

certainly a noticeable feature of many Netspeak conversations. Lexical suffixes are often extended. For example, the noun-forming suffix *-ity* (as in standard English *brief* → *brevity*) might be used in *dubiosity* (from *dubious*), *obviousity* (from *obvious*), and other such *-ous* instances. Other popular ludic Netspeak extensions include *-itude* (*winnitude*, *hackitude*, *geekitude*), *-full* (*folderfull*, *windowfull*, *screenfull*, *bufferfull*), and *-ification* (*hackification*, *geekification*). In a development which will cause delight to all Anglo-Saxonists, the *-en* plural of *oxen* is found with some words ending in *-x*, such as *boxen*, *vaxen* ['VAX computers'], *matixen*, and *bixen* ['users of BIX, an information exchange system'] – a usage which could well increase, given that so many computing names end in *-X*. Word-class conversion is important, too, usually from noun to verb: *to mouse*, *to clipboard*, *to geek out* ['talk technically'], *to 404* ['be unable to find a page'].

The various types of abbreviation found in Netspeak have been one of its most remarked features. Acronyms are so common that they regularly receive critical comment, as observed by Steve G. Steinberg, quoted in *Wired Style*:²⁰ 'When it comes to technology, the greater the number of acronyms, the higher the bullshit factor'. A tiny sample would include *BBS* ['bulletin board system'], *BCC* ['blind carbon copy'], *DNS* ['domain name system'], *FAQ* ['frequently asked question'], *HTML* ['hypertext markup language'], *ISP* ['Internet Service Provider'], *URL* ['uniform resource locator'], *MUDs* and *MOOs* (see chapter 6), and the names of many firms and sites, such as *AOL*, *IBM*, *IRC*. Letter-plus-number combinations are also found: *W3C* ['World Wide Web Consortium'], *3Com* [a data-networking organization – the *Coms* standing for Computer, Communications, Compatibility], *P3P* ['Platform for Privacy Preferences'], *Go2Net*. The chatgroups and virtual worlds also have their abbreviations, some of which turn up on e-mail and in personal Web pages.²¹ Some of the commonest ones are listed in Table 3.2. Newer technology, such as the WAP-phones ['Wireless Application Protocol'] with their tiny screens, have

²⁰ Hale and Scanlon (1999: 188). ²¹ A list is available at <<http://www.netlingo.com>>.

Table 3.2. Some abbreviations used in Netspeak conversations (both upper- and lower-case forms are used).^a

aftak	as far as I know	hhok	ha ha only kidding
afk	away from keyboard	hth	hope this helps
asap	as soon as possible	ianal	I'm not a lawyer, but...
a/s/l	age/sex/location	ic	I see; [in MUDs] in character
atw	at the weekend		
awhfy	are we having fun yet?	icwum	I see what you mean
bbfn	bye bye for now	idk	I don't know
bbl	be back later	iirc	if I remember correctly
bcnu	be seeing you	imho	in my humble opinion
b4	before	imi	I mean it
bfd	big fucking deal	innsho	in my not so humble opinion
bg	big grin	imo	in my opinion
brb	be right back	iou	I owe you
btw	by the way	iow	in other words
cfc	call for comments	irl	in real life
cfr	call for votes	jam	just a minute
cm	call me	j4f	just for fun
cu	see you	jk	just kidding
cul	see you later	kc	keep cool
cul8r	see you later		
cya	see you	khuf	know how you feel
dk	don't know	l8r	later
dur?	do you remember?	lol	laughing out loud
eod	end of discussion	m8	mate
f?	friends?	mtbwu	may the force be with you
fotel	falling off the chair	na	no access
	laughing	nc	no comment
f2f	face-to-face	np	no problem
fwiv	for what it's worth	nwo	no way out
fya	for your amusement	obtw	oh by the way
fyi	for your information	o4u	only for you
g	grin	oic	oh I see
gal	get a life	otoh	on the other hand
gd&r	grinning ducking and running	pmji	pardon my jumping in
gmta	great minds think alike	ptmm	please tell me more
gr8	great	rip	rest in peace
gsoh	good sense of humour	rotf	rolling on the floor
		rotfl	rolling on the floor laughing

