

The Effects of Texting Language on Esl Students' Writing Skills: Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate Pakistani ESL instructors' opinions on how text messaging affects their students' writing abilities. The project's major goals were to investigate the impact of text messaging on ESL students' writing abilities from the perspective of the teachers and to ascertain the level of academic English spelling. In all, thirty ESL teachers took part in the research. Participants' answers were gathered using a five-point Likert scale, and descriptive statistics were utilised to analyse the quantitative data. It has been discovered that learners who use text messaging and those who don't have remarkably different English spellings in their writing abilities.

Keywords: Text Messaging, ESL Writing, Instructors' Opinions, Academic English Spelling, Quantitative Analysis

Introduction

The acronym for short message service is SMS. Texting, sending text messages, and text messaging are other terms frequently used to refer to SMS. Short text messages can be transmitted over the service from one mobile device to another or from the Web to another mobile device. It is a method for instantaneously exchanging written electronic messages via a mobile device or the Internet, utilising a shared software programme on a personal computer. On December 3, 1992, Neil Papworth, a 22-year-old test engineer at Sema Group (now Airwide Solutions), sent Richard Jarvis a text message saying "Merry Christmas" across the Vodafone network using a personal computer. This was the first instance of SMS messaging being utilised. With 2.4 billion of the 3.3 billion phone customers using the Short Message Service regularly, or 74% of all mobile phone users globally, text messaging is now the most popular mobile data service. More than 85% of people use SMS in nations like Finland, Sweden, and Norway. With over 60% of active SMS users, North America is quickly coming up to the over 80% rate for Europe. With an average of 27 texts sent every day, mobile phone consumers in the Philippines use the service the most frequently. In the UK alone, text usage has recently reached more than 4 billion messages per month, for a yearly total of over 45 billion texts. According to telecommunications expert Gartner, there will be more than 2.3 trillion messages sent globally in the next few years, representing a 19.6% rise from the previous record of 1.9 trillion messages. There are extremely few conceivable messages, and only a few abbreviations, such "C" for "see," "B" for "be," "U" for "you," and "B4" for "before," may be used in several phrases. Writing is a task that involves almost all cognitive functions. It plays a significant role in many people's vocations as well. Students' writing abilities are impacted by text texting as well. It is said that because this language is simple and affordable, pupils are becoming dependent on it. Since language evolves as the world does, this altered English spelling of pupils while sending SMS messages has an impact on students.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are following;

- 1 To find out the effects of SMS language on ESL students writing skills.
- 2 To find out the standard of academic English spelling by exploring the effects of text messaging.
- 3 To suggest some ways that how text messaging can be used in a positive way.

Research Questions

- 1 What is the effect of text messaging on English spelling of ESL students' writing?
- 2 What is the effect of text messaging on the accuracy of writing skills of the ESL learners?
- 3 Does text messaging affect the grammar skills of the students?
- 4 Does text messaging enhance the vocabulary of the ESL learners?

Delimitation

The study is confined to selected English language teachers of the secondary and tertiary level students in different institutes of South Punjab, Pakistan.

Review of Literature

The phrase "text messaging," often known as "texting," refers to the practice of sending brief text messages via mobile devices using the short message service (SMS). Messages that are not longer than a few hundred characters are sent using text messaging. Generally speaking, the phrase refers to texting that occurs between two or more mobile devices.

Text messaging is officially known as SMS, or short message service. Globally, short messaging services are expanding quickly. Only 17 billion SMS messages were transmitted in 2009; in 2001, that figure reached 250 billion, and in 2004, it reached 500 billion.

A mobile phone, often known as a cell phone, is a long-range electronic gadget that is used for mobile communication via a network of specialised base stations, or "sites," in the cellular industry. Modern mobile phones may handle a wide range of other services in addition to the voice function, such gaming and SMS text messaging. (wikipedia.2009).

Undoubtedly helpful, cell phones have been ingrained in adolescent society. They are now an essential component of the rapidly developing, new technology that permeates teens' lives. When held in the hand, a cell phone appears to have its own energy (Petén, 2009). The transmission of short written messages between mobile phones via cellular networks is known as text messaging, or texting. The phrase has been expanded to encompass communications with images and videos, such as MMS messages, even though it is most commonly used to describe messages delivered through the short messaging service (SMS). According to Wales and Snow (2009), individual communications are referred to as "text messages" or "texts."

In essence, text messaging aims to give users the ability to send messages to each other from anywhere as long as there is cell carrier signal availability. This service is also utilised by automated systems, mostly for the purpose of buying products and mobile phone services. Text messaging is also frequently utilised in competitions.

