

I CAN HAS THESIS?: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF LOLSPEAK

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Lolspeak, which I characterize as an internet dialect of English that is used in conjunction with images of cats, exhibits distinctive variations and patterns which differ from those of standard English. Lolspeak has influenced other language use and may have a significant impact on the English language, due in part to the internet's role in the evolution of English (Crystal "Language and the Internet," 2006:26-27). To approach this data, I created a multi-modal discourse transcription technique for analyzing Lolspeak utterances within the context of their images based on Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss "The Discovery of Grounded Theory" 2007:9). I implemented this technique with randomly collected Lolspeak data that I collected from the website www.icanhascheezburger.com. My work has dual future implications in that it could be used to further studies of Lolspeak or other internet dialects/ languages, and the transcription method I have invented could be beneficial to those looking at other forms of multi-modal discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

If we are to understand truly how the Internet might shape our language, then it is essential that we seek to understand how different varieties of language are used on the Internet. – John Paolillo (Crystal “Language and the Internet” 2006:25)

My thesis focuses on the recently invented dialect of English called *Lolspeak*, and how it is used in images called macros on the website www.icanhascheezburger.com. The first three letters of the word *Lolspeak* represent of the acronym L.O.L, for “laugh out loud.” Thus, the name characterizes the contents as humorous. Lolspeak began with images (also known as macros) of cats accompanied by text, usually referred to as captions. The cats displayed in this online forum are known as Lolcats, the feline creatures who use or are talked about in Lolspeak, in a small section of the internet, but recognition has extended far beyond the internet and into the pop culture world. The Lolcat phenomenon is interesting because of the innovative language play (with the text superimposed onto the cat macros) created mostly by native English speakers whose intentions, it seems, were to make amusing text for funny cat pictures to evoke positive reactions in others. However, in the process of doing so, they also created a unique form of English, that I analyze here as a distinctive dialect of English, whose development shows how dialects are formed. The Lolcat phenomenon has become a full-blown internet community that has sculpted the rules of this new dialect of English, and is influencing spoken language by its growing popularity.

In the mid 2000’s, Lolspeak appeared on the internet scene (Dubs “Lolcats | Know Yours Meme” 2009). The exact details of its beginning cannot be accurately described due to the lack of reliable sources resulting from the malleability of the websites involved in its inception, as well as the malleability of its community. However, the first solid pieces of Lolspeak’s foundation appear to come from a cat food advertisement and a celebration called “Caturday” on the image board site, 4chan, which is considered not safe for work (a common term for any online media that is deemed unsuitable for being viewed in a public place due to language or content).

One of the origin myths of Lolcat is a cat food ad (Figure 1.1), Russian in origin but with English text. This cat food ad was one of the first macros posted for “Caturday” on 4chan, and this supposedly began the Lolcats trend. 4chan, a set of image boards with many inside jokes, anonymous members, and vulgar threads, started Caturday, which was known as the day of the week between Friday and Sunday when (lol)cats would do whatever it was that (lol)cats did (Elle “Caturday | Know Your Meme” 2011). The intended consequence was posting a lot of pictures with napping cats. Many contributors to 4chan would post pictures of cats with captions on Caturday, and these cats made people “lol,” or “laugh out loud.” Caturday became popular enough on 4chan that many associated sites were created for Lolcat macros. Many pages of these websites have dwindled into nonexistence, with the prominent exception of www.icanhascheezburger.com, which showcases the now famous Russian cat food ad (Menning “Happy Cat” 2009) that offers one variant origin myth that reportedly ignited the Lolcat phenomenon.



Figure 1.1 – The First Lolcat

The ad shows a grey cat looking up slightly, mouth parted and eyes glossy, with the text “I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?” As an advertisement in Russia, it employs an unintentionally non-standard form of English that might be used by non-native speakers to indirectly articulate putative speech by domestic felines (Dufour “Dialogic Dogs and Phatic Felines: Speaking To and Through Our Pets” 2003:65-70). This is a type of foreigner talk, a type of non-native speech that contains grammatical errors compared to standard English (Ferguson “Absence of Copula

and the Notion of Simplicity: A Study of Normal Speech, Baby Talk, Foreigner Talk and Pidgins" 1968:5). The text used in the ad became the title of the website www.icanhascheezburger.com, now the go-to source for all things Lolcat, and the Russian cat food ad became the first macro placed on the site. Due to the Russian cat food ad originating from a non-native speaker English, the question form it uses is slightly different in word order from that of standardized English questions. This form of non-standard English has been embraced in the Lolcat community at www.icanhascheezburger.com that has emerged in postings to this site (See Section 6.1 – Lolspeak Forums). Not only is the sentence structure of Lolspeak different from that of standard English, but the verb forms and spellings differ as well, and in a distinctive fashion. Some elements of Lolspeak (such as spelling) are found in Netspeak as well. This is a factor of shared origin of both of these forms of English on the internet.

Lolspeak tends to be associated with internet memes, which are “an idea or element of social behaviour passed on through generations in a culture, [especially] by imitation” (“Memes” 2011). This is the original definition by Richard Dawkins, who intended to use memes to show long term social behavior. The arrival of the internet has given way to using memes as viral ideas that spreads through social media quickly and is then replaced with a different meme. Memes are important to the way Lolspeak is written. Macros are the images on which memes are placed, leading Lolspeak to a careful balance between the ‘written speech’ standardized through memes, and the free flowing typed words of those who participate in Lolspeak forums, are in the process of translating the Bible into Lolspeak, or use it amongst friends (“Guidelines/Images” 2008; “Guidelines” 2010).

Lolspeak is a part of Netspeak, which is the term for acronyms, abbreviations, emoticons, and slang produced by internet users for keyboarding on the internet (Crystal “Language and the Internet” 2006:12). Like Netspeak, Lolspeak is distinctively different from standard English; some of the differences derive from their origin in the medium of writing on a

computer keyboard, and thusly it is primarily written language, not oral. As Lolspeak and Netspeak developed, their forms of written English have begun to influence spoken English.

Lolspeak is an innovative internet-based form of language. It presents a new kind of language change important to investigate. I pose the following questions for the analysis of Lolspeak: Why is it important to observe this form of English? What purpose do Lolcats and Lolspeak serve? Why does Lolspeak orthography differ from that standard English? Is Lolspeak really part of Netspeak as I suggested above, or something else? Is it really an invented dialect? Could we take seriously the suggestions that Lolspeak is a “kitty pidgin” as suggested by Anil Dash, as though Lolspeak had arisen between English and the language of cats?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With many geographical locations now assiduously examined for data, linguists are turning to the internet to find new fields of research. In an area so ripe with possibility, the internet provides a new frontier for linguistic research.

David Crystal is an important scholar to address, as he is one of the founding voices on the internet linguistics phenomenon. His books “Language and the Internet” and “Txting: The Gr8 Db8” provide a great deal of analysis of nonstandard English orthography, especially “Txting: The Gr8 Db8” (2009:35-62), and his book, “Language Play” provides examples and reasons for why people play with language. “Txting: The Gr8 Db8”, as implied by the title, focuses specifically on the form of language used in text messages, addressing questions about how and why texting is used. As the language used in texting is part of the broad spectrum included with Netspeak, Crystal’s analysis of texting provides insight relevant to linguistic evaluation of online language.

“Language and the Internet,” Crystal’s 2006 book, covers many topics concerning the use of language online, from gaming chats to forum posts. This second edition is the most current, yet due to the speed at which things change on the internet, some of the information in his book is out of date, where other areas require more exploration. Nevertheless, the lack of relevance does not diminish the sheer amount of information Crystal manages to concisely deliver.

Crystal’s “Language Play” details many different ways in which people use nonstandard language for humorous effect. One of his main points in the book is that language play is not just a phenomenon engaged by children, but is also important to the socialization of adults (2001:93-155). In fact, Crystal argues that perhaps our ability and desire to play with language

is part of what makes us human (2001:222-225). After all, our language skills and what we do with them separate us from other animals.

Another linguistic giant in the internet world, Naomi Baron, specializes in examining past and present language change. In her aforementioned book, "From Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading," Baron brings awareness to the quirks that have entered the English language over the years and guides the reader to understand why English has evolved this way in the modern world (2009).

Crystal and Baron frequently mention that Netspeak, textspeak, and other variations of English are positive influences on language, despite the opposing prescriptivist belief. Other researchers have also contributed data, facts, and common sense to help overcome the false presumptions that nonstandard English degrades the language and language skills (Fortanet, Palmer, and Posteguillo "3.14 - A Developed Sense of Humor" 2004; Labov "The Logic of Nonstandard English" 2000:456-466; "NetSpeak Brings Freshness and Creativity to Everyday English" 2005; "Netspeak the New Newspeak?" 2010; "Netspeak, L33t, Internet and IM Languages Legitimized" 2005). In fact, Baron's article, "Are Digital Media Changing Language?" is designed to neutralize such statements (2009:42-46). In this article, she acknowledges that digital media are playing a role in changing language. She explains why this is, and how language change is a good thing.

Not only do people play with language for the purpose of humor, they also play with language in order to accurately describe spoken forms of dialect dialogues on paper. This orthographic depiction of dialects is referred to as 'eye dialect.' Most usage of eye dialect occurs works of fiction with characters that have different speech patterns from the rest of the characters in the book. Jane Raymond Walpole explores the author's process and reason for using eye dialect for speech patterns by writing about how an author:

attempts to transmute vocalized sounds into ink, he finds several devices available to the task, none of them wholly satisfactory. He can vary the syntax of his sentences to recreate conversational patterns. He can orchestrate the punctuation to echo pause, pitch, and stress. He can tailor the diction to reflect large or limited vocabularies, informal colloquialisms, and regional idioms. And he can use "eye dialect." That is, usually by adding an apostrophe to the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, he can twist standard orthography. (1974:191-192)

This way of using nonstandard English orthography to highlight pronunciation is something that Mary Bucholtz discusses in her article "The politics of transcription." She points to many court cases where eye dialect is not used in transcription because then assumptions are made about the people in question. However, Bucholtz suggests how eye dialect may be handy for phonetic representation both for academics and general audiences who are unfamiliar with transcription techniques, as this allows them to more closely connect to the sounds of speech.

Dennis Preston also promotes the use of eye dialect should be embraced. In his article, "'Ritin' Fowklower Daun 'Rong: Folklorists' Failures in Phonology," Preston addresses the critics of the use of eye dialect in folklore publications on variation in spoken English on the grounds that eliminating eye dialect prevents stories from being told in the way their tellers intended them to be conveyed (1982:304-307). Preston surveyed different dialects of English to determine which ones were likely to be given eye dialect treatment, and which ones were likely to be written in standard English. Preston gives many different possibly phonological ways to depict accents with eye dialects.

Transcription of spoken language is problematic, and it is becoming increasingly more difficult to accurately transcribe text and speech involved with digital media. Elinor Ochs and Mary Bucholtz begin addressing the issue of transcription problems in general in their respective works. Much of Ochs' work, "Transcription as theory," shows the issues with 'official' transcription techniques, which do not allow for nonverbal communication (1979:43-72). Ochs stated that nonverbal communication was very important for analyzing the children she was working with. Bucholtz's article, "The politics of transcription," uses an example of two different transcriptions of a police interrogation used later in a courtroom (2000:1439-65). She shows that

the manner in which the interrogation is transcribed drastically affects the outcome of the court's decision, just by something as simple as the way stress in speech is transcribed. With problems like this simple monologue transcription, it's easy to see why adding new technology may add challenges to creating an accurate transcription method that incorporates a cohesive blend of spoken word and visual media.

Sigrid Norris addresses this difficulty in her article, "The Implication of Visual Research for Discourse Analysis: Transcription Beyond Language" (2002:197-121). Norris analyzed the discourse of five young boys as they watched a television show and interacted with a computer game. She noted that, while the boys might make comments to each other, they tended to focus their gaze on the medium they were interacting with. In attempting to apply traditional transcription techniques to this mediated interaction, Norris found that she needed to include visuals to give precise understanding of what was being analyzed. Due to this, Norris created her own transcription techniques, which she displays in her paper. Norris is not, however, advocating that her transcription technique is the one to be followed. She uses her transcription technique as an example, as well as a guide of how a combined visual and text transcription can be made. Norris encourages researchers to examine their data and develop their own transcription techniques based on their own specific data set, which is something I have used with my own work.

The way Norris views transcription is the way Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss view research methods. In their collaborative work, "The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research," Glaser and Strauss hypothesize that it is more beneficial in social sciences to let the data speak for itself before theorizing how the data can be interpreted (2007). By purely observing the data and producing ideas based on the data, researchers avoid the trap of forcing the data to fit their preconceived constraints, and may thus see more clearly the salient features in their work. While this notion is one that many social researchers subscribe to,

Glaser and Strauss' theory strictly emphasizes the importance of interpreting the data only after it has been collected.

When looking at any set of social data, one must always account for the social part. Language in use cannot be kept in a bubble separated from culture. Joel Sherzer makes readers very aware of this symbiosis in his work, "A Discourse-Centered Approach to Language and Culture" (1987:295-309). Sherzer grounds his perspective in the history of earlier investigations of the relationship between language and culture. According to Sherzer, one should never try to separate the two, as one provides the frame in which to see the other.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to analyze Lolspeak, I decided to collect a random sample of cat macros from the years 2007-2009 on www.icanhascheezburger.com. I selected every fortieth cat macro posted on the site during this period as my database, and stored them in a file folder on my computer to later analyze and categorize. As I began to sort through my data, I realized that the size of my data sample was a bit too daunting, as the site posts around ten cat macros a day. I then scaled my data back to include only 2007-2008, the first two years of Lolspeak, resulting in my now ninety-five tokens of data (See Appendix A). The choice of every fortieth macro was done to produce a random sample set, and the selection of the first two years of postings was to observe Lolspeak's features.

I used Grounded Theory methodology to formulate my analysis (Glaser and Strauss "The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research" 2007). Grounded Theory derives hypotheses from observations of the data instead of first making a hypothesis, collecting data, and then attempting to verify if the hypothesis was or was not verified. "Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. Generating a theory involves a process of research (2007:6)."

I decided to investigate Lolspeak sayings and how it was developing rather than making assumptions and trying to determine if any pre-imposed assumptions were correct. Nevertheless, I had already exposure to Lolspeak, having encountered it years before undertaking this project. I put Grounded Theory to work to anticipate possible categories that would help illuminate my data.

I began constructing a spreadsheet based on elements that I saw repeated in data, ways in which Lolspeak differed from standard written English, and specific features of the text and image. Some categories were useful, and for those that were not, I made revisions. The

spreadsheet underwent many changes as I slowly added data. I then grouped these features and elements into categories.

The final revised categories are as follows: number, date, text, frames, contextual settings, characters present + action, recurring characters, narrator or speaker, monologue or dialogue, references, spelling variants, subject/verb agreement, missing or added parts of speech, font differences and capitals, punctuation, and last but not least, lol formulas (See Appendix C for full spreadsheet).



