

Analysis Word of Abbreviations Used by Gen Z on Twitter (X): Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Article History:

Received: 12/11/2025

Accepted: 12/12/2025

Published: 10/01/2026

Keywords:

*Generation Z,
morphology,
Twitter (X),
word abbreviation*

This research discusses the abbreviations of words used on Twitter (X) by Gen Z. This study aims to analyze the categorization and functions of abbreviations used by Generation Z on the Twitter (X) platform. This research is based on theories of Schendl (2001) and Jakobson (1960). The study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a thematic analysis design, analyzing screenshot-based textual data. The findings indicate that the dominant type of abbreviation is Initialism, totalling 20 instances, which is defined as an abbreviation where each letter is pronounced separately. This is followed by Clipping, which consists of 10 instances and refers to a shortened form of a word. Blends recorded the same frequency, 10 instances, referring to words formed by combining two or more words. Next, Acronyms appeared 7 instances, defined as abbreviations pronounced as regular words. Lastly, Contractions were found in 3 instances, referring to two words combined into one using an apostrophe (''). This study not only identifies patterns of digital language development among Generation Z but also contributes academically to current digital linguistics studies. These findings enrich our understanding of how social media communication practices influence language change, especially in the use of word abbreviations. In addition, this study has significant social implications, particularly in efforts to improve digital literacy and to design communication strategies better suited to the characteristics of the younger generation in the technological era.

Kata Kunci:

*Generasi nol,
morfologi,
Twitter (X),
singkatan kata*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas singkatan kata yang digunakan di Twitter (X) oleh Generasi Z. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kategorisasi dan fungsi singkatan yang digunakan oleh Generasi Z di platform Twitter (X). Penelitian ini didasarkan pada teori Schendl (2001) dan Jakobson (1960). Studi ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan desain analisis tematik,

menganalisis data teks berbasis tangkapan layar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jenis singkatan yang dominan adalah Initialisme, dengan total 20 contoh, yang didefinisikan sebagai singkatan di mana setiap huruf diucapkan secara terpisah. Disusul oleh Pemendekan Kata, yang terdiri dari 10 contoh dan merujuk pada bentuk singkat dari sebuah kata. Gabungan Kata tercatat dengan frekuensi yang sama, yaitu 10 contoh, merujuk pada kata yang terbentuk dengan menggabungkan dua atau lebih kata. Selanjutnya, Akronim muncul sebanyak 7 kali, yang didefinisikan sebagai singkatan yang diucapkan seperti kata biasa. Terakhir, Kontraksi ditemukan sebanyak 3 kali, merujuk pada dua kata yang digabungkan menjadi satu menggunakan tanda apostrof ('). Studi ini tidak hanya mengidentifikasi pola perkembangan bahasa digital di kalangan Generasi Z, tetapi juga memberikan kontribusi akademis bagi studi linguistik digital saat ini. Temuan ini memperkaya pemahaman kita tentang bagaimana praktik komunikasi di media sosial memengaruhi perubahan bahasa, terutama dalam singkatan kata. Selain itu, penelitian ini memiliki implikasi sosial yang relevan, terutama dalam upaya meningkatkan literasi digital dan merancang strategi komunikasi yang lebih sesuai dengan karakteristik generasi muda di era teknologi.

INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, language is fundamental for interacting with others. Language both mirrors the social structures and expresses the cultural identity of its speakers, while also functioning as a medium for communication (Robins and Crystal, 2021). In the current technological era, a growing number of people interact through diverse internet-based communication platforms. This shift has prompted modifications in language, especially in online contexts, which can enhance communicative efficiency. A specific linguistic phenomenon resulting from this shift is the increased use of abbreviations. Examples commonly found in daily interactions include BTW (by the way), FYI (for your information), and CMIIW (correct me if I'm wrong).

Based on broader developments regarding digital communication trends, as pointed out by Mitchell et al. (2021), Twitter (X) is a social media and news-sharing platform where users exchange short messages that can include text, images, or

other media. The platform's character limit encourages concise and effective communication, fostering linguistic innovation through its fast and dynamic environment. As a result, Twitter (X) serves as a space conducive to the emergence of new abbreviations, informal language (slang), and other everyday styles of language.

Generation Z has the strongest connection to internet culture among active Twitter (X) users. According to the Pew Research Center (2019), Generation Z consists of individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Palley (2012) also states that Generation Z has exceptional technological skills and participates more frequently in online communication than other generations. Generation Z often uses abbreviations to communicate, which show identity, a sense of togetherness, and shared understanding in certain online communities. For example, the abbreviation "HBU?" (How about you?) is usually used to ask someone how they are doing in digital communication, and abbreviations such as ASAP, IDK, and FOMO have become part of everyday digital conversation, demonstrating the relationship between language use and the formation of social identity.

