

# Assessing Language Teachers' Opinions on Techspeak's Effects on Students' Second Language (L2) Acquisition and Writing Abilities

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8090130>

Received: 31 July 2024; Accepted: 09 August 2024; Published: 09 October 2024

## ABSTRACT

This research study investigates language teachers' perspectives on the influence of TechSpeak (or TxtSpk) on second language learning and writing skills among students in the College of Education at Central Mindanao University and Bukidnon State University during the second semester of the 2021-2022 academic year.

The study aims to 1. identify the common TechSpeak language used by students in academic writing; 2. assess the impact of TechSpeak on students' second language learning and writing skills; 3. uncover themes and patterns from teachers' perspectives on TechSpeak.

The study involved six language instructors—five females and one male—selected through purposive sampling from both universities. Individual interviews were conducted, focusing on their experiences and observations regarding students' submissions and feedback.

Analysis of the data led to several key themes regarding the impact of TechSpeak. First, TechSpeak affects students' formal writing, confirming earlier research on the intersection of technology and learning. While students demonstrate an understanding of appropriate TechSpeak usage, its frequent use in formal contexts raises concerns about its potential negative impact on writing skills.

The prevalence of TechSpeak, characterized by abbreviations, acronyms, and omissions, suggests an emerging trend that may hinder formal writing capabilities.

To mitigate the adverse effects of TechSpeak, educators and parents should promote awareness of the importance of proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation across all forms of communication.

Students should be actively encouraged to distinguish between informal and formal writing contexts and adjust their language accordingly.

Further research is needed to investigate the long-term impacts of TechSpeak on writing skills and to develop effective strategies for addressing its use within educational settings.

**Keywords:** Language Teachers, TechSpeak, TxtSpk, Students' Second Language, Learning and Writing Skills

## INTRODUCTION

The increasing prevalence of technology and its impact on communication have raised concerns about the effects of TechSpeak, or the specialized language used in technology-related fields. While TechSpeak has its place in precise technical communication, its overuse can create barriers when attempting to communicate with non-technical audiences. This emphasizes the need for strong writing fluency skills, which enable individuals to effectively convey complex technical concepts in a way that is understandable to a broader audience.

One area of concern is the potential negative impact of TechSpeak on students' writing ability. As TechSpeak

becomes more prevalent, students may become accustomed to using abbreviations, acronyms, and other forms of shorthand in their academic writing. This can result in a decline in their writing skills, making it challenging for them to express themselves clearly and coherently in formal writing contexts. Additionally, the use of TechSpeak can introduce errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, further compromising the overall quality of their writing.

Furthermore, relying heavily on TechSpeak can impede communication with individuals who are not familiar with technical language. Individuals need to recognize the limitations of TechSpeak and possess the ability to simplify technical concepts into plain terms. This enables them to effectively communicate the significance and implications of their work to non-technical stakeholders, such as policymakers, investors, and the general public. Developing strong writing fluency skills alongside technical mastery becomes crucial to bridge the gap between technical and non-technical audiences.

In professional settings, the ability to convey complex technical information clearly and concisely is highly valuable. Effective communication within and outside of technical fields requires individuals to possess exemplary writing fluency skills. These skills facilitate better collaboration and understanding among colleagues, as well as effective communication with stakeholders who may not have a technical background.

The impact of TechSpeak on writing ability is particularly relevant in educational settings, where students are developing their language and communication skills. The infiltration of TechSpeak into students' writing can have detrimental effects on their proficiency and accuracy. Teachers often find that students resort to using TechSpeak shortcuts, such as abbreviations and homophone symbols, even in formal writing assignments. This poses challenges in improving students' writing skills and can hinder their progress, especially for those aspiring to become future teachers themselves.

Specific research studies have examined the relationship between TechSpeak and students' writing ability. These studies have shown that frequent use of TechSpeak is associated with poorer performance in basic grammar tests. Additionally, students who receive text messages using TechSpeak are more likely to adopt and use that language themselves. These findings emphasize the need to address the impact of TechSpeak on students' writing ability and provide strategies to improve their skills.