(Continued)

Table 3.2. (cont.)

rtfm	read the fucking manual	tuvrn	thank you very much
rtm	read the manual	tx	thanks
ruok	are you OK?	tyvm	thank you very much
sc	stay cool	wadr	with all due respect
smtoe	sets my teeth on edge	wb	welcome back
so	significant other	w4u	waiting for you
sohf	sense of humour	wrt	with respect to
	failure	wffgo	what the fuck is going on?
sol	sooner or later	wtg	way to go
t+	think positive	wu	what's up?
ta4n	that's all for now	wuwh	wish you were here
tafn	that's all for now	X!	typical woman
thx	thanks	Y!	typical man
tia	thanks in advance	yi	yes I understand
tmot	trust me on this	2bctnd	to be continued
tnx	thanks	2d4	to die for
tfn	ta-ta for now	2g4u	too good for you
ttt	to tell the truth	2l8	too late
t2ul	talk to you later	4e	forever
tyl	talk to you later	4yeo	for your eyes only
tytt	to tell you the truth		

*Not all are found in every situation. Some refer to specific chatgroup interactions (e.g. *afk*) and procedures (e.g. *cfv*), or are more likely in text-messaging (p. 229).

motivated a whole new genre of abbreviated forms. The acronyms are no longer restricted to words or short phrases, but can be sentence-length: *AYSOS* ['Are you stupid or something?'], *CID* ['Consider it done'], *CIO* ['Check it out'], *GTG* ['Got to go'], *WDYS* ['What did you say?']. Individual words can be reduced to two or three letters: *PLS* ['please'], *THX* or *TX* ['thanks'], *WE* ['whatever']. Some are like rebuses, in that the sound value of the letter or numeral acts as a syllable of a word, or are combinations of rebuses and letter initial: *B4N* ['Bye For Now'], *CYL* ['See you later'], *L8R* ['later']. Further examples are given on p. 229.

Distinctive graphology is also an important feature of Netspeak. The range extends from an enhanced system (by comparison with traditional writing) with a wide range of special fonts and styles, as in the most sophisticated Web pages, to a severely reduced system, with virtually no typographic contrastivity (not even such 'basic' features as italics or boldface), as in many e-mails and chatgroup conversations. All orthographic features have been affected. For example, the status of capitalization varies greatly. Most of the Internet is not case-sensitive, which thus motivates the random use of capitals or no capitals at all. There is a strong tendency to use lowercase everywhere. The 'save a keystroke' principle is widely found in e-mails, chatgroups, and virtual worlds, where whole sentences can be produced without capitals (or punctuation):

john are you going to london next week

The lower-case default mentality means that any use of capitalization is a strongly marked form of communication. Messages wholly in capitals are considered to be 'shouting', and usually avoided (see p. 35); words in capitals add extra emphasis (with asterisks and spacing also available):

This is a VERY important point.

This is a * very * important point.

This is a v e r y important point.

There are, however, certain contexts where capitals need to be recognized. Domain names in Web addresses are lowercase; but path-names (after the first slash) are case-sensitive. A capital letter may be obligatory in a business name (especially if trade-marked). Indeed, a distinctive feature of Internet graphology is the way two capitals are used – one initial, one medial – a phenomenon variously called *bicapitalization* (*BiCaps*), *intercaps*, *incaps*, and *midcaps*. Some style guides inveigh against this practice, but it is widespread:

AltaVista, RetrievalWare, ScienceDirect, ThomsonDirect,
NorthernLight, PostScript, PowerBook, DreamWorks, GeoCities,
EarthLink, PeaceNet, SportsZone, HotWired, CompuServe,
AskJeeves.