Effects of text-messaging on undergraduate students

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the impact of text-messaging on the academic writing students of secondary schools. The researcher adopts descriptive and empirical analytical approaches as far as data collection and discussion are concerned.The researcher sets a questionnaire for teachers to see the impact of text-messaging on the writing performance of Secondary School students. To analyze the data, the researcher has used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The findings of the study revealed that Text- messaging have a negative impact on the students, writing skill. Spelling is really changed among student's writing. No punctuation marks used. Based on the findings stated above the researcher offers the following recommendations: Texting is reading and writing, therefore it must be encouraged. Grammar should be set as a unit either by giving the exact writing if it exists suitable one . Texting is appropriate way of simple communication. Punctuation is a very significant feature of written language, so when commerce with text- messaging a sentence it is recommended to identify the place of the punctuation marks that determine the intended meaning. Teachers and students should give sufficient time for practicing writing skills.

Keywords: academic writing, abbreviations, SMS language, texting messages, acronyms, pictogram.

1. Historical background

Messaging, texting or SMS (short message service) is a way of communication that connects people living in any place of the world by this mode. It takes minimum time one can say few seconds. The concept of SMS was flourished in 1984. It was developed in the Franco German GSM cooperation by Fried helm Hillenbrand and Bernard Ghillebacrt. The very first message was sent in 1992 from Neil Papworth. The first message was 'Merry Christmas'. 4.1 Billion SMS sent daily in 2008. SMS is predicted to exceed 10 Trillion in 2013. The 'short' part carries maximum size of text message that is about 160 characters (letters, numbers, or symbols in the Latin alphabet). It was a slow process when it started but gradually it succeeded. Today it is the most commonly and widely used application in the world. About 81% of the mobile phone users subscribe it. There are different networks that make it more and more easy way of communication.

2. Statement of the Problem

Students sometimes confuse the lines between formal English and the very informal SMS language. This is thought to be causing them to make a lot of spelling and grammatical errors in their assignments and tests, and makes it rigid for teachers to differentiate what they are trying to say. The English language teachers are fronting a great challenge due to this situation. The language of texting does not detect grammatical and syntactic rules. So it is neither formal nor standard. Words are spelled as they are spoken. As a result, teachers penalize the learners for unusual spelling which causes damage to the students if this language is used in academic writing. This creates negative impact of writing on paper in the classroom that language of text-messaging thus they create writing errors. This is what the researcher tries to highlight and suggest solutions *.*

3. Objectives of the Study

1 .To find out the common use of text messages and their effects on student's written skills.
2. To discover the features that affect the students written skills in their academic work.

4. Questions of the Study

1. To what extend that common use of text-messaging effects on the student's writing skill?
2. What are the features that affect the students written skills in their academic work?

5. Hypothesis of the Study

1. The common use of text messages and their effects on student's written skills.
2. The features that affect the students written skills in their academic work.

6. Significance of the Study

This study endeavors to provide some investigations into problems that are encountered by the students and seeks to find out solutions to overwhelm those difficulties. Also, the emphasis of this study is to find out if there is an effect of SMS on the formal writing of Secondary school students. It is hoped that this research will shed light in the effect of text messaging on writing EFL among Secondary School Students. It is going to be valuable for both teachers and students. The study is expected to provide perceptions to the field of applied linguistics and be a base for further studies.

7. Methodology of the Study

The researcher adopts descriptive and empirical analytical approaches as far as data collection and discussion are concerned.The researcher sets a questionnaire for teachers to see the impact of text-messaging on the writing performance of Sudanese Secondary School students.

8. The impact of the internet on writing:

The internet has changed the style people live in numerous things, but the largest is the impact it is getting on the way they interact ordinary. Most social media are used to transmit one's emotions and ideas, for instance, 'Facebook' users may employ the language freely as they want (Brown, 2017).

Since the internet became so dominant in our culture, we have been blessed enough to have access to wide volumes of information. Having easy access to large volumes of information has its benefits. These days, we all have user-friendly software on our mobile devices or

laptops which not only checks spelling, but also grammar. It has reduced the effort and time taken to produce a piece. As we know, text messages aren't a proper form of communication. We use slang words and often shorten words by change their spelling. This has had a significant impact on the writing style of the younger generation. Many have suggested that writing skill has in fact, reduced.

9. Text Messaging and the theory of Literacy

Literacy skills are very diverse; they vary from recognizing skills to higher level of understanding. Importance is given to the observation of the connection between literacy and features which affect and moderate it to an extent, because of the important role it plays in developing and improving knowledge in a society.

According to Baron (2008), as soon as children can distinguish between formal and informal language, SMS language does not affect their literacy. Thurlow (2006) claims that the growing body of scholarly research deals with two types of public observations: 'first the general influence of texting on the standard languages and on popular notions of good communication; second, concerns about the specific influence of text messaging language on conventional literacy'.

The latest studies (from a team at Coventry University) have found great positive relations between the use of text language and the skills required for success in Standard English in pre-teenage children. The more abbreviations in their messages, the higher were their scores on tests of reading and vocabulary. The children better at spelling and writing used the most text SMS and the younger they received their first phone, the higher their scores which implies that they could not be good at texting if they had not already developed significant literacy awareness.