In the context of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), it is crucial to explore the perspectives of language teachers on the infiltration of TechSpeak into second-language learning and writing skills. Understanding these perspectives can help identify effective approaches to facilitate language learning and engagement without compromising grammar and spelling standards. By providing insights into the impact of TechSpeak on students' language skills, this research can contribute to the development of strategies and resources that support learners and language teachers in navigating the challenges posed by the digital age.

The rise of TechSpeak presents both opportunities and challenges in effective communication. While technical professionals need to possess specialized language skills, it is equally important to prioritize the development of strong writing fluency skills. This allows for effective communication with diverse audiences, including those who are not well-versed in technical jargon. In educational settings, the impact of TechSpeak on students' writing ability should be carefully examined, and strategies should be implemented to enhance their writing skills while maintaining the integrity of language standards. By striking a balance between technical mastery and writing fluency, individuals can foster successful and meaningful communication within and outside the technical arena.

## Objectives

The study examined the different perspectives of the language teachers on TechSpeak to students' second language learning and writing skills in the College of Education of Central Mindanao University and Bukidnon State University, two (2) Teacher Education Institutions in the Province of Bukidnon, Mindanao, Philippines, for the Second Semester of SY 2021–2022. Specifically, it endeavored to:

1. determine the common TechSpeak lingo used by the students in academic and writing skills as observed by the language teachers;

2. describe how the usage of TechSpeak influences students' second language (L2) learning and writing skills; and
3. identify the initial codes, concepts, categories, and themes that can be formulated from the language teachers' perspectives on TechSpeak for students' second language learning and writing skills.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

#### The Phenomenological Research Design

Phenomenological research essentially looks for the universal nature of an experience. Phenomenology is an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience. This study mainly focused on exploring the language teachers' perspectives on the use of TechSpeak to the second language learning and writing skills of the pre-service teachers. Phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved (Muaña, 2013). Because the primary source of data is the life-world of the individual being studied, in-depth interviews were the most common means of data collection. Furthermore, emerging themes were frequently validated with participants because their meanings of that observation and actual perspectives are central to the phenomenological study (Ploeg, 1999).

In addition, the words of Van den Berg, as cited by Groenewald (2004, p. 5) and as translated by Van Manen profoundly capture what is stated in this paragraph:

*[Phenomena] have something to say to us – this is common knowledge among poets and painters. Therefore, poets and painters are born phenomenologists. Or rather, we are all born phenomenologists; the poets and painters among us, however, understand very well their task of sharing using words and images, their insights with others – an artfulness that is also laboriously practiced by professional phenomenologists.*

This is similarly emphasized by Prado (2011) as the general aim of the phenomenological approach is the world of research. The origins of phenomenology, however, are in philosophy, particularly the works of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. Prado added the idea that the researcher must use in-depth interviews in conducting this phenomenological study for basic reasons: 1) the participants are geographically dispersed, and 2) the topic desires a greater depth of response per individual about complex subject matter and knowledge.

### Research Setting

This study focuses on two universities in the province of Bukidnon, Mindanao, Philippines: Central Mindanao University (CMU) and Bukidnon State University (BukSU). CMU is a reputable institution with ten colleges offering a wide range of degree and non-degree programs. These colleges include Agriculture, Arts and Sciences, Business and Management, Education, Engineering, Forestry and Environmental Science, Human Ecology, Information Science and Computing, Nursing, and Veterinary Medicine. CMU is mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to fulfill four key functions: Research, Instruction, Production, and Extension.

On the other hand, BukSU offers undergraduate programs through its five schools: the School of Education, the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business Administration and Information Technology, and the School of Graduate Studies. Later, the School of Community Education and Industrial Technology, the School of Nursing, and the School of Law were established. Additionally, under the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, BukSU has several colleges, including the College of Law, College of Technologies, College of Administration, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business, College of Nursing, and College of Education. The university has three vice presidents responsible for Academic Affairs, Research, Extension, and International Affairs, and Administration, Planning, and Development.

The province of Bukidnon is known for its vast land area and diverse culture. This diversity extends to the

facilities and professional development opportunities available to administrators and instructors in different cities and municipalities within the province. The survey conducted at CMU and BukSU aimed to gather insights and information from pre-service teachers who come from diverse backgrounds and have different knowledge-seeking goals.

