthiness, member checking was utilized. After each interview was transcribed, the participants were invited to review the transcripts and to suggest desired changes (Creswell, 2013). The participants checked

their transcripts from the interview for clarity and accuracy on how they expressed their perceptions of text messaging, textspeak, and the effects on their students' writing and spelling.

Potential Research Bias

The researcher has been in the education field for over 15 years and has noticed over her career that the use of textspeak is becoming more and more present in students' writing. As students become more reliant on technology, and technology becomes more available to students, the use of textspeak may eventually be consistent in students' writing. Despite studies that produced results that text messaging had a positive effect on students' literacy skills (Bushnell et al., 2011; Crystal, 2009; Plester et al, 2008; Powell, & Dixon, 2011), it is unsettling to find textspeak overpowering certain aspects of standard English. To reduce any possible bias from entering the interviews, the researcher developed a semi-structured interview protocol, and used the ideas of epoché and bracketing to keep her personal ideas silent in order to allow her to listen to participant responses from an objective position.

Limitations

Study limitations included that the sample size was limited to 12 participants were certified teachers in the areas of English, reading, or writing in Florida. The views and perceptions presented by these participants may differ from other teachers around the state, country, or world. Other limitations included the design and data collection. Even though the interview process was strictly voluntary, some participants may have hesitated to fully explain their thinking in the moment. To help counteract this potential limitation, each participant was sent their interview transcript to review and suggest revisions.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the views of Florida literacy middle school teachers on the impact of textspeak on their student's writing abilities. This study helped in gaining a better understanding of middle school literacy teachers' views regarding the presence of textspeak as it is being used in their students' written work.

Participants

Twelve middle school literacy educators from different school districts throughout the state of Florida were interviewed. All participants in the study had varied years of experience and taught in suburban or inner-city middle schools throughout Florida. There were no limitations based on the participants' degree, age, gender, or religion. This research was voluntary, and the participants had the opportunity to opt-out of participating in the research. The participants responded quickly with their consent to participate in the study.

Participants' Backgrounds

Participant 1 (P1) is a female Hispanic English teacher in her early forties with over 12 years of teaching experience in a southern metropolitan area. Participant 2 (P2) is an English language arts (ELA) teacher in her late forties who has been a teacher for over 15 years, also in an urban southern area. Participant 3 (P3) is a Caribbean African American female in her early fifties with over 20 years of teaching English and language arts in a large urban school district. Participant 4 (P4) is a female reading and language arts teacher in her mid-forties who has been teaching for about 18 years, beginning in New York. She is currently working in a smaller southern district. Participant 5 (P5) is a female Hispanic reading and language arts teacher in her forties who has 15 years of

experience in a very large urban district in the south. Participant 6 (P6) is an African American reading and language arts female teacher in her late twenties with 3 years of teaching in a southern county. Participant 7 (P7) is a female Hispanic reading and language arts teacher in her mid-forties with over 13 years of teaching experience in a wealthy and urban southern district. Participant 8 (P8) is a mid-thirties female African American English teacher of 5 years in a southern district. Participant 9 (P9) is an American female in her mid-fifties with over 20 years of teaching English in a district in the far south. Participant 10 (P10) is an American female in her mid-forties who has been a reading and language arts teacher for over 12 years, also in an urban district. Participant 11 (P11) is a Hispanic female English teacher in her late twenties with two years of teaching experience in an urban district in the south. Participant 12 (P12) is a female American reading and language arts teacher in her late thirties with over 9 years of experience.

Sequential Analysis Steps

To assist different individuals in understanding the experiences of teachers with textspeak and student writing, the researcher examined the interview responses of all 12 participants and applied data analysis steps using the generic qualitative approach (Percy et al., 2015). The steps are listed below.

1. The researcher reviewed the interview transcripts for all 12 participants and organized them according to the research question.

2. Each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym to protect anonymity.

3. The researcher began with the first participant (P1) and reviewed her interview transcripts from both Microsoft Teams and the one that was done using Microsoft 365

Word Dictate for research question one and highlighted sentences and phrases that were significant and important to the research questions.

4. The data that were unrelated to the research questions were stored.

5. The data from research question one were then clustered and organized in order to establish patterns.

6. This process was completed for each of the remaining 11 participants.

7. Each participant's significant responses to the research question were compared to the previous participant and analyzed to build on the emerging patterns.

8. During the analysis evolving patterns were studied.

9. The steps above were repeated for each of the remaining three research questions.

10. Patterns noted from the data of all participants on all research questions were grouped and checked against previous data from the transcribed responses to determine themes.

11. To ensure the relevance of the four research questions posed, each pattern was arranged and the emerging themes were identified.

12. The researcher analyzed and described each pattern and theme in written format.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis and findings from all 12 participants are included in this chapter. All participants were individually interviewed using Microsoft Teams video communication and were asked questions related to their experiences with textspeak in their students' writing. Microsoft Word dictation was used in transcribing the data, which

was also recorded using an audio recording device. All participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts to ensure transparency with the data collected. The data collected were analyzed for patterns and themes that appeared. The research questions allowed middle school literacy teachers to describe and elaborate on what they noticed in their students' writing regarding textspeak. The open-ended interview design allowed the participants the freedom to express their own views about their experiences with their students' academic writing performance. The 12 participants answered 12 questions focused on the four research questions that follow.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 was "To what extent do middle school teachers notice textspeak within student writing?" The primary purpose of this question was to determine how often students use textspeak spelling in their formal and informal written assignments. Three interview questions were asked to address research question one. They were: (a) "How often do you see textspeak or text usage in your students' formal writing? Informal writing? Spelling?", (b) "In what sorts of written work or projects do you most notice the influence of texting or textspeak?", and (c) "What sorts of textspeak do you see in your students' formal written classwork? Informal written classwork?" Three patterns emerged from teacher interviews: (a) improper grammar was frequently used, (b) abbreviations were frequently used, and (c) students must learn to use proper grammar in class assignments.

P1 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern was centered on the use of improper grammar seen in students'

writing in different types of written assignments given in middle school. The participant observed that the use of improper grammar was seen daily in the sentence structure of her students. She specifically described a lack of basic punctuation skills such as commas and periods. According to P1, students tended to write very short sentences, and if they did write long sentences, they were often run-on sentences. She reported that their sentences lacked basic grammatical structure and were constantly missing capitalization, especially for the stand-alone I and proper nouns, conjunctions, and articles. She went on to say, "It's as if the student just wants to hurry up and finish, so they leave out words and punctuation."

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern reported by P1 was based on seeing a constant use of textspeak code and abbreviations in her students' writing when they answered questions, wrote a story, completed their essay writing, responded to a short writing prompt, and made presentations. The use of textspeak abbreviations was constantly seen in the students' writing even after the teacher worked with the students on correcting the textspeak mistakes. The students' writing appeared "like a dialogue," with the constant use of shortened forms of words such as u for you, bc or bcuz for because, and lower case i. She described that the use of textspeak abbreviations and codes had a great influence on her students' writing abilities.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern focused on writing properly in class. P1 stated that being able to write using proper grammar and sentence structure is very important for each of her students. The students must learn to stop writing "as if they are texting a friend." She

described the necessity of the students having the ability to answer questions in complete sentences with a complete thought in a coherent manner. The participant mentioned that students must be able to explain themselves properly in all forms of writing, so the appropriate audience is able to understand what is being communicated.

P2 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern concentrated on the use of improper grammar seen by P2 in her students' daily classroom written assignments. She pointed out that the use of improper grammar was often seen in the sentence structure of her students at the beginning of the school year. However, she explained that her constant correction of them diminished the textspeak errors, but some of those errors were still present near the end of the school year. Participant 2 said that the constant lack of simple punctuation such as commas and periods was often overlooked, as was capitalization.

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern noted was based on the participant seeing the use of textspeak abbreviations in her students' informal and formal writing, PowerPoint presentations, and Cornell notes. The use of textspeak abbreviations was occasionally seen in her students' formal writing, especially the abbreviations U for you and Idk for I don't know.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern focused on writing properly in the participant classroom. The participant noted that proper grammar usage and sentence structure were necessary for her students. When she noticed the use of textspeak in her students' writing, she "cut that off as quickly as possible," and instructed the students why it was not appropriate.

P3 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern is centered on the use of improper grammar seen in P3's students' writing in different types of assignments. In her classroom, she assigns many written compositions. She noted the students' sentence structures were very short and simple, with an absence of proper capitalization usage and punctuation. She stated, "it is something I would expect from a kindergarten child, not a middle school student." She also indicated students tend to forget to capitalize the stand-alone letter I and proper nouns, and they omit punctuation such as commas and apostrophes.

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern concentrated on the abbreviations P3 noticed in her students' writing. She indicated the usage of textspeak is prevalent in their sentence structure with the shortened words and omission of vowels and articles. For example, she noted the use of dat for that, k for okay, cuz for because, redy for ready, and blu for blue. She went on to say that her students "are not familiar with the Webster Dictionary anymore." Many times, she corrected the students and took points off from their writing assignments because of textspeak usage but her students still revert to using them. To sum it all up she stated the use of textspeak abbreviations makes their writing, "piss poor!"

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern is based on teaching proper writing in P3's classroom. Even though textspeak was rampant in her classroom, she felt the need to always go back and reteach basic grammar and sentence structure to her students. She indicated, "educating my students that textspeak is not appropriate on in-class assignments or written or oral

communication is important." She explained that constantly having to correct her students is a "daunting task" but felt someone must do it.