Some firms claim that in 1989, Edward Lantz, a former NASA employee, transmitted the first-ever text message. The Motorola beeper was used to send the text message. To read the message, turn the numerals in the message upside down.

The first SMS message was transmitted using a Vodafone GSM network in a commercial on December 3, 1992 in the UK. Neil Papworth used a desktop computer to send the SMS

message. The text message, which reads "Merry Christmas," was sent to Richard Jarvis by Vodafone using an Orbital 901 phone. An engineering student sent the first SMS for the GSM networks using a Nokia phone.

Text talks, sometimes known as text language, are customised ways of typing messages fast due to the widespread use of text messaging. Words are abbreviated in text speak to save time by not having to type the entire term. Another factor is that, unlike personal computers, the majority of mobile phones lack Qwerty keyboards.

Text Messaging

The power of humans to be linguistically creative and adapt language to many contexts is most recently demonstrated by text messaging. We can observe language evolving in text speak, although very slightly (Crystal, D. 2008).

Types of Text Messaging

There are following types of text messages,

Pangolin's **Interactive Messaging Unlimited** system supports the reception and processing of these types of messages:

- SMS
- Instant Messaging
- Smart Messaging
- EMS
- MMS
- Email

SMS

Text messaging is officially known as SMS, or short message service. The most popular and basic kind of text messaging is SMS (Short messaging Service), which is supported by a wide range of mobile phones. Text messages sent over SMS may normally include a maximum of 160 characters. Globally, short messaging services are expanding quickly. Only 17 billion SMS messages were transmitted in 2000; by 2001, that figure had risen to 250 billion, and by 2004 it had reached 500 billion.

Instant Messaging

a method of instantaneously exchanging written electronic communications using a mobile device or the Internet, utilising a shared software programme on a PC or smartphone. Shorthand: IM

Instant messaging (<https://browse.dictionary.reference.com/>)

Both texting and instant messaging are examples of technology-mediated communication that let people connect with one another and build and maintain friendships and social bonds. Since text messaging isn't anonymous, it differs from instant chatting and a lot of other CMC methods. because mobile phone technology often makes text messaging possible. Therefore, texting is typically used to reinforce a person's current network. Furthermore, comparatively little study has been done on text messaging compared to the large body of research that has been done on email and instant messaging. This is unexpected given that text messaging is highly popular among teenagers worldwide due to its low cost and portability (Eldrige & Grinter, 2001; Grinter & Palen, 2002).

Young people seem to use text messaging for social purposes in a similar way to how they use instant messaging (IM), email, and cell phones; in fact, text messaging is frequently used in conjunction with these other technologies to multitask (Lenhart, Madden & Hittin, 2005). The possibility that instant messaging and text messaging might be used as educational tools is one



of their most intriguing features. Teachers who "encourage students to use messaging short hand to spark their thinking processes" (Lee, 2002) are an example of how they may be used by educators to assist students understand school-related knowledge.

Smart Messaging

Nokia created smart messaging, which is exclusive to Nokia phones. With the help of smart messaging, users of Nokia phones may compose messages that contain non-text data such as virtual business cards, ring tones, and photos, all while remaining generally compatible with the SMS text standard. Put another way, even if these messages might not contain text, the data is still communicated using the SMS text data stream.

The best part about smart messaging is that it enables basic visual messaging for a fraction of the cost, with message delivery times far faster than with traditional text messaging. The term "low cost" refers to the fact that sending Smart Messages from a mobile phone costs the same as sending a standard SMS text message, and they may be delivered in almost the same amount of time. "High simplicity" refers to how simple the phone's user interface makes it to create Smart Messages..

EMS: Extended Message Service

In response to Nokia's exclusive Smart Messaging standard, Alcatel, Motorola, Siemens, and Sony/Ericsson worked together to create the EMS (Extended Message Service) standard. Based on the fact that several manufacturers collaborated to establish EMS following Smart Messaging, Pangolin believes this standard is more well-thought-out, adaptable, and easier to support.

Similar to Smart Messaging, the EMS standard permits images, animations, ring tones, and other non-text content. However, EMS also adds the capability to format text messages, allowing for changes to font size, colour, style (bold, italic, etc.), and placement of text and pictures within messages.

The beautiful thing about EMS messages, like Smart Messaging, is that they use the SMS text data stream for transmission, which means that they offer the high simplicity, low cost, and speed of SMS text messages.