There are two perspectives that enable a comprehensive analysis from both structural and functional dimensions. Schendl (2001) explains that in terms of morphology, abbreviations can take various types, such as clipping, blends, acronyms, initialism, and contractions. On the other hand, abbreviations have various communicative purposes. According to Jakobson (1960), there are six types of language function: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic. As a result, the analysis of the use of abbreviations not only looks at form or structure, but also at the communicative purpose and social meaning intended to be conveyed through the use of these forms.

This study investigates the types and functions of abbreviations employed by Generation Z on Twitter (X). While prior research has analyzed online abbreviations generally, few studies have specifically examined how Generation Z utilizes these forms within the fast-paced, text-driven environment of Twitter (X). To address this gap, this research applies Schendl's (2001) classification of abbreviation types and Jakobson's (1960) framework of language functions to

tweets generated by Gen Z users. Thus, the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of how linguistic practices, particularly abbreviations, emerge, evolve, and reflect identity formation in contemporary digital communication.

METHOD

This study utilized qualitative descriptive research to thoroughly describe and understand the use of abbreviations by Generation Z on Twitter (X). This approach was selected because its purpose is to reveal the types and functions of abbreviations, requiring an examination of the linguistic phenomenon that necessitates understanding the social context and the researcher's interpretation. Through the descriptive design, the research can portray linguistic phenomena factually and comprehensively without manipulating variables. Purposive sampling was applied to select 42 Twitter (X) accounts identified as Generation Z users (individuals born between 1997 and 2012) based on their profile information. Data were collected during September 2024 through searching, reading, and capturing tweets from the selected accounts. The data were limited to public tweets containing abbreviations of one to three words, which appeared within everyday conversational contexts, specifically concerning entertainment discussions, casual interactions, and K-pop fandom culture. User identities were kept confidential to adhere to ethical research principles and privacy.

The data analysis process was executed in four sequential stages. The first stage involved the identification and selection of data to ensure abbreviations met the research criteria. The second stage comprised the classification of abbreviation types based on Schendl's (2001) framework, which includes clipping, blends, acronyms, initialism, and contractions. The third stage utilized Jakobson's (1960) theoretical framework of language functions to analyze the communicative role of the abbreviations, distinguishing between the referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic functions. The final stage involved the derivation of themes and patterns using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis was crucial for exploring consistent patterns of meaning in how Generation Z employs

abbreviations to construct meaning, maintain interactive functions, and express identity in online communication.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This analysis identified a total of 50 instances of abbreviations used by 42 Generation Z Twitter (X) accounts. These instances were categorized based on Jakobson's (1960) classification of language functions and Schend's (2001) classification of abbreviation types. Overall, the Initialism type (20 instances) was the most dominant abbreviation type, while the Referential function (22 instances) was the most frequently observed linguistic function, closely followed by the Conative function (13 instances). The distribution of these instances includes the Clipping type (10 instances), which comprises the Referential (7 instances) and Conative (3 instances) functions. The Blends type (10 instances) also consisted of the Referential function (7 instances) and the Conative function (3 instances). The Acronyms type (7 instances) featured the Emotive (3 instances), Conative (2 instances), and Metalingual (2 instances) functions. The dominant Initialism type (20 instances) was distributed across the Referential (7 instances), Conative (6 instances), Metalingual (3 instances), Emotive (2 instances), and Phatic (2 instances) functions. Lastly, the Contractions type (3 instances) included the Referential (1 instance), Conative (1 instance), and Phatic (1 instance) functions.

The 50 instances of abbreviations were categorized based on Schendl's (2001) framework. Table 1 provides the distribution of the five identified types.

Table 1. Types of Abbreviation

No	Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Clipping	10	20%
2.	Blends	10	20%
3.	Acronyms	7	14%
4.	Initialism	20	40%
5.	Contractions	3	6%
Total		50	100%

The results show that Initialism is the most prevalent type of abbreviation, accounting for 20 instances (40%) of the data. Initialisms are abbreviations where each letter is pronounced separately. This dominance, along with Clipping for 10 instances (20%) and Blends for 10 instances (20%) of the data, suggests a strong

preference among Gen Z for concise and effective language, which is consistent with the principle of language economy driven by Twitter's (X) character limits. This finding aligns with previous studies that recognize digital constraints as a main driver for morphological shortening.