P4 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern concentrated on the use of improper grammar seen in P4's in-class assignments, especially her students' informal and formal writing. The participant noted that her students do not know how to use the English language properly. She stated that her students omit punctuations such as commas, periods, and apostrophes often. These errors are often noticed in students' sentences, short answer responses, and comprehension responses. She stated that this error, "takes away from the coherent meaning of the sentence."

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern focused on the usage of textspeak abbreviations in students' writing. In P4's class, students use bru for brother, its for it's, and bc for because. She stated she noticed a combination of different errors such as shortening words and leaving out certain letters and apostrophes, which are typical textspeak characteristics. She stated that the use of textspeak abbreviations makes students' sentences shorter and they tend to "truncate the sentence."

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern of writing properly is very dear to P4's heart. She stated the importance of wanting to fix the lack of proper grammar skills in her students by going back and reteaching the basic skills. She mentioned the importance of teaching the simple task of diagramming a sentence can help students understand how to write a proper

sentence. This participant acknowledged that her students, “just don’t see the value in writing or even speaking properly, but I have to teach then.” She admitted that even “re-teaching skills like vowels, adjectives, and adverbs take away from teaching other important skills, but it is necessary.”

P5 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern concentrated on improper grammar P5 saw in her students’ written assignments. She observed the absence of punctuation and capitalization of proper nouns was often seen in the sentence structure of her students. She indicated that her students do not use commas and periods often when they are writing and are often overlooked when reading. She realized that many times her students do not know when to use punctuation and they fail to realize that punctuation “is their friend when they are reading, writing, or speaking.”

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern documented the use of textspeak abbreviations in students’ writing. This participant observed that when her students are answering questions, writing stories, and completing essays or a short writing prompt, the use of textspeak abbreviations are present. She stated that the students used shortened forms of words such as b for be, u for you, bc or bcuz for because, r for are, abt for about, and da for the in their sentences. She noted that the constant use of textspeak abbreviations had a negative influence on her students’ writing and spelling abilities.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern focused on proper writing in P5’s classroom. She stated that although

textspeak spelling is highly visible in her students' sentences, she felt it is important to go back and reteach basic grammar, sentence structure, and spelling skills to her students. She declared, "It's sad that these students are making these mistakes, and don't realize what they are doing wrong." She felt that educating her students about the inappropriateness of textspeak usage in written or oral communication is important.

P6 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern centered on the use of improper grammar seen by P6 in her students' written classroom assignments. She noted that the scarcity of punctuation such as commas, apostrophes, and periods are often missing from sentences, and very seldom do her students capitalize proper nouns. She expressed that even with constant correction and taking away points from assignments due to these mistakes the students "don't seem to care about learning how to correct it."

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern documented the use of some textspeak abbreviations P6 observed in her students' writing. This participant told that when her students were writing stories or essays the use of textspeak abbreviations was present in their sentences. She admitted, "I have seen shortened forms for words that I would have never thought of," and this is being used daily in their written assignments. For example, e1 for everyone, ne1 for anyone, g for grin or giggle, and o for over. She testified that her students write, "like they are they are texting or talking to their friends." She observed the negative influence textspeak had demonstrated on her students' writing abilities.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern concentrated on writing properly in the classroom. Participant 6 stated that while textspeak characteristics are visible in her students' writing, it is important to explain the difference between textspeak writing and academic writing to her students. She acknowledged that "I am still considered a new teacher, I'm still trying to find the best way to teach my students the skills they need." She criticized that students should know how to write proper coherent sentences by the time they enter middle school, "I should not have to go back and re-teach basic grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence skills."

P7 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern focused on the improper grammar usage P7 saw in her students' written assignments. She indicated the use of improper grammar when it came to punctuations and capitalization in proper nouns. She mentioned her student's omitted commas and periods when writing and bypassed them when reading. She added, "they have a hard time using punctuations."

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern concentrated on the abbreviations P7 noticed in the essay writing and the long and short response answers of her students. She admitted that textspeak usage is seen in their sentence structure. She observed the shortening of words with the omission of certain letters and vowels, for example, dat for that, b/c or cuz for because, r for are, and redy for ready, are often seen in her students' writing. She mentioned that even after teaching her students the appropriateness of using the entire word when writing and

taking points off written assignments due to textspeak abbreviations, her students continued using textspeak. However, she pointed out that when her students are taking notes, textspeak is accepted because it is for their own personal use and points are not deducted because of it.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern focused on the proper writing in the classroom of P7. She indicated that although textspeak abbreviations are visible in her students' sentences, she felt it is necessary to go back and read the students' sentences out loud so they can hear how "ridiculous" they sound. She also noted that "granted, they find it funny, when it's someone else's sentence, but it's necessary." She indicated that she does this with the hopes of having her students self-correct their mistakes. She acknowledged that educating her students about not using textspeak in any form of written or oral communication is important for her students to understand.

P8 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern concentrated on the use of improper grammar usage seen by P8 in her students' written assignments. She observed the absence of punctuation such as commas, apostrophes, and periods are often ignored in her students' sentences. She also acknowledged that she constantly corrects their mistakes, but her students continue making the same mistakes.

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern documented the use of textspeak abbreviations P8 noticed in her students' writing. This participant observed that when her students are writing essays or

stories the use of textspeak abbreviations is present in their sentences. She mentioned that recently in her problem/solution activity her students used IDK for I don't know as a response. She admitted that even on bulleted lists the use of textspeak abbreviations is present.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern focused on writing properly in the classroom of P8. The participant discussed that though textspeak usage is seen in her students' writing, she constantly goes over basic grammar and sentence structure rules with her students, hoping "it will sink in one day." She realized her students do not understand what they are doing wrong in their writing and hopefully one day they will learn the difference between textspeak writing and academic writing.

P9 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern concentrated on the use of improper grammar seen by P9 in her students' written assignments. She indicated that "over the years things have changed, students learn differently, teachers have to learn different ways to teach the basic reading, writing, and arithmetic." Participant 9 explained that over 20 years ago, students learned by reading and writing. Now there are so many kinds of technology to help students learn, and "I don't see the point when my children are missing the basic skills." She asserted that her children simply need to, "see it, hear it, read it, and write it, in order for their little brain to understand it." She confirmed that "the lack of proper grammar skills has increased over the years in my children," and blames it on the use of all the new technology. She mentioned that simple things like punctuations such as commas and

periods are often overlooked in sentences as well as capitalization.

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern was based on the participant seeing the use of textspeak abbreviations in her students' informal and formal writing, presentations, and notes. She acknowledged that the use of textspeak abbreviations is occasionally seen in her students' formal writing, with the frequent use of specific abbreviations such as u for you, r for are, and hve for have. She mentioned that when reading her children's written assignments "I try my best to correct it, but "sometimes I feel I am reading another language." She criticized that textspeak has made a negative impact on her children's writing over the years she has been a teacher.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern focused on P9 teaching her children how to write properly in the classroom both academically and personally. She mentioned that proper grammar usage, sentence structure, and appropriate spelling are very important for her children. She repeatedly instructs her children on why it is not appropriate to use textspeak when writing.

P10 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern centered on the use of improper grammar usage seen by P10 in her students' formal and informal in-class written assignments, because "they don't do anything at home." She noted the lack of punctuation such as commas, apostrophes, and periods in sentences. She also indicated that her students do not capitalize proper nouns, especially the stand-alone I.

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern concentrated on the abbreviations P10 noticed in her students' formal and informal in-class writing. She observed that textspeak such as the shortening of words with the omission of certain letters and vowels, for example, d or de for the, dat for that, r for are, and b/c or cuz for because is often used in her students' writing. She also mentioned that even after constantly teaching the student not to use textspeak abbreviations when writing, the students still use textspeak.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern focused on proper writing in the classroom. The participant admitted that although textspeak is visible in her students' formal and informal in-class writing, she still felt it is important to go back and re-teach basic skills to her students when textspeak mistakes are repetitive. She confirmed that this will help her students realize that textspeak usage is not appropriate in any form of writing.

P11 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern referred to the improper use of grammar seen in students' written assignments. The participant explained that the use of improper grammar is seen in the sentence structure of her students. She acknowledged that there is a lack of basic punctuation skills such as commas and periods. She mentioned that the students write very short run-on sentences and do not know how to use appropriate punctuation. She explained that the students' sentences are constantly missing capitalization for the stand-alone I and proper nouns and are often missing words and letters such as conjunctions, vowels, and articles.

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern documented the use of some textspeak abbreviations P11 noticed in her students' writing. The participant is still considered a new teacher and she observed that when her students are writing stories or essays the use of textspeak abbreviations are present in their sentences. She listed examples such as, e1 for everyone, r for are, and o for over. She claimed, "they write like they text." She indicated the use of textspeak abbreviations is "dumbing down my kids."

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern focused on proper writing in the classroom. P11 indicated that textspeak characteristics are visible in her students' sentences. She mentioned that even though it is important to go back and re-teach some of the basic English and grammar skills to her kids so they can write properly she does not really have the time because other skills must be taught.

P12 Analysis

Pattern 1: Improper Grammar was Frequently Used

This pattern is based on the improper use of grammar seen in P12 students' written assignments. The participant pointed out the use of improper grammar such as the lack of commas, apostrophes, and periods in her students' writing. She went on to say that they miss capitalization, especially the stand-alone I and proper nouns, along with the omission of conjunctions, vowels, and articles in words.