By conducting this survey in two universities within the province, the researchers sought to address the impact of the diverse culture on pre-service teachers' quest for knowledge. The findings will provide valuable insights into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by these pre-service teachers in their educational journey. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective teaching strategies and providing appropriate professional development support to enhance the quality of education in the province.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of this exploration were the six (6) English Language Teachers from Central Mindanao University and from Bukidnon State University, handling English and Language subjects for the students enrolled during the Second Semester of the School Year 2021 – 2022 using the purposive random sampling method. They were contacted either personally or by phone to indicate interest in participating in the research after receiving the Participant Recruitment Letter. Data were generated from the participants for this qualitative research to effectively address the research questions and uncover multiple realities. For each participant, a pseudonym was provided to ensure confidentiality and to protect their identity.

### **Sampling Procedure**

To ensure the successful answering of research questions, the selection of participants is crucial. In this study, a purposive random sampling procedure was used to select six language teachers from the two Teacher Education Institutions. This sample size aligns with the qualitative research goal of elucidating specific information rather than generalizing findings. The sampling design in qualitative research involves choosing participants who can provide meaningful insights and represent the population under study. Factors such as research objectives, resource availability, sample size, and data type should be considered. Ethical considerations, including participant safety and confidentiality, must also be addressed. It is essential that participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied and can articulate their day-to-day experiences in detail. Given the small sample size of six participants, the sampling procedure is a critical aspect of the research design to ensure rich and detailed information about the research topic.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

In this study, permission was sought from the Teacher Education Institutions in the Province of Bukidnon, specifically from the Deans of the College of Education. The participants were informed through letters, texts, or calls that they were selected to take part in the study. An Informed Consent for Participation was presented to them outlining the conditions attached to their involvement, and questionnaires and related activities were distributed. The participants were given sufficient time to respond, and interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through phone calls, video chats, and text messaging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional information was gathered during the interviews, including details about the participants' daily experiences and plans. The interviews were transcribed, and content analysis was conducted to identify emerging themes. The study also involved the analysis of structured data from various sources. Access to the participants was granted with the approval of the relevant university authorities, and confidentiality of their identities was guaranteed as stated in the Informed Consent Form.

### **Data Analysis**

The goal of the qualitative analysis according to Vegafria (2014) is to reduce a large amount of textual data to meaningful concepts while identifying themes and categories in the data. With this, the researcher utilized the three (3) Cs of data analysis which included the elements of Codes, Categories, and Concepts. This analysis process is depicted in Figure 2.

