

## The Impact of SMS Language on Academic Writing of Graduate Students: A Study at University-Level in Punjab, Pakistan

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### Abstract

*Short message service (SMS) language, textspeak, or texting language is used with mobile phone text messaging, or other internet based communication such as email and instant messaging. The current study aims at determining the reasons of SMS language use and its impact on the academic writing of the students. Ten (10) teachers and 80 (40 male and 40 female) students were among the participants of the study. The data were amassed from two public sector universities of the Punjab, Pakistan. Two questionnaires, one for teachers and the other for students, were administered as research tools for the data collection. The collected data were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Majority of the teachers viewed that the SMS had a negative impact on the academic writing skills of the university students. Students opined that the SMS language was an easy and fast mode of writing while they did errors of punctuation, spelling and in the construction of long or short sentences.*

### Introduction

The rise in text messaging among students has raised the concerns of language teachers that this notion is very detrimental to academic writing of the students. Crystal (2008), nonetheless, views this change a novice change in the form or structure of the language. Ling (2010) terms SMS language as a life phase and not a cohort phenomenon. Mphahlele and Mashamaite, (2005) opines that SMS language stands for the economy of money and time. Baron (2008) claims that students' writing is influenced by SMS messaging and SMS writing skills and communication. The educational perspective of internet linguistics, proposed by Crystal (2011), suggests that students and language learners know the power of SMS language and its potential to develop creative work. Brown, Giguere, Sheinfeld, Ibitoye, Balan, Ho, and Cranston (2018) argue that the internet has changed the style of the people. This style is more prevalent in the form of human interaction on internet. Cormack, Gómez Hidalgo, and Sánz (2007) view the change as both the positive and negative manifestations.

Standard English is regularly referred to as a standard dialect. Standard English is a variation of the English language (especially print) that is usually used as part of a composition; is associated with instructive frameworks of English-speaking peoples around the world (Thurlow, 2003; Chen, Seilhamer, Bennet & Bauer, 2015; Lyddy, Farina, Hanney, Farrell, & Kelly O'Neill, 2014).

Shockingly coded dialect expressions (instant messages) are not really understandable for a penny (Thurlow, 2003; Starovoit, 2012). A guiding framework that is representative requires some clarification and understanding. For example, to replace single syllables and words with single letters or numbers, one or more words are combined in one method. All words can also be overlooked (SMS Language). Goldstuck (2006), the SMS dialect has adapted over time. For example, "thank you" is tightened with "tnx" and then abbreviated with "tx" (Goldstuck, 2006). According to Thurlow (2003), instant messages can be perceived as non-standard typography or spelling structures. A study in South Africa found that abbreviations, non-standard spellings and paralinguistic compensations were used as part of instant messages written in English.

Teachers are making deliberations on the effects of content informing on the composed dialect aptitudes of learners (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). Language instructors are worried that the shortened and abbreviated dialect style of content informing is improperly sifting into standard academic writing skills. The SMS dialect has likewise been seen in examination scripts (Weiss, 2009). An official report UK-Based language testing body unearthed that examination scripts were absorbed and occupied with abridged, truncated and curtailed lexicons (Henry, 2004).

Owens (2004) states that, with particular respect to youthful learners, perusing and composing structure a vital part of the instructive framework. Spelling and perusing, and additionally spelling and composed creation, are demonstrated to have a huge relationship (Geertsema, Hyman, & Van Deventer, 2011). Perusing and spelling offer indistinguishable fundamental phonological procedures however are not just switch forms (Owens, 2004). Proclaiming spellings (perusing) is less requesting than composing spellings. This is because of the way that the

written work of spelling re-quires bigger amounts of data to be removed from memory (Geertsema, Hyman, & Van Deventer, 2011). To an expansive degree, spelling requires division, while perusing requires mixing aptitudes. Spelling and composing are associating forms that must arrange for ideal working (Owens, 2004).

As indicated by Crystal (2008), inventive capability of messaging has been practically disregarded. Examine demonstrates that messaging does not eat into youngsters' capacity to peruse and compose. It rather enhances proficiency. The most recent studies (from a group at Coventry University) have discovered extraordinary positive relations between the utilization of content dialect and the aptitudes required for achievement in Standard English in pre-adolescent youngsters.