Pattern 2: Abbreviations Were Frequently Used

This pattern focused on the use of textspeak abbreviations P12 has seen in her students' writing. Participant 12 reported that her students' stories and essays have

textspeak abbreviations in the sentences. For example, r for are, hve for have, and o or ovr for over.

Pattern 3: Students Must Learn to use Proper Grammar in Class Assignments

This pattern concentrated on the proper writing skills in P12 classroom. Even though P12 noticed the use of textspeak abbreviations in her students' writing, she feels it is essential to go back and re-teach the difference between textspeak writing and in-class writing. She advised on the importance of educating her students that textspeak usage is not appropriate in written or oral communication.

Themes for Research Question 1

The transcribed interviews for research question one from all the participants were read several times to determine the patterns and themes that resulted from the teachers' perspectives on the extent to which textspeak was used within their students' writing. Two primary themes emerged in the responses to research question one. The first theme noted was that all participants stated that textspeak is almost always present in their students' writing. The second theme noted is that the participants reported they must teach the difference between when it is appropriate to use textspeak and when it is not appropriate to use textspeak in-class assignments.

Theme 1: Textspeak is Nearly Always Present in Class Assignments

The first theme noted was that the participants stated that textspeak characteristics is almost always present in their students' writing. The participants saw a variety of textspeak usage in their class assignments. Most of the participants noted grammar mistakes such as a lack of commas, periods, and apostrophes. Participant 1 stated, "It's not just the use of improper grammar, it's like they are texting to a friend." Participant 3

lamented that the grammar mistakes she saw in her students' writing due to textspeak, "is something I would expect from a kindergarten child, not a middle school student." The errors that occur due to textspeak in students' writing "takes away from the coherent meaning of the sentences," according to P4.

Most of the participants also stated that their student's spelling was affected because of the use of textspeak abbreviations and shortened words due to missing letter(s). Participants 3, 7, 10, and 11 acknowledged the absence of conjunctions, vowels, and articles in students' words. Participant 6 acknowledged, "I have seen shortened forms for words that I would have never thought of," in her students' daily writing. Participants 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11 mentioned the shortening of words such as d or da for the, dat for that, and blu for blue; abbreviations such as u for you, r for are, and b/c or cuz for because. P3 confirmed the use of textspeak abbreviations makes students writing "piss poor!" The participants mentioned the lack of capitalization of the stand-alone I and proper nouns. The participants concluded that textspeak is constantly seen in their students' assignments.

Theme 2: Teachers Must Teach Students When Textspeak Is or Is Not Appropriate

The second theme observed by the participants is the use of textspeak is the reason they have to re-teach certain basic skills in their classroom. in all their students' assignments, including essays and short response answers. Most of the participants explained that at the beginning of the school year they spent time teaching when it is appropriate to use textspeak in their writing. Participant 3 acknowledged that "educating my students that textspeak is not appropriate on in-class assignments or written or oral communication is important," and added that it is a daunting task. The participants

explained to their students that textspeak is not appropriate for assignments that would be graded, such as classwork, homework, projects, essays, research papers, or responses to questions. Participant 4 mentioned that "re-teaching skills like vowels, adjectives, and adverbs take away from teaching other important skills, but it is necessary," because students need to know these skills to write properly. P2 and 7 admitted they allowed their students to use textspeak when taking notes because the content is not graded, and it is for their own personal use. The participants also noted that even with this being taught and reemphasized throughout the school year, students continued using textspeak in their writing.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 was, "What do middle school literacy teachers report as the impact of textspeak on students' written work?" The primary purpose of this question was to explain how middle school teachers describe the influence textspeak had on their classroom assignments. Four interview questions were asked to address research question two. They were: (a) Describe any positive impacts of textspeak or the influence of texting within your student work on its quality., (b) Describe any negative impacts of textspeak or the influence of texting within your student work on its quality., (c) What do you notice about student writing in terms of spelling, punctuation, and grammar due to textspeak?, and (d) How are students grades impacted (positively and/or negatively)when you notice textspeak in student written classwork? Three patterns evolved: (a) textspeak increases personal efficiency while serving as non-examples for teaching, (b) textspeak reduces student writing expertise, and (c) textspeak reduces student grades.

P1 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P1 noted a benefit from textspeak as being a possible teaching tool to be utilized by educators in the classroom. She suggested that teachers can use textspeak to educate their students on writing properly, persuading an audience, or conveying their point. She warned, "students need to be aware of the audience, and using textspeak is not going to deliver the message." Furthermore, she explained if her students are "doing group work, working in teams, or brainstorming ideas" they can use textspeak. She continued by stating, "sure they can go ahead and use it as long as it works for them."

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P1 explained how textspeak affected the way her students communicated. For example, she discussed giving her students a writing prompt that required them to convince the school administrator to change the school food, and "the use of abbreviation and textspeak does not deliver a powerful message." She indicated that the use of textspeak in students' writing does not prepare them to write effectively. She stated that while grading one student's assignment she "had to go to Urban Dictionary to get to know what that acronym means." She lamented that her student's use of textspeak does not allow them to effectively meet Florida's writing standards.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P1 stated textspeak has "diminished" her students' grades by affecting their grammar. She noticed that her students committed a lot of grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors, and they did not understand why it was wrong because "that's the way they textspeak, the way they see it all the time." Furthermore, she insisted that

because of this “writing and grammar have been the challenge this year and last year.”

P2 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P2 recognized the benefit of textspeak in her classroom. She mentioned that her students completed their notes with speed and accuracy. She noted that in her classroom notetaking is only a completion grade, “so this helps their grades.” She explained, “they are taking notes, it’s for their personal use, I don’t read it.” She maintained that the notes are for their benefit and studying, so “as long as they know what they’re writing, it doesn’t matter.”

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P2 discussed how textspeak affected the way her students communicated in formal writing. She insisted that textspeak decreases the quality of her students’ formal writing, which “they need to know how to do it for high school and future college.” She pointed out that ignoring grammar, capitalization, and punctuation in formal writing is not accurately completing formal written assignments. Moreover, she asserted that textspeak does not allow her students to communicate effectively in their formal writing.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P2 observed that the misuse of proper grammar, punctuation, and capitalization in students’ writing had a “negative effect” on her students’ formal writing. Which in turn influenced their grades negatively. She concluded that her students, “don’t learn the language, they don’t learn the grammar, they don’t know how.” She doesn’t “expect to see texting lingo” in her students’ formal writing; however, it is used and as a result, their grades suffer because of irregular grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

P3 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P3 explained that a benefit she saw in her classroom based on textspeak and her students' writing is that they are very "direct and to the point" when answering questions. She reported that her students quickly answer the "short response questions," but often their responses are not accurate. She further noted, "granted, the sentence structure is not correct, but at least they are trying."

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P3 expressed that her students are "using texting or textspeak as a common way of communicating" in their writing. She insisted that because of this her students are not writing complete sentences or paragraphs. P3 identified that students must write complete sentences to convey their message. Consequently, she pointed out that her students had a difficult time using words to explain their ideas. She alleged, "they don't know to express their thoughts on paper."

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P3 claimed, "if you can't use punctuation marks or spell properly, how do you expect to write properly?" Hence, she concurred that because of those mistakes, her students writing grades are suffering. She suggested that if she were to go back and look at the writing score of students for the last 10 years, she would see a reduction in scores and went on to blame it on the excessive use of technologies by students. P3 concluded that "I have seen our children dumb down within the last 10 years because of technology."

P4 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P4 observed that a benefit from textspeak seen in her students' writing is that they are "trying to get their point across quickly." She mentioned that her students would use textspeak when answering questions which leads them to "quickly answering and finishing the assignment." She reported that this "shows they are making an effort, even though the answers are not explained."

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P4 pointed out she wants her students to "grow up to become positive contributing members of society," and to do so, they need to be able to communicate clearly. She warned that if her students cannot use punctuation, grammar, or spell properly they will not be able to articulate their thoughts onto paper appropriately. She claimed that by "using textspeak they will not be able to be clear when writing especially when their spelling is atrocious." P4 indicated that "everything is quick and truncated, trying to get their point across and not expanding and explaining." She elaborated by saying that if the students are unable to explain their thoughts in writing, they will not be able to communicate clearly.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P4 mentioned her students struggle with the basic skills in reading and language arts and overall, their grades do suffer. She suggested that their excessive use of the textspeak such as the lack of punctuation, capitalization, and shortening of words in graded assignments do have a negative effect on their grades. She went on to say she does not like to do "double jeopardy" so if she is grading on content, textspeak usage

does not affect their grade but if she is testing her students on comprehension, it does impact their grades.

P5 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P5 described a benefit of textspeak seen in her classroom is that her students use textspeak to peer-edit their classmates' written assignments. She mentioned, "it seems to be beneficial; the kids get it!" Participant 5 observed that when doing group or teamwork in her class, her students communicate with each other using textspeak. She acknowledged that for "whatever reason the use of textspeak in those classroom situations works, so who am I to knock them for it."

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P5 admitted that "written and oral communications skills are important for my students because they will use them for the rest of their lives." She mentioned that if her students' writing is missing proper punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and spelling, they will not be able to communicate their thoughts effectively. She observed that her students' writing skills require many basic English skills. However, the use of textspeak "being infused in their writing isn't helping." P5 complained, that it is unfathomable to read and understand a sentence when "I have to refer to Urban Dictionary to understand a text abbreviation." Furthermore, she asserted that the "State Writing Assessment readers will not refer to Urban Dictionary before assigning a score." She warned that the use of textspeak is not an effective way for students to communicate in writing because it does not clearly get their point across.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P5 pointed out the effect textspeak had on her students' grades. She mentioned that because her student's punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and spelling are poor, their grades are affected. She identified that these skills are the very basic things that make up a sentence and since her students do not have the basic grammar skills their writing suffers. She warned, "if their sentences are not coherent how can they explain their thoughts?" and this results in the decline of their grades.