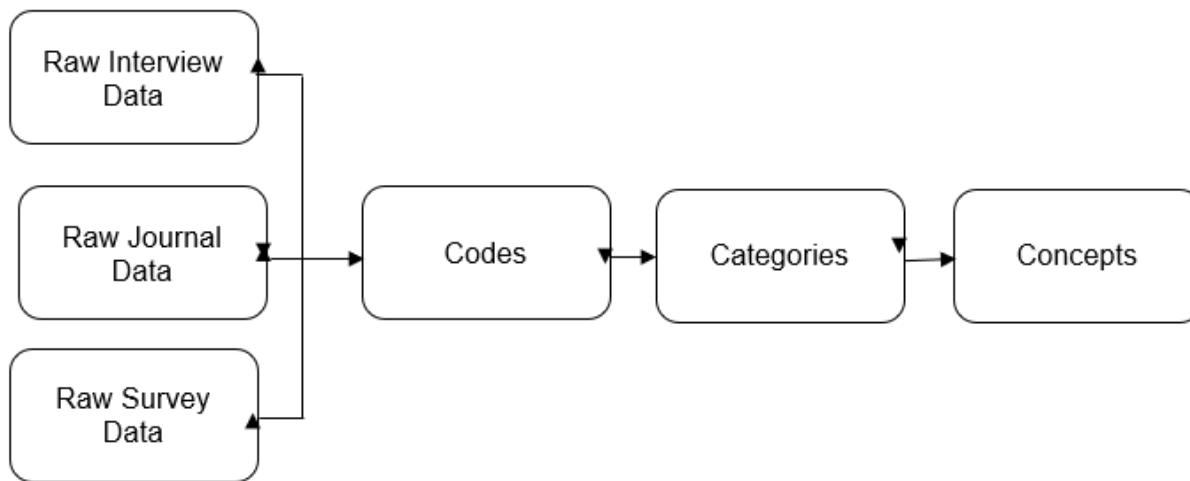


Figure 1. The Three (3) Cs of data analysis: codes, categories, and concepts

In data analysis, codes are labels assigned to specific segments of data, categorizing them based on themes or concepts. Categories are broader groupings of related codes, providing an organizational structure. Concepts are abstract ideas or constructs that guide the analysis and interpretation of data. The researcher followed a systematic approach using the three Cs—Codes, Categories, and Concepts—to analyze the data. They created codes, developed categories, and identified key concepts or themes. The Lichtman (2006) steps were followed, including revisiting and modifying codes and categories. Redundancies were removed, and key concepts or themes were identified. Typically, a set of data contains around five to seven concepts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Common TechSpeak Lingos Used by the Students in Academic and Writing Skills as Perceived by the Language Teachers

#### Emerging Theme: Abbreviations and Jargon

As the researcher used six (6) the six-step process of Lichtman (2006) in analyzing the data, she kept on reading the interview transcripts. It was hard at first. However, after reading and rereading the transcript, the researcher came up with the initial codes as the first step. The evolution of these codes comes into view after many times of reading the transcript. After that, those codes were then modified until the researcher determined categories.

Frame 1 showcased the initial coding based on the participants' perspectives on the infiltration of TechSpeak into the pre-service teachers' second language acquisition and writing skills. Implication of the overuse of TechSpeak is a limitation in learners' ability to effectively express complex ideas and concepts. TechSpeak can be useful for conveying simple messages quickly, but it can fall short when it comes to more complex communication. This can be detrimental to learners' academic performance, as clear communication is essential in effectively conveying complex ideas and concepts. The frequent use of TechSpeak can also negatively impact learners' critical thinking skills by limiting their ability to analyze and articulate complex ideas. Effective communication requires critical thinking and learners who rely heavily on TechSpeak may struggle with developing this skill.

Moreover, the use of TechSpeak can lead to a decrease in vocabulary and spelling skills. Learners who frequently use TechSpeak may not feel the need to use more descriptive or complex language, which can limit their ability to express themselves effectively in writing. Finally, the informal language used in text interactions may not translate well to more formal writing contexts. Learners who heavily rely on TechSpeak may struggle with adapting to more formal writing situations, such as academic papers or professional correspondence.

While TechSpeak may be a useful shorthand in certain contexts, its overuse can have negative implications for the writing habits of learners. Educators should work to address this issue and encourage learners to develop

strong writing habits, such as proper spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills. By developing these skills, learners can improve their academic performance and set themselves up for success in their future academic and professional endeavors.

These ideas of the participants conform to the study published in the *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* in 2019 which investigated the effects of incomplete discourse on the writing skills of L2 students (Aktas & Can, 2019). The study found that incomplete discourse negatively affected the coherence and organization of students' writing, leading to lower scores on writing assessments. The researchers suggest that teachers provide explicit instruction on the components of complete discourse, such as topic sentences and supporting details, and provide opportunities for practice to help students develop their writing skills.

Another study published in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* in 2019 by Kormos and Trebits, examined the effects of incomplete discourse on the language learning outcomes of L2 learners. The study found that incomplete discourse hindered the development of L2 proficiency, particularly in terms of grammar and vocabulary usage. The researchers suggest that teachers provide feedback on incomplete discourse and explicitly teach the components of complete discourse to help students develop their language proficiency.

The issue of politeness in student posts and submissions is a topic that has been explored in various academic publications. One such study is "Politeness in Online Discussion Forums: A Comparative Analysis of Face-Threatening Acts in English and German" by Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain and Sabine Ottemoeller, published in the *Journal of Pragmatics* in 2011.

The study examined the use of politeness strategies in online discussion forums in English and German and found that there were significant differences in the level of politeness between the two languages. In particular, the authors found that German speakers tended to use more formal and indirect politeness strategies, while English speakers used more direct and informal strategies.