The web semantics proposed by Crystal (2008) recommends that we learn more about the instructive point of view, the qualities of the SMS dialect, and its imaginary possibilities. Mobile phones have the potential to be expressed separately from the main open capabilities. The world saw messaging verse competitions and content books as new evolving species exploring the potential consequences of word play within the 160 character limit. Why can't we use it to increase students' ability in a standard dialect? As the web and messages are gradually used as part of teaching and instruction, Crystal (2008) offers methods of using informative content in the classroom to encourage learning about the dialect.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The main goal is to find out the impact of texting / short message service (SMS) use on students' academic writing skills. This study also finds out if students' academic writing skills are affected by SMS language. Thus, the hypothesis is that the greater the habit of using SMS, the more negatively it affects the students' academic writing skills.

### **Theoretical Framework**

George Grebner's theory of mass communication plays a key role in his work on the influence of the media using a framework. The central claim of this theory is that constant exposure to media content has small but measurable effects on the perception of members of the audience, and the more a person is exposed to a media message, the more he believes. Here, the effect of SMS is measured by usage.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study intended to know to the perspectives of university students regarding the possible influence of text messaging on their academic writing. The objectives of the study were:

1. To help determine the reasons of SMS language use by the students enrolled in the universities of Punjab.
2. To explore the impact of SMS language on academic writing of graduate students enrolled in universities of Punjab.

### **Research Methodology**

The research approach was quantitative. Two questionnaires were employed to collect information from university teachers and students. Purposive sampling was employed, to select the individuals for a particular purpose. Students and teachers were included in the study from two public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan (The Islamia University of Bahawalpur and Government College University Faisalabad). The questionnaire for students' participants was divided into three factors which were formulated in accordance with the objectives of the research study. A separate questionnaire for teachers was used for seeking their opinions about the usage of SMS language in their academic writing tasks. Questionnaires were delivered in person and information was collected from the target population. The survey participants provided high returns on questionnaires. These self-prepared questionnaires were completed by participants without the assistance and participation of researchers (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). The collected data were included in the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) data sheet. The data were processed and analyzed under the good guidance of a statistician.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1**Reason of SMS Language Use

Item No.	Statement	SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %	Mean	SD
1	SMS language is easy use.	41.3	23.1	8.8	10.0	16.9	3.62	1.51
3	Text language is appropriate.	29.4	23.8	31.3	8.8	6.9	3.60	1.19
5	I send messages to my friends in free time.	35.0	23.8	16.3	9.4	15.6	3.53	1.44
9	Students write simple English in text messaging.	17.5	28.8	28.8	21.3	3.8	3.35	1.11
12	I can compose my message rapidly.	9.4	25.0	41.9	20.6	3.1	3.17	.96
13	I enjoy text language while in chat.	8.1	23.8	30.0	31.9	6.3	2.96	1.06
11	My communication purpose is achieved.	9.4	23.8	30.6	23.8	12.5	2.94	1.16

The frequencies (%) of reason of SMS language use, means and standard deviations. It is observed that frequency is relatively high for the first four item, short messages services (SMS) language was easy use ( $M=3.62$ ,  $SD=1.51$ ), text language was appropriate ( $M=3.60$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ), they send messages to their friends in free time ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=1.44$ ), Students write simple English in text messaging ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ) 60% of the respondents reported agree or strongly agree. Next three items of this factor fall in medium use frequency, they can compose their message rapidly ( $M=3.17$ ,  $SD=.96$ ), they enjoy text language while in chat ( $M=2.96$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ) and their communication purpose was achieved ( $M=2.94$ ,  $SD=1.16$ ). It is evident that most students use SMS language as it is easy, simple and enjoyable, message is composed rapidly and communicative purpose is achieved.