Figure 3.1 – HappyCat and Figure 3.2 – Saturday Night Fever

Below are examples of my data (figures above) analyzed through these categories:

Table 3.1 – Spreadsheet Section 1

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings
1	01/11/07	I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?	T C	
5	02/12/07	SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER	T C	Human body wearing disco clothes and on a dance floor

The first section shows the number given in the first column. This marks each macro in the order that I found it online. The “date” column gives the chronological order of appearance posted online. The “text” column shows the words used in the macro. The “frames” column was

added to analyze where the text was placed in relation to cats (or other animals) in the picture. “T” denotes text; “C” denotes cats. In instances where there are many cats, “MC” was used. For any other animal in the macro, I used “O” for coding. “Contextual Settings” refers only to settings in the images that provide relevant information to the text. For example, #5 in my data has the text “Caturday Night Fever.” As shown below, this is a reference to the movie, “Saturday Night Fever,” which involves disco. This knowledge makes the settings in #5 contextually relevant.

Table 3.2 – Spreadsheet Section 2

#	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	Lol Formulas
1	Happycat	Speaker	Yes	Monologue		(I) + (can) + (has) + [noun]?
5	Cat head on human body		No		Saturday Night Fever, Caturday	

In the next section of my spreadsheet (Table 3.2), I show the characters presented in the macro, along with any actions they may be performing in the macro that are relevant to the texts. For instance, in #1, Happycat is listed as the character because it is the name that posters have attached to this particular cat. For other macros with cats that are not given nicknames that reflect their online creations, they are described like #5. The “Narrator or Speaker?” column denotes the voice of the text as one of the characters in the picture or a disembodied outsider. The “Recurring?” panel shows whether the character, narrator, or speaker recurs in my data or in elsewhere on www.icanhascheezburger.com. Again, this category applies to Happycat, yet not the cat present in #5, since the caption of #5 is in the font used in the movie. The “Lol Formulas” section was designed to look for patterns in Lolspeak, which will be analyzed later in greater detail.

Table 3.3 – Spreadsheet Section 3

#	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
1	Missing determiner	have	cheeseburger	Capslock	Question mark
5		frag	Saturday	Styled like "Saturday Night Fever" font	

The last sections of my spreadsheet analysis (Table 3.3) are devoted to comparing the macros against standard English in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. I included fonts because Lolspeak predominantly uses **Impact** or Arial - the font this paper is written in (McRaney "A Special In-Depth Analysis by David McRaney" 2007). Variations to the font, such as posting everything in capslock or a nonstandard Lolspeak font, were analyzed to determine whether they were included in an overall pattern in my data set.

The intention of my thesis is to focus on the way Lolspeak is presented and used. Other information in the macros is only considered with reference to the text. (In order to see a more cohesive analysis of how text and images blend together, see the forthcoming work of NiTyjah Thigpen, "Decoding Comics: Essential Elements for Transcription.")

Some of these spreadsheet categories function to keep track of data. The others are designed in order to provide as much information as possible about the linguistic structure of Lolspeak; however, my protocol also revealed many tidbits of information in this data set that could lead to other interesting studies on Lolcats and cat macros, such as the way text and image evoke cultural referents. For the purposes of this paper, I will be focusing on the text, with attention to orthography (including variants, use of capitalization and punctuation), subject/verb agreement, missing or added parts of speech, and use of fonts. I will also be further analyzing how Lolspeak compares with spoken and written English, as well as "Lol Formulas" categories.

Any reference to 'standard' or 'regular' English refers to the English found in most dictionaries and taught in native English classrooms in the United States of America.

After collecting and analyzing my data, I returned to www.icanhascheezburger.com for other macros that would provide confirmation of apparent trends in my data set and to pick up notable Lolspeak features not available in my sample. I only supplemented macros from 2007 and 2008, the years my data came from. In the following tables containing cat macro data, not every instance of a particular feature's appearance is shown. The tables draw attention to the use of particular features of Lolspeak.

4. THE LANGUAGE OF LOLSPEAK

4.1 An Online Dialect

In January 2007, a picture was posted on the internet of a grey cat with the caption: "I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?". The picture and text were originally from a Russian cat food ad, which may explain why the text was not completely in standard English ("Happycat" 2010). Internet users found the picture amusing, and created similar pictures of cats with misspelled captions in nonstandard English grammar. The website www.icanhascheezburger.com is currently the largest host of such pictures (also called macros). Through this website and others, Lolspeak, the text used in such captions, was born. Lolspeak's name comes from lol (or LOL), an acronym for 'laugh out loud,' which originated in textspeak or chatspeak. The name is modeled on Netspeak, which some consider Lolspeak to be a subset of. Netspeak is an electronically "written speech" that is linguistically constrained by a keyboard, a lack of face to face interaction, and a lack of vocal tone (Crystal "Language and the Internet" 2006:26). The term 'Netspeak' is a play on George Orwell's "Newspeak" from his novel 1984 ("Netspeak the New Newspeak?" 2011).

The cats in the macros posted came to be called Lolcats, as their purpose for being in such pictures was to be cute and make people lol. The cat macros rapidly became a popular internet phenomenon. Anyone can log on to www.icanhascheezburger.com and make a cat macro ("Make Your Own LOL" 2011). Whether or not the macro is posted on the site depends on the site editors. The site gets many macros each day, and editors pick ten of the funniest each day to post ("FAQ – Cheezburger Company Blog" 2011). Part of deciding which ones are the funniest, of course, involves reading the captions. It is unknown why exactly editors will choose one macro over another, though it is important to note that these individual choices influence the evolution of Lolspeak.

However, just as the Académie Française cannot patrol the streets handing out violations for nonstandard use of their standardization of French, neither can the editors at Cheezburger, Inc. (the company that owns www.icanhascheezburger.com) contain how Lolspeak is represented outside of the macros. For every picture posted on www.icanhascheezburger.com, there is also a forum underneath each picture so that people can comment on the pictures and respond to other comments. For the most part, comments on these pictures are written in Lolspeak.

One of the first people to analyze Lolspeak was Anil Dash, a blogger, who labeled Lolspeak as a 'kitty pidgin' in an attempt to define it in his blog after a conversation amongst two friends:

...where I suggested this consistent grammar for Lolcats could be a "cweeole". Knowing a bit more about such things now, I realize this isn't a creole but more likely a pidgin language, used to help cats talk to humans. And since "pidgin" is already a cutesy spelling of a mispronunciation, there doesn't seem to be any really cute way to rename it to reflect its uniqueness. "Kitty pidgin" might be the closest thing we have to a name for this new language. ("Cats Can Have Grammar" 2007)

Though I appreciate the enthusiasm of Dash and his friends for making such an analysis, I cannot agree with Dash's assessment of Lolspeak as a pidgin ("Pidginholed" 2007). However, I applaud Anil Dash, who is not a linguist, for being the first person to give Lolspeak this much consideration and posting about it. Also, I find that changing 'creole' into the more Lolspeak appropriate "cweeole" in order to define Lolspeak shows a certain amount of commitment to the appreciation of language play.

One of the features that drew Dash to Lolspeak was the novelty of a community of people creating an innovative type of speech through cat captions ("Cats Can Has Grammar" 2007; "Cats, Comics, and Closure" 2007). However, captioning pictures of animals is not itself a new phenomenon. Comics provide examples, such as seen in "Pearls Before Swine" and "Pogo," which provide other instances of a fabricated form of written speech. Comics have written text, but they are meant to convey the sounds of spoken language. Their nonstandard

English orthography is an example of eye dialect, and is used to give an accurate phonological representation of the speech sounds being referenced in the text.

The crocodiles in “Pearls Before Swine” (Figure 4.1) are supposed to be funny because they speak differently and, as one of them says, because they are dumb.

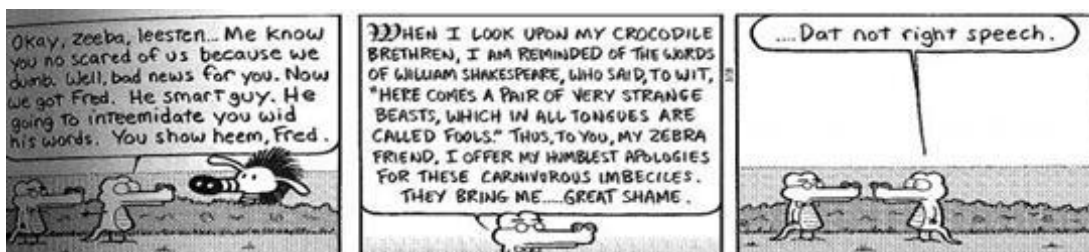


Figure 4.1 – Pearls Before Swine

In “Pearls Before Swine,” one crocodile asks Fred the crocodile, who (unlike the other crocodiles) is educated, to give a speech that will blow the ‘zeeba’ away. Unfortunately, Fred gives the wrong one, with visibly flowery text, saying he wishes no harm to zebras. The strip is supposed to be humorous by contrast. It pokes fun at the stupidity of the crocodiles, which is indicated in their nonstandard speech, and hints that it is not okay to be like the crocodiles (unless you are like Fred), due to the associated of nonstandard speech with stupidity (Pastis “Da Brudderhood of Zeeba Zeeba Eata: a Pearls before Swine Collection” 2007:31).

The language use by the crocodiles (except Fred) is marked by a few simplified features. This speech contains only two forms of negatives: no and not. These negatives function with no form of “to be” verb. There’s one form for the first person singular pronoun: the objective ‘me.’ These features show language simplification shown in ‘foreigner talk.’ Charles Ferguson’s article, “Absence of Copula and the Notion of Simplicity: A Study of Normal Speech, Baby Talk, Foreigner Talk and Pidgins,” while focusing mostly on copula also explains the phenomena of baby talk and foreigner talk (1968). Baby talk and foreigner talk are both forms of English, but are used by those who have not yet mastered the English language, or are native speakers accommodating their speech for speakers who are not fluent in English. This phenomenon

results in language that reduces complexity, sometimes omitting things such as copulas while conveying idea.

Another comic that uses a created form of nonstandard English is “Pogo.” This is a series of comic strips drawn by Walt Kelly. The strip provided below comes from his book “Pogo’s Will Be That Was” (15).



Figure 4.2 – Pogo

As shown in the strip, many of the verbs do not match their singular subjects. In the first and third panels, the word “what” substitutes for the word “that.” The word “always” is spelled “allus,” to show eye dialect, just as the apostrophes are placed there for the same reason.



Figure 4.3 – The Broons

“The Broons” is another cartoon that contains nonstandard English. It is a strip of a Scottish family, and is meant mostly for Scottish speakers who are familiar with this culture and laugh about it. The strip is meant to be read in a Scottish accent, and is used to express the comedic side of Scottish life. (“The Broons and Oor Wullie: the Glory Years 1956-1969” 2009:25)

Nonstandard English is written in images that tend to fall under one of two types. Either the images express cultural ideals and values that should be emulated (or give warnings against those that should not) or the images show how funny variant language looks, and how those who do not know how to properly speak English are not intelligent.

Given these features, I can understand why Dash would want to call Lolspeak a pidgin. Pidgins, after all, are usually looked down upon because they are simple forms of two or more languages merged to achieve limited communication (Sebba “Pidgins and Creoles” 1997:167). Pictures of cats with misspelled language and variant grammar are not the most prestigious pictures in the world. However, Lolspeak does not meet the requisite conditions of a pidgin language, which develops as a result of particular kinds of language contact. Forming a pidgin requires having one or more superstrate languages (lexifiers) and a substrate (grammatical) language. Since all of the vocabulary comes from English, this means Lolspeak’s nonstandard feature must come from a substrate of cat language. The problem here lies with the fact that though humans do engage in communication with cats, there is no linguistically persuasive

evidence that cats have a language, though many cat owners have speculated about it. By definition, a pidgin must involve the blending of at least two languages into a unique form that is reminiscent of the languages involved (1997:168). With Lolspeak, we only have one language represented: English.

One trait in which Lolspeak and pidgins are similar is in their varying grammatical structure. Pidgins, in their early stages, often use many different forms of “to be” verbs to agree with a multitude of pronouns (shown in Section 4.3.1 – Syntax).

However, one area in which Lolspeak and pidgins differ is with relative clauses. Mark Sebba includes Bickerton’s checklist of features for when a pidgin transitions into a creole in his book on the subject. #5 on this list is that creoles have relative clauses and pidgins do not (1997:173-175).

Table 4.1 – Lolspeak Clauses

1.	2.
	

Table 4.1 contains two examples of relative clauses shown in Lolspeak. However, #1 (NOBODY NOOOOOEZ DA TRUBBLE I SEEN) is a quoted song lyric, and #2 (Surveys shown two out of three kittehs believe in Ceiling Cat) appears to be a standard English utterance. These macros may show a more acrolectal variation of Lolspeak. The fact that they are present in Lolspeak shows that Lolspeak can use relative clauses, though it may not do so regularly. #2 references Ceiling Cat, which is a deity in the Lolcat world (“LOLcats, Television, Tropes and

Idioms” 2011; “LOLcats |Cracked.com” 2011). So, not only does Lolspeak have relative clauses, but it also is used to make familiar cultural references, and is involved in creating a sort of culture for those who use Lolspeak.

It is important to point out that of my data in Table 4.1 occurred in 2008. Dash posted his theory of how to define Lolspeak in April of 2007, a few months after the first Lolcat debuted, early in the life of Lolcats. Compounding his limited data with his lack of linguistic knowledge and pidgin/creole terms conspired to lead him to a conclusion that is not accurate about Lolspeak.

Since Lolspeak is not a kitty pidgin, it is reasonable to ask what Lolspeak is. As Lolspeak seems to be comprised of only English (albeit, nonstandard English), it cannot be a pidgin, a creole, or a mixed language. Since the changes Lolspeak makes to vocabulary are very prominent (Styler “Im in Mai Blog, Postin’ Bout Cats” 2007; Zimmer “LOL- Lexicography” 2007), it is possible that Lolspeak is a register of English. Both Lolspeak and registers require an in-group community of speakers. Both use vocabulary in specific social practices.

However, some definitions of register specify it as strictly referring to vocabulary while others include syntax. The former definition is the one that I adhere to for register. Under this definition, not all of Lolspeak’s features can be analyzed, as Lolspeak is distinctive along a number of linguistic dimensions. I would like to propose the following terms to define Lolspeak: internet dialect or artificial dialect. The definition of dialect that I ascribe to is “a language variety in which the use of grammar and vocabulary identifies the regional or social background of the user” (Crystal “A Dictionary of Language” 2001:87) All definitions of dialect include these items, whereas only some definitions of register do, which has led me to chose ‘dialect’ over ‘register.’

I selected the word ‘artificial’ to academically classify Lolspeak to describe languages that did not evolve organically. Artificial languages have been invented for many years for

creating cultures in books or movies (like Elvish, and Klingon) or for trying to establish peaceful utopia, like Esperanto (Isenberg “Artificial Languages” 2011).

Another approach to understanding what Lolspeak might be is to look towards the umbrella term “Netspeak.” David Crystal defines Netspeak as the language we use on the internet, but many people use many different languages on the internet (Language and the Internet 19-20). Correlations are drawn between Netspeak and textspeak, which is language used on a phone keyboard. There is an overlap of what fits into which definition, especially with abbreviations like LOL. To describe this overlap, Dustin Williams coined the term ‘pop orthography’ as a term based "on the assumption that this [Net and text speak] orthography is as fluid as popular culture (“Pop Orthography” 2010).

