

Orthographic variation of (lol)

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Data and code available at <https://osf.io/mgdpu/>.

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Phenomenon

- ① James Ramirez: @xebeche914 Nobody knows nothing...lol
- ② Josiah Eguino Silvas: @AthenaBass wave 2 me when u are on the plane over Nova Scotia LOL. Your getting closer LOL. Thx thumper Gr8 2 C U giggling
- ③ Alyshah Tsegay: @angew lololol that's so clever!!! Where are we flying to??? Muahaha!

Defining *lol*

- Originated in English language chatrooms in the early 1980s (McCulloch 2019, as cited in Schneier, [2021](#))
- Originally an acronym meaning ‘laugh out loud’
 - In other languages (e.g., French (Liénard, [2014](#); McNeill, [2018](#))
- Now a general internet-language maybe-acronym?

Why (lol)

- Typical interpretation of *lol*
 - “Phatic filler” (Baron, [2004](#)) or “a signal of interlocutor involvement” (Tagliamonte & Denis, [2008](#))
- Other possibilities yet to be ruled out
 - Social or pragmatic significance

(lol) as a lexical variable

- Mostly a small part of broader analyses
 - Most frequent acronym in instant messaging (IM) (Baron, [2004](#); Tagliamonte & Denis, [2008](#))
 - Less frequent with older IMers (Tagliamonte & Denis, [2008](#))
- But also sometimes the primary focus
 - Almost always turn initial or final (Schneier, [2021](#))
 - Also argued that *lol* coordinates turn taking and mitigates face threatening acts

(lol) as an orthographic variable

- Has not been studied as an orthographic variable
- Orthographic variation has been studied in general
 - Audience: ⟨in⟩ for ⟨ing⟩ is more frequent in @-messages on Twitter (Eisenstein, 2015)
 - Community membership: Found to be significant in German hip-hop community membership (Androutsopoulos, 2008), for race (Eisenstein, 2015), for geographic location (Jones, 2015), virtual community membership (Cherny 1995, as cited in Paolillo, 1999), age group membership (Schnoebelen, 2012), and gender (Baron, 2004; Varnhagen et al., 2010)
 - Pragmatics: Lengthening and capitalization have been argued to represent prosody (Schnoebelen, 2012; Thurlow and Brown 2003, as cited in Schneier, 2021)

Research question

- With these possibilities in mind:
RQ What if any are the social constraints and/or pragmatic functions of the orthographic variable (lol)?

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Data collection

Coding

Social variables

Pragmatic variables

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