**Table 2**

*Student's Consciousness of SMS Language Use*

Item No.	Statement	SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %	Mean	SD
2	I use abbreviations in text messaging.	33.1	30.0	13.1	20.0	3.8	3.69	1.23
4	I use cell phone in daily life frequently for SMS.	29.4	28.8	18.1	18.8	5.0	3.59	1.23
6	I use short spelling of words while writing SMS.	41.3	17.5	20.6	10.6	10.0	3.69	1.36
7	I am aware about SMS text messaging.	21.3	31.9	21.3	16.3	9.4	3.39	1.24
8	I receive and send text messages in daily life.	18.1	23.8	38.8	13.1	6.3	3.34	1.11
10	I don't care about grammar	17.5	21.3	29.4	16.9	15.0	3.09	1.29
14	Text language is not appropriate.	17.5	23.8	23.1	22.5	13.1	3.10	1.29
17	People enjoy text language.	38.8	20.0	8.1	17.5	15.6	3.49	1.52
18	I adopt the vocabulary of text language consciously.	29.4	28.8	6.9	25.6	9.4	3.43	1.38
19	I am habitual of text language.	30.6	18.1	24.4	17.5	8.1	3.42	1.36

The above Table shows represent the frequencies (%) of students' consciousness of SMS language use. Mean and standard deviation showed the high frequency use for the first three items; they use abbreviation in text messaging ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ), they use cell phone in daily life frequently for SMS ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ) and they use short spelling of words while writing SMS ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=1.36$ ). Next seven items fall in the categories of medium frequency use; they were aware about SMS text messaging ( $M=3.39$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ), they receive and send text message daily ( $M=3.34$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ), they don't care about grammar ( $M=3.09$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ), text language was not appropriate ( $M=3.10$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ), people enjoy text language ( $M=3.49$ ,  $SD=1.52$ ), they adopt the vocabulary of text language ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=1.38$ )and they were habitual of text language( $M=3.42$ ,  $SD=1.36$ ) 63% of the respondents reported agree or strongly agree. It revealed that the students are highly aware the use of SMS language. Students are aware about text language; its inappropriate grammar, vocabulary and spelling but they use it frequently as the have become habitual.

**Table 3**

*Impact of SMS Language Use on Academic Writing*

Item No.	Statement	SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %	Mean	SD
15	SMS language deviates from linguistics norms.	17.5	19.4	18.8	27.5	16.9	3.70	1.36
20	I feel difficulties in academic writing.	41.3	23.1	8.8	9.4	16.9	3.70	1.51
21	My spellings are under influence of SMS language.	33.1	30.0	13.1	19.4	3.8	3.63	1.22
22	SMS language has spoiled my grammar.	29.4	23.8	31.3	8.1	6.9	3.61	1.19

23	I make spelling mistakes in academic writing.	29.4	28.8	18.1	18.1	5.0	3.60	1.22
24	I become confused about spellings.	35.0	23.8	15.6	9.4	15.6	3.53	1.44
25	I become confused about grammar while writing academic.	41.3	17.5	20.0	10.6	10.0	3.40	1.36
26	My proficiency has been influenced by SMS language.	21.3	31.9	20.6	16.3	9.4	3.35	1.25
27	SMS has a negative effect on students' language.	18.1	23.8	38.1	13.1	6.3	3.35	1.11
28	I use short words when writing an exam paper.	17.5	28.1	28.8	21.3	3.8	3.16	1.11
29	I often forget to spell the words on the paper correctly.	17.5	20.6	29.4	16.9	15.0	3.09	1.29
30	Students do not write proper sentences in text messaging.	9.4	23.1	30.6	23.8	12.5	2.93	1.16
31	SMS has a negative effect on English language times.	9.4	24.4	41.9	20.6	3.1	2.93	.96