MMS: Multimedia Messaging Service

Text, image, audio, and other types of material can all be created messages using the MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service) standard. Multiple pages, each with its own text, image, music, etc., can be found in MMS messages. The newest and trickiest standard that mobile phones use right now is MMS. Due to its recent introduction, there may be incompatibilities across phone makers and even cell carriers (for example, AT&T's implementation and use may differ from that of Verizon, Alltel, etc.). This might lead to "interoperability" problems between different mobile phone models and carriers.

One obvious and simple distinction is the image resolution that cell phones support. While some camera phones enable 640 by 480 pixels or greater, some only handle relatively low-resolution images, like 352 by 288 pixels. A photograph must be transformed when it is transferred across different phone models in order for it to display properly. "Trans-coders" working for the mobile carrier perform this conversion. Currently, this trans-coder procedure functions very well inside a certain cell carrier but may not function at all between carriers.

Email

Email was first developed as a text-messaging tool for use on personal computers. The capacity to send and receive emails has been a feature of many newer kinds of mobile phones as they have developed. In truth, most mobile phones allow you to send an image message via MMS

to both an email address and a phone number when you compose it on the device. Since email allows users to send both text and photo messages, it's frequently an excellent substitute for sending MMS messages. Sending an email rather than an MMS message can be quicker for those with mobile phones since sending an image message to an email address may need less data exchanges. Additionally, sending email is usually free with cell subscriptions, while sending MMS messages costs money.

Language Used in Text Messaging

The phrase "SMS language," also known as "texting language" or "textsese," refers to the slang and abbreviations that are most frequently employed in mobile text messaging since they must be brief. This is especially true of the widely used SMS (short message service) communication protocol. On the Internet, SMS language is also widely used in email and instant messaging. (Himanshu & Rai, 2005)

Users usually remove the vowels from words that do not have a common abbreviation. This means that the reader must understand a string of consonants by inserting the vowels again (e.g. dictionary becomes kybrd and keyboard becomes dctnry). There are several instances of words or phrases that utilise the same abbreviations, therefore the reader must interpret the abbreviations based on the context in which they are used (e.g., lol might indicate laugh out loud or lots of love, and cryn could signify crayon or cryin(g)).

Since many telecommunications companies have character limits for SMS messages, one advantage of SMS language is that it minimises the number of characters required to convey a meaningful message. As a result, punctuation, grammar, and capitalization are often disregarded.

Text messaging has become a social medium that has given rise to a new language. "Because" means "cuz," "are you" means "R U," "laugh out loud" means "LOL," "later" means "l8er" while "got to go" means "G2G." It's probable that children's understanding of appropriate sentence construction is being undermined by text messaging. Because there is so little room and so much information squeezed into little paragraphs, writing has become sentence fragments.

In the UK and throughout the world, text messaging is growing in popularity as a means of communication, particularly among young people. 52 million people use mobile phones in the UK alone, and they send over 2.3 billion texts annually. In addition to being eager to teach you how to text in English, students may also be willing to teach you some of their native texting techniques.

Implications of Text Messaging

The society in which students are growing up is one of pervasive technology (Prensky, 2001). To describe these freshmen who were raised in a technologically advanced environment, a New York writer created the phrase "digital native." A wide range of technological tools are available to digital natives, and they easily incorporate these technologies into their everyday routines. The inhabitants have access to a wide range of instruments, such as computers, internet, communication devices, and electronic games. These devices are an essential aspect of their life since they live in a constantly connected environment (Prensky, 2001). The majority of students nowadays are digital natives, defined as those who were born after 1980. Digital natives are making educators reevaluate how they teach and how students learn in a digitally linked society, from elementary schools to colleges throughout the nation. Compared to pupils in the past who did not grow up with technology, they think and behave differently (Prensky, 2001). They don't discriminate between online and offline life since they are always linked (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

Short Messaging Services (SMS), Instant Messaging (IM), and microblogging are three of the most used text messaging platforms. All three of these communication methods may be categorised as text messaging as they have a lot of the same traits. Therefore, while discussing text messaging as a whole, the word "text messaging" shall be utilised throughout this essay. Every kind of messaging service will be outlined with a brief synopsis.

Instant messaging (IM) is a type of computer "chat" that enables text-based conversations in real time with one or more persons about topics of interest. It is a common way for young people to communicate these days (O'Connor, 2005).