Online communication can greatly differ from face to face communication. Written words, for example, do not translate tone well, which is why I would consider calling Lolspeak an internet dialect. While Lolspeak is still a phenomenon found mostly on the internet, it has penetrated other internet and media genres. A website called “ThinkGeek” vends Lolcat related merchandise, including but not limited to word magnets and shirts (See Appendix B). A TV series called “Big Bang Theory” has an episode where two characters are discussing emailing Lolcats to each other (“Panty Piñata Polarization” 2008), with one of them quoting the first Lolcat. It may be premature to think that Lolspeak may have a very full life on and off the internet in the future, but our ‘real’ world is interacting more and more with the online world all the time.

Though Lolspeak, an internet/artificial dialect, is not universally known, and accompanies silly pictures of cats, I believe it is important to document. Lolspeak is so prevalent that people who are not linguists, like Dash, are analyzing and participating in this phenomenon. The question arises: Why has Lolspeak come into existence? There is no dire need for such a

variant of English. Captions of pictures of animals have been around before Lolspeak's existence. Yet, here it is. Plain and simple, humans love to play with language. Preceded language play that spawns discussions on TV shows, shirts, and analysis on blogs should be something linguists pay attention to, especially as many of these discussions are held by people who are not linguists.

4.2 Phoneme/Grapheme Correspondence

One area in which Lolspeak purposefully differs from standard English is in its spelling conventions. Many individuals who first encounter Lolspeak comment on how it uses spelling incorrectly compared to standard English (Jones "Lolcat Literacy" 2008). Although Lolspeak is a modern innovation, its spelling practices actually resemble those of Middle English, when English spelling was not yet standardized. At that time, spellings were based on authors' perceptions, and it was common practice for an author to use several different spellings of the same word within one text, as seen here (Figure 4.4) in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales:

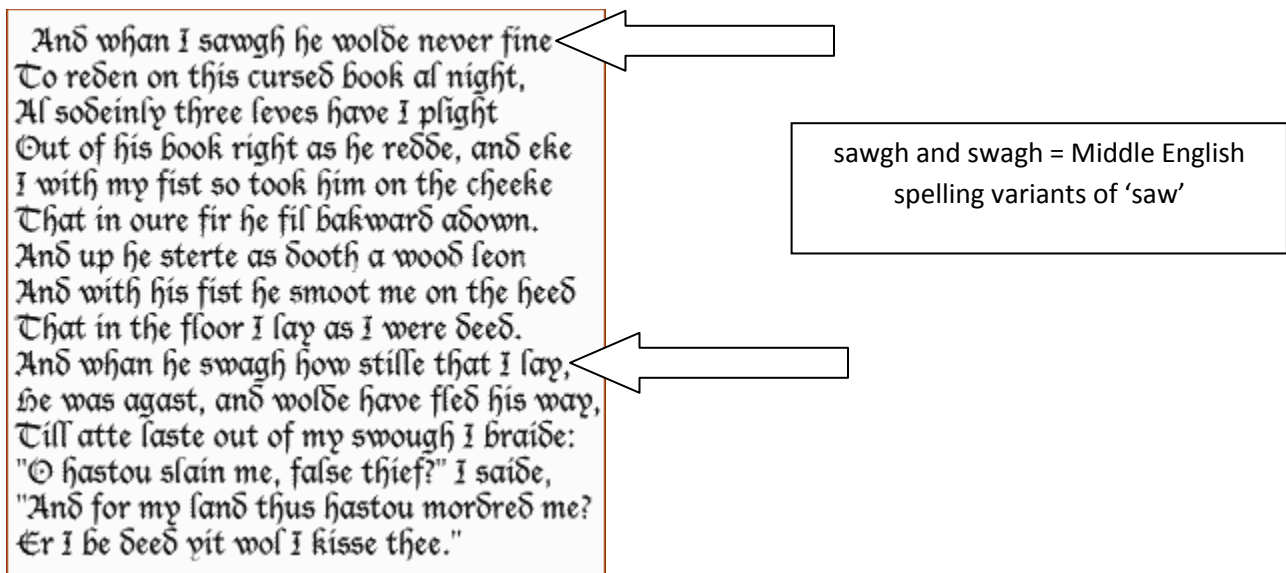


Figure 4.4 – Middle English

The text in Middle English occurred before spelling regulations came into place, but unfortunately, after the spelling was fixed to accurately represent the text, something called the

Great Vowel Shift came along. The shift was a change in pronunciation of vowels, meaning that once again, English spelling was 'unique.'

The figure below (Figure 4.5 – Generall Historie) shows a sample of text from colonial America that illustrates similar orthographic practices prior to standardization. It is obvious that the spelling rules of that time differ from those that preceded standardization, and contains '-our' endings similar to that of modern day British English. Between these two examples (Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5), it is clear that the spelling of the English language has changed substantially. Lolspeak demonstrates similar spelling patterns and variants.

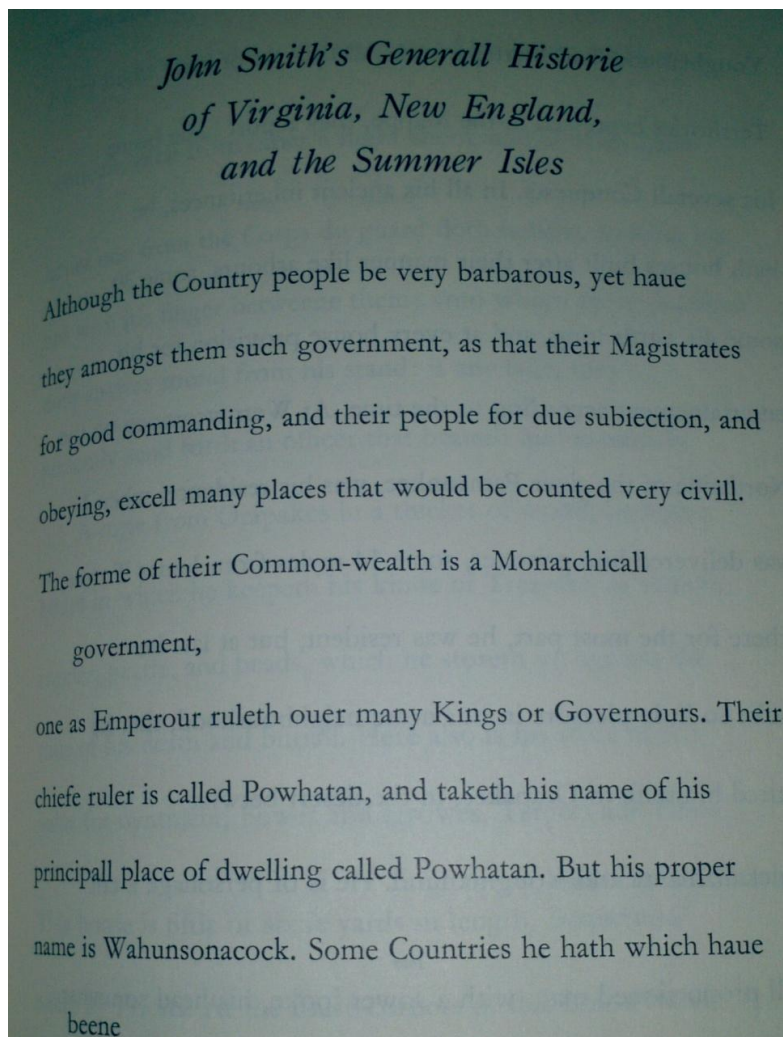


Figure 4.5 – Generall Historie

Lolspeak comes closer to an accurate representation of a sound/symbol correspondence for consonants than standard written English does. In order to understand what that means, we must begin with the general question of what a phoneme/grapheme correspondence is in English. In every word, there is at least one syllable. A syllable is a unit of language that is comprised of sounds. These 'sounds' are called phones. Groups of phones that share similar qualities are known as phonemes. Phonemes are "one of a set of abstract units that can be used for writing a language down in a systematic and unambiguous way" (Ladefoged "A Course in Phonetics" 2006:294). These phonemes interact with items known as graphemes, which are the units or symbols of a written language (Harley "The Psychology of Language: from Data to Theory" 2008:495). So, Roman letters and Chinese logographs are both types of graphemes. If a true phoneme/grapheme correspondence existed in a writing system, each grapheme corresponds with one phoneme, using visual to connect with oral and aural. English orthography does not have an accurate good phoneme/grapheme correspondence.

4.2.1 Consonants

One instance of Lolspeak having a better phoneme/grapheme correspondence than standard English involves 'z' and 's' graphemes. Table 4.2 below illustrates that there are many examples of words spelled with the letter 'z' instead of 's': cheezburger, windoze, nayberz, haz, and iz. All of these English words are pronounced with /z/, not /s/, making their Lolspeak spelling more closely related to the phonetic representation of these words. However, not every instance of words pronounced with the phoneme /z/ is spelled with the letter 'z' in Lolspeak. In Table 4.2, #1 (I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER) uses an 's' for 'has.' In fact, it is more common for the word 'has' to be spelled with an 's' in my data. This does not indicate that there is a special rule allowing 'has' to keep its original spelling, as evidenced by the text from #29 of my data:

“I’m in ur sox stealin the left ones.” Here, ‘ones’ keeps the ‘s,’ though ‘ones’ is pronounced /wənz/.

Table 4.2 – Consonants

<p>1.</p> 	<p>2.</p> 	<p>3.</p> 
<p>4.</p> 	<p>5.</p> 	

What we can gather from this is that Lolspeak is more likely to alternate spelling to reflect the phonemic sounds of language, but it is not restricted to doing so. Lolspeak also changes the spellings of words with the phoneme /j/, shown in the words ‘capshun’ and ‘shur’ in #3 (But I don’t wanna haz a capshun) and #4 (Uh...hai um... yer shur home erly...), which seem to be emphasizing the child-like or non-native command of English spelling by cats.

One cat macro text happens to be from a popular Christmas song titled “I’m dreaming of a White Christmas” (Appendix A, #94). Though Lolspeak differs in many ways from standard English, when it makes references and quotes, it generally keeps to the pattern of the reference or quote. Therefore, it seems, at least in the first sentence in this cat macro, ‘iz’ is a contraction of ‘I is.’ However, the Lolspeak dictionary (“G-I Speak Lolspeak” 2010) verifies that the dictionary classifies ‘iz’ as a representing the standard English forms ‘is’ and ‘I am,’ meaning

that this one Lolspeak work has dual possible meaning. Of course, while some of the fun of Lolspeak is that it is created by many users on an online community, it also makes it difficult to know for a fact precisely how these words are being used until they become widespread and analyzed. Hence, the citation in the Lolspeak dictionary carries little authority.

4.2.2 Vowels

While consonants in Lolspeak stay the same or change to more phonetic spellings, vowels are a bit more diverse, as they are in standard English. Standard English has five graphemes to represent fifteen phonemes, making it difficult to accurately capture pronunciations (Ladefoged “A Course in Phonetics” 2006:1), and this difficulty is also expressed in Lolspeak. The best way to show this would be to look at examples of different ways that vowels are written in Lolspeak, as shown below.

Table 4.3 - Vowels

<p>1.</p>	<p>2.</p>	<p>3.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>5.</p>	<p>6.</p>

From #1 (I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?) and #2 (plees sur i can has som more?), the only difference between the 'I' vowels is in capitalization, which is not particularly relevant to this section. What is relevant is comparing #1 and #2 with #4 (Baths are gud u saiz?). #1 and #2 use 'ai' instead of 'I' for the diphthong /ai./, while #4 uses 'ai' for /ə/.

However, in #4, 'ai' is also used to spell the word 'says' as 'saiz.' If this were actually a phonemic spelling, the pronunciation of this word would be closer to the standard English word 'size,' which does not fit the context of this cat macro, where the target is clearly 'says' or /sɛz/, like in #3 (ai dun care whut clock sez. Tummy sez iz breakfast tiem!). So, we can hypothesize that either the text in #3 is to be interpreted with a very strong accent, or the letters do not depict an accurate pronunciation.

In table 4.3, #5 (Schrodinger's cat wonders how YOU liekz it?!?!?) uses 'ie,' which also is representing the diphthong /ai/. In #4 and #5, we have alternate spellings of 'like' and 'time' as 'liek' and 'tiem' respectively. These spellings are also seen in Netspeak (Crystal "Language and the Internet" 2006:151-153) and can be attributed to an acceptance of the fact that they are misspellings of the words they represent. In Lolspeak, it is possible to have spellings of vowels that do not match their pronunciation due to accepted misspellings that have become Lolspeak spellings of those words.

Another nonstandard representation of vowels in Lolspeak is illustrated in this table. The last picture in this section, #6 (mom sed share mom sed share stop mockeeng stop mockeeng i telling mom i telling mom), contains the alternate spelling 'mockeeng.' The 'ee' here represents the phoneme /I/, and is used in some dictionaries as a pronunciation guide. The way phonemes are used in these types of guides are all called 'spelled pronunciation,' as they are variant spellings based on how these vowels are most commonly pronounced ("Spelled Pronunciation" 2010). So, for the vowels, demonstrates a complete range of possibility, from purposeful

distortions of regular spelling to spelled pronunciation, and accurate phonemic representation. With this much variety, Lolspeak is great for those who have a loose interpretation of spelling, or want to break from prescriptivist patterns.

4.2.3 Hai/Bai/Mai

Lolspeak has spelling patterns of sets of words with the same vowel pronunciation, such as 'hi,' 'bye' and 'my,' as shown below. Standard English spells all of them differently, yet Lolspeak has the option to spell them all as they are pronounced. Table 4.4 below is an attempt to evaluate if Lolspeak spells these three common words as they are pronounced, as standard English would, or as something else altogether. The first row of Table 4.4 shows all of the tokens in my data for the word 'hi.' Notice that #1 (OH HI I FIXED UR BLINDS) is the only one spelled 'hi,' whereas the others are as spelled 'hai,' a spelling which has become emblematic of Lolspeak.

Although there were no tokens of 'bye' in my data set, my search for 'bye' on www.icanhascheezburger.com provided the examples #4 (I lernz bai ozmozzis) and #5 (bai dog hav fun at vet), which show that both 'bye' and 'by' can also be spelled as 'bai.' As shown previously, Lolspeak does also use standard English spelling, and does so for 'bye' and 'by' in other macros. 'My' is a commonly used word in Lolspeak that is spelled in standard English in my corpus with one exception: mah. Again, a search for examples not captured by my random selection turned up #7 (And dis mai cusin Jeff...) in this table as 'mai.' The spelling 'mah' has been used years prior to indicate nonstandard English accents, and it seems that its appearance in Lolspeak parallels this depiction (Preston "'Ritin' Fowklower Daun 'Rong: Folklorists' Failures in Phonology" 1982:325). My data set shows that most cat macros with the word 'my' will use the regular spelling or 'mah' more than they will use 'mai.' So, even though /hai/, /bai/, and /mai/ all rhyme, they each show orthographic individuality through Lolspeak, which allows various ways of expression in its spelling.

Table 4.4 – Hai, Bai, Mai

 <p>1.</p>	 <p>2.</p>	 <p>3.</p>
 <p>4.</p>	 <p>5.</p>	 <p>6.</p>
 <p>7.</p>	 <p>8.</p>	

4.3 Syntax

Lolspeak syntax diverges from standard English sentence conventions, just as Lolspeak spelling does. In its syntax, Lolspeak shares similarities with creoles, pidgins, African American English and Scottish Doric pronunciations. Unlike standard English, these forms of language accept verbs with subjects that are highly inappropriate and grammatically incorrect in standard English (Labov “The Logic of Non-Standard English” 2000:457-460).