P6 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P6 acknowledged that she can use textspeak in her classroom to benefit her students. She admitted that her students use a lot of textspeak abbreviations in their academic writing and this can be used as a teaching tool to correct spelling of textspeak words. The participant explained that she can use their own formal written assignments as examples and highlight the inappropriate content and demonstrate to her students the correct way of writing it.

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P6 acknowledged the visibility of textspeak characteristics in her students' writing. Furthermore, she alleged that her students cannot communicate their thoughts efficiently when writing because they cannot "write coherent sentences." She admitted that for her students to communicate properly they must know basic grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence skills. She identified that the influence of textspeak has even flowed into their "verbal communication skills, the way they talk to others."

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P6 admitted that the scarcity of basic grammar, punctuation, and spelling skills in her students' writing has affected their grades. She indicated that even after many re-teaching lessons to her students on the appropriate use of grammar, punctuation, and spelling they still repeat the same errors. The participant condemned her students' excessive use of texting since it flowed into their formal writing. She blamed textspeak for her students' lower academic scores.

P7 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P7 suggested that textspeak can be a benefit to teachers. She suggested that teachers can use examples of students' textspeak as a teaching tool to teach their students how to write properly. She insisted this will allow the students to see what is appropriate and inappropriate for formal writing. The participant mentioned that this can also help the students to "self-correct their mistakes," since it will make them aware of what is not appropriate for graded written assignments.

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P7 acknowledged that effective communication skills are key in determining students' success as individuals in the future. She pointed out that to be able to communicate competently both orally and in writing certain "basic skills should be mastered." She revealed that students must be proficient in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure to communicate their points effectively. The participant claimed, "if students are unable to explain or expand their point of view, the Florida Writing Standards are not being met."

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P7 admitted that the use of improper grammar, poor spelling skills, and horrible use of capitalization and punctuations had an "unfavorable" effect on her students' grades. The participant revealed that her students' sentences and paragraph structure contain many mistakes. She attributed this to the use of textspeak because "the errors I see, are those I would see in a text message." She insisted that written assignments require certain standards, and "abbreviations or absence of basic grammar skills are not one of them."

P8 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P8 explained that since her students constantly use textspeak abbreviations in their writing she can create a "kind of what to use instead of" list for her students. She described that this list would include the abbreviations noted in her students' writing and the appropriate alternative to be used. The participant concluded that this should be beneficial to her students and alleged it should alleviate the use of the textspeak abbreviations seen in her students' writing.

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P8 claimed that for students to "get their point across when writing" students must know the basic grammar skills and proper sentence structure. She warned that if students do not have these skills when they come to middle school, they will not be able to "clearly deliver the message in their writing." She explained, in a writing prompt given to her students, "it clearly stated write to convince," however, in students' writing there was the use of "textspeak abbreviations." Unfortunately, she declared that "textspeak

abbreviations can't convince anyone to do something." She complained that the use of textspeak is not helping her students' written communication skills.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P8 identified that "certain expectations are set for my students" this way her students know what is expected from them for each assignment. She reported that if students do not pay attention to grammar, punctuations, or capitalizations in their sentences when writing it will affect the sentence structure resulting in a negative effect on grades, "like a domino effect."

P9 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P9 described textspeak as a "disaster to my children's writing." She suggested that she can use this "disaster" to teach her children "what not to do when writing." She chuckled and stated, "there you go, you take a bad situation and turn it into a positive!"

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P9 explained that proper grammar usage, sentence structure, and appropriate spelling are important in any form of writing, not just in a classroom setting. She further indicated that if a child cannot write a proper sentence, they cannot successfully communicate their point on paper. She blamed the use of "textspeak abbreviations" as a "disaster" on the poor writing skills of her children. Hence, this is the reason her children are not able to write proficient sentences and paragraphs.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P9 informed that when she is grading assignments "I feel I am reading another language" because of the textspeak usage seen in her children's writing. Subsequently,

this resulted in a negative impact on her children's grades. Furthermore, she asserted that ignoring punctuations and capitalization when writing "cannot be overlooked, especially if it's a repeat offender, I have to take points off for it."

P10 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P10 indicated that a benefit she noticed in her students' writing from textspeak is they "try to make their point" when answering questions. She described that her students answer questions, using "textspeak abbreviations." She stressed that even though the use of textspeak is used on graded assignments, "I know my students are trying." She went on to explain that this can be used to show her students how to fix their responses or sentences appropriately.

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P10 claimed that written or oral communication skills are important for her students. She stated that written communication should include the basic use of punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and spelling; furthermore, this also leads to the way one effectively communicates orally. P10 suggested that when students' writing is missing the basic English skills and textspeak is used instead, there is a decline in students' writing. The participant indicated that textspeak characteristics being used in students' writing are not an effective way for students to communicate.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P10 claimed that since textspeak characteristics have a deficiency in punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and spelling, these writing deficiencies are showing up in her students' writing and resulting in a decline in her students' grades. She pointed out

that “textspeak characteristics don’t belong on an assignment I am grading.” Even though her students are constantly reminded, and she re-teaches basic English skills, the use of textspeak is still present in her students’ writing. She continued and declared that “I feel it’s necessary to start deducting points from their assignments now.”

P11 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P11 stated that textspeak can be a benefit in her classroom. She suggested using examples of her students’ textspeak to teach her students how to write properly. P11 claimed that the misuse of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling seen in her students’ writing can be used to aid her students in writing better. She speculated this might give her students a better visual understanding of what is unacceptable in written communication.

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P11 reported that her students write “very short sentences or run-on sentences, so how can they communicate properly in writing.” She mentioned that there is an excessive misuse of grammar, spelling, and punctuation in her students’ writing. She lamented that her students cannot read and comprehend at their grade level, so “how are they expected to master standards on their grade level.” She added that the state mandates certain writing expectations for students in all grade levels and insisted that “more needs to be done” so the standards are met for all the students in all grade levels.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P11 reported that when grading assignments she observed many grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes, therefore these lead to a decline in her students’

grades. She indicated that even after re-teaching these basic grammar skills, the mistakes are still present, and unfortunately “I have to take off points on their written assignments.”

P12 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Increases Personal Efficiency, While Serving as Non-Examples

P12 reported that in her classroom she allowed her students to use textspeak for their notes. She justified her method of allowing this by stating, “it’s for their use, they use it to study, they know what they wrote.” P12 concluded that this allows her students to write their notes using a method they feel comfortable using. She expressed that the students do complete their class notes.

Pattern 2: Textspeak Reduces Student Writing Expertise

P12 discussed that ignoring grammar, capitalization, omission of vowels and articles, and punctuation in formal writing is not accurately completing formal written assignments. She insisted that formal writing must have certain standards. She argued “textspeak characteristics” in formal writing decreased the value of her students’ assignments. The abuse of grammar, capitalization, omission of vowels and articles, and punctuation does not allow her students to communicate efficiently in their formal writing.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Reduces Student Grades

P12 admitted that her students’ grades suffer because of the misuse of punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and poor spelling. She mentioned that these competencies are needed to write proficient sentences. She concluded, “if these skills are missing, the sentence will not be clear” and this results in the decline of their

grades.

Themes for Research Question 2

The transcribed interviews for research question two from all the participants were read several times to determine the patterns and themes that resulted from the teachers' views on the impact of textspeak on students' written work. Three powerful themes presented themselves in the responses to research question two. The first theme suggested that textspeak can provide many teachable moments in the classroom for the teacher and the students. The second illustrated the negative effect textspeak has on students' writing skills. The third theme that presented itself is the detrimental effect textspeak usage is having on the students' grades.

Theme 1: Teachable Moments

The first theme noted was all the participants found a positive in textspeak usage in their classroom. Many participants mentioned that textspeak can be used as a tool in their classroom to teach their students how to write properly. Participants 1, 7, and 11 mentioned they can use their students' textspeak from written assignments to teach their students the appropriate way to write in formal assignments. In addition, participants 6 and 8 stated it can be used to teach their students the difference between what is appropriate and inappropriate spelling in formal writing.

Some participants highlighted the benefits of allowing their students to use textspeak in their class notes. Participants 2 and 12 allow their students to use textspeak to complete their notes and found it beneficial to their students. Participant 2 stated that her students completed their notes quickly and accurately with the use of textspeak. She also mentioned that her students use their notes for studying, so "as long as they know

what they're writing, it doesn't matter." Participant 12 justified her use of allowing textspeak in her students' notetaking by stating, "it's for their use, they use it to study, they know what they wrote." Participant 5 described that in her classroom, textspeak is used by her students in team or group assignments and when they are peer-editing classmates' written assignments. She indicated that it "works" in her classroom and the students understand the feedback given in textspeak verbiage. Participant 1 explained that if her students are "doing group work, working in teams, or brainstorming ideas," it is permitted for them to use textspeak.

