

Text (SMS) Messaging and its Influence on Standard English in Digital Era

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Abstract: The extensive use of mobile texting has given rise to a distinct linguistic variety known as Short Message Service (SMS) language, marked by abbreviations, acronyms, and non-standard orthography. This study scrutinizes the influence of SMS language on the use of perception of standard English among young adults. Employing a mixed-method approach that includes questionnaires, writing tasks, and interviews, the research explores the frequency and context of SMS language use and its contemplation in formal writing. The results indicate that while text-based communication fosters linguistic creativity and efficiency, persistent exposure to SMS conventions can influence spelling accuracy, grammatical consistency, and overall linguistic formality. However, it is revealed that, the SMS language, degrading standard English, signifies a dynamic adaptation of linguistic expression in the modern world.

Keywords: Text Messaging, Vowel Deletion, Exponential Order, Morphemes, Syntax, Logograms, Morphosyntactic Structures, SMS Language, Registers, Graphemes, Alphanumeric Homophones, Code – Switching and Code – Mixing, Acronyms, Abbreviations, Emoticons, Textism.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Short Message Service (SMS) language, also known as textism, has become a broadly used form of communication in the world. With the prevalence of mobile technology and social media platform, people of all ages rapidly count on abbreviated and informal expressions to convey messages swiftly and conveniently. This modern form of language, often characterized by shortened words, acronyms, emoticons, and phonetic spellings, contemplates the changing nature of written communication in the modern society.

These types of communication systems, can be adversely affected for the main language. It is revealed that, even though, these types of communication systems are very interesting and attractive, harmful effect can be occurred in the view of the main languages (English or Sinhala languages in Sri Lankan point of view).

So, it is utmost important to study this paradoxical event (text messaging) paying attention on the younger generation and future English education in Sri Lanka.

- In this juncture, it is important to observe,
- Types of SMS languages
- Frequency of use
- Influence on standard English writing
- Attitudes towards SMS language
- Context of usage

Briefly it can be said that, the observation seeks to observe in linguistic structures and features of SMS language in the context and how to impact them on the standard English.

➤ Significance of the Study

A number of studies have been conducted by many researchers on SMS language. Not only in Sri Lanka, but also in other countries, the system is used with unique features in the context. It is a nationally and internationally identified linguistic phenomenon, which is to be observed for the betterment of the English language and the younger generation in the world. According to some of the research papers, even in students' academic writing exponential order, vowel deletion, punctuation errors and use of symbols instead of words (logograms) has been identified in the face of text messaging communication, which is consolidated the position of observing this controversial occurrence in the modern world.

E.g. "Thanking of U"

"Hi, U"

The above examples are contemplated to emphasis the unique features in the text message communication which is similarly experienced among the Sri Lankan students as well. So, it is high time to be observed this linguistic phenomenon for the betterment of the future.

In this juncture, it is important to be taken a quick step by the educational experts regarding the adverse effects of this Short Messaging System among the students of Higher Educational Institutions.

➤ Research Questions

- How does the use of SMS language impact on the standard language?
- What are the special features in SMS communication??
- Identify the syntactic structures of the SMS language?
- What are the harmful effects on the standard language?

➤ Expected Result

To contemplate adverse effects and attitudes of the younger generation on text (SMS) messaging, applicable to the standard language (English).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study sets out to investigate the positive and negative aspects in SMS communication in the modern society. The study randomly sampled fifty students enrolled for the Higher National Diploma in English, second year, full time students during 2020 – 2021 period of the Hardy advanced Technological Institute in Ampara. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 -25 years and English language is used by them as a second language.

The data collected by conducting online survey, sending a well -developed questionnaire to the targeted population.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In observation the morphosyntactic structures of students' SMS language, Adebileje (2014) conducted research investigating the use of various registers in text messaging,

Also, in 2014, the research paper named “The influence of texting on the written skills of students” at the college of education in Nigeria has been published by Odey (2014) paying attention on the peculiarity in the event of communication.

A research paper on SMS language was compiled by Chaka Chaka (2015) reflecting the structural characteristics in text messaging as well.

A study conducted at the Tshwane University of technology which has been reflected those different frequencies of textism, in relation to the present and past research papers.

It has been revealed that the senior generations seemed to have a difficult time to adopt to text language, according to the research paper by Arlini Binti Alias (Vol. 06 2015 – 2016). Further, it emphasizes that however it is a growing trend that even the senior generations are learning to utilize this form of text messages. The writer also contemplates that the sharing ideas in text message is an inevitable process

which has to be paid attention on, in the context. In this juncture, the writer also reflects that the harmful effect of the text language targeting the standard language.