4.3.1 Copula

In the following tables, I have included all of my data involving copulas (“to be” verbs) separated into three categories (standard usage, nonstandard usage, and null copula). A standard usage copula refers to a copula used as in standard English, nonstandard usage refers to a copula not used in standard English, and null copula means the copula has been deleted from the phrase, although it is part of the underlying sentence structure.

Table 4.5 - Standard Copula










<p>1.</p> 	<p>2.</p> 	<p>3.</p> 
<p>4.</p> 	<p>5.</p> 	<p>6.</p> 
<p>7.</p> 	<p>8.</p> 	<p>9.</p> 

Table 4.5 presents a representative sample of the tokens of the present tense copula from my corpus. Occasionally, Lolspeak uses ‘acrolectal’ spelling, reflecting standard English, such as in #1 (All I want is just one sammich), #5 (Dramatic Cat is...Dramatic), and #8 (I AM INDIFFERENT TO YOUR SUFFERING). Though #2 (Im in ur sox stealin the left ones), #4 (Uh...hai um... yer shur home erly...), #7 (Bird watchin Yer doin’ it wrong), and #9 (Dis mah hoomin. Hez ossim) do not use apostrophes, as mandated in standard English, it is clear that they contain subject/copula contractions similar to those used in spoken English. In Lolspeak, it appears that the only time punctuation is important is when a sentence is written in declarative form, but is intended to express an interrogative, thus requiring a question mark. #6 (dis bud not for yoo is for me) is in the unique position of having a standard copula, but no visible subject to go with it for the second sentence in the macro.

Table 4.6 below illustrates more variations of the copula. The subject ‘I’ is seen to be used with ‘is/iz’ and ‘ar/r’ (#1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8). Two instances of ‘iz’ appear to be contractions (#9, #11). Given that #11 (Iz dreemin of a white krisma...as) is a reference to the lyrics of the popular Christmas song, “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas,” we can conclude that ‘iz’ can be a contracted ‘I is,’ a nonstandard version of ‘I am’ (“White Christmas Lyrics” 2011). The plural subject ‘tonsils’ in #4 (I NOT FEELS SO GOOD IS MAH TONSILS SWOLLEN?) is used with the singular copula ‘is,’ though the plural pronoun ‘they’ is used with ‘be’ (#4, 5). ‘wezhavit’ in #10 can be dissected to ‘we’ + ‘is’ + ‘have’ + ‘it,’ meaning the copula is an added feature, or Lolspeak has another pronoun in ‘wez,’ which is a double marked plural.

Table 4.6 – Nonstandard Copula










<p>1.</p>  <p>I R NOT SQUEEZY TOY!!</p>	<p>2.</p>  <p>I is not a 'mallow...</p>	<p>3.</p>  <p>lets be friends forevr K! i ar hungry tho</p>
<p>4.</p>  <p>I NOT FEELS SO GOOD IS MAH TONSILS SWOLLEN?</p>	<p>5.</p>  <p>I iz plantin burd seed now K how long we wait?</p>	<p>6.</p>  <p>not right now mom iz on the computer</p>
<p>7.</p>  <p>I has a bag Noooooo! They be stealin' mah bag!</p>	<p>8.</p>  <p>HALP! i r not 4 sale!!!</p>	<p>9.</p>  <p>i r not talkin' to youze guyz n e moar</p>
<p>10.</p>  <p>Exhaustion wez hav it</p>	<p>11.</p>  <p>Iz dreemin of a wite krismaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaass Iz dreemin of duct tape</p>	

Table 4.7 – Null Copula

<p>1.</p>	<p>2.</p>	<p>3.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>5.</p>	<p>6.</p>

Table 4.7 contains the examples of the null copula. Some of these macros (#4 and #5) should look familiar, as they are also in the standard copula table. The null copula appears to be used with 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns as well as with singular and plural nouns (#1-6). #4 has the subject “the bud” in the first part of the text, and the subject is not referenced again in the second part of the text, as it would be in standard English. Interestingly enough, where there is a subject in #4, there is no copula, yet when there is not a subject, there is a copula.

From these three data tables, it is obvious that Lolspeak shows a wide range of copulas in the present tense. From the data in my corpus, it appears that the form of the copula used with the 1st person singular pronoun alone has free variation between ‘am,’ ‘is,’ and ‘are.’

4.3.2 Determininers

Lolspeak determiners appear to match those of standard English. The following tables will be used to show the use of determiners in Lolspeak: A/An, The/Teh, and Null Usage. Tables 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10 do not include every instance of determiners found in the data, but these tables show a representative sample.


Table 4.8 – Determiner ‘A’

<p>1.</p> 	<p>2.</p> 	<p>3.</p> 
<p>4.</p> 	<p>5.</p> 	<p>6.</p> 

All of the tokens of the indefinite articles ‘a’ paired with singular nouns conform to standard English usage. Interestingly enough, #3 (There seems 2 B an invisable barrier) uses ‘an.’ The reason I consider this interesting is that standard English would need to pair ‘an’ with ‘invisable,’

but Lolspeak does not have to. However, since 'an' is in the data, it is possible to conclude that this is a feature Lolspeak has taken from English.

Table 4.9 – Determiner 'The'

<p>1.</p> 	<p>2.</p> 	<p>3.</p> 
<p>4.</p> 	<p>5.</p> 	<p>6.</p> 

While many languages distinguish between the indefinite specific and definite specific determiners with two different words, English does not (Sebba "Contact Languages" 1997:144). For English, 'the' is definite. Therefore, I have placed all instances of 'the' or its orthographic variant 'teh' in one table. #1, 2, 3, and 5 not only contain determiners, but are also references from a movie, a TV show, and a song. This shows that Lolspeak is used not just as an ingroup language phenomenon among those who know how to type it, but it uses these references to make insider jokes and refer to contemporary culture. And it shows that people like captioning fat cats with quotes from Jabba the Hutt.

Table 4.10 – Null Usage





<p style="text-align: center;">1.</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">2.</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">3.</p> 
<p style="text-align: center;">4.</p> 		

Table 4.10 contains the only four null usage of determiners found in my data, including the Russian cat food ad that started the Lolspeak phenomenon. This low number of null usage indicates that Lolspeak’s determiners operate mostly like those of standard English.

4.3.2 – Has/Have and Am/Is

As seen in tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, and 4.8 in this paper, Lolspeak sometimes uses ‘has’ instead of ‘have’ with the first person singular subject pronoun. ‘Has’ is used with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd singular and plural subject pronouns. In Lolspeak, ‘has’ can be used with any subject. ‘Has’ appears to be the symbolic default form, which could be because of Lolspeak’s tendency to simplify.

Many macros from my data set show that 'have' in Lolspeak is used in nonstandard fashion with 1st person singular, 1st person plural, 2nd person singular, and 3rd person neuter singular. 'Have' is used with all of these types of subjects in English, but also 2nd person plural, and 3rd person plural. Examples of 3rd person plural with 'have' were not available for the years I collected my data, but they do exist in Lolspeak. While 'has' is able to be used with all types of subjects in Lolspeak, 'have' does not have that flexibility. It remains the same in Lolspeak as in standard English.

A similar scenario between 'has' and 'have' applies to 'am' and 'is' in Lolspeak. In this case, 'am' is like 'have,' and is used in Lolspeak in conformity with the rules of standard English, which is the first person singular 'I.' However, there is an example where the third person neuter singular 'it' is used with 'am.' I believe this to be an outlier, as this is the only example I found searching posts in the www.icanhascheezburger.com website using their search function. It was posted within the first few months of the website's creation, and I hypothesize that the person who posted this macro was attempting to explore all Lolspeak possibilities ("It Am Delishus" 2010). However, this trend did not catch on. A few forum comments on this picture articulate confusion about what the subject 'it' is referring to, guessing that 'it' is the cat.

'Be,' the more versatile verb in Lolspeak, can be paired with the first person singular, and the third person masculine, feminine, and neuter singular, just like standard English, as shown previously. Including the subjects mentioned, 'is' can also be used with the first person plural. No examples have been found of using 'is' with the second person plural, and only one cat macro has the third person plural, causing me to believe it is another outlier like 'it am.'

5 RECURRING SYNTACTIC FEATURES

While cat macros are created by a number of different users, many presented their contributions using sentence structure in which patterns emerged and, eventually, variations of those structures arose. I present these syntactic formulas by placing parts of speech in braces, phrases and clauses in brackets, and directly quoted words in parentheses, to show variations in spelling.

5.1 {subject} + (can) + (has) + [noun phrase] + (?)

The structure of the very first Lolspeak text provides the template for one of many Lolspeak formulas. Though no other instances of this formula appeared in my data, many cat macros can be found on www.icanhascheezburger.com during 2007-2008 to illustrate this structure. From those sentences, I've derived the following formula: {subject} + (can) + (has) + [noun phrase] + (?)



Figure 5.1 – {subject} + (can) + (has) + [noun phrase] + (?)

Although the punctuation indicates that it is a question, the auxiliary “can” is not fronted at the beginning of the sentence as it would be in a question in standard English. Only the presence of the question mark gives indication that this sentence is interrogative. As other forms of English do not put this much pressure on punctuation, this brings up questions about how Lolspeak uses punctuation that may differ from that of standard English.

5.2 {subject} + (has) + (a) + [noun phrase]

There is also a declarative format, which is expressed as: {subject} + (has) + (a) + [noun phrase]. This declarative format shown in Appendix A, #19 in my data. Here, no punctuation is needed, and the format is acceptable as standard English.



Figure 5.2 – {subject} + (has) + (a) + [noun phrase]

5.3 [noun phrase] + {subject} + (has) + {pronoun}

From this format, a variation has evolved that fronts and emphasizes the noun phrase. This variation, shown in #87 and #92 of my data, set has become more popular and widely used than the format it came from, as can be seen on www.icanhascheezburger.com. This may be due to the noun-fronted variation being less common in standardized English sentences.



Figure 5.3 – [noun phrase] + {subject} + (has) + {pronoun}

5.4 (I'm) + (in) + [determiner phrase]+ {verb_{present progressive}} + [determiner phrase]

Another popular Lolspeak sentence formula is "I'm in ur _____, _____ing ur _____." This sentence formula seen in #17 in my data set. According to www.knowyourmeme.com, this formula actually predates Lolspeak (see below).



Figure 5.4 – (I'm) + (in) + (your) + {noun₁} + {verb_{present progressive}} + (your) + {noun₂}

It was originally a phrase used by Starcraft computer game players to insinuate they had just embarrassed a player without that player's prior knowledge of said embarrassment: I'm in your base, killing your dudes ("In Ur Base" 2009). Starcraft is a computer game set in the distant future in which players control armies to defend their bases and to kill other player's armies, or in this case, dudes (Dulin "Starcraft Review, Starcraft PC Review" 1998). So here, it seems that, throughout English, Lolspeakers assimilate things they find interesting into Lolspeak. It is possible that these Starcraft players thought their in-group gaming language might fit well in cat macros, or someone else thought the Starcraft players needed to share the phrase. Also worthy to note is that this formula has been brought into commercial culture by being printed on a shirt. The shirt has blank white spaces for the parts of speech, showing the versatility of the formula, and the extent to which it has been made available to wider audiences (See Appendix C, #17).

Perhaps the repetitive use of these sentence structures was to create solidarity through

the language play in this community. Though, it could be unintentional. Either way, there are noticeable syntactic relationships.

6. POPULARITY AND THE FUTURE

6.1 Lolspeak Forums

While my data consists of Lolspeak used in cat macros, that is not the only place where Lolspeak appears. For each cat macro, there is a forum underneath the macro in which people can discuss the macro. To discuss the language use in the forums themselves would require extensive analyzing that cannot be contained in this paper alone. However, for the purposes of seeing how Lolspeak is used outside of cat macros, I have analyzed the forums of the first and last macros in my data. For simplicity, any utterance containing two or more features of Lolspeak was considered Lolspeak. Any instances of codeswitching, the act of using two or more dialects and/or languages in an utterance, are not going to be considered in this thesis.

My first cat macro data is the famous “I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?” line from Happycat. As of the date that I last accessed that forum (August 26, 2011), there were 903 comments. These comments spanned from 2007, when the macro was placed on the site, to the present. Because my data only covers years 2007-2008, I looked only at the comments in those years. Many of the comments on the site centered around Happycat, with users discussing what kind of cat he was, and what happened to the actual cat in the macro. Others commented on how much they loved the site and wanted it to continue. Almost all of the comments were close enough to standard English spelling and grammar to be considered standard English. Some of the comments were in Lolspeak.

The Lolspeak comments of interest can be divided into two categories: cultural wordplay and metalinguistic awareness. The cultural word play that I observed in the Lolcat forums involved retellings of English language writing into Lolspeak, and also sometimes swapping American English cultural connotations with Lolspeak ones. The first cultural wordplay I found involved a retelling of part of the story of Hiawatha by using Lolspeak. However, this Lolspeak parody of Hiawatha does not just exchange standard English words for Lolspeak. The Lolspeak

parody substitutes cultural connotations as well. As shown in the figure below, the Story of Hiawatha’s famous line, “By the shores of Gitche gumee” becomes “By the shores of Intar-Webbies.” Other similar changes are made.

Table 6.1 - Hiawatha

The Story of Hiawatha (excerpt, Longfellow 2011)	The Lolspeak Parody
By the shores of Gitche Gumee, By the shining Big-Sea-Water, Stood the wigwam of Nokomis, Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis. Dark behind it rose the forest, Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees, Rose the firs with cones upon them; Bright before it beat the water, Beat the clear and sunny water, Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.	By the shores of Intar-Webbies, By the shining Big-Cheez-Burger, Stood the macro of Blue Kitteh, Pièce de résistance, Blue Kitteh. Dark behind it rose the sofa, Rose the roomy gloomy sofa, Rose the pics with lols upon them; Bright before it post the comments, Post the wry and funneh comments, LOI@shining Big-Cheez-Burger!!

The writer of this parody gives a description of both the Happycat macro and Lolcats in general, using Longfellow’s meter as a perfect backdrop for Lolspeak.

Another user posted song lyrics in Lolspeak. The song comes from a children’s television show that has a section of the show specifically devoted to silly songs ("Madame Blueberry VeggieTales DVD" 2003). What is notable about these lyrics is that they are about cheeseburgers. Though the user’s song translation does not include a cultural translation, the fact that the song itself involves something recognizable to Lolcat culture shows that the user is aware of the language play s/he is making.

Another instance of Lolspeak used for cultural word play is a comment from the appropriately named user, *CATHolic*, who rewrote the Apostle’s Creed using Ceiling Cat (shown below) in place of God (Keifer "The Apostles' Creed" 2011). The “Cat Creed” also features other characters familiar to Lolcat culture, such as Ceiling Cat, Lolrus, and goggies. As previously mentioned, this is not the only time in which Lolspeak is used to recreate religious text. The LolCat Bible Translation Project uses such correlations (such as basements serving as a parallel for hell) to translate a Lolspeak version of the Bible.