Even while most people still consider texting while in class to be a distraction, some institutions are starting to explore methods to use students' interest in texting for learning. Some educators compare the "language and syntax of text messaging with that of formal, written English" in order to start conversations about formal vs informal language while using texting as a teaching tool (Carvin, 2006).

Procedure of Study:

The study used a descriptive methodology, and it was finished with the aid of a survey. Research of this kind focuses on the current occurrences as it relates to circumstances, attitudes, actions, connections, and patterns.

Population:

The population of present study consisted of teachers teaching secondary and tertiary level students in different institutes of Southern Punjab.

Sample:

There are undoubtedly numerous institutes in South Punjab, but owing to time and budget constraints, the researcher only chose those that were conveniently accessible in Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan city for data gathering. A total of thirty English language teachers were sampled from institutions of the above mentioned localities. Fifteen teachers were chosen from each city.

Instrument:

The teachers were asked to provide information on the "Effects of SMS language on students' writing skills at post graduate level," and a Likert-type questionnaire was chosen as the instrument. The questionnaire consisted of fifteen items of various kinds, and its development took into account all the important considerations when creating a questionnaire. Upon completion, it was presented to experts for revisions, and every question was assessed based on the following criteria:

- (i) Is it pertinent to the study's problem?
- (ii) Is it clear and unambiguous?
- (iii) Is it consistent with the study's scope?

The questionnaire was finalised after the necessary adjustments.

Distribution and Return of questionnaire:

The questionnaires were distributed to teachers with appropriate guidelines. They were given proper time to answer the question in a relaxed situation. The questionnaires were taken back instantly, when filled by teachers.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This part deals with the presentation of data collected, in the form of 15 tables and there is the interpretation of the collected data under each table.

Table 1

Statement: Text messaging affects writing skills positively.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	3	6	3	9	9
	%Age	10.00	20.00	10.00	30.00	30.00
	Mean	2.50				

According to Table 1, 30% of respondents felt that text messaging has a beneficial impact on writing abilities, whereas 60% disagreed. The assertion is not accepted, as indicated by the estimated mean score of 2.50%.

Table 2

Statement: Text messaging enhances vocabulary of students.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	4	6	3	7	10
	%Age	13.33	20.00	10.00	23.33	33.33
	Mean	2.57				

According to Table 2, 33.33% of respondents agreed that "Text messaging enhances vocabulary of students," while 57.67% disagreed. The computed mean score of 2.57 indicates that the statement is not deemed acceptable

Table 3

Statement: Text messaging adversely affects the English spelling of students.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	7	9	3	6	5
	%Age	23.33	30.00	10	20	16.67
	Mean	3.23				

According to Table 3, 53.33% of respondents felt that pupils' English spelling is negatively impacted by text messaging. and 36.67% of those surveyed said they didn't agree with this. The computed mean score of 3.23 indicates that the statement is accepted.

Table 4

Statement: Text messaging has a positive impact on grammar skills of students.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	3	2	4	13	8
	%Age	10	6.67	13.33	43.33	26.67
	Mean	2.30				

According to Table 4, 16.67% of respondents agreed that pupils' grammatical abilities are improved via text messaging. and 70% of those surveyed said they didn't agree with this. The computed mean score of 2.30 indicates that the assertion is rejected.

Table 5

Statement: Text messaging has now become a source of time wastage of students.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	7	12	2	5	4

	%Age	23.33	40	6.67	16.67	13.33
	Mean	3.43				

According to Table 5, 63.33% of the participants concurred that students are presently wasting time on texts. and 30% of those surveyed said they didn't agree with this. With a computed mean score of 3.43, the statement is deemed acceptable.

Table 6

Statement: The dullness is being created in student's writings by the use of SMS language.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	6	8	3	4	9
	%Age	20	26.67	10	13.33	30
	Mean	2.93				

Table 6 indicates that while 43.33% of respondents disagreed with the assertion, 46.67% of respondents agreed that "the dullness is being created in student's writings by the use of SMS language." The computed mean score of 2.93 indicates that the statement is deemed acceptable.

Table 7

Statement: Text messaging conveys a comprehensive message through least number of characters.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	7	10	3	4	6
	%Age	23.33	33.33	10	13.33	20
	Mean	3.27				

According to Table 7, 56.67% of participants concurred that text messaging effectively provides a complete message using the fewest characters possible. and 33.33% of those surveyed said they didn't agree with this. With a computed mean score of 3.27, the statement is deemed acceptable.