Theme 2: Textspeak Negatively Effects Student Writing Skills

The second theme emphasized by all the participants is the negative influence textspeak had on their students' quality of work. Most of the participants mentioned the demise of students' writing skills. Participant 1 indicated that "the use of abbreviation and textspeak does not deliver a powerful message," in students' writing and does not prepare them to write effectively. The participants pointed out that their students ignore grammar and capitalization, omit vowels and articles, and leave out punctuation when completing formal writing. Participant 2 indicated that "they need to know how to do it for high school and future college." The participants described that basic grammar, punctuation, capitalizations, and sentence structure skills make up a sentence and if these characteristics are missing from sentences, the sentences are not coherent. Participant 3 alleged that students, "using texting or textspeak as a common way of communicating" does not allow the students "to express their thoughts on paper."

The participants stated that when textspeak is present in students' writing it is not coherent and therefore results in the students not being able to effectively communicate

in writing. Participant 4 indicated that “using textspeak they will not be able to be clear when writing especially when their spelling is atrocious.” Participant 5 noted that “written and oral communications skills are important for students because they will use them for the rest of their lives.” These skills are needed so students can communicate their thoughts efficiently when writing. P6 pointed out that the visibility of textspeak characteristics is not only visible in students writing but flowed into their “verbal communication” skills as well.

Participants 1 and 5 gave awareness of the use of textspeak abbreviations and textspeak characteristics in relationship to the Florida State Writing Assessments. Participant 1 pointed out that the use of textspeak abbreviations in students’ writing does not allow the students to effectively “deliver a powerful message” when writing to address a prompt given on Florida State Writing Assessments. Both participants noted their experience of having to use Urban Dictionary to understand textspeak abbreviations used in their students’ formal written assignments. Participant 5 stated, “State Writing Assessment readers will not refer to Urban Dictionary before assigning a score.”

Theme 3: Textspeak Negatively Effects Student Grades

The third theme expressed by participants is the effect the absence of correct grammar; incorrect capitalization; missing vowels, letters, and articles from words and phrases; and incorrect punctuation had adversely affected students’ grades. The participants mentioned that even after re-teaching basic English and grammar skills to their students, they repeatedly made the same errors which resulted in points being deducted from students’ written assignments. Participant 1 indicated that repeated mistakes in her students’ writing caused their grades to “diminished.” Participant 9 noted

that “repeat offender cannot be overlooked” especially if the content was re-taught, therefor points were taken from assignments. Participants 10 and 11 echoed the same sentiments. Participant 10 indicated that if re-teaching basic English and grammar skills to their students was necessary and the use of textspeak was still present in students’ writing, “I feel it’s necessary to start deducting points from their assignments.”

Participant 2 stated that “texting lingo” in her students’ formal writing had a “negative effect” on her students’ writing which resulted in their grades suffering. Participant 5 indicated that, “if their sentences are not coherent” in their writing assignments, it will result in a decline in the students’ grades. Participant 7 added that “the errors I see, are those I would see in a text message,” and it had an “unfavorable” effect on her students’ grades. The participants pointed out that textspeak characteristics do not need to be present in formal writing. Participant 8 pointed out that on writing assignments “certain expectations are set,” and if those expectations are not met in her students’ writing, their grades will be affected.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 was, “What are middle school teacher attitudes about students using features of texting, or textspeak, in written classwork?” The key purpose of this question was to ascertain a better understanding of middle school teachers’ mindsets on their students’ use of textspeak in their written assignments. Three interview questions were asked to address research question three. They were: (a) Do you believe students should or should not be permitted or encouraged to use or incorporate textspeak, in written classwork?, (b) How does it make you feel when you notice textspeak in student-written classwork?, and (c) Describe any other benefits or detriments you have

come to learn about students using textspeak in their written classwork. Three patterns evolved: (a) textspeak should not be used in formal writing, (b) teachers want to correct student writing, and (c) textspeak makes it difficult to teach students formal writing skills.

P1 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 1 advocated that textspeak should not be used when students are writing essays or completing assignments where written content will be graded. P1 emphasized that "textspeak is not appropriate language for formal writing." She stressed that "creating a sentence or creating an essay requires formal writing." She revealed that the "state standards require formal writing on written assessments." Therefore, formal writing must be "taught and expected" from her students.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 1 acknowledged the importance of wanting to "help her students" by providing alternative ways of writing words and sentences. She indicated the use of "sentence stems and alternative word list," to assist her students in creating better coherent sentences. She acknowledged that "verbal praise" to her students when they self-correct a repetitive mistake allows "me to feel happy" because "I know he's learning." She concluded by expressing that as a teacher there is always the opportunity to help students learn from their mistakes and self-correct themselves.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 1 stressed that if she taught her students not to use abbreviations or inappropriate spelling and improper grammar or punctuations in formal writing, it is

expected for her students to demonstrate this in their writing. However, she admitted that even with the many re-teaching activities the same errors occur in her students' writing. This led P1 to believe that despite all her efforts "textspeak is winning" in her students' writing. She concluded, that after many endeavors to correct her students' grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors, many of her students revert to the wrong way of writing.

P2 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 2 indicated that if her students are writing a research paper or essay textspeak should not be included. She further noted that when grading a "formal speech for accuracy" textspeak usage should not be present. P2 continued and stated that if her students are writing a short story, a narrative, or telling a story, it should not contain textspeak usage. She explained that these assignments have a specific purpose, audience, and objective, therefore textspeak is not permitted.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 2 promoted her "teachable moments at the beginning of the school year" on the use of proper grammar, punctuations, and capitalizations. She specified that "those teachable moments" helped in lessening the errors constantly being present in her students' writing. P2 concluded, that the errors are not as many as they were at the beginning of the school year, so she knows her students are aware of the mistakes and are trying to correct them in their writing.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 2 explained that her students' grades are suffering because of the incoherent sentences in their assignments. She indicated that her students are not able to

communicate effectively in writing, which is affecting their grades. P2 admitted that students must be able to write and communicate coherently. She asserted these are “skills students need in high school and college.”

P3 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 3 emphasized that textspeak should not be used in any form of written or oral communication. She insisted that the use of textspeak in students’ writing is the reason why students’ writing scores are decreasing. She asserted that students are not able to properly express themselves verbally or written. She maintained that the mistakes seen in her students’ writing are the basic grammar, punctuation, and capitalization rules that textspeak ignores. She acknowledged that textspeak is “already molded in their brains,” hence why “it’s present in students’ writing.”

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 3 stated that the use of textspeak in her classroom makes her “frustrated and I just want to fix it.” She admitted she cannot go back and undo what was already instilled in her students from the excessive use of technology. However, she can educate her students and parents about the appropriate use of technology, and the allowable amount of time students should have for technology usage.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 3 warned that if the textspeak trend continues and students are not corrected, they will have a difficult time “learning how to comprehend, learning how to speak, and learning how to communicate verbally, orally, and written.” She gave an example of seeing an “emoji” being substituted for the word sad in a sentence on an

assignment she was grading. She lamented that textspeak is a hindrance to students' written, verbal, and nonverbal communication skills. She concluded by stating, "it's dumbed down our students' brains totally!"

P4 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 4 explained that she does not expect all her students to grow up to be lawyers, doctors, or engineers; but expects her students to become, "positive contributing members of society." She expressed that to do so they must be able to interpret and articulate the English language, and this cannot be achieved with the use of textspeak. Therefore, she concluded that textspeak should not be allowed in students' formal writing or communications.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 4 identified her constant need to re-teach her students the basics on how to diagram a sentence, how to sound out and spell words, and how to use punctuation and capitalization properly. She admitted that because her students do not see the value of writing properly, she must teach them why it is important to be able to write and communicate in a coherent manner. She indicated that it is important for her students to write and express themselves clearly so others can understand their thoughts and opinions. Therefore, if textspeak is used in her students' written communications, it will be difficult for their audience to understand or follow.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 4 pointed out that the biggest detriment she noticed overall due to textspeak is students' handwriting. She identified that the students are losing the

"mechanics of holding a pen or pencil and forming letters properly." She explained that students are constantly texting or typing and are not practicing how to hold a pencil correctly and write letters properly. P4 added that because of this, students do not know how to form letters accurately. She described that students have a difficult time forming letters when writing and texting contributed to the "horrible penmanship."

P5 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 5 admitted that textspeak should not be present in any form of written or oral communication. She explained that effective written and oral communication skills are important for students to clearly get their point across. She noted that these skills are needed for "the rest of their lives." She described, that if students are not able to accurately express their thoughts or opinions either orally or in writing, "how can they become successful adults?" Furthermore, P5 concluded that the use of textspeak in written or oral communication impedes students from delivering the appropriate message.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 5 acknowledged her constant need to go back and reteach her students about the inappropriateness of textspeak usage in written and oral communication. She mentioned that their writing is missing basic English skills. She emphasized the importance of this skills, especially when it comes to the State writing assessment.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 5 claimed that "textspeak abbreviations are a detriment to the English language!" She revealed that having to use an Urban Dictionary to understand students' writing is not a part of standard English. She identified that students' verbal and written

skills are suffering because of textspeak abbreviations, and it is not beneficial. She criticized, “I hear it in their conversations, they use of KK, bro, OMG, and BFF.” She concluded that “this is not English!”

P6 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 6 emphasized that students must be able to communicate properly. P6 believed that the visibility of textspeak characteristics present in her students’ writing, hinders their thought processes and they are unable to communicate properly when writing. She admitted that textspeak made it difficult for her students to “write coherent sentences.” Furthermore, P6 confirmed that if students do not know basic grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence skills, the sentences they write will not be comprehensible. Therefore, she concluded that the use of textspeak should not be present in any form of writing.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 6 commented on her need to “go back and re-teach basic grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence skills,” to her students. She advised that students should be able to use appropriate communication skills orally, verbally, and in writing. She expressed that student should be able to write proper coherent sentences without textspeak usage. P6 acknowledged that “if I don’t correct them, they will go on to the next grade making the same mistakes.”