Table 6.2 – Apostle’s Creed

The Modern Day Apostle’s Creed	CATHolic’s version of the Apostle’s Creed
<p>I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.</p> <p>I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen [sic]</p>	<p>Hai beleefs in teh Ceiling Cat, El Kitteh Supremo, Creator of teh Ceiling and teh Floor And in Happycat, is nly sun, teh Original LOLcat Hoo waz maid famus by teh awsum powr of teh LOLrus Born of teh Interwebs Sufferd undr teh Agnostic Kitteh, Had cheezburger taken away and kikked teh bukkit. Hee went into teh Basement On therd day hee escapd from teh Basement Cat, Hee climbd 2 teh Ceiling An iz seetd at teh raitt paw of teh Ceiling Cat El Kitteh Supremo From whare Hee shall comm back an takes revinge on teh goggies hoo took cheezburgers away from Him Hai beleefs in teh LOLrus Teh Holy ICHC Website Teh Kittehs’ gathering Teh furgivness fur making teh cookies but eating dem Teh return of teh bukkit And cheezburgers 4 evar Kthxbai!</p>

It is through this culture that we see just how aware the users are of their language play. As noted by one user: “a kulcher was begun.” Thus, comments about the comments on Lolspeak metalinguistic awareness also began. Some users were happy to find others who used Lolspeak, and expressed that in the comments: “i waz pleasantly surprised2find every1talkz like meez... lolz” and “i can’t speak lol verri well, either. I doo liek to talk on teh internets to all my friends, tho.” Other users were very insistent that people use only Lolspeak, writing, “u must speeks teh Lolspeaks on teh thread of lolling.” When one user asked a question in standard English, another user responded with, “we wunt tll unless u speekz Lolspeak!” This type of exclusion by a group for violating the rules of the group is not uncommon in internet forums

(LeBlanc ““Is There a Translator in Teh House?": Cultural and Discourse Analysis of a Virtual Speech Community on an Internet Message Board" 2005:53-61).

The forum for the last macro in my Lolspeak data corpus, “You may kiss it,” is drastically different from the first forum. All of the comments on this forum, except for the last two, were posted on the same day that the picture was posted. All comments analyzed were in Lolspeak, except for the ones too short to consider containing two features of Lolspeak. Since the macro was posted two days before January 1st, most of the comments involved discussing what plans the users had for New Year’s, and where they would be. None of the comments seemed to be related to the actual macro. Rather, this macro forum seemed to operate like the forums in ancient Rome – an area where people came together for daily communication. It is partially because of how this forum seems to operate that gives the feeling of an in-group. The other way this forum shows group dynamics, of course, is the way they use language.

The most interesting topics about the in-group language in the “You may kiss it” forum involve the users nativeca66 and bellie. Nativeca66 posted and responded to many posts in the forums, and at one point, s/he posted, “See ya cheezpeeps ::waves:: gotta go tew administration and file some paperwork. Be back later.” Here, nativeca66 is referring to the group of people posting in the forums as ‘cheezpeeps,’ which seems to be a name the group adopted to refer to themselves, presumably after the “I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?” text and the slang term, ‘peeps,’ for people (“Peeps” 2003). Also noteworthy is that nativeca66 is taking the time to post that s/he has to work but will return. In an online forum where chats are not displayed in real time, this kind of reporting on one’s availability is not necessary. Yet, nativeca66 wants to let other ‘cheezpeeps’ know why it will be a while before s/he is able to post and respond again. This statement makes it even clearer that this forum is frequented by users who have formed their own community in which people are expected to participate multiple times a day.

Another manifestation of the Lolspeak forum performing as a speech community occurred when bellie, a new member, asked the community how to change her avatar: “[berry off topic] can somwun pleez explain 2 mee how ai can change my avatar heer?[/berry off topic]”. Bellie uses Lolspeak to address the community with her question, and the fake command UBB tags, also known as edited html bulletin board tags, “[berry off topic]” and “[/berry off topic]” around her dialogue to show that she is posting something not related to what everyone else is posting. The community’s reaction to bellie’s post was very receptive. This may be due to bellie’s use of Lolspeak. As seen in the first forum, the ‘cheezpeeps’ do not react well to use of anything other than Lolspeak on the forums. The positive response to bellie’s submissive new member (newbie) query is in sharp contrast to the reception of newbies on other online forums. (LeBlanc ““Is There a Translator in Teh House?": Cultural and Discourse Analysis of a Virtual Speech Community on an Internet Message Board” 2005:27)The community responded by giving bellie information to help answer her question, and they welcomed her to “Cheezland.”

6.2 Spinoffs and Variants

Lolcats have their own domain on the internet thanks largely to www.icanhascheezburger.com, the mecca for cat pictures with cute and funny sayings. The site has expanded to include things besides Lolcats, however. The I Can Has Cheezburger Company (also referred to as ICHC) includes over fifty unique sites with pictures and graphs to entertain and delight under its virtual umbrella. It appears some of these other sites were inspired by Lolcats, and found evidence from my data (described below) that agrees.

Example #79 from my collected data features a dog asking a cat “i... i can getz luv too?” <http://dogs.icanhascheezburger.com/> is one of the major ‘spinoff’ sites from ICHC. I consider it a spinoff because it is applying a similar formula of text to pictures with a different animal that is as likely to be an American pet. Dogs, doggies, or “goggies,” as they are called on the site, have many pages devoted to them (though not as many as the original cat site).

<http://puns.icanhascheezburger.com/> features macros that involve homonyms and multiple definitions of words to make their macros into jokes. In data macro #48, “jus’ chillin’ wif my peep” plays with the words ‘peep,’ a slang term referring to people or a person, and ‘peep,’ the marshmallow Easter candy the cat has in the macro. Data macro #63, “Yewd be sad 2 ifs yew had a Bownty on UR hed,” refers to the expression of ‘having a bounty on your head,’ meaning that someone would pay money for you to be killed. However, it has dual meaning, as Bounty is also a paper towel brand name, and the cat in the picture has what appears to be a hat fashioned out of a paper towel on its head.

Another ICHC spinoff website, <http://totallylookslike.icanhascheezburger.com/>, puts two pictures side by side, showing how one object looks like another object. Appendix A, #68, is a picture of a cat with the text “Cat Blanchett.” This is a play on words, as it is referencing the actress, Cate Blanchett, and the fact that this picture with “Cat Blanchett” text is a cat. And, surprisingly, there is a resemblance between the actress and the “Cat Blanchett” cat. In fact, the image from my data paired with an image of Cate Blanchett (Figure 6.1) is one of the first posted on the “Totally Looks Like” site.



Figure 6.1 – Cat Blanchett

Another spinoff site was inspired by the fact that many people in the world are not raised as native English speakers, but are surrounded by usually improper English.

<http://engrishfunny.failblog.org/> is ICHC's website about funny signs, t-shirts, and other visual paraphernalia that employ nonstandard English akin to foreigner talk. Data macro #20 has Japanese kanji and hiragana text on a box with a kitten peeking out of the box swatting at a toy bus. The text on the macro is "Gojira!" The macro text is spelled to represent the Japanese pronunciation of what native English speakers call 'Godzilla,' the giant reptile that attacks Tokyo ("Godzilla (1954)" 2011). The kitten in data macro #20 is a parallel to Godzilla, 'attacking' the toy bus (with, presumably, toy Japanese people inside screaming out in terror).

The last piece of data that seems to have generated another ICHC site is data macro #3, "Holykitty has evolved into Holycat." The idea of a young animal evolving into the adult version of its species comes straight out of the anime/manga/game Pokemon ("What are Pokemon" 2011). It is very likely that <http://pokememes.memebase.com/> was generated after people came up with more macros similar to data macro #3.

Perhaps one of the most interesting 'spinoff' sites is <http://knowyourmeme.com/>. This site is used to keep track of memes that become popular on the internet, how the memes evolve over time, and how they are used. Since this is an ICHC site, it keeps track of Lolspeak and Lolcats, the memes that began the site that created a site to tell about those memes.

6.3 Affecting English

The best anecdote of how language changes was told to me by a very enthusiastic linguistics professor, Dr. Oliver. She regaled my class with a story of a young yet tall child, who pronounced /l/ and /r/ as /w/. Due to his height, he was regarded as cool. Everything he did was imitated, including the way he spoke, which my professor dubbed "the wascally wabbit syndrome." Dr. Oliver imagined these schoolchildren adopting the wascally wabbit syndrome as their speech pattern into adulthood and childbearing years. The children of those schoolchildren, unfamiliar with another way of speaking, would continue the wascally wabbit syndrome, furthering language change, until eventually, a majority of speakers chose the wascally wabbit syndrome way of speaking, and those who used older forms died out.

The sociolinguist process underlying the anecdote is the phenomenon of linguistic accommodation, where speakers attempt to minimize differences between their speech and that of their interlocutors by altering their speech to approximate that of their interlocutor (Gann "Language, Conflict and Community: Linguistic Accommodation in the Urban US" 2011:108-111). Basically, if people hear something said in a way they like, or presented by a person they like, it is possible that they will adopt the same speech mannerisms. This may become part of their every day speech, and may, eventually, change the way that particular language works.

While Lolspeak is predominantly an internet fad at the moment, the question of how much it and other pop orthography may influence the future of English is a relevant one to consider. Take, for example, this question and example in an online forum known as "Ask Me Anything:" "Is there any word or phrase from lolspeak or the intranetz that you've incorporated into your everyday speech? Inspired by referring to my cats' food as noms. My husband then started calling their food noms and now we refer to our food as noms. ("Om Nom Nom" 2011) Many users in the forum did comment that there were Netspeak and Lolspeak phrases that crept into their vocabulary in everyday life. While many admitted to most of the phrases being used in reference to their cats, they did admit to using Lolspeak orally as well as graphically. As a member of this forum, I found the question and responses fascinating, as they deal with my current field of research. Upon requesting their participation in my ongoing research, I found members who went back to the previous question, wanting to contribute to my data ("This is relevant to my interests" 2011). This, to me, shows that not only are people engaging in Lolspeak in real life, but want to show solidarity with others who use and are interested in Lolspeak.

Online forums are not the only places where internet users are engaged by Lolspeak. Comic authors have decided to put their own spin on Lolspeak and Lolcats using their comic strips. The two figures below, both by Randall Munroe, involve conversations between two stick

figures. In both drawings, one figure is aware of Lolcats and the other is not. The first figure speaks more to the nature of cat macros, playing on the idea of cats being captioned in real life.



Figure 6.2 – Captions to Cats

The second comic (Figure 6.3) speaks more to a dual reference through the phrase “It’s like herding lolcats.” This phrase refers to the expression “like herding cats,” which is an expression about the futility of applying order to a situation (“Herding Cats” 2011). As the rest of this comic strip refers to problems arising on the internet, combining those strange speaking internet cats with a common American phrase seems applicable.

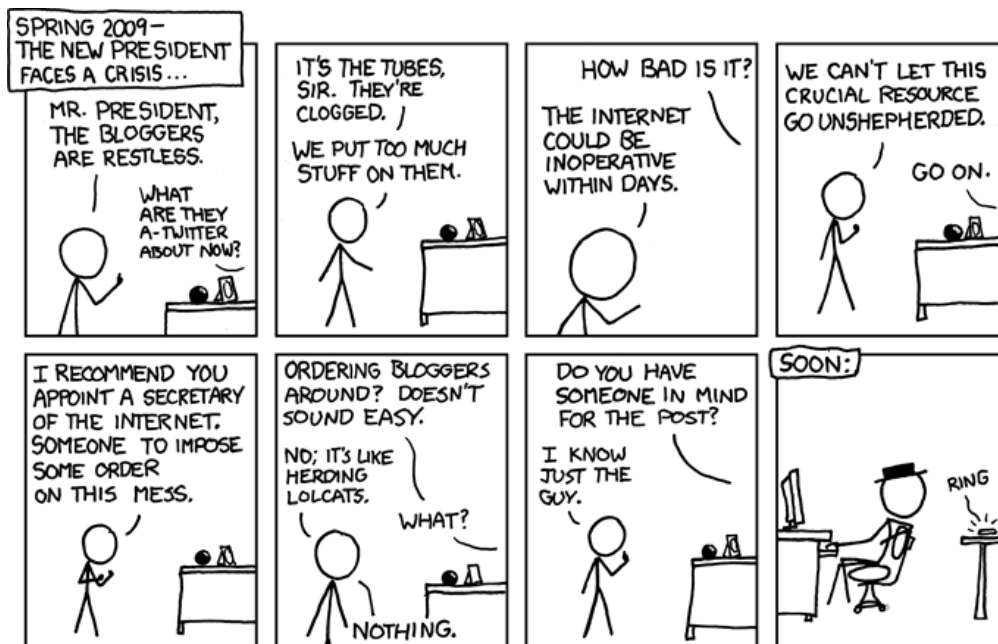


Figure 6.3 – Herding Lolcats

Danielle Corsetto's following comics go in different directions. The background setup for Figure 6.3 involves all characters in the comic strip deciding that they will dress up as internet memes for Halloween. One character, Maureen, dresses as a cat, and holds an "Oh Hai!" sign, leading other characters to correctly guess that she is a Lolcat.



Figure 6.4 - Hallowmeme

For Figure 6.4, Maureen tells her friends that she has just gotten a well paying job. One of her friends, Hazel, holds up a cat and "speaks" for the cat, asking Maureen to take it because the cat requires expensive medical care. The orthography used for Hazel's speech bubble is Lolspeak, and she uses the same question format used in the first Lolcat macro.



Figure 6.5 – Interpret Kitty

However, not all of these strips evaluate Lolspeak and Lolcats positively. Jeph Jaques' strip (Figure 6.6) has two birds discussing how Lolcats "was so three months ago," implying that Lolcats are a fad that has come and gone. The strip is reminiscent of Munroe's, as the first bird

is asking whether or not the second has heard of Lolcats, implying that Lolcats are not a widely known phenomenon. Yet, at the same time, the comic expresses that it became popular enough to reach the popularity saturation point and become cliché.

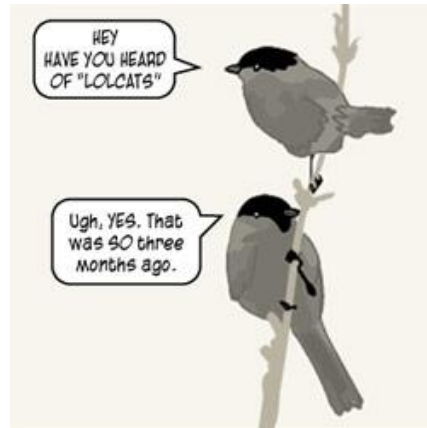


Figure 6.6 – So Three Months Ago

The last strip, Figure 6.7 by David Malki, is worth noting because it precedes Lolspeak, as it was drawn in 2005. Yet, the strip predicts the future where the “thoughts” of cats are available on blogs. The strip uses Netspeak spellings and phrases like “omg” and “kewl” to mark the language of the cat in the comic strip.