The frequencies (%) of influence of SMS language use on academic writing of students are displayed in the table above mean and standard deviation showed the high frequency use for the first six items; SMS language deviates from linguistics norms ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=1.36$ ), students feel difficulties in academic writing ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=1.51$ ), their spellings were under influence of SMS language ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ), SMS language has spoiled their grammar ( $M=3.61$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ), students make spelling mistake in academic writing ( $M=3.60$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ) and they become confused about spelling in academic writing ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=1.44$ ). Next seven items fall in the categories of medium frequency use; they become confused about grammar while academic writing ( $M=3.40$ ,  $SD=1.36$ ), their proficiency has been influenced by SMS language ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ), SMS language has negatively impact on their academic writing ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ), while writing in examination, they use short forms of words ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ), they often forget the correct spelling of words in paper ( $M=3.09$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ), students do not write proper sentences in text messaging ( $M=2.93$ ,  $SD=1.16$ ) and SMS has negative impact on tenses of English language ( $M=2.93$ ,  $SD=.96$ ). 65% of the respondents reported agree or strongly agree. It exposed the negative impact of SMS language on academic writings of graduate students in Pakistan. Text language negatively impact on grammar, vocabulary and spellings of the students who are habitual of SMS language use. They become confused while writing in examination.

**Table 4***Teachers about the Impact of SMS Language Use on Student's Academic Writing Skills*

Item No.	Statement	SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %	Mean	SD
1	Students don't care about spelling in academic writing.	33.3	51.9	3.7	3.7	7.4	4.00	1.10
2	Students don't care about punctuation in academic writing.	37.0	37.0	11.1	14.8	0.0	3.96	1.05
3	Students use abbreviation in academic writing.	25.9	51.9	7.4	3.7	11.1	3.78	1.21
4	Students use letter or number the way a word letter sound.	25.9	44.4	14.8	11.1	3.7	3.78	1.08
5	Students use non-conventional spelling in academic writing skill.	25.9	51.9	7.4	11.1	3.7	3.85	1.06
6	Students use G. Clipping like going-goin.	48.1	33.3	11.1	7.4	0.0	4.22	.93
7	Students use extra punctuations of joy or sorrow.	14.8	40.7	22.2	11.1	11.1	3.37	1.21
8	Students use deletion of end letters like after-after.	22.2	40.7	25.9	7.4	3.7	3.70	1.03
9	Students violate grammar rule in academic writing.	40.7	40.7	7.4	11.1	0.0	4.11	.97
10	Students do not use proper sentences in academic language	25.9	33.3	14.8	14.8	11.1	3.48	1.34

The frequencies (%) of reason of SMS language use from teachers perspective are given in the Table above mean and standard deviation showed the high frequency use for the first four items; students don't care about spelling in academic writing ( $M=4.00$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ), students don't care about punctuation in academic writing ( $M=3.96$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ), students use abbreviation in academic writing ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ), students use letter or number the way a word letter sound ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ), students use non-conventional spelling in academic

writing skills ( $M=3.85$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ), students use G. Clipping like going-goin ( $M=4.22$ ,  $SD=.93$ ), students use deletion of end letters like aft-after ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ), students violate grammar rules in academic writing ( $M=4.11$ ,  $SD=.97$ ), 85% of the respondents reported agree or strongly agree. Next two items of this factor fall in medium use frequency, students use extra punctuations of joy or sorrow ( $M=3.37$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ) and they do not use proper sentences in academic language ( $M=3.48$ ,  $SD=1.34$ ). Teachers' responses are evidence that students' academic writing is negatively impacted by SMS language as students use nonconventional spellings, G. clipping, extra punctuations, extra letters and number used as the have sounds they grammatical incorrect sentences and inappropriate vocabulary was due to SMS language.

## Discussion

Thurlow and Brown (2003) closely linked with the idea of Crystal (2008) found that 25% of word content that the majority of text messaging language is in standard from where students use merely some spelling variant (Thurlow & Brown, 2003). Although our estimates are lower than those used in the survey studies highlighted above (35% to 50%), the proportion of non-standard substances is 25%, slightly higher than data from other natural sources data (Thurlow & Brown, 2003). The inclusion of missing capitals may have exaggerated our estimate, however if we eliminate the missing capital, the non-standard spelling rate remains at 19%.