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 6 identified that the use of textspeak is present in both her students’ written and verbal communications. She explained that oral and written communication

skills are “important in everyone’s daily lives.” P6 criticized that the use of textspeak influenced the communication skills of her students in a negative way. She admitted, “it makes them sound stupid and makes us look like we don’t teach.”

P7 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 7 confirmed that textspeak should not be used in students’ formal writing or “in any form of writing or communication.” She noted how “ridiculous” and incoherent students’ writing is when textspeak is present. She acknowledged that students must be proficient in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure when writing. She confirmed that with the use of textspeak in writing those basic elements are eliminated. P7 advised that Florida Writing Standards will not be met if textspeak usage is accepted in students’ writing.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 7 commented on the importance of educating her students on not using textspeak in any form of written or oral communication. P7 admitted the importance of it being “embedded into their brain.” She insisted she must teach her students what is appropriate and inappropriate writing. She hopes her efforts will teach her students to become better writers.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 7 claimed that the use of textspeak is not just a detriment to her students’ writing skills, but it overflows into their reading skills and oral communication as well. She expressed that when her students are reading, they “eat through punctuations, there is no stop or pause.” She related this to the fact that in textspeak there is no use of

punctuations. She noted that textspeak abbreviations are even heard when her students are speaking to others. For example, “I hear them use OMG, OKK, and IDK in conversations all the time, even when speaking to me.”

P8 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 8 confirmed that the use of textspeak should not be allowed in students’ writing. She acknowledged, “they constantly use textspeak, so when writing, they think it’s normal.” Therefore, the students do not realize what they are doing wrong in their written assignments. She explained that when students are writing, they must communicate their point across clearly and the use of textspeak does not allow students’ writing to deliver a precise message.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 8 noted the importance of educating her students on appropriate academic writing. She admitted that she re-teaches basic grammar and sentence structure often to correct textspeak errors seen in her students’ writing. P8 explained that it is crucial for her students to know the difference between textspeak writing and academic writing. She concluded that writing appropriately is a skill her students will need for the rest of their academic and professional lives, so they “need to get it.”

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 8 confirmed that textspeak is a detriment to students’ academic writing. She noted that textspeak is seen in her students’ writing. She explained that her students do not pay attention to grammar, punctuations, or capitalizations when they are writing. She continued by adding “it affects the sentence structure.” P8 admitted that

when sentence structure is affected, students are not able to “clearly deliver the message when writing.”

P9 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 9 condemned the use of textspeak in any form of academic or social writing. She insisted, “it should not be allowed.” She indicated that children must know basic grammar skills which are missing from children’s writing. P9 acknowledged that children should know how to write properly. She mentioned that it is not appropriate to read a child’s written assignment in middle school and “feel I am reading another language,” because of the use of textspeak.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 9 indicated that textspeak is a “disaster” for her children’s writing. She admitted the need to instruct her children on why it is not appropriate to use textspeak when writing. She admitted that her children cannot write proper coherent sentences to accurately communicate their points because of textspeak. She exclaimed, “this is wrong, and it must be fixed.”

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 9 expressed that textspeak is a detriment to her children’s writing. She identified that her children cannot write a proper sentence or articulately communicate their thoughts on paper. She explained that her children do not use proper grammar skills, punctuation, and capitalizations when writing. P9 continued and stated that the abbreviations in her children’s writing make it difficult to understand the written message they are trying to deliver. She blamed the use of textspeak for this “disaster.”

P10 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 10 stated that textspeak should not be allowed in students' formal writing. She specified that textspeak includes the shortening of words, omission of letters and articles, misuse of punctuations, and capitalizations. She indicated that those characteristics do not need to be in a formal written assignment. P10 added that when those characteristics are present on a formal written assignment it takes away from the content of the assignment and the students are not demonstrating the objective of the assignment has been met.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 10 stated the need to educate her students on appropriate formal writing. She explained it is important to teach her students proper English to be used in formal writing. P10 claimed that by re-teaching basic English skills to her students they will learn what is appropriate for formal writing.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 10 confirmed that textspeak is having a negative effect on her students' grades. She indicated that points are deducted from formal written assignments because she taught her students that textspeak should not be included in formal writing and it is still present. Therefore, she linked the use of textspeak to being a detriment to her students' academic progress in her class.

P11 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 11 explained that textspeak should not be used in any form of writing.

She expressed that textspeak is the reason her students write “very short or run-on sentences.” She blamed textspeak for the use of improper grammar in her students’ sentence structure. She described textspeak as “dumbing down our kids,” and it should not be used in formal writing.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 11 pointed out the need to re-teach basic English skills to her students because it is necessary when her students are writing. She mentioned that the basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation skills must be reiterated often to her students because the same mistakes occur often. She asserted that her students must know these basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation skills to be able to read and write properly.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 11 expressed that if students cannot read and comprehend at their grade level, they cannot be successful in class. She explained that “this is why the basics must be taught.” She added, that if students are constantly using textspeak and are not corrected they will think it is appropriate to use it in academic writing. She indicated that the use of textspeak in student writing is having a negative impact on their education.

P12 Analysis

Pattern 1: Textspeak Should Not Be Used in Formal Writing

Participant 12 admitted that the use of textspeak should not be allowed in students’ formal writing. She explained that textspeak has a misuse of grammar capitalization, punctuation, omission of letters, and poor spelling and sentence structure. She indicated that those things do not need to be present in a students’ formal writing. She concluded that because of those textspeak characteristics, textspeak should not be

allowed in students' formal assignments.

Pattern 2: Teachers Want to Correct Student Writing

Participant 12 indicated the need to educate her students that textspeak usage is not appropriate in written or oral communication. She explained that if her students use textspeak in formal writing it decreases the value of their writing, and this must be corrected. She feels it is important to teach the difference between textspeak writing and in-class writing.

Pattern 3: Textspeak Makes It Difficult to Teach Students Formal Writing Skills

Participant 12 indicated that the use of textspeak is having a damaging effect on her students' formal writing. She explained that her students are not writing coherent sentences. She added that her students are not able to clearly express their thoughts on paper. She indicated that if this textspeak style is not corrected in students writing, it will result in student's continuance of not being able to effectively communicate.

Themes for Research Question 3

The transcribed interviews for research question three from all participants were read several times to determine the patterns and themes of teachers' attitudes about students using textspeak on graded written assignments. Two key themes appeared in the responses to research question three. The first theme noted by the participants is that textspeak must be corrected in students' writing. The second theme documented by participants is that the continued use of textspeak by students is negatively affecting the students' academic progress.

Theme 1: Textspeak Must be Corrected

The first theme maintained by the participants is that the use of textspeak does not

belong in students' academic writing. Participant 1 emphasized that "textspeak is not appropriate language for formal writing." The participants indicated it is important to teach students to write coherent sentences. P2 admitted that students must be able to write and communicate coherently because these are "skills students need in high school and college." Participant 5 agreed that textspeak should not be included in students' writing because effective written and communication skills are important "for the rest of their lives."

The participants mentioned that basic grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure skills are needed to write coherent sentences. Several of the participants believed that the familiarity with textspeak characteristics present in students' writing, impedes their thought processes resulting in the inability to communicate accurately when writing. Participant 3 considered textspeak as a hindrance to students' written, verbal, and nonverbal communication skills and stated that textspeak is "already molded in their brains," and that is why "it's present in students' writing." Participant 9 acknowledged that the use of textspeak in her children's writing is a "disaster."

Majority of the participants expressed their efforts in trying to correct the use of textspeak in students' writing. Participant 8 explained that it is crucial for her students to know the difference between textspeak writing and academic writing and indicated that her students "need to get it," because they will need to use academic writing for the rest of their educational and professional lives. The participants claimed that even after re-teaching their students the basic grammatical, spelling, and punctuation rules, many of the students revert to the wrong way of writing. Participant 9 exclaimed, "this is wrong,

and it must be fixed." The participants noted that if textspeak usage is not corrected it will have a negative impact on students' education.

Theme 2: Textspeak Negatively Effects Students

The second theme documented by most participants is that textspeak is having a detrimental effect on students' academic learning. The participants stated when students are completing a written assignment, textspeak usage should not be present. Participant 1 indicated that even after many endeavors to correct her students' textspeak errors in their writing, many of her students revert to the textspeak usage. Participant 8 admitted that when sentence structure is affected due to textspeak usage, students are not able to "clearly deliver the message when writing."

The participants stated that textspeak and the use of abbreviations or inappropriate spelling and improper grammar or punctuations should not be present in a research paper, essay, or speech because it affects the overall content of the students' writing. The participants noted that textspeak usage diminishes the substance and message being delivered depending on the purpose, the audience, and the objective of the assignment. Participant 3 noted that textspeak is a hindrance to students' written, verbal, and nonverbal communication skills because "it's dumbed down our students' brains totally!" Participant 5 claimed that "textspeak abbreviations are a detriment to the English language," and it is the reason why our students cannot communicate properly bother verbally or in writing. Participant 6 claimed that the usage of textspeak in our students' written and oral communication skills, "makes them sound stupid and makes us look lie we don't teach."

Participant 4 identified that because students are constantly texting or typing,

students are not learning the “mechanics of holding a pen or pencil” and they cannot form their letters properly resulting in “horrible penmanship.” Other participants identified the demise in students’ verbal and written skills because of textspeak abbreviations. Participants 5 and 7 criticized the use of textspeak in their students’ verbal conversations. Participant 7 stated, “I hear them use OMG, OKK, and IDK in conversations all the time, even when speaking to me.”