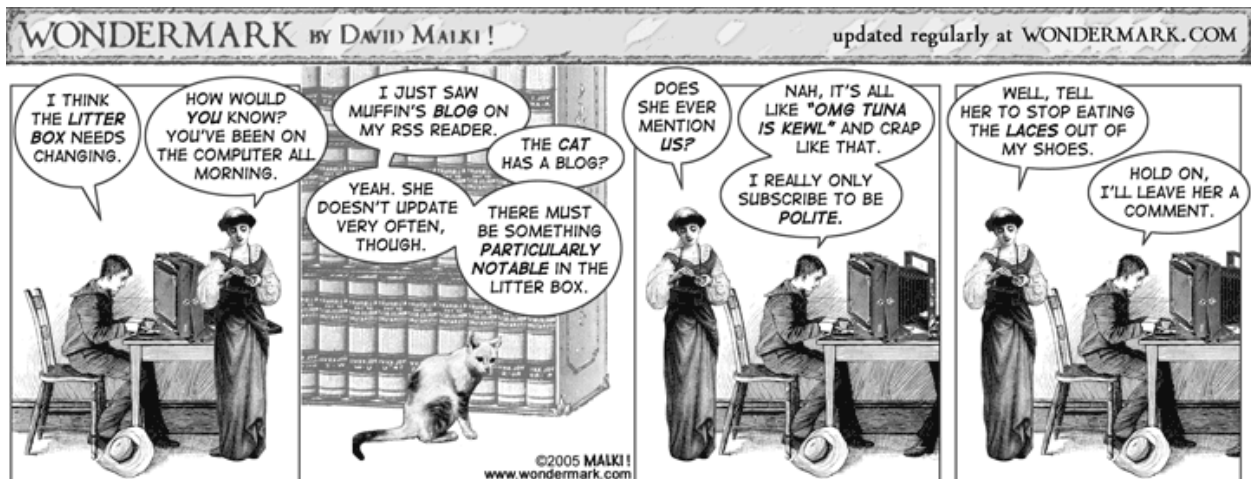


Figure 6.7 – Mitten's Blog

Though Lolspeak is more visual than aural, its popularity has spread to videos. Youtube, a well known video site, has users who post videos on many channels. In fact, ICHC has its own video channel for posting. The ICHC videos are not the only ones related to Lolcats and

Lolspeak, however. Just as the ICHC forums users took American cultural phrases and gave them Lolspeak cultural phrases, so have video users. Allison Lonsdale and Eben Brooks are two such individuals, who performed “LOL Together,” a reinvented version of the Beatle’s song “Come Together” (2008). An individual by the pseudonym of Dr. Popular has a video of himself Lol-rapping (2009) in front of the world’s largest real life Lolcat, a graffiti image on a building (“Lolcat IRL”). Another interesting video is one created by MAD TV: ThunderLOLcats. This video combines the cartoon “Thundercats” with many internet memes associated with Lolspeak and Lolcats, as well as other memes that have gained popularity on the internet (2011).

Real life use of memes is becoming more frequent. One currently circulating is the honey badger meme. The meme came from a video narrated in a humorous mockumentary style, saying how this small yet ferocious animal “doesn’t care” and “takes what it wants” (Kim “Honey Badger” | Know Your Meme” 2011). A Louisiana State University fan felt these attributes described football player Tyrann Mathieu accurately, and made a video depicting the football player as the honey badger (Davis “College Football Star With Nickname Inspired By Viral Video Now Has His Own Viral Video” 2011). After being shown the meme, Mathieu has accepted the nickname, and the meme has expanded to Tyrann “Honey Badger” Mathieu shirts (“Honey Badger Shirts - Tiger District” 2011), and a song parody (“Maroon 5 Gets LSU Remix Treatment with ‘Moves Like Badger”” 2011). Glenn Davis, who writes for the website SportsGrid refers to this as “your 2011 college football memespllosion of the year. It’s a meme on top of a meme on top of a meme.” The fact that Davis calls it the 2011 ‘memespllosion’ for college football implies that there was one for the previous year, or that there will be one for the next year, showing how widespread memes have become if there are many being debated as the sports meme of the year. Davis’ calling the honey badger meme a “meme on top of a meme” is due to one meme spawning another, which shows not only the application of memes to real life situations, but also how memes are evolving to include other memes within them.

Brad Wing is another LSU football player that has memes centered around him, but for different reasons than the Honey Badger. In a game versus University of Florida's Gators, Wing faked a punt and ran towards the endzone, scoring a touchdown. Just before he reached the endzone, he extended his arms in a less than a second-long gesture (shown below) that the referees declared as "excessive taunting." According to newly implemented football rules, excessive taunting is not allowed. Wing's touchdown points were revoked from the score (Johnson "LSU Punter Brad Wing Pays for Early Celebration vs. Florida" 2011). As one might expect, many football fans were very upset about this. How did they react? They made memes.



Figure 6.8 – You mad, mate? and Figure 6.9 – Haters Gonna Hate

Both macros shown here depict Wing's "excessive taunting." Fans in support of Wing responded to the situation by taking many popular meme phrases already in circulation around the internet and applying them to pictures of his gesture to the other team. The text in the macro on the left, "You mad, mate?" is reference to the meme "u mad bro?" and switches 'bro' for 'mate,' as a nod to Wing's Australian roots. This catchphrase is "often used in discussion threads to imply that someone is losing their temper during the course of an argument" (Kim "U MAD?" 2009). It is likely that this macro is directed to the Florida Gators. The text in the macro on the right, "Haters gonna hate," references the meme of the same name, which is defined as "a catchphrase used to indicate a disregard for hostile remarks addressed towards the speaker" (Kim "Haters Gonna Hate" 2010). This macro also appears to be directed to the opposing team,

but given the context of the situation, may also refer to the referees who made the call, or the officials who implemented strict gesture regulations.

Not only are people using Lolspeak (and memes in general) in media and real life, but also in a multitude of social interactions expanding beyond informal usage. In fact, Lolspeak is infiltrating academia. Lolspeak has been present in classrooms at LSU as part of a project for sections of Anthropology 3060 classes. The evaluation of its effect on society and academia is seen in multiple venues through the work of current researchers, such as Kate Miltner. Miltner, who is involved in advertising, is presently analyzing why memes (Lolcat ones in particular) are so popular and generating business (Chen "This Woman Getting a Master's Degree In Lolcats Will Be Richer Than You." 2011; Edelstein "Memes: Take a Look at Miaow" 2011).

Lolspeak has become so prevalent that it has found a spot in the Venn diagram overlap of popular culture and academia: conventions. In 2008, a convention called ROFLcon was held in Massachusetts on MIT's campus. The purpose of this convention was not just to roll on the floor laughing (or ROFL), but to host panels to discuss things happening on the internet and why they're happening, including a panel on Lolspeak (Chiu "Really Short Summary: LOLCATS Panel: I CAN HAZ CASE STUDY? @ ROFLCon" 2008).

With such emerging media coverage, Lolspeak is permeating many different circles of life. One of those ways, mentioned previously in this paper, is through merchandising (See Appendix C). ICHC has its own store to sell Lolcat items – the aptly named “Lolmart.” The aforementioned site ThinkGeek also sells Lolcat items. The most notable merchandise shown in Appendix C is #13: magnetic poetry in Lolspeak. A company called TeeFury, which sells one shirt design per twenty-four hour period, has a gallery of shirts with Lolcat references also featured in this appendix. An important thing to note is that because these shops are online, they are instantly global. Anyone anywhere can peruse Lolcat items.

While it is difficult to gauge precisely how language change will occur, we can make predictions of what is likely to occur. Right now, Lolspeak is like the wascally wabbit syndrome. Lolspeak is cool. It is possible that Lolspeak will be part of the evolution of English, contributing to its orthography, syntax, vocabulary, or some combination of those three elements.

7. CONCLUSION

Lolspeak involves language play, changing sentence structure, and altering standard English spelling. It is a whimsical, invented dialect often paired with amusing pictures of animals. This invented dialect is not limited to those pictures, though they have served as a gateway for the introduction of Lolspeak to a larger audience.

In Lolspeak, you will find a co-occurrence of standard English and nonstandard English, but with a tendency to go towards nonstandard English for simplification. In this way, Lolspeak is similar to pidgins, but this similarity is not enough on its own to classify Lolspeak as such.

Instead, Lolspeak is grouped together with other forms of social media language, like Netspeak, textspeak, and chatspeak. These types of language, also known as pop orthography (Williams “Pop Orthography” 2010), share many acronyms, which get cycled between written and spoken forms, as shown in Figure 7.1 below:



Figure 7.1 – Bee Arr Bee

A common pop orthography acronym is BRB, which stands for ‘be right back.’ It began as an abbreviated way to type in instant messages. Somewhere along the way, people thought it would be fun to pronounce BRB instead of just typing it. What is posted about is a written approximation of the pronunciation of that acronym. Figure 7.1, a panel from Jeph Jacques’

“Questionable Content” comic, utilizes this language play, showing the emerging prevalence of written word influencing spoken word.

Response to Lolspeak in the English-speaking community is mixed. This is shown strikingly in the two previously mentioned articles about Kate Miltner’s work with memes. Edelstein’s article describes Lolspeak as “daft” and “an intentionally stupid dialect,” which evokes notions of speaker’s intelligence, as shown previously in discussion of “Pearls Before Swine.” While Edelstein sides with the haters, Chen points to the business Lolspeak and memes in general have brought about. Where there is controversy, there is a subject worth discussing. The way these writers handled the same subject shows that there is controversy about what the public thinks of Lolspeak. With Lolspeak starting to receive more notice, it is inevitable that discussions of its qualities will bring about questions and possibly worldwide debates.

Yet, while Lolspeak is widely recognized and available, it is important to remember there is a specific culture that goes along with it, as articulated by my colleague: “Even though we’re in a global society, we still communicate in isolated cultural communities of our choosing. We choose to evolve language to create our own community. It’s a bonding technique, in my opinion” (Harrington-Burns “Cultural Anthropology” 2011).

My work in Lolspeak has scratched the surface of this phenomenon, but there is much more to explore. My data could lead to analyzing how Lolspeak has changed in the years since 2007 and 2008 in the macros. An entire dissertation could be written about the Lolspeak forums themselves using Grounded Theory to see what the data presents. The forums could also be paired to compare and contrast with other internet forums to observe the different ways in which they use in-group language. My data could be compared with the language used in the LolCat Bible Translation Project, a project of such magnitude that it could be analyzed on its own. With

such a unique culture and dialect of language, the possibilities of analyzing and observing evolution are endless.

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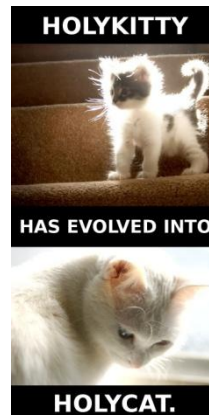
APPENDIX A: DATA MACROS



1.



2.



3.



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19.



20.



21.



22.



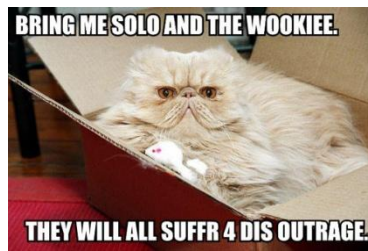
23.



24.



25.



26.



27.



28.



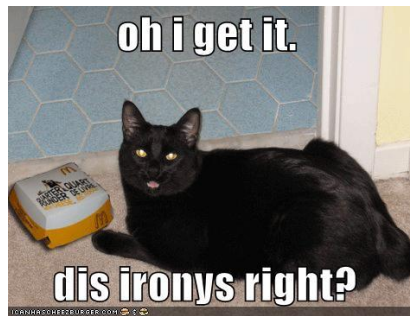
29.



30.



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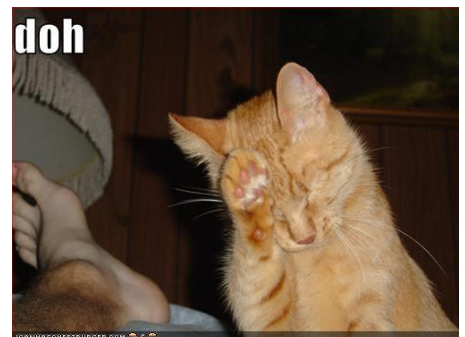
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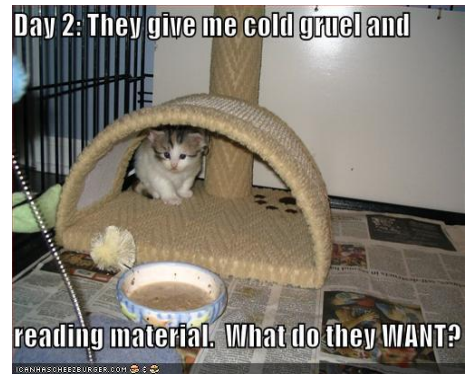
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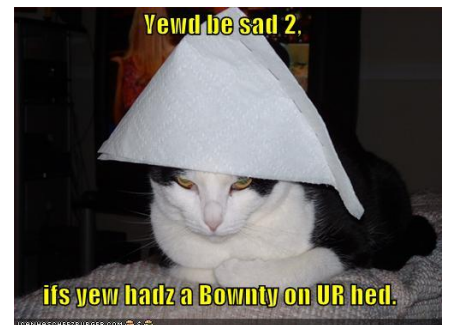
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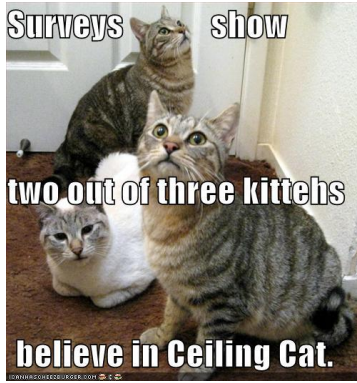
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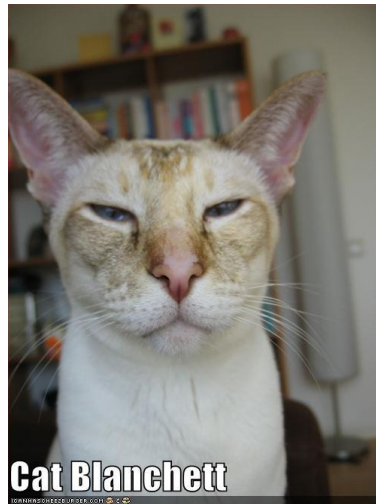
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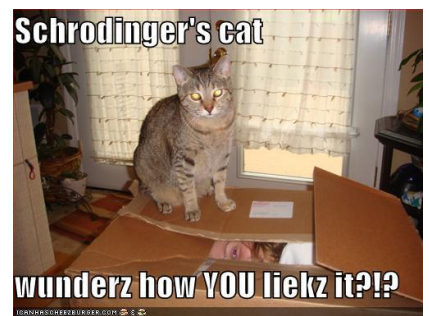
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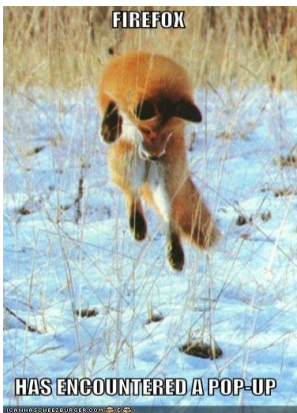
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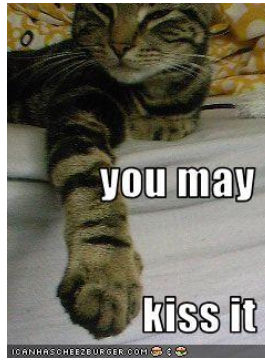
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APPENDIX B: MERCHANDISE