10. Literacy Skills: Writing and Spelling

Text messaging has a unique spelling pattern. This pattern is highly phonetic. Words are often spelled the way they sound and in some cases numeric graphemes (such as 2 for too and 8 for words ending with –ate or -eat) are employed forming a distinct type of alphanumeric (use of alphabetic and numeric symbols to form words). Hard af Segerstad posits that this type of spelling is mainly employed to save time and keystrokes. Some examples of textisms which employ phonetic spelling and alphanumerisms are as follows:

skool – school, nite - night, gr8 – great or cr8 – create, 2day – today, fone – phone. Spelling in text messaging also involves lexical (word) shortenings by replacing longer words with shorter forms (Hard af Segerstad).

Baron (2005) in her study suggests that there are two dimensions in which we can linguistically interpret CMC: "On the one hand, such a dichotomous perspective ignores the variation in online communication, reflecting age, gender, education level, cultural background, personality, and years of experience with the CMC platform or the purpose of the communiqué (a well-crafted email message applying for a job vs. a hasty blitz mail note arranging to meet at the library at 10); on the other hand, many evils attributed to CMC, especially as practiced by teens, can be traced back to Arpanet days". Nevertheless, according to her "the most important effect of IM on language turns out to be not stylized vocabulary or grammar but the control seasoned users feel they have over their communication networks", and "knowledge of contemporary CMC style (and the social control IM and other media offer) is empowering".

Rosen et al (2010) questioned if there is a positive relationship between textism and informal writing and a negative one with formal writing. They also measured the usage of texism. As a conclusion, people without any college education used more abbreviated words and had bad formal writing. One the other hand, people with college education did not show negative correlation of their writing abilities. Moreover, "the data from the current study found negative associations between reported use of textisms in everyday electronic communication and writing skill, particularly for formal writing".

11. Language use in SMS Messaging

SMS is an abbreviation standing for "Short Message Service". It is a technology that enables the transmission of typed text messages from a mobile phone to another. As a service, it makes it possible for users of mobile and portable devices to exchange brief written information/messages through cellular network (International Journal of Linguistics and Communication, Vol. 2(3), September 2014).

The limited number of characters per message unusually affects language use in text messaging as there obviously rises the need for the message to be compressed to fit the limited size provided for the communication, without losing the lucidity of the message sent.

Richardson and Lenarcic (2009: 846) make reference to this creative and 'artistic' use of language in SMS messaging when they note that the relatively limited supply of 160 characters that constitute the expanse of a single text message very much compels the author of such a message to adopt a strategy to "relate cogent meaning and this becomes a shared approach to generate a dynamic mobile social network".

12. Origins of Text Messaging Slang

At the root of most, if not all, differences between normal English and text messaging slang -- affectionately or mockingly known as "txt spk" -- lies a desire to use as few characters as possible. SMS originally allowed a maximum of 160 characters, including spaces and punctuation: shortening words was often the only way to fit everything you wanted to say into the message.

13. Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Pictogram

A great part of the vocabulary of text messaging is made up of abbreviations, acronyms, and pictograms. Abbreviations are words that are shortened one way or another, such as "l8r" for "later," "u" for "you," and "sec" for "second"; acronyms are letter sequences that stand for a longer phrase, such as "IDK" for "I don't know," "OMG" for "oh my God," and "AFAIR" for "as far as I remember"; pictograms are strings of characters that represent a feeling or concept, such as ":)" for a smile and "<3" for "love."

Examples of such compositions include the following: "4 u" used for "for you", "luv u" used for "love you", "b4" used for "before", "love you with all my heart" used for "luwamh", "to whom it may concern" in the place of "twimc", "2d8" used for "to date" and "db8" used for "debate" (Essoh et al 2014; Crystal 2008, Dansieh 2011; BBC-Focus on Africa, 2004).

Dansieh (2011:222) attempts a theorization of the phenomenon when he briefly concedes that:

As more and more students worldwide acquire and use mobile phones, so are they immersing themselves in text messaging. Such is the situation that some teachers, parents and students themselves are expressing concerns that students' writing skills stand the risk of being sacrificed on the altar of text messaging.

14. Previous Studies

Danish, et., al (2011) conducted a research on SMS texting and its potential Impacts on student's written communication skills. They found that the more students write, the more they improve upon their writing skills. Therefore, they explore some important factors about the excessive usage of texting they found that its increased use rather enhances the literacy of users, especially the youth instead of harming it. The debate is carried to another level by the third group who doubt whether texting really has any effect (positive or negative) on English grammar at all. These views will be expanded later under the literature review section. I would like to posit that text messaging in itself is not bad. (Dansieh, SMS Texting and Its Potential Impacts on Students' Written Communication Skills, 2011).

(Moursund, 2004). Conducted one study on SMS they found that the number of relevant text messages sends and received during a lecture cover the topic of developmental psychology was connected to students' mental faculty of the lecture and student's and the study proved that the right use of information and communication technology Improved Student-Teacher Interaction Innovation has enhanced the understudy and educator connection amazingly. Presently numerous instructors utilize numerous mechanical guides to interface with their understudies.