1. Clipping

Expert 1

“kak cat 6 tuh yang grey ya?” (@y0uryaya, 9/26/24)

Based on the sentence “*kak cat 6 tuh yang grey ya?*” which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @y0uryaya, the abbreviation “cat” is classified as a clipping type according to Schendl (2001), as it is formed by shortening the word “category.”

2. Blend

Excerpt 2

“abis beli cahol 14rb LUCU BGT GAK KWATTT i lov blink blink jametz”
(@skngntuk, 9/26/24)

Based on the sentence “*abis beli cahol 14rb LUCU BGT GAK KWATTT i lov blink blink jametz*” which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @skngntuk, the word “cahol” is classified as a blend type according to Schendl (2001), as it is formed from two words, “card and holder.”

3. Acronym

Excerpt 3

“moots yg risih sama postku yg mostly skz, free utk bub aku ya” (@lnxauru, 9/15/24)

Based on the sentence “*moots yg risih sama postku yg mostly skz, free utk bub aku ya*” which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @lnxaurus, the word “bub” is classified as an acronym type according to Schendl (2001), as it is formed by combining the first letters of a series of words and pronouncing the resulting combination as a new word.

4. Initialism

Excerpt 4

“hyu dhiyo, ntky ya” (@rinosce, 7/19/24)

Based on the sentence “*hyu dhiyo, ntky ya*” which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @rinosce, the word “NTKY” is classified as an initialism type according to Schendl (2001), as it is formed from the initial letters of the phrase “nice to know you” and typically written in capital letters without being pronounced as a single word.

5. Contraction

Excerpt 5

“y'all, cookies pertama gue” (@raspbherry_, 9/2/24)

Based on the sentence “*y'all, cookies pertama gue*” which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @raspbherry_, the word “y'all” is classified as contractions type according to Schendl (2001), as it combines the words “you and all” by removing letters and adding an apostrophe.

Table 2. Functions of Abbreviation

No	Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Referential	22	44%
2.	Emotive	5	10%
3.	Conative	15	30%
4.	Phatic	3	6%
5.	Metalingual	5	10%
6.	Poetic	0	0%
Total		50	100%

Table 2 shows that the Referential function is the most prevalent, accounting for 22 instances (44%). The Conative functions, which have 15 instances (30%), come after this function. Additionally, there are 5 instances (10%) of both the Emotive and Metalingual functions. In contrast, Poetic function was completely absent with 0 instances (0%), and Phatic function was present in 3 instances (6%). This finding suggests that Generation Z strongly favors language that emphasizes information flow and direct connection with the recipient, which is consistent with the primary communication goals supported by platforms like Twitter (X).

1. Referential

Excerpt 1

“my world, my love, and my life, he’s na jaemin” (@sevenkites, 8/20/24)

Based on the sentence *“my world, my love, and my life, he’s na jaemin”* which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @sevenkites. The word “he’s” in this sentence serves a referential function based on Jakobson’s (1960) framework, which is used to convey factual information. In this context, “he is” refers to Na Jaemin, a member of the boy group NCT Dream, described by the speaker as their “world, love, and life,” expressing deep admiration and emotional attachment.

2. Emotive

Excerpt 2

“bolehh clo, aku sengaja ga kasih wm biar kalian bisa save hehe” (@91LLBEOKAY, 5/19/24)

Based on the sentence *“bolehh clo, aku sengaja ga kasih wm biar kalian bisa save hehe”* which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @91LLBEOKAY. The word “wm” in this sentence serves an emotive function based on Jakobson’s (1960) framework, which conveys the speaker’s personal feelings or attitudes. In this context, “watermark” is mentioned to express that the author intentionally did not include a watermark so that others could freely save and share the concert photos. This reflects a sense of generosity and a desire to spread the enjoyment of the event among fellow fans.

3. Conative

Excerpt 3

“aku mau bebersih folls nih, rep aja biar ngga kesapu atau yg belum ku fb jg rep yah aku tunggu sampe nanti sore” (@nunaajwii, 9/9/24)

Based on the sentence *“aku mau bebersih folls nih, rep aja biar ngga kesapu atau yg belum ku fb jg rep yah aku tunggu sampe nanti sore”* which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @nunaajwii, the abbreviation “rep” in this sentence serves a conative function based on Jakobson’s (1960) framework. This function is characterized by the speaker’s attempt to influence or direct the behavior or actions

of the listener, typically through commands, requests, or invitations. In this context, “reply” is used as a request for followers to leave a comment so that they are not removed during the account’s “follower cleaning” (deleting followers) process. If certain followers are removed and have not been followed back by the account owner, replying to the post allows them to maintain interaction and potentially restore the connection.