Table 8

Statement: Ring of SMS tune disturbs the peace of class climate.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	8	13	2	4	3
	%Age	26.67	43.33	6.67	13.33	10
	Mean	3.63				

According to Table 8, 23.33% of respondents disagreed with the assertion that "Ring of SMS tune disturbs the peace of class climate," whereas 70% of respondents agreed. The computed mean score of 3.63 indicates that the statement is accepted.

Table 9

Statement: Many students use text messaging language in the examination.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
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Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	5	9	3	5	8
	%Age	16.67	30	10	16.67	26.67
	Mean	2.93				

According to Table 9, 43.33% of respondents disagreed with the statement "Many students use text messaging language in examination halls," while 46.67% of respondents agreed. The computed mean score of 2.93 indicates that the statement is deemed acceptable.

Table 10

Statement: Students face problems of spelling and vocabulary in writing due to text messaging.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	7	9	3	6	5
	%Age	23.33	30.00	10	20	16.67
	Mean	3.23				

According to Table 10, 53.33% of the participants concurred that students encounter difficulties with spelling and vocabulary while writing because of text messaging. and 36.67% of those surveyed said they didn't agree with this. The computed mean score of 3.23 indicates that the statement is accepted.

Table 11

Statement: Language structure is being disturbed by the use of SMS Language in examination.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	5	9	5	7	4
	%Age	16.67	30	16.67	23.33	13.33
	Mean	3.13				

According to Table 11, 36.67% of respondents disagreed with the assertion that "Language structure is filling disturbed by the use of SMS Language in examination," while 46.67% of respondents agreed. The computed mean score of 3.13 indicates that the assertion is accepted.

Table 12

Statement: Writing fluency is disturbed by the frequent use of SMS language in examination.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	7	12	3	4	4
	%Age	23.33	40	10	13.33	13.33
	Mean	3.47				

According to Table 12, 26.67% of respondents disagreed with the assertion that "Writing fluency is disturbed by the frequent use of SMS language in examinations," while 63.33% of respondents agreed. With a computed mean score of 3.47, the statement is deemed acceptable.

Table 13

Statement: The use of abbreviations in text messaging affects the accuracy of writing skills of students.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	5	8	3	4	10
	%Age	16.67	26.67	10	13.33	33.33
	Mean	2.80				

According to Table 13, 43.33% of respondents agreed and 46.67% disagreed that students' accuracy in writing is impacted by their usage of abbreviations in text messaging. The computed mean score of 2.80 indicates that the assertion is accepted.

Table 14

Statement: Due to text messaging punctuation and capitalization are ignored.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	7	12	0	6	5
	% Age	23.33	40	0	20	16.67
	Mean	3.33				

According to Table 14, 36.67% of respondents disagreed with the assertion that "Punctuation and capitalization are ignored due to text messaging," while 63.33% of respondents agreed. The computed mean score of 3.33 indicates that the statement is accepted.

Table 15

Statement: Students need to use proper text during SMS.

Choice	Statistical Techniques	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
Teachers (n = 30)	Frequency	6	8	3	5	8
	% Age	20	26.67	10	16.67	26.67
	Mean	2.97				

Table 15 demonstrates that 46.67% of respondents agreed and 43.33% disagreed with the assertion that students should use suitable text during SMS. The statement is accepted, as indicated by the mean score of 2.97.

Discussion

Texting is a great way to communicate and it makes our life so much faster. Texting is a rapid and concise means of exchanging ideas and thoughts. A wide range of information gathering methods and communication channels have been made possible by the development of computers, the internet, and mobile phone technology (Massimi, M., 2009). When done correctly, texts are more likely than phone conversations to provide a sense of constant engagement. People can react to texts secretly and surreptitiously while multitasking. Text messages are often received at any time and from any location. It was discovered that texters used texting to communicate with others more frequently. People may feel more connected to and supported by their friends, family, and other social networks when they text. One of the main appeals of texting may be the sense of constant connection and presence of mind (Reid & Reid, 2004).

Conclusion

It has been discovered that students who use text messaging and those who don't have remarkably different English spelling patterns while writing. They each make various spelling, grammatical, and vocabulary errors. It may also be inferred that pupils' language proficiency is unrelated to how much technology they utilise. Taking notes is not the same as writing a report. In order to write more quickly in casual writing, students frequently employ shortcuts and abbreviations; nevertheless, this has the unintended consequence of encouraging them to adopt these same techniques in formal writing as well. They can't tell the difference between writing that is professional and casual enough. Additionally, it has been shown that text messaging negatively impacts pupils' grammatical proficiency and due to text messaging, students struggle with regards to it in their writing assignments.

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