Crystal (2008), conducted a research on text messaging and its effects on student's written communication skills. They found that the presentation of printing, transmit, phone, and broadcasting caused comparative dangers however the interest, doubt, dread, vulnerability, restriction, appeal, energy and excitement at the same time that messaging has stimulated in such a limited capacity to focus time is outperformed by no phonetic wonder.

15. Data Analysis and Discussion:

The teachers' questionnaire consisted of 10 items. In these items, the teachers are asked to select from the following choices: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) disagree, (4) strongly disagree. In addition, these items were involved teachers opinion about the effect of text-messaging on their students' academic writing. The questionnaire was given to 30 respondents who have long experience in teaching.

The following table shows the mean and standard deviation and chi-square values for the following study Hypotheses: The following hypotheses are postulated:

1. The common use of text messages and their effects on student's written skills.

2. The features that affect the students written skills in their academic work.

No	Statement	mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-Square	p-value
1	When writing a message, texters do not pay enough attention to all aspects of language use.	1.26	0.52	26.60	0.000
2	My students do not recognize the difference between informal language use, where features of texting and SMS are allowed, and formal writing which should be purely academic	1.43	0.81	38.00	0.000
3	Uncommon abbreviations and contractions appear in my students' academic writing	1.43	1.62	14.60	0.000
4	Text messaging affects negatively students' use of punctuation marks	1.33	0.71	44.13	0.000
5	In my students' writing, grammar is the most affected aspect due to texting effects	1.36	0.55	18.20	0.000
6	In my students' writing, spelling is the most affected aspect due to texting effects	1.83	0.87	13.20	0.000
7	In my students' writing, fragments are always found due to texting effects	1.30	0.53	23.46	0.100
8	In my opinion text messaging and chatting will endanger the future of standard English	1.36	0.556	18.20	0.000
9	As a feature of e-technology, texting improves students' English in general and their writing in particular	2.13	0.973	4.66	0.000
10	In my writing classes, features of texting appear in the essays of students who have good command of the language	1.60	1.664	29.20	0.100

1- From the above table, it was clear to the learner that the percentage of I strongly agree is big and their rate is 76.7%, and the ratio I agree is 20.0%, as it indicates when writing a message, teachers do not pay enough attention to all aspects of language use.

2- From the above table, it is noted that the largest percentage strongly agree, which amounted to 73.3%, followed by I agree, where a ratio of 13.3% was recorded, and the final decision of the phrase will be made after conducting an analysis such as squaring it.

3- From the above table, it is noted that the largest percentage strongly agree, as it reached 63.3%, followed by I agree, with a score of 30.0%, and the final decision of the phrase will be made after conducting an analysis of Kay squared to it ..The majority responded that uncommon abbreviations and contractions appear in my students' academic writing.

4- From the above table, it is noted that the largest percentage strongly agreed, which amounted to 76.7%, followed by I agree, where a ratio of 16.7% was recorded, and the final decision of the phrase will be carried out after conducting an analysis such as squaring it ..Is clear that the majority strongly agree that text messaging affects negatively students' use of punctuation marks.

5- From the above table, it is noted that I agree with the largest percentage of 43.3%, and I strongly agree with a score of 40.0% and the final decision of the phrase will be made after conducting an analysis of Kay Squared to it. Over 80 % show that students' writing, spelling is the most affected aspect of grammar .

6- From the above table, it is noted that the largest percentage strongly agree, amounting to 66.7%, followed by I agree, where a ratio of 30.0% was recorded, and the final decision of the phrase will be made after conducting an analysis of Kay Squared to it .So the hypothesis is proved.

7- From the above table, it is noted that the largest percentage strongly agree, amounting to 73.3%, followed by I agree, with a score of 23.3%, and the final decision of the phrase will be carried out after conducting an analysis such as squaring it.

8- From the above table, it is noted that the percentage strongly agree, reaching 66.7%, followed by I agree, where it scored 30.0%, and the final decision of the phrase will be made after conducting a Kai-squaring analysis for it.

9- From the above table, it is noted that the largest percentage agreed, with a rate of 36.7%, followed by I strongly agree, as it reached 30.0%, and the final decision of the phrase will be carried out after conducting an analysis such as squaring it .

10- From the above table, it is noted that the largest percentage agreed, with a ratio of 63.3%, followed by a ratio and strongly agreed, where he recorded a ratio of 30.3%, and the final decision of the phrase will be carried out after conducting an analysis such as squaring it.

16. Conclusion:

According to the questionnaire which conveys the views of English language teachers about the effect of text-messaging on their students' academic writing, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

1- Texting is reading and writing, therefore it must be encouraged.

2- Grammar should be set as a unit either by giving the exact writing if it exists suitable one.

3- Texting is appropriate way of simple communication.

4- Punctuation is a very significant feature of written language, so when commerce with text- messaging a sentence it is recommended to identify the place of the punctuation marks that determine the intended meaning.

5- Teachers and students should give sufficient time for practicing writing skills.

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