It is reflected that also; the younger generation of users do not like to use lengthy sentences and words. Short and instant results are expected by them in this busy world.

In a research paper Chamindi Dilrukshi (vol. 11, No. 1, 2017) contemplated that omission of vowels in textism with the following examples,

Omission of the vowels initially,

Of = f

and = nd

extra = xtra

Ok = k

I am = m

excellent = xclnt

In = n

exam = xm

Omission of the vowels medially,

Given = gvn

taken = tkn

but = bt

Thank = thnk

how = hw

It reflects the morphological aspect of the text language.

Furthermore, it emphasizes that,

Omission of the vowels finally,

Are = R

Love = Lov

like = lik

You = U

Have = Hav

Come = Com

Even though, it is a most productive and creative process, harmful effect for the standard language is there.

Apart from them, Shazia Aziz published an article (5th February 2013)

In revelation textisms, writer illustrates that ratio of patterns occurrence of features of SMS language. Furthermore, it reflects that, a study conducted with two different groups of students of the same level to observe data focus attention on the training and assessments of punctuations and instructions without this form leads to difference in the performance of learners in academic writing in relation to the institution.

It is clear that the variations can be identified in the event of textisms, applicable to the different social status.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study sets out to investigate the positive and negative aspects of the SMS (text) language.

The study randomly sampled fifty students enrolled for the Higher National Diploma in English, second year, full time students, during 2020 – 2021 period of the Hardy Advanced Technological Institute in Ampara. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 – 25 years and English language is used as a second language. All participants may be considered as having significant amount of experience with SMS language.

➤ Morphological Aspect

• Messages Written in Full Sentence

According to the phenomena, grammatically correct, meaningful sentences are used by the participants in the event of communication with the academics of the institution, in contrary, SMS language is mostly used among the peer group members. At the Covid-19 period social media communication was used as a medium of communication which was reflected that only standard language used for the communication with lecturers. It is a good omen to be considered in this juncture. As it was consolidated by the respondents, academic writing should be in formal language and has to be written in clear, well-structured way. Also, the participants emphasize that too informal, unsophisticated expressions with bad grammar and incorrect words, can destruct the meaning. It is a must to understand the situation and involving person in communication.

E.g.

Formal situation

“Is that true sir?”

“That would be fine”

“Thank you, sir, we will participate”

“Sir may I come to the lab”

“Now we are free sir, our next lecture is 10.30 a.m.”

“Today we have a physical assignment sir”

“Good Morning sir, our online application web portal is not working properly. Some of us have difficulty in logging in and others couldn't select batch. Please help sir.

What can we do?”

“Aren't you going to conduct the assignment tomorrow sir?”

(extracted from real conversations with academics).

• Abbreviations and Logograms

Abbreviations and logograms can be identified in communication among the peer group members. These elements are used only occasionally in their SMS messages, also the common, perhaps globally understood by people of all generations.

E.g.

Night = nite

Imo = in my opinion

Later = l8r

FB = face book

See you = c u

NP = no problem

Tnx = thanks

Pls = please

2mrrow = tomorrow

B4 = before

Tonight = 2nite

ATM = at the moment

SBY = somebody

GF = girlfriend

OMG = oh, my God

BF = boyfriend

Sis = sister

The above examples reflect the use of abbreviations in which vowels were left out from the words. Also, the usage

of 2morrow instead of tomorrow is an example as homonym and phonetic-based spelling instead of the standard English is identified in the event.

In text messaging, there can be made-out code-mixing communication as well, which means code-switching to mixing of words with other languages in a sentence.

E.g.

“Mn 1st year English eke lamayek”

“apita digatama online class karanawada”

“1st year 1st sem repeat danna puluwanda me dawaswala”

(extracted SMS messages among the peer group members)

In the above examples, several words of English appeared in between Sinhala words (Mn = I, lamayek = a student, apita digatama online class karanawada ? = will they (lecturers) continue online classes? 1st year first sem repeat danna puluwanda medawaswala? = can we apply first year, first semester examination these days?).

In the observation, the common features of text messaging were found as follows,

- *Initialism (Consisting of Initial Letters Pronounce Separately, e.g. BBC etc.)*

✓ ATM = At the moment

✓ GN = Good Night

✓ GM = Good Morning

✓ BTW = By The Way

✓ OMG = Oh, My God!