Research Question 4

Research question 4 was, “How do middle school teachers describe student attitudes about using features of texting, or textspeak, in written classwork?” The primary purpose of this question was to get teachers understanding of students’ attitudes about using textspeak on assignments. Two interview questions were asked to address research question four. They were: (a) Describe your students’ attitudes or beliefs about using textspeak in written classwork., and (b) How strongly do students feel about being permitted to use (or not use) features of texting, or textspeak in formal and informal written classwork? Two patterns emerged from participant responses: (a) students believe they should be permitted to use textspeak in class and (b) students do not see textspeak as wrong.

P1 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant acknowledged that she thinks her students would like to use textspeak in their assignments because “it’s the way they speak.” P1 explained that it becomes overwhelming to constantly convince her students that textspeak is not appropriate in academic writing. She also explained that her students would love to be

able to use textspeak in their writing because they will not have to "write correctly and use grammar correctly."

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant acknowledged that her students have a difficult time using appropriate grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. She admitted that her students have a difficult time correcting the errors made in their writing due to textspeak. P1 related this to the fact that her students are "so accustomed to using textspeak, the errors seem normal to them."

P2 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant acknowledged textspeak characteristics are not very detailed and structured therefore her students would probably, "love to be able to use it." P2 noted that because textspeak language is not detailed and structured it does not belong in formal writing. She concluded, "I think they would love to use it because they think it's OK."

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant confirmed that her students do not like to correct their textspeak mistakes in their writing. She explained that her students "whine about it," when asked to go back and correct their textspeak errors. She further explained her student's question "why can't we do this, you know what I'm talking about." She pointed out that her students have a difficult time being "explicit" in their writing. Hence it is difficult for her students to write correctly to explain their thoughts.

P3 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

This participant believed that if her students were able to use textspeak in all their assignments they would think "it's the bomb!" She emphasized it will make things easier for her students because textspeak is "already molded in their brains." She noted that it is difficult to "undo the damage," that textspeak has created in her students' writing.

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant admitted that when she asks her students to correct mistakes such as spelling, punctuations, or capitalizations on their written assignments "they get very upset." She explained that if a student cannot spell a word and is told to "look it up," the student "gets upset." She continued and stated that her students believe their writing is correct because they are constantly using textspeak.

P4 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant confirmed that she felt her students "would want to use it all the time," because textspeak is used on their phones and computers. She noted her students "don't seem to understand the value," of having the proper grammar and punctuation in their writing. Therefore, her students would want to use textspeak in their writing.

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant confirmed that her students do not like to go back and correct the grammar, punctuation, and capitalization errors made on their written assignments. P4 noted, "they don't feel it needs to be corrected." She further noted that her students believe they are getting their point across, "so what's the big deal." She stated that her

students want to use textspeak in their written assignments even though it has been explained and reasons were given as to why textspeak is not appropriate for formal writing.

P5 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant stated, “if I had to guess, my students would love to use textspeak all the time.” She pointed out that with textspeak, “it really doesn’t matter if the grammar, punctuation, or capitalization is correct,” as long as the reader can “figure out” what the writer is trying to say.

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant acknowledged, that when textspeak spelling, grammar, and sentence structure errors are present in her students’ writing, they are asked to re-read their writing and fix their errors before submitting it to be graded. She continued by stating, “which middle schooler likes to hear that, they look at me like I’m the evilest person in the world.” She advised that even though she reteaches basic grammar, sentence structure, and spelling skills to her students they still make the same mistakes, “they don’t know what they are doing wrong.”

P6 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant claimed that if her students were given the opportunity to use textspeak in their assignments, “they probably would.” She indicated that her students have difficulties when it comes to using punctuation properly in sentences and “they don’t seem to care about learning how to use it correctly.” Therefore, using textspeak in

their writing would make writing easier for them. However, it would impede the clarity and coherence of their sentences, and "they don't get that."

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant acknowledged that since textspeak characteristics do not follow the basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules, her students have a difficult time self-correcting their mistakes on their written assignments. P6 admitted that even though she "re-teaches basic grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure," to her students "they don't know how to correct their mistakes, because they don't feel it's wrong"

P7 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant pointed out that if her students were given the opportunity to complete their assignments in textspeak they probably would "love it, despite knowing how ridiculous they sound." P7 continued and stated that "texting or textspeak characteristics" will allow her students to write without the use of proper grammar, punctuations, capitalizations, and abbreviations; therefore, this will not allow them to become "proficient writers."

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant admitted that after educating her students about not using textspeak in their formal writing or oral communications, it is still present. She asserted that her students "don't see their errors." She mentioned that textspeak is infused in everyday life; seen on televisions and in advertisements therefore it "becomes normal to them."

P8 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant claimed that if her students were given the opportunity to use textspeak in their writing they would "like it," because it gives them the chance to write less; therefore, it is "easier for them." P8 predicted that her students would probably love using textspeak abbreviations in their writing, because "it's already used in their conversations," and they "think it's normal."

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant admitted that with the constant re-teaching of basic grammar and sentence structure rules to her students, they still make the same mistakes. She realized that her students do not understand what they are doing wrong because "textspeak has a huge influence on the way they communicate orally and in writing." She added that they all have phones and use social media to communicate with their friends, therefore "textspeak abbreviations is normal to them."

P9 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant laughed and stated, "it would be the best thing since sliced bread," if her children were allowed to use textspeak in their assignments. She explained that proper grammar usage, sentence structure, and appropriate spelling are very important skills for her children to become successful writers and communicate their points on paper. She argued that her children do not know how to write properly using proper grammar, sentence structure, and appropriate spelling and stated, "textspeak is teaching them the wrong way."

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant indicated that even after re-teaching her children why it is not appropriate to use textspeak when writing they continue. She admitted that her children cannot write proper coherent sentences and when told "it's wrong and it must be fixed," she indicated that she is seen "as the mean old witch."

P10 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant stated that her students would probably love the idea of using textspeak in their assignments because they finish "very quickly." She noted textspeak abbreviations allow students to write quickly. She added, "who wouldn't want to finish an assignment quickly."

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant acknowledged that her students have a difficult time using proper grammar in both formal and informal writing. She pointed out that her students have difficulty correcting grammar errors in their writing even after re-teaching. P10 contributed this difficulty to their exposure of textspeak so their errors do not appear to be wrong to them.

P11 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant claimed that if she had to guess, "I think my students would rather use textspeak than proper English when writing." She added that her students' written assignments include, short run-on sentences with improper grammar, no punctuations, no capitalizations, and missing words or letters, which is also a characteristic of textspeak.

She indicated that her students have a difficult time writing using proper standard English.

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant stated that her students should know basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation skills to be successful readers and writers. However, she noted that if they are struggling to understand "standard English rules, even after I re-teach it," it would be difficult for them to realize what they are doing wrong and self-correct their mistakes.

P12 Analysis

Pattern 1: Students Believe They Should Be Permitted to Use Textspeak in Class

The participant believed that her students would love to use textspeak on their written assignments, because "they think it's normal and everyone uses it." However, she noted they "don't realize the difference between textspeak writing and in-class writing even after I explain it to them." P12 indicated that her students must understand the difference between when it is appropriate and not appropriate to use textspeak.

Pattern 2: Students Do Not See Textspeak in Formal Writing as Wrong

The participant argued that textspeak characteristics are present in "our everyday lives," it is seen on "television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, social media, etc." She added that because of this "our students think it is normal," so when they are asked to "go back and correct the textspeak mistakes, they look at me like I'm crazy."

Themes for Research Question 4

The transcribed interviews for research question four from all participants were read several times to determine the pattern and theme that resulted from how teachers would describe middle school students' attitudes about using textspeak in their written

assignments. One powerful theme presented itself in the responses to research question four. This theme suggested that students believe textspeak should be accepted in their written assignments.

Theme 1: Students Believe Textspeak Should Be Accepted

This theme noted that despite the absence of proper grammar usage, exclusion of punctions and capitalization, omission of vowels, letters, and articles, and poor sentence structure students would use textspeak in their writing even after being taught it is not correct. P1 noted that if her students were allowed to use textspeak in their written assignments, they will not have to "write correctly and use grammar correctly," and related this to the fact that her students are "so accustomed to using textspeak, the errors seem normal to them." The participants mentioned that their students would love to use textspeak in their writing because they have a difficult time correcting their mistakes. The participant acknowledged that even after reteaching basic grammar, sentence structure, and spelling skills students make the same mistakes. P5 felt that her students "don't know what they are doing wrong." Participant 6 noted "they don't know how to correct their mistakes, because they don't feel it's wrong."

Participants 2, 3, 5, 9, and 12 specifically mentioned that their students get upset when they are asked to correct their mistakes before turning in the assignment for a final grade. Participant 2 indicated that her students "whine about" having to correct their mistakes and indicated the students say, "you know what I'm talking about," because the students feel that textspeak is understood by everyone. P5 expressed that she is looked upon as, "I'm the evilest person in the world," when she tells her middle schoolers to fix their textspeak errors, because "they don't know what they are doing wrong." P9

indicated as being seen “as the mean old witch,” by her students when they are told that their writing assignment has textspeak mistakes and “it’s wrong and it must be fixed.” Participant 12 stated, “they look at me like I’m crazy,” when asked to go back and fix their textspeak mistakes because “our students think it is normal.”