Another study, "Politeness Strategies in Online Academic Discourse: A Case Study of an English-Speaking Online Course" by Dongdong Li, published in the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* in 2019, examined the use of politeness strategies in an online academic course taught in English. The study found that while students generally used polite language in their posts and submissions, there were still instances of impolite or aggressive language, particularly in disagreements or debates.

These studies suggest that the lack of expression of ideas resulting in incomplete discourse can hurt students' L2 learning and writing skills. Explicit instruction on the components of complete discourse and opportunities for practice can help students develop their writing and language proficiency.

### **How the usage of TechSpeak influences students' second language (L2) learning and writing skills**

The theme that was derived from the initial codes was: TechSpeak mediates intuitive fluency. This can be explained as TechSpeak immerses students in an L2 digital language environment. Regular interaction and practice with the platform in an L2 contextualize language use and build familiarity. This fosters intuitive comprehension and articulation of ideas. Abbreviated L2 used in TechSpeak like acronyms, initialisms, text speak, etc. enhances fluency through concise yet meaningful expression. Implied meaning and limited language inspire inference, nuance, and clever wordplay. Fluency becomes second nature. Opportunities to develop personalized L2 abbreviations and voice in TechSpeak nurture ownership and confidence in language use. Students feel empowered to share complex thoughts in familiar yet innovative ways. Their L2 fluency blossoms as a result.

Exposure to diverse L2 perspectives and thinking patterns in TechSpeak broadens minds. Adaptability, openness, and courage to think originally strengthened through exposure to varied viewpoints. Higher-order thinking skills essential for navigating complexity emerge. Regular practice using L2 in TechSpeak sustains progress and prevents attrition. Motivation to continue engaging with the immersive environment and community supports habit formation and long-term fluency development. Learning becomes lifelong. Challenges in TechSpeak spark possibilities for growth. Figuring out implied meaning, crafting definitions collaboratively, or discussing

concepts from multiple angles cultivate analytical, critical, and abstract reasoning abilities in the L2. An innovation mindset takes root. Social interaction and accountability to an L2-speaking community in TechSpeak provides encouragement and real-world context for fluency. The use of language becomes more natural, nuanced, and impactful as a result. Technical skills develop alongside soft skills crucial for success.

Referring to the results, there is an ongoing debate about whether "TechSpeak" - the tendency for technology companies and experts to use jargon, acronyms, and other specialized terminology - poses a significant problem for education. On the one hand, some arguments for it being a problem are as follows: It can create barriers between educators, students, and parents who may not fully understand certain tech terms and concepts. This can limit accessibility and inclusion. It promotes an "insider knowledge" that privileges those deeply immersed in tech culture and terminology. This can marginalize others. It changes and evolves so rapidly that it is difficult for educators and curricula to keep up, leaving students with disjointed or outdated knowledge.

On the other hand, arguments that it is not an overwhelming problem or that it can be addressed: Educators can explicitly teach technical terminology and concepts to promote shared understanding. Students can learn to "translate" between TechSpeak and a common language; The benefits of exposure to new knowledge and ways of thinking likely outweigh the costs of learning some new terminology. Technical skills are increasingly important in many careers and for informed digital citizenship; Not all tech education relies on or promotes TechSpeak. Educators can adapt materials and explanations for different audiences; Like any specialist knowledge, TechSpeak can be demystified through exposure and applied to understand. It is a means of communication, not an end in itself.

This section presents research findings on language teachers' perspectives on TechSpeak and its impact on students' second language learning and writing skills. Before the analysis, a transcript discussion was conducted. The resulting model called the Reliable Uniform Blueprint for Informal and Organized Syntax (RUB4IOS) Design Theory, is depicted in Figure 1.

The RUB4IOS model proposes a reliable and uniform blueprint for designing syntax in informal and organized communication, especially in contexts like texting, social media, and digital platforms where TechSpeak or Textism is common. The model advocates for a clear, concise, and easily understandable framework that is consistent and adaptable to different contexts and audiences.

In today's digital age, where informal and abbreviated language is prevalent, the RUB4IOS model holds significant implications. It recognizes the importance of informal communication and emphasizes the role of clear and effective syntax in successful communication across all contexts. Additionally, the model acknowledges the need for tailored syntax designs to optimize communication for different audiences and contexts.