- *Omission of Consonants*

✓ Callin = calling

✓ Waitin = waiting

✓ Shd = showed

✓ Wd = would

✓ Wl = will

- *Omission of Vowels*

✓ Tnx = thanks

✓ pls = please

✓ B4 = before

✓ nxt = next

✓ Gvn = given

✓ dr = dear

✓ nw = now

✓ sng = song

✓ gng = going

✓ fr = for

- *Phonetic Spellings*

✓ “Apita digatama online class karanawada?”

✓ “1st year 1st sem repeat danna puluwanda me dawaswala?”

✓ “Mn 1st year, English eke lamayek”

(Rarely these types of SMS messages can be seen for the academics, but mostly, these types of messages can be identified among the peer group members).

✓ “send me the English certificate eke date eka” etc.

- *Alternation*

✓ “Ayyo, I am so early”

✓ “Joke, anney”

✓ “tnx machan”

- *Conventional (Standard) Forms*

As it was revealed earlier, conventional forms also can be identified in the context as follows,

✓ “Sure Sir, but if you don’t mind, may I know the duration sir?”

✓ “Thank you, sir, we will participate”

✓ “Sir may I know is it a pair work”

✓ “That’s true sir, we always guide them in the right manner. None of us misguides you. All the students should follow only the institute’s website and official WhatsApp group for authentic information”.

It is clear that, most of the participants communicate in standard language, especially communication with the lecturers. That phenomenon is consolidated by the above examples which were exacted from real conversations with lecturers regarding day today occurrences in relation to the academic matters. It is further revealed that, formal or informal setting of conversation depends on the personal variations (according to the observation).

In this juncture, the reality which contemplates, is the participants are able to manage situation in formal or informal context (as they are educated students with language skills).

However, it is better to understand that, the unfavorable influence in the context. Although, some of the people know the negative effect, majority of the people can't understand this adverse effect in the event of text messaging.

V. CONCLUSION

In observation, positive and negative both aspects, were revealed by the respondents, which are consolidating the above position. Majority of the respondents expressed the answer as “strongly agree” to the question which was asked in the event of using text (SMS) language, positive and negative both aspects can be experienced in relation to the standard English. Furthermore, the participants expressed that, the text (SMS) language is most popular among the younger generation in the country which, can be regarded as an attractive medium of communication and creative as well.

In this juncture, majority of the participants somewhat agreed on the question harmful effect of the text (SMS) language. Also, the participants emphasize that they never use text (SMS) language in academic writing and other official purposes. Text (SMS) language is used only for social media communication, which is reflected that the utmost importance in the situation.

According to the purposes and situations, a suitable language (formal or informal) should be used as the younger generation. It is consolidated that these participants do not use text (SMS) language to communicate with academics. During the Covid- 19 period most of the communication was occurred as text (SMS) messages. In experience, it can be said that only completed and grammatically correct sentences were used in the event of communication with the lecturers. It is a good omen to consider in Sri Lankan point of view, especially applicable to the educated younger generation. So, the limitation of harmful effect for the standard language can be identified in the event of text (SMS) messaging, which is consolidating the position of paradoxical reality too.

Apart from them, advantages of the text (SMS) language were explained by the participants with some examples for the purpose of illustrating the positive effect in the context.

Moreover, it is revealed that the people, especially, younger generation, like to text in short terms, which are able to create some mental pictures in their mind. According to most of the participants, every SMS word, has a symbolic value which is accustomed to picturing words in short terms.

Texting is referred to the action of constructing short character-based messages and exchanging them among mobile phone users. Text messaging is an evolution which has developed to service, a number of unanticipated different uses. Also, SMS is initially a form of communication frequently used by teenagers to reduce cost and time, also an easy way for social communication. (Lewis 2005)”

Even tough, it is a creative event, SMS will be able to hinder users' abilities on grammar in their writing and social

skills. So, it is a must to vigilant on it, in the event of texting according to the variations of the purposes. Especially, due to the prevailing situation in the country (Covid – 19 and difficulty in travelling), mobile phone is mostly used by the students. As a result of the addiction of these devices, harmful effect on standard language can be experienced in future. But, majority of the respondents, explain that “academic writing should be in formal language and has to be written in a clear, well-structured way. As students they should be able to understand these are academic writing, it is not suitable to include informal language in these writing.

Furthermore, the participants emphasized that, too informal unsophisticated expressions with bad grammar and incorrect words can destruct the meaning. These days, in addition to social media communication, a large number of students use text (SMS) language for their academic writing and other purposes. In order to this controversial event, it is time to improve the clarity and conciseness of their academic activities and pay attention on the formal language.

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