4. Phatic

Excerpt 4

“*hyu dhiyo, ntky ya*” (@rinosce, 7/19/24)

Based on the sentence “*hyu dhiyo, ntky ya*” which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @rinosce, the word “NTKY” in this sentence serves a phatic function based on Jakobson’s (1960). This function which is aimed at establishing or maintaining social interaction. In this context, “nice to know you” is used as a casual greeting toward a new mutual friend, reflecting a friendly and informal tone. This abbreviation is commonly used on social media to create familiarity and strengthen online relationships.

5. Metalingual

Excerpt 5

“*bukan indian tp native americans, disebut indian krn org2 eropa yg ke amrik mikir mereka org india krn warna kulitnya cmiiw*” (@meinarchivez, 05/30/24)

Based on the sentence “*bukan indian tp native americans, disebut indian krn org2 eropa yg ke amrik mikir mereka org india krn warna kulitnya cmiiw*” which was written by a Generation Z Twitter (X) user @meinarchivez, the word “cmiiw” in this sentence serves a metalingual function. This function which is used to ensure mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener. In this context, “cmiiw” (*correct me if I’m wrong*) is used by the author to invite correction or confirmation regarding the explanation about the misunderstanding between Native Americans and Indians, showing openness to other people’s perspectives and input.

This study demonstrates a clear consistency with Schendl’s (2001) theory of word structure and Jakobson’s (1960) language functions, incorporating specific adaptations for the digital environment. Structurally, the widespread use of

Initialism and Clipping is in line with the principle of linguistic efficiency (economy), which proves that a formal adaptation is necessary for effective communication on the Twitter (X) platform. Functionally, the high rate of the Referential and Conative functions reflects the main focus of language use on delivering information and prompting action. Conversely, the absence of the Poetic function supports the view that the aesthetic aspect of messages tends to be unimportant in digital communication that prioritizes speed and practical results.

The results are largely consistent with previous studies (e.g., Yusuf & Marlina, 2020; Rosita, 2024) on the dominance of Initialisms and Clippings in social media. However, this study introduces significant contextual and methodological changes by focusing its analysis on the linguistic interactions of Generation Z on Twitter (X), which have often been overlooked or obscured in broader age group analyses. This study serves as confirmation and validation of relevant morphological and functional trends, while also contributing new sociolinguistic insights by emphasizing the role of abbreviations as markers of collective identity and mechanisms of solidarity within fandom subcultures. This aspect expands the scope of existing theoretical research.

Beyond the functional classification, Gen Z's use of abbreviations shows a deeper sociolinguistic understanding. Abbreviations not only function as a form of linguistic economy but also as markers of group identity that solidify social membership and closeness, especially in fandom culture and online communities. Through shared understanding, abbreviations become a mechanism of solidarity that differentiates the in-group from the out-group. Furthermore, the dominance of initialisms and their high referential function indicates that Gen Z prioritizes communication that is fast, efficient, and gets straight to the point. Thus, abbreviations not only represent linguistic creativity but also reflect cultural values that emphasize speed, practicality, and social connection in digital interactions. These findings show that language adapts to become a symbolic tool for asserting identity while fulfilling the pragmatic needs of communication on platforms such as Twitter (X).

CONCLUSION

Based on Schendl's (2001) and Jakobson's (1960) theoretical frameworks, the main objective of this qualitative study is to identify and analyze the types of abbreviations and the functions used by Generation Z on Twitter (X). According to the analysis, Initialism is the most common mode of communication, with 20 data being the most widely used in this study. Functionally, the analysis shows that the Referential Function dominates (22 data), followed by the Conative Function (15 data), while the Poetic Function is not found at all. The dominance of these types and functions indicates Gen Z's tendency towards concise and effective language; this is in line with platform character limitations and the principle of language economy, not just for appearance or aesthetics. The high prevalence of the Conative Function indicates that abbreviations serve not only as tools for information transfer but also as tools to foster group unity and persuasion. Theoretically, these findings suggest that Gen Z's use of abbreviations on Twitter (X) has transcended practical aspects to signify collective identity and inclusive practices. This indicates that in digital sociolinguistic studies, social media functions as an agent of linguistic change and a primary driver of morphological change.

To explore the broader implications of these findings, further studies are needed. A key recommendation is to compare platforms to explore the consistency of language economics across other social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Discord. Additionally, the study should focus on specific communities; for example, research could be conducted on the Twitter (X) platform with *Komunitas Marah-Marah* and accounts such as @convomf, and include user demographic variables such as gender, region, and experience to obtain a larger sample. To understand the contextual nuances of the most common abbreviations, it is recommended to use in-depth pragmatic analysis. In the era of social media, studies of digital language and language teaching will greatly benefit from this research.

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