The omitted capital letters were the most common non-standard spelling, accounting for 22% of such spellings. Accent stylization, consistent with Thurlow and Brown (2003) and De Jonge and Kemp (2010), also emerged frequently, accounting for 19% of non-standard spellings. Most non-standard writing consists of some phonetic abbreviations that may reflect the level of metallurgical consciousness in the text, including phonological consciousness (Plester, & Wood, 2009), but since the texts used are seldom new, it is possible to create forms or simply that many end users have not demonstrated these language skills. Numerous non-standard spellings are associated with punctuation (mostly apostrophes), accounting for 11% of total non-standard spelling. In contrast to stimuli used in experimental manipulations comparing standard messages and those containing text, only 10% of messages consisted of more text than standard text (Berger & Coch, 2010; Perea, Acha, & Carreiras, 2009). Our text density assessments also differ from studies that asked participants to create or translate sentences using texts (Kemp, 2010; Kemp & Bushnell, 2011; Plester & Wood, 2009).

An example here was university students. Although this is accepted as a limitation in terms of generalization, this sample was selected according to a group of participants who compared text messaging and text messaging with standard spelling, as other studies noted differences in effects depending on text use and education (Rosen et al., 2010.). The data probably contains some features related to this group and location. Despite these limitations, this study highlights a number of issues that inform experimental studies using laboratory-based analogues of real text messages. Text messages are used for special purposes, when these conditions are restored, the texts will be easier to read and a more accurate analogue of the actual text experience will be provided. The average length of a text message and the proportions of the texts can be taken into account to create a more ecological comparison of sentences, including standard sentences and texts. The type of text differed depending on the length of the message and the purpose of the text message. The emergence of speech-based spelling options should also be considered in a relatively small text dictionary. Here, as in other studies (De Jonge & Kemp, 2012), omitted capitalization was the most non-standard form of writing. The high level of emphasis stylization suggests that experimental research should consider local text types instead of selecting stimuli based on SMS dictionaries. When such factors are taken into account, it becomes clear whether processing costs affect the reading or compilation of text messages, or to what extent. The current study also looked at the impact of SMS language or messaging on academic writing in the formation of weak sentences from non-traditional writing, truncated vocabulary items, extra punctuation marks, and extra letters by university graduates.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

On the bases of above mentioned results and discussion, it can be said in conclusion that university teachers have given their opinion in the favour that text messaging has been influencing negatively academic writing of university students. This effect has minimized the knowledge of correct English among university students. It has influenced spelling, grammatical structure and punctuation. As a result university students have adopted wrong spelling, short sentences (Grammatically wrong) and incorrect punctuation use. The majority of students use SMS languages as it is easy to use, simple enjoy able, message is composed rapidly and purpose is achieved. Students are aware about their habit of text language; its inappropriate grammar, vocabulary and spelling but they use it frequently as the have become its habitual.

University students have negative influence of SMS language use in their mind that text language negatively influences grammar, vocabulary and spellings of the students who are habitual of SMS language use. They become confused while writing in examination. Teachers' are of the view about SMS language that student's academic writing is negatively influenced by text language. Students use nonconventional spellings, G. clipping, extra punctuations, letters and number used as the have sounds, Grammatical wrong sentences and

vocabulary is due to SMS language. Students use SMS language, they are aware about its use, its negative influence on academic writing but have become habitual of its use in daily life.

The current study has contributed in the field as it creates awareness among teachers as well as university students of Punjab, Pakistan about negative influence of text messaging. It has opened the door for researchers to conduct further researches to explore other aspects related to it and to develop strategies to save the standard language among university level students. The current study included university students of age group 19-25. The same can be conducted on matriculation and intermediate levels. Other researchers can conduct research studies to explore the positive impact of SMS language as it can be used for important academic message or important information exchange with family without voice call.

Surprisingly, students are aware of the disadvantages of using the SMS language, but are unable to stop it because they are accustomed to using it. Students are encouraged to use simple, short, grammatically correct sentences, correct punctuation, and spelling, as demonstrated by Crystal (2011). This study examined the effects of SMS language on Baron (2008), Crystal (2008), and Thurlow (2003). Additional research may be needed to determine the specific problems faced by second language learners and the educator's future role in addressing these specific problems. The essence of this case can be repeated when examining the impact of SMS on other official languages in Pakistan. This will provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of SMS language on the mother tongues of all students, the nature of the impact and the associated academic outcomes.

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