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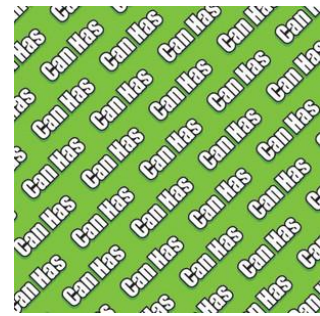
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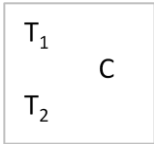
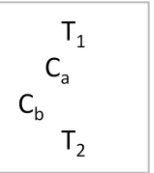
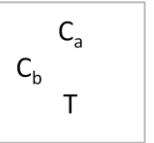
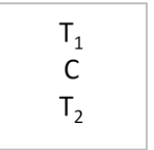




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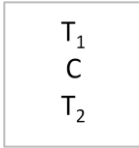
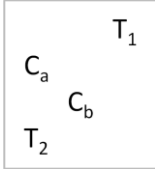
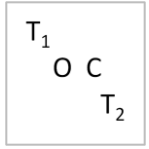
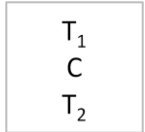
APPENDIX C: DATA SPREADSHEET

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
1	01/11/07	I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> T C </div>		Happycat	Speaker	Yes
2	01/15/07	DAY I GOT COOKIE	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> T C </div>		cat licking lips about cookie	Narrator	No
3	01/25/07	HOLYKITTY ₁ HAS EVOLVED INTO ₂ HOLYCAT. ₃	<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> T₁ <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">C_a</div> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> T₂ <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">C_b</div> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> T₃ </div>	White and grey kitten _a on stairs with a picture of a white cat _b underneath	HolyKitty _a and HolyCat _b	Narrator	Yes
4	02/02/07	CHALLENGER ₁ They always appear ₂	<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> C </div> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> T₁ T₂ </div>	cat being "confronted" by small plastic lions	white cat	Narrator	No
5	02/12/07	CATURDAY NIGHT FEVER	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> T C </div>	Human body wearing disco clothes and on a dance floor	Cat head on human body		No

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
1	Monologue		(I) + (can) + (has) + [noun]?	Missing determiner	have	cheeseburger	Capslock	Question mark
2	Monologue			Missing determiners	frag		Capslock	
3	Monologue	Pokemon & religion	[adj] + [noun] = [adj/same + noun/related]				Capslock	Period
4	Monologue	A catchphrase from Street Fighter 2, now popular on the internet	[noun] + [sentence under noun]		frag		Partial Capslock	lack of colon and period
5		Saturday Night Fever, Caturday			frag	Saturday	Styled like "Saturday Night Fever" font	

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
6	02/20/07	All I want ₁ is just one sammich ₂			Sad kitten	Speaker	No
7	02/28/07	Bring me Solo and the Wookiee, ₁ they will pay for this outrage. ₂		fat cata is sitting upright in a laundry basket supported by a sleeping catb	Fat cat imitating Jabba the Hutt and a sleeping cat.	Speaker	Yes
8	03/06/07	INVISDBLE RING O' FIER		a red rug the cat _a in mid-air is jumping over another cat _b .	cat in mid-air and cat on the ground	?	no
9	03/15/07	excuse me ₁ do you has a flavor? ₂			Cat sticking out its tongue	Speaker	yes
10	03/24/07	OH HI I FIXED UR BLINDS		The cat is between the blinds and the windowsill, causing the blinds to warp	Cat in a windowsill	Speaker	No
11	04/03/07	I R NOT SQUEEZY TOY		Kitten is being held firmly in a human hand	Little kitten with eyes closed and mouth open	Speaker	No

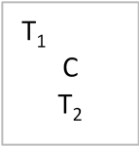
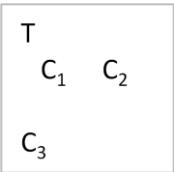


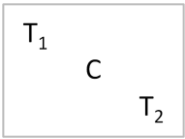
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
6	Monologue	?				sandwich	In pink text with shadow	lack of comma
7	Monologue	Quote from Jabba the Hutt from Star Wars				wookiee	Black text, different font	comma instead of period or semicolon
8	?	?	(invisible) + [noun phrase]			invisible, of, fire	Capslock and circusy font	
9	Monologue		(excuse) + (me) + (do) + (you) + (has) + (a) + [noun]?		have		two different sizes of text, and no beginning capital letter	lack of comma
10	Monologue		(oh) + (hi) + (I) + [verb] + (your/ur) + [noun]			your	black text, capslock	lack of end punctuation
11	Monologue			Missing determiner	am	are	In pink text, capslock	lack of end punctuation

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
12	04/11/07	I is not a ₁ 'mallow... ₂		Kitten is surrounded by marshmallows	white kitten	Speaker	No
13	04/21/07	The Goggles... ₁ They do nothing! ₂			Cat with goggles	Speaker	No
14	04/30/07	I has a teddy! ₁ I has a hat! ₂			Orange cata hugging the middle of silver catb's belly, with feet by silver catb's head	Speakers	No
15	05/07/07	lets be friends forevr ₁ k! i ar hungry tho ₂			Chick and kitten	Speakers	No
16	05/15/07	I NOT FEELS SO GOOD ₁ IS MAH TONSILS SWOLLEN? ₂			Cat opening it's mouth wide	Speaker	No


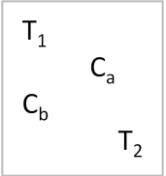
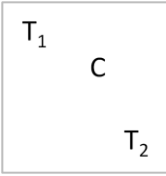
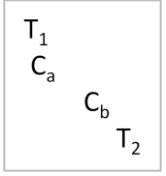
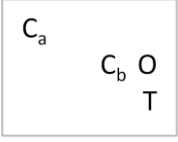
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
12	Monologue				am	marshmallow	shadow	apostrophe and double ellipsis
13	Monologue	Radioactive Man from The Simpsons					thin outline	ellipsis and exclamation mark
14	Dialogue		(I) + (has) + (a) + [noun]		have		First text is orange, second is gray	exclamation marks
15	Dialogue				am	Let's, forever, okay, are, though	lack of beginning capital letter, and capital (I)	lack of end punctuation and apostrophe
16	Monologue			(do) - missing	feel, are	my	Capslock	question mark and lack of end punctuation

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
17	05/19/07	I'm in ur windoze ₁ flashing ur nayberz ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center;">T₁</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">T₂</p> </div>	cat is near a window	Cat laying on back, exposing self	Speaker	
18	05/27/07	i tire	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> </div>		Cat laying down	Speaker	No
19	06/05/07	I has a bag ₁ Nooooo! They be stealin' mah bag! ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">T₁</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">T₂</p> </div>	Plastic bag and human	Cat lying on a plastic bag. Cat grabbing plastic bag while a human grabs the other end	Speaker	No
20	06/14/07	Gojira!	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> </div>	Box has Japanese logographs on it	Cat in a box pawing at a toy car	Unclear	No
21	06/24/07	HAHAHA ₁ ...wut? ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center;">T₁</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">T₂</p> </div>		Cat standing on hind legs	Speaker	No

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
17	Monologue		(I'm) + (in) + (your) + [noun] + [verb]ing + (your) + [noun]			your, windows, neighbors		lack of comma and end punctuation
18	Monologue	?					lack of beginning capital letter	lack of end punctuation
19	Monologue		(I) + (has) + (a) + [noun] + [pronoun] + (be) + (stealing) + (my) + [noun]!		have, are	stealing, my		exclamation mark and lack of end punctuation
20	Monologue	Godzilla			frag	Godzilla		exclamation mark
21	Monologue					what		ellipsis and question mark

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
22	07/02/07	Damn! ₁ You found me! ₂		Kitten is partially hidden behind white fabric	White kitten	Speaker	No
23	07/06/07	I r not talkin' to youze guys n e moar		Black kitten ₃ is facing away from others, and is presumably the speaker	Black kitten ₃ , grey kitten ₂ , and black and white kitten ₁	Speaker	No
24	07/15/07	...excellent...		Rodent is clasping hands together with slitted eyes, in what is regarded as an evil expression	small rodent (hamster?)	Speaker	No
25	07/26/07	So...much...purple...		cat is surrounded by and falling into purple fabric	small wide eyed cat	Unclear	No
26	08/15/07	BRING ME SOLO AND THE WOOKIEE. ₁ THEY WILL ALL SUFFR 4 DIS OUTRAGE. ₂			Fat cat sitting in a box	Speaker	Yes

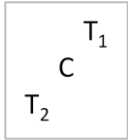
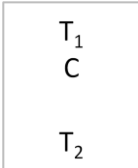

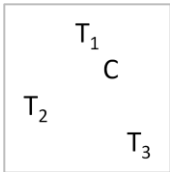
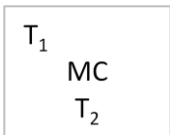
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
22	Monologue	?						
23	Monologue				am	are, talking, yous, anymore		lack of end punctuation
24	Monologue	Cultural?			frag		italics	double ellipsis
25	Monologue				frag			triple ellipsis
26	Monologue	Jabba the Hutt from Star Wars (lolspeak variant)				suffer, for, this		period

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
27	08/23/07	halp!		Cat is on wooden post, outside, above the ground	Cat holding onto a wooden post	speaker	No
28	09/01/07	I iz plantin' burd seed now ₁ K how long we wait? ₂		The cats are sitting in flower pots	Two cats sitting together	Speakers	No
29	09/09/07	I'm in ur sox ₁ stealin the left ones ₂		The basket is filled with laundry, and there are socks on the floor.	Cat in a laundry basket	Speaker	No
30	09/17/07	Unsuspecting cat... ₁ ...suspects nothing ₂		The black cat _b cannot see the grey cat _a	Grey cat climbing onto the couch, black cat laying on couch	Unclear	No
31	09/27/07	The boss wunts to c u			black and white kitten with paws together _a , orange kitten _b patting the head of a chick	Speaker	No

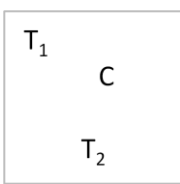

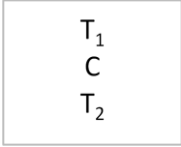

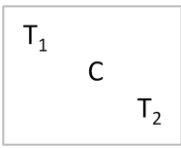
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
27	Monologue					help	lack of beginning capital letter	exclamation mark
28	Dialogue			(do) - missing	am	is, planting, bird, okay		question mark and lack of end punctuation
29	Monologue	Cultural?	(I'm) + (in) + (your) + [noun] + [verb]ing + [noun phrase]			your, socks, stealing		lack of comma
30	Monologue		[adj] + [noun] + [verb/rel adj] + [noun]					double ellipsis and lack of end punctuation
31	Monologue					wants, see, you	small text	lack of end punctuation

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
32	10/04/07	oh I get it. ₁ dis ironys right? ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> T₁ C T₂ </div>	Cat is laying next to a McDonald's Quarter Pounder (cheeseburger) box.	black cat laying on the floor	Speaker	No
33	10/12/07	traffik light cat iz on the job.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> C T </div>	The camera's flash has made one of the cat's eyes appear light green, and the other eye appears red.	a white cat standing on the top of a doorframe	Narrator	No
34	10/20/07	Oh Hai! ₁ U New Here? ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> T₁ C T₂ </div>	Cat is looking into a mirror	Cat standing on a couch	Speaker	No
35	10/28/07	Halp! ₁ I r not 4 sale!!! ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> T₁ C T₂ </div>	There is a person's hands holding the bag open	Cat in a bag	Speaker	no
36	11/06/07	doh	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> T C </div>		Cat holding paw in front of one eyes	Speaker	No

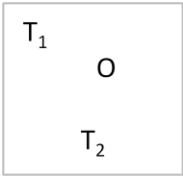
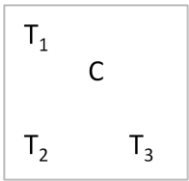
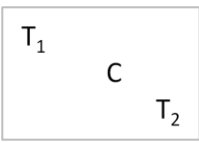
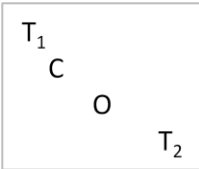
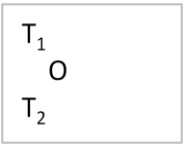
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
32	Monologue	I can has cheezburger meta reference		(is) - missing	frag	this, irony		Lack of comma
33	Monologue					traffic, is		period
34	Monologue			(are) - missing	frag	hi, you	Black text, different font, every word capitalized	exclamation mark and question mark
35	Monologue				am	help, are, for	capslock one word and lack of beginning capital letter	exclamation marks
36	Monologue	Simpspons			frag	d'oh		lack of punctuation

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
37	11/14/07	no, really, I iz ₁ ok to drive ₂		Outside, with a person in the background	Cat on hind legs	Speaker	No
38	11/21/07	happee fangsgivings! ₁ <3 from me & hand turkey ₂		The kitten's paw is on a sheet of paper in a "paw-drawn" turkey	kitten	Speaker	no
39	11/28/07	contemplatin mah super eval plan.			frog with front limbs together	Speaker	no
40	12/05/07	Um...hai ₁ um... ₂ yer shur home erly... ₃		Cat has wine glass on windowsill	Cat reclining in a window	Speaker	No
41	12/15/07	There seems 2 B ₁ an invisable barrier ₂		They're all pressed against the outside of a window	lots of white and ginger cats	?	No

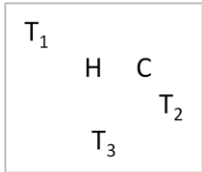


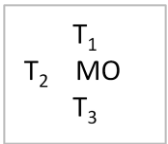
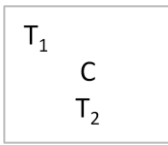
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
37	Monologue	Cultural?			am	is	no caps	commas and lack of end punctuation
38	Monologue	Cultural? Less than three = heart			frag	happy, thanksgiving	no caps	exclamation mark and ampersand
39	Monologue			[subject] - missing	?	contemplati ng, my, evil	no caps	Period
40	Monologue					hai, you're, sure, early		triple ellipsis
41	Monologue					to, be, invisible	different font	lack of end punctuation

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
42	12/22/07	wtf? ₁ u again? ₂		Kitten is standing on circular cat toy the ball is in.	Kitten looking at a ball	Speaker	No
43	12/28/07	ROFL			Elephant falling onto back	?	No
44	01/05/08	My cute innocent face ₁ let me show you it ₂		Cat is near a plant pot that has spilled over	cat sitting and looking up	Speaker	No
45	01/12/08	Zombie slayves so hard to steer		human has blank expression on face	kitten in the back of a humans shirt	Speaker	no
46	01/19/08	Dramatic Cat is ₁ ...Dramatic ₂		There is shadow on most of the cat's body, yet prominent sun on the cat's eyes, giving a dramatic look.	Black cat sitting	?	Yes