The significance of the RUB4IOS model lies in its potential to enhance communication and reduce misunderstandings in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. By providing a reliable and uniform blueprint for syntax design, the model can help individuals and organizations communicate more effectively and efficiently in diverse contexts. Furthermore, it promotes clarity and understanding in informal communication, which is increasingly important in today's world.

The RUB4IOS model is supported by theories such as Language Evolution Theory, Textism Theory, and Digital Communication Theory. Language Evolution Theory suggests that language adapts to changing contexts and needs, aligning with the RUB4IOS model's emphasis on adaptability. Textism Theory posits that abbreviated language in digital communication is a response to media constraints, supporting the RUB4IOS model's focus on clear and concise syntax. Digital Communication Theory underscores the importance of effective communication in the digital age, which is reflected in the RUB4IOS model's emphasis on promoting clear and effective syntax in various digital contexts.

The RUB4IOS model can be a valuable tool for individuals involved in designing syntax for informal and organized communication. It highlights the importance of clear and consistent syntax while recognizing the need for adaptability to different contexts and audiences. By fostering effective communication in the digital age, the

model contributes to building stronger relationships, increasing productivity, and reducing misunderstandings. Professionals in fields such as marketing, advertising, public relations, and social media, where effective communication is crucial, may find the RUB4IOS model particularly useful.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the data analysis, the researcher came up with the following conclusion:

The perspectives of the Language Teachers on the impact of the utilization of TechSpeak by the learners on their learning and writing skills were best captured in the different ideas that were drawn out from their experiences. The six (6) initial themes were the following: use of abbreviations in conversations in chats, use of shortcuts and patterns in their interactions, use of initialism and contractions of words, shift in the use of words through substitution, use of the words being shortened as acronyms, and letters are inadvertently omitted to save space and time.

The initial themes derived from the initial codes and categories were the following: abbreviations, shortcuts, initialism, substitution, acronyms, and omissions.

The emerging theme summarized from the data focused on abbreviations and jargon.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are given:

The administration may plan for activities to enhance digital fluency. Exposure to TechSpeak and the opportunity to interact using digital languages, abbreviations, and shorthand builds familiarity and comfort with technology. Students develop fluency in comprehending and conveying complex ideas through limited means. This intuitive fluency translates to other digital tools and platforms, empowering stronger, more confident technology users. Regular practice nurtures fluency into a habit, so students think, learn, communicate, and innovate digitally with greater ease, effectiveness, and confidence. Socioemotional skills like perseverance, creativity, and a growth mindset are also strengthened through fluent tech use. Overall, TechSpeak immersion helps future-proof students' capacity to learn and thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Language teachers may design activities and craft materials that may foster innovative and critical thinking: TechSpeak provides chances to develop new perspectives, solutions, and thinking patterns. Abbreviated language, acronyms, implied meaning, and other abbreviated forms spark possibilities for invention and insight. Opportunities to suggest alternate representations, craft definitions collaboratively, or discuss concepts from multiple angles nurture analytical, evaluative, and abstract reasoning abilities. Exposure to varied viewpoints from peers develops adaptability, open-mindedness, and courage to think originally. Stronger higher-order thinking transforms learning into a journey of discovery, enabling deeper understanding, nuanced analysis, and forward-focused thinking. Students gain vital skills for success in complex, unpredictable environments.

Students may always be reminded to promote lifelong learning. Meaningful engagement with TechSpeak cultivates passion and dedication to continual growth. Challenges to develop new ways of thinking about familiar concepts or explore interconnections across topics inspire an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Making learning playful yet impactful builds intrinsic motivation to persist through obstacles or complex material. Students become self-directed, taking ownership of their progress and seeking to expand their minds continually. Regular usage of TechSpeak as a resource and community develops into a habit of lifelong learning. Connection to a network of like-minded, growth-focused individuals provides accountability, encouragement, and opportunities for learning that extend beyond classroom years. Students graduate equipped with adaptability, perseverance, and hunger for progress - qualities that will serve them well across an endless journey of discovering and developing their potential.

Future researchers may replicate this study considering other factors and variables to address issues that need to be undertaken for in-depth study and more generalized results of the impact of the utilization of TechSpeak not only on learning and writing skills of the learners but in other aspects of their student life and as a member of the society.