The participants admitted that their students view textspeak as being a normal form of communication. Participant 7 mentioned that textspeak is immersed in their daily life and it “becomes normal to them.” P8 added that because of the use of phones and social media to communicate with their friends, “textspeak abbreviations is normal to them.” Participant 12 pointed out that textspeak is seen on “television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, social media, etc.” and hinted that this is the reason students do not recognize the errors in their writing.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Study Overview

This generic qualitative research study was designed to gain middle school reading, writing, or English educators' perceptions and their students' views and utilization of textspeak on formal student writing. The purpose of this study was to utilize a qualitative research method to investigate the views of middle school reading, writing, or English educators with at least one year as an in-classroom from Florida. The study utilized a single interview for each of the 12 participants and focused on their perceptions of how the textspeak has impacted their students' writing. The study provided an understanding of the teachers' perspectives on how textspeak is appearing in their students' writing. The study outlined some positive and more negative effects of textspeak on students' writing.

Research Background

The generic qualitative research study was conducted on 12 middle school reading, writing, or English educators, with at least one year as a teacher in Florida. Each participant was individually interviewed and recorded on Microsoft Teams in addition to being recorded using the traditional cassette tape recorder. After all the interviews were completed, the data from the interviews were transcribed using Microsoft 365 Word Dictate and sent to the participants to check for authenticity. Then the researcher began the analysis began by coding each participant's data set according to the research questions. The relevant data from all the participants were classified according to patterns and themes that developed. Then the patterns were compiled and coded to uncover themes that emerged from the individual participant's transcripts.

Research Questions and Findings

Research Question 1

The focus of the first research question was to learn if middle school teachers notice textspeak usage within their student writing and to determine how often students use textspeak spelling in their formal and informal written assignments. Three interview questions were asked to address research question one. Three patterns emerged: (a) improper grammar was frequently used, (b) abbreviations were frequently used, and (c) students must learn to use proper grammar in class assignments. From the patterns that evolved, two primary themes emerged in the responses to research question one from all the educators. The first theme observed by the participants was that textspeak is nearly always present in class assignments. The second theme revealed by the participants is that teachers must teach students when textspeak is or is not appropriate.

Research Question 2

The primary purpose of research question two was to explain how middle school teachers describe the influence textspeak had on their classroom assignments. Four interview questions were asked to address research question two which resulted in three patterns from the teachers' views on the impact of textspeak on students' written work. The three patterns shown were: (a) textspeak increases personal efficiency while serving as non-examples for teaching, (b) textspeak reduces student writing expertise, and (c) textspeak reduces student grades. From the patterns, derived three powerful themes from the responses to research question two. The first theme suggested that textspeak can provide many teachable moments in the classroom for the teacher and the students. The second illustrated that textspeak negatively effects students writing skills. The third

theme suggested textspeak negatively effects student grades.

Research Question 3

The central premise of research question three was to better understand middle school teachers' opinions about their student's use of textspeak in written assignments. Three patterns were established: (a) textspeak should not be used in formal writing, (b) teachers want to correct student writing, and (c) textspeak makes it difficult to teach students formal writing skills. The patterns led the researcher to the two important themes: the use of textspeak must be corrected in students' writing and textspeak is negatively effecting students' academic progress.

Research Question 4

The intent of research question four was to get a better understanding from teachers about their students' attitudes and uses of textspeak on assignments. Research question four had two interview questions. Those two interview questions formed two main patterns: (a) students believe they should be permitted to use textspeak in class and (b) students do not see textspeak in formal writing as wrong. The two patterns were then linked to one powerful theme. That theme suggested that students believe textspeak should be accepted.

Limitations

This study included some limitations. First, it was limited to 12 participants that were certified teachers in the state of Florida who have been employed full-time and teaching a literacy-related middle school subject for at least one year. The research study included a single interview which were used to pose questions individually to 12

participants. This is difficult to determine the perceptions of other educators in different regions around the country or world.

Recommendations

With reference to middle school educators as a focus for this study, the inclusion of other subject teachers should be included in future research to gain the full perception of the effect of textspeak on students' writing. Additionally, it would be beneficial to hear from the students as well as adults outside of the teaching profession, such as employers.

Future Research Implications

This generic qualitative study was designed to learn about perceptions of middle school literacy educators regarding text messaging, textspeak, textism, and the effects on students' writing and spelling abilities. The focus was on students in literacy-related middle school subjects in the state of Florida. However, further research is essential to better understand the relationship of textspeak to students' writing from kindergarten to Grade 12 in all subjects. This will help to better understand the effect textspeak is having on students' writing from additional perspectives.

A new aspect to consider for further research on textspeak is to investigate how the use of textspeak in media has influenced the quality of students' writing. Additionally, one can explore if the frequent use of technology including texting and typing effects the mechanics of learning to form letters and subsequent penmanship.

Conclusions

As a result of interviewing 12 participants regarding their experiences on the impact of textspeak on their students' writing abilities, data were examined about their experiences and resulted in both positive and negative results. The research literature

supported both positive and negative findings. Earlier research studies saw a positive effect on students writing from texting (Bushnell et al., 2011; Cingel & Sundar, 2012; Drouin, 2011; Durkin et al., 2011; Kemp & Bushnell, 2011; Kemp et al., 2014; Plester et al., 2008; Plester et al., 2009). Previous research saw a negative link between texting and student academic writing (DeJonge & Kemp, 2012; Drouin & Davis, 2009; Grace et al., 2014; Varnhagen et al., 2010).

The educators from this study reported that the use of textspeak by their students on assignments that were not graded helped the students complete their assignments more quickly. They mentioned that when textspeak was used as a form of feedback in group or team assignments their peers understood what was being communicated. The participants pointed out that when students used textspeak in their assignments, they were trying their best to get their point across when answering questions. Participants observed that the use of textspeak in notetaking was beneficial to their students' understanding and assisted them in studying. This proves true to the principle of least effort that people will expend minimal effort to achieve more by doing the least amount of work (Zipf, 1948).

The participants provided excellent insights to textspeak and its effects on students' writing. The educators acknowledged that the use of textspeak in their students' writing affects the use of standard English such as spelling, grammar, and punctuations, whether it is written or spoken. The use of textspeak in students' writing affects the way students use formal English in both writing and speaking. The use of textspeak hinders the way students express themselves through writing as well as oral communication skills. The B.E.S.T. standards indicate that communication skills, both written and oral, are expected for all individuals in all grade levels. Students must be able to communicate

both orally and in writing following standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling rules (Florida B.E.S.T. Standards, 2020).

Nawaz et al. (2021) indicated that technology has transformed the world and has influenced how people write, think, and communicate with each other. Results of this study similarly showed how textspeak impacts students' writing, thinking, and communications skills from the teacher point of view. Teachers suggested that the use of textspeak must be corrected in students' formal writing because it leads to reduced writing skill and academic grades.

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Appendix

Teacher Interview Protocol

Appendix

Teacher Interview Protocol

Pre-Interview Script

I am pleased you have agreed to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of your views about the presence of textspeak in student writing. Textspeak is known as a form of written language used in text messages and other digital communications, characterized by many abbreviations, and typically not following standard grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style (dictionary.com).

After this interview, I will send you your transcript. If you wish to make any changes, you may. Your identity will remain anonymous. I will use some of your verbatim comments along with those of other participants to illustrate patterns and themes that recur in response to the questions I ask you today.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

(Do not read the research questions to participants. Read only the interview questions.)

Research Question 1: To what extent do middle school teachers notice textspeak within student writing?

Interview questions:

1. Given the definition above of textspeak, how often do you see textspeak or text usage in your students' formal writing? Informal writing? Spelling?
2. In what sorts of written work or projects do you most notice the influence of texting or textspeak? (Please provide specific examples. Consider classwork such as speeches, term or research papers, PowerPoint Presentations, short answer questions, and so on.)
3. What sorts of textspeak do you see (please provide specific examples of words, phrases, abbreviations, and other aspects of written communication) in your students' formal written classwork? informal written classwork?

Research Question 2:

What do middle school teachers report as the impact of textspeak on students' written work?

Interview questions:

4. Describe any positive impacts of textspeak or the influence of texting within your student work on its quality. Please provide specific examples.
5. Describe any negative impacts of text speak or the influence of texting within your student work on its quality. Please provide specific examples.

6. What do you notice about student writing in terms of spelling, punctuation, and grammar due to textspeak?
7. How are student grades impacted (positively and/or negatively) when you notice textspeak in student written classwork?

Research Question 3:
What are middle school teacher attitudes about students using features of texting, or textspeak, in written classwork?

Interview questions.

8. Do you believe students should or should not be permitted or encouraged to use or incorporate textspeak into their written classwork? Why?
9. How does it make you feel when you notice textspeak in student written classwork?
10. Describe any other benefits or detriments you have come to learn about students using textspeak in their written classwork.

Research Question 4:
How do middle school teachers describe student attitudes about using features of texting, or textspeak, in written classwork?

Interview questions.

11. Describe your students' attitudes or beliefs about using textspeak in written classwork.
12. How strongly do students feel about being permitted to use (or not use) features of texting, or textspeak, in formal and informal written classwork? Please provide specific examples.

Please feel free to offer any other opinions about student use of textspeak in their written work that I have not asked you about specifically.

Post Interview Script

Thank you for being honest and answering the questions based on your experience. I will send you the transcript within a week so you can review it and if necessary, make any changes, So I can get it to you in the right location, please provide me your current email address and phone number.

Here is my contact information as well if you have any questions after the interview.

Participant: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____