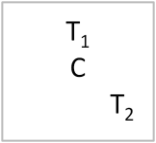
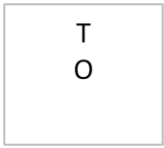
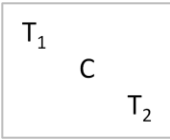
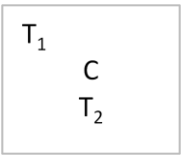
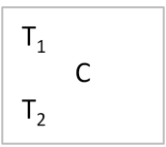
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
42	Monologue	Netspeak			?	you	no caps	question marks
43	Monologue	Netspeak			?		all caps	lack of punctuation
44	Monologue		(noun phrase): let me show you it					lack of punctuation
45	Monologue					slaves	text is green	lack of end punctuation
46	Monologue	(adj) (noun) is (adj rep)						ellipsis and lack of end punctuation

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
47	01/26/08	dis bud not for yoo ₁ is for me ₂		Otter is standing on a case of bud light	Otter holding a bud light bottle	Speaker	no
48	02/02/08	jus' chillin' wif ₁ my ₂ peep. ₃			cat lying down, nosing the ear of a peep marshmallow	Speaker	No
49	02/09/08	OMG ₁ I KNEW IT!!! ₂			Cat with a "shocked" expression	Speaker	No
50	02/16/08	open open open op ₁ en open open open ₂			bird inside with a cat outside the window	Speaker	No
51	02/23/08	Bird watchin ₁ Yer doin' it wrong ₂		There is a small bird in his head	Boy looking through binoculars	Narrator	No

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
47	Monologue			(it) - missing	frag	this, you	no caps	lack of end punctuation
48	Monologue			[subject] - missing	?	just, chilling, with	no caps	period
49	Monologue						all caps	exclamation marks
50	Monologue				frag		no caps	lack of punctuation
51	Monologue				?	you're		lack of punctuation

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
52	03/01/08	I AM ₁ INDIFFERENT ₂ TO YOUR SUFFERING ₃		The cat is on the human's back	Cat and a human sitting with face over a toilet	Speaker	No
53	03/08/08	OH ₁ HAI! ₂		the giraffe is seen through an airplane window	Giraffe	Speaker	No
54	03/15/08	want me to call the paramedics?!			cat looking down	Speaker	No
55	03/22/08	Okay. When they start ₁ Jumping, ₂ We all stand up. Got it? ₃		the deer are underneath a trampoline	many deer laying down	Speaker - a deer	no
56	03/29/08	Dis mah hoomin. ₁ Hez ossim ₂		Army man in the background holding cat	cat being held	Speaker	no

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
52	Monologue						all caps	lack of end punctuation
53	Monologue					hi	Text is orange	exclamation mark
54	Monologue			[subject] - missing	?		no caps	exclamation mark and question mark
55	Monologue						all words at the left of the macro are capitalized	period, comma, period, and question mark
56	Monologue		(this) + (my) + [noun]	apostrophe - missing		This, my, human, He's, awesome		period, and missing period

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
57	04/05/08	shower, water, naked man. ₁ help me ₂		cat is inside the shower with a human	cat with paws against shower glass	Speaker	no
58	04/12/08	Not without my blankie!		the snake is grabbing a blanket with it's mouth as it's being picked up.	snake being held	Speaker	no
59	04/19/08	Happiness is. . . ₁ Human slaves ₂		there is a human hand holding a spoon of food near the cat	cat licking lips about food	speaker	no
60	04/25/08	Day 2: They give me cold gruel and ₁ reading material. What do they WANT? ₂		there is a bowl of cat food in front of the cat, and newspaper spread out on the floor.	Cat huddled in a cat toy box	Speaker	no
61	05/02/08	teh sign is rong ₁ it shud say "big boned cat" ₂		The sign reads, "Caution: Area patrolled by Fat Cat Security Co.	Cat sitting next to a sign	Speaker	no

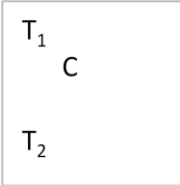
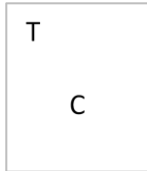
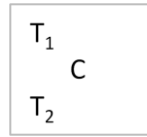

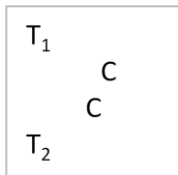
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
57	Monologue						no caps	commas, a period, ellipsis, and lack of period.
58	Monologue				frag			exclamation mark
59	Monologue	"happiness is..."			are		font is blue	ellipsis and period
60	Monologue	journals?						colon, period, and question mark
61	Monologue	sign in the picture				The, wrong, should	no caps	none

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
62	05/09/08	Yes, Ma'am. ₁ Needs financil aid ₂ cuz comes from large famlee. ₃	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ O T₂ T₃ </div>	the bunny is sitting in an office chair	Bunny sitting up on its hind legs	Speaker	no
63	05/16/08	Yewd be sad 2, ₁ if yew hadz a Bownty on UR hed. ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ O T₂ </div>	the cat has a paper towel hat on it's head, presumably a Bounty paper towel.	a cat laying on a bed	Speaker	no
64	05/23/08	Don't puts all ur kitteh ₁ in one basket ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ C T₂ </div>	the cat is lying in two baskets at once	a cat lying down	Narrator	no
65	05/30/08	Surveys ₁ show ₂ two out of three kittehs ₃ believe in Ceiling Cat. ₄	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ C T₂ C T₃ C T₄ </div>		three cats, two looking up, and one laying down and looking down	Narrator	no
66	06/06/08	etticat skoll: ₁ sittin ₂ rong ₃ rite! ₄	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ C_a T₂ C_b T₃ T₄ </div>		a grey cat _a , sitting sprawled out, and a black cat _b sitting up straight or "properly"	Narrator	no

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
62	Monologue			[subject] - missing	need, come	financial, family		periods
63	Monologue	Bounty paper towels/ other definition of bounty			had	You'd, too, you, had, Bounty, your, head	font is yellow	comma and period
64	Monologue	Don't put all your chickens in one basket/ Don't count your eggs before they hatch maxim			put	your, kitty	font is yellow	none
65	Monologue	Ceiling cat/Holy Cat		(that)		kitties		period
66	Monologue	Etiquette school sitting and CAT		and - missing		etiquette, school, sitting, wrong, right	no caps	colon and exclamation mark

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
67	06/13/08	Happy faic! =)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T C </div>	there's a happy face drawn on the box	a cat in a box with just its ears and the top of it's head sticking out		no
68	06/20/08	Cat Blanchett	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> C T </div>		a cat that has facial features and coloring similar to Cate Blanchett		no
69	06/27/08	Did you HAVE 2 git ₁ the cheap litter? ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ C T₂ </div>	the cat is surrounded by black rocks	cat crouching on rocks	Speaker	no
70	07/06/08	mom sed share ₁ mom sed share ₂ stop mockeeng ₃ stop mockeeng ₄ i telling mom ₅ i telling mom ₆	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ T₂ C_a C_b T₃ T₄ T₅ T₆ </div>	one kittena has its paws in a box, and the other kittenb is climbing inside the box	two kittens	Speakers	no
71	07/13/08	Tonight on Medical Mysteries...	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T H C </div>	the baby and cat look to be connected together by their heads	a human baby laying next to a cat	Narrator	no

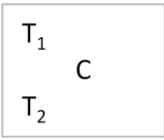
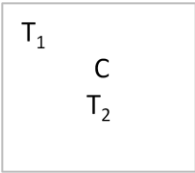
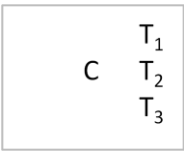
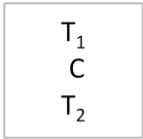
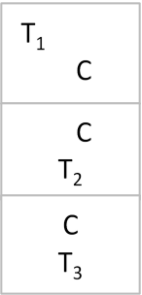
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
67	Monologue					face		exclamation mark and happy face emoticon
68	Monologue	Cate Blanchett and CAT						none
69	Monologue	cat litter				to, get	"have" capslocked	question mark
70	Monologue	children copycatting		to - missing am- missing		said, mocking	no caps	no punctuation
71	Monologue	tv shows, like Medical Mysteries, and they way they're announced						ellipsis

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
72	07/20/08	Schrodinger's cat ₁ wunderz how YOU liekz it?!?! ₂		the cat is on top of a cardboard box. Part of a human's face is visible from inside the box.	cat sitting on top of a cardboard box		Yes
73	07/37/08	4 mee?		cat is in front of a table with a lot of food on it	Cat sitting in human's lap	Speaker	no
74	08/03/08	Radioactive kitteh ₁ has to be contained ₂		cat is in some sort of metal box with a clear panel to view cat	white cat laying down	Narrator	No
75	08/11/08	Cheeeeezz			Moose that appears to be smiling	Speaker	no
76	08/18/08	Synkrinize Swim Kittehs ₁ need no waters... ₂		cats are laying down on the floor.	two cats lying next to each other with a paw extended	Narrator	no

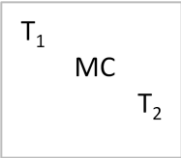

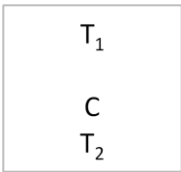
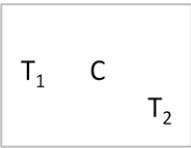
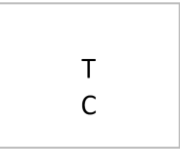
#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
72	Monologue	Schrodinger's cat				wonders, likes		question mark, exclamation mark, question mark, then exclamation mark
73	Monologue	Asking if something is for you?				for, me		question mark
74	Monologue					kitty		
75	Monologue	Saying "cheese" while smiling for a camera				cheese		
76	Monologue	synchronized swimming				synchronize, kitties	blue font	ellipsis

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
77	08/25/08	but...but... ₁ teh orange ones ₂ r poysin ₃	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> T₁ C T₂ T₃ </div>	there is an orange carrot on the table	cat sitting at a table, looking up with big eyes	Speaker	no
78	09/01/08	Suprise! ₁ Dude.Notyet. ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> T₁ O T₂ O </div>	one chick has hatched and the other hasn't	two chicks	Speakers	no
79	09/08/08	i... I can getz ₁ luv too? ₂ no. ₃	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> T₁ C O T₃ T₂ </div>	cat is being held by a human	cat and dog	Speakers	No
80	09/15/08	not right now mom ₁ iz on the computer ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> T₁ C T₂ </div>	cat is literally on top of the laptop	cat	Speaker	no
81	09/22/08	U need1 a bigger comfy rug. ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> T₁ MC T₂ </div>	Lots of cats all attempting to sit on one green rug together	many cats	Speaker/Speakers?	No

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
77	Monologue	certain colors are 'poison' kids believe?				the, are, poison	no caps	double ellipsis, period
78	Dialogue	surprise parties				surprise	text in comic bubbles	exclamation mark, and two periods
79	Dialogue				get	gets, love	no caps	ellipsis, question mark, period
80	Monologue				am	iz= I is	no caps	
81	Monologue					you		period

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
82	09/29/08	details r unimportant ₁ plz just get me out ₂		Cat stuck in a plastic rack in a cabinet	Cat in cabinet	Speaker	No
83	10/06/08	NOBODY NOOOOOEZ ₁ DA TRUBBLE I SEEEEN ₂		cat behind metal bars	cat with mouth open	Speaker	no
84	10/13/08	Nom Nom Nom Ding Ziiip ₁ Nom Nom Nom Ding Ziiip ₂ Nom Nom Nom Ding Ziiip ₃			Cat eating corn	Neither (sound effects)	No
85	10/17/08	FIREFOX ₁ HAS ENCOUNTERED A POP-UP ₂			fox jumping in mid-air	Narrator	Yes
86	10/20/08	Lukz like me ₁ smelz like me ₂ IMPOSTER!!! ₃		three progressive frames of a cat investigating a stuffed animal cat	Orange cat hugging the middle of silver cat's belly, with feet by silver cat's head	Speaker	No

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
82	Monologue					are, please		
83	Monologue	song lyrics "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen"		(have) - missing		knows, the, trouble	all caps	
84	Neither	the noise of a typewriter					all first letters capitalized	
85	Monologue	Firefox web browser	?				all caps	
86	Monologue					looks, smells	all caps in last frame	triple exclamation mark

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
87	10/27/08	Exhaustion ₁ wezhavit ₂			row of cats laying together sleeping	Speaker/Speakers?	maybe?
88	11/03/08	But I don't wanna has a capshun			wide eyed kitten with part of its face hidden behind a cat bed	Speaker	
89	11/10/08	Child star kitteh ₁ relives glory day ₂		There is a picture of a brown kitten on the tv screen the cat is staring at	brown cat looking up at a tv	Narrator	
90	11/24/08	so... ₁ Whutr wi looken et? ₂		cat is next to a white lion statue of equal size	Cat sitting on a balcony	Speaker	no
91	12/01/08	Lifes = 9		The mirrors surrounding the cat give the illusion there are 9 cats in this picture	Cat staring into a mirror	Unclear	No

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
87	Monologue		[noun phrase] + {subject} + (have/as) + [pronoun]			we have it		
88	Monologue	meta-lolspeak reference			have	caption		
89	Monologue	child stars		determiner - missing		kitty, days		
90	Monologue intended to be dialogue					what are, wi, looking, at		ellipsis, question mark
91	Monologue	notion that cats have nine lives	?			lives		equal sign

#	Date	Text	Frames	Contextual Settings	Characters Present + Action	Narrator or Speaker?	Recurring?
92	12/08/08	chrissmes sperit ₁ ...i haz et. ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ C T₂ </div>	There is a Christmas tree with ornaments on it	kitten grabbing a christmas ornament off a tree	Narrator	No
93	12/15/08	after a long cold winter alone, mr.prickly was overjoyed to meet new friends.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> O T </div>	the porcupine is near bristle brushes	porcupine	Narrator	No
94	12/22/08	Iz dreemin of a wite krismaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaass ₁ Iz dreemin of duct tape ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> T₁ C T₂ C </div>	Has speech(1) and thought (2) bubbles	cat with mouth open in the background, and cat with eyes half closed in the foreground	Speakers	No
95	12/30/08	you may ₁ kiss it ₂	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> C T₁ T₂ </div>	cat has paw extended	cat laying on a white, soft surface	Speaker	No

#	Dialogue/ Monologue	References	lol formulas	Missing/Added Parts of speech	S/V Agreement	Spelling Variants	Font Differences & Capitals	Punctuation
92	Monologue	notion of Christmas spirit	[noun phrase] + {subject} + (have/as) + [pronoun]		have	christmas, spirit, has, it		ellipsis, period
93	Monologue	story narrator tone					no caps	comma, period
94	Monologue/ Internal Dialogue?	lyrics to the song "White Christmas"			am	iz = I is, dreaming, white, christmas	All black font	
95	Monologue						no caps	

VITA

Jordan Lefler was born and raised in Lafayette, Louisiana, to an offshore worker and a resident alien. She grew up bilingual in Southern American English and Scottish Doric. Because of her upbringing, she was always very aware of other countries and cultures. This and her fascination with music led her to pursue an undergraduate degree in English, with a minor in music at the University of Louisiana. She then decided to become a linguistics graduate student at Louisiana State University to further her understanding of languages and how they work. This led her to present findings of her cat macro spreadsheet at the South Eastern Conference On Linguistics (SECOL) in 2011. She resides in Baton Rouge, mourning the loss of Louisiana State University's linguistics program. And yes, she does like cats. She can be reached at jor.lefler@gmail.com for comments, questions, and discussions.