

The Impact of Text Message Slang (Tms) or Chatroom Slang on Students Academic Performance

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Abstract The research is on the impact of text slang or chatroom slang on students' academic performance. It is an unstructured language that violates the standard rules of the English language. So the research is necessitated by the fact that most students in recent times have resorted to the use of text message slang or chatroom slang in their class work as well as in their examinations. This is not a good phenomenon as they eventually are the same people that will end up teaching the next generation of Nigerians. If the use of text message slang is not currently checked, it will completely erode proper use of the English language. The research therefore seeks the effects of such improper language can have on students academic performance. Descriptive research methodology was adopted and in order to elicit information from the respondents, questionnaire was constructed and distributed on hand-to-hand basis to the students immediately after their classes. This was done to ensure effective retrieval of the instrument. A total of three hundred and thirty (330) questionnaires were administered and three hundred and twenty four (324) were found usable as only this number was duly filled and returned.

Keywords Text message, slang, academic performance

1. Introduction

Text message (TM) simply refers to the use of abbreviations that might not necessarily be universally accepted. It makes use of short language forms to craft short message services (SMS), instant messages (IM), black berry messages (BBM) and so and so forth. This type of communication does not usually follow any language pattern, standards, rules, spellings, syntax or otherwise.

Texting is so pervasive that some regard it as an emergent language register in its own right[1]. This is largely due to the proliferation of mobile phones as well as internet base IM and the chatroom. In a survey by Pew Internet & America Life Project, 64 percent of US teens admitted that some form of texting has crept into their academic writing[2]. This is not peculiar to the US alone as South Africa has witnessed some traces of texting in students' academic work both in test scripts and examinations. Many teachers lament the problem of text creep in South African schools. It appears as if learners are not able to use appropriate language in different context: their informal textisms appear in formal writing assignments[1].

In our everyday activity, People send text messages. It has affected our lives so much so that its use is on the increase. People send SMS when they do not want to speak. The dangers here are huge, especially since the SMS, IM BBM

cannot always express the tone of voice or true mood of the communicator. The worst of this problem is that, even as text is replacing both verbal and written communications, the use of slang has virtually overtaken good English manner and those using slang seem to be comfortable with it.

2. Review of Literature

Texting which is the exchange of brief written messages between mobile phone and portable devices over cellular networks is now widely used among students at Delta state university, Abraka. Text message may be seen as only messages sent as SMS; it has over the years been extended to include messages containing images, videos, sound and other forms of messaging. In other words, TMS is totally colloquial and the depth depends on the extent of involvement just as it vary from one region to another. For example, text message is referred as text or texto in North America, an SMS in the United Kingdom, and most of Europe, and TMS in the Middle East, Asia, and Australia.

With text message becoming a more common way for teenagers to communicate, it is also posing a great problem in school and even in colleges (universities). College (university) professors and high school (secondary school) teachers once complained of students being unable to read and write[3]. It is hereby observed that students in both formal and informal writing do so in TMS and so most students have lost their grip on spoken and written English.

In some part of the world, text message is referred to as IM. IM is a form of computer "chat" that allows one to have a

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real time, typed “conversation” with one or more buddies while connected to the internet. It is an extremely fast growing communications medium especially among adolescents. 74% of online teens use instant messaging and 69% of teen instant message users use instant message at least several times a week[4]. IM is clearly an extremely influential element in many young people’s lives[5]. Majority of the Delta state university students make use of SMS, IM, BBM and many more but the problem is that they do not know how much of this is bad. This is because they impulsively transmit this in their test and examination environments without knowing its effects on their academic and further compound their assessment. So one may now wonder, what the fate of the unborn generation in terms of spoken and written English language?

3. Uses of Text Messages

SMS, MMS, BBM and others are used for various aspects of our lives today. Some individuals have advocated for it to be generally accepted and used in the classroom. Prominent amongst these is Michael who argued that text messaging is most often used between private mobile phone users, as a substitute for voice calls in situations where voice communication is impossible or undesirable. In some regions, SMS is significantly cheaper than placing a phone call to another mobile phone elsewhere. SMS is hugely popular in India where youngsters often exchange lots of text messages, and companies provide alerts, infotainment, news, cricket scores update, railway/airline booking, mobile billing, and banking services on SMS. While in Nigeria, students use text message to exchange information on class assignments, football match scores, chatting on everyday life, dating and a host of others. Some examples of text messages are: Gdm, hw is d family n ur mum? U r invtd. Pls rd ur bbl e 29t 4eva, gud9t 2 u. hp u arivd hm safly ystaday? I’lb succsfl , and things like that constitutes TMS that most students now use in their scripts for both formal and informal writing.

4. Methodology

The paper adopted the descriptive survey method in this research. The instrument used for the paper was mainly the questionnaire which was divided into various parts for the purpose of obtaining information for this research. A total of 324 students were sampled and the entire instrument administered were duly filled and returned.

Data analysis

From the findings in table 1, it is observed that most Delta state university students do send text message. Three hundred and twenty two (322) of those sampled regularly make use of text message, this represents 99.38%. This is agreement with O’Connor when she said that with the commercial advent of the internet and cell phones in the late 1990’s, technologies such as IM and TM have achieved increasing prevalence in our society[6]. This type of messaging has

been found very useful to the student at all levels of studies including students of Delta state university.

Table 1. do you send text message with your mobile phone?

respondents	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Yes	322	99.38
No	2	0.62
Total	324	100

From table 2, it is clear that majority of the students do not know when they make use of slangs or chat room language even when they write a formal text to their lecturers. 215 (66.36%) of the respondents said they text in a constructive manner while 104 representing 32.10% said they use text slang in their writing. This is in sharp contrast of the experience on the day the questionnaire was administered to the students.

Table 2. how is your text language designed?

Responses	F	%
Constructive	215	66.36
Slang	104	32.10

The table 3 above is another contrast to the real life situation of text message slang use among undergraduate students of the Delta state university as many users do not actually know that they are deeply involved in its use. From the data collected, a total of 105 representing 34.43% agreed that they use TM every time; while those who use it often amounts to 43(14.10%); most times with 19(6.23%), and those who use TM occasionally are 24 representing 7.87%.

Table 3. how often do you use simple and correct English in your text messaging?

responses	Frequency	%
Most times	19	6.23
occasionally	24	7.87
Often	43	14.10
Not often	114	37.38
Every time	105	34.43

From table 4 above, it is obvious that Delta state university students are aware of the dangers associated with the use of text message slang and its effects on their academic performance as they claimed to mind their syntax while texting but cannot avoid it completely as 240 (74.07%) said they do not mind their syntax while texting and only 81(25%) agreed that they mind their syntax as they send text messages.

Table 4. do you mind the kind of language or syntax used in your text messages?

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	81	25
No	240	74.07

In table 5 above, it is clear that even the students are aware of the effects of texting as 228 representing 70.37% of the respondents agreed that they are bothered about the effects of texting on their English language on both speaking and writing, while 92(28.40%) said they never bothered. This implies that the concern in a general thing but the real situa-

tion is undermined as the use of text message slang keep appearing in formal writing such as test and examination even some times spoken English.

Table 5. have you bothered about the effects of text message slang on your English language in both spoken and written in terms of formal writing?

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	228	70.37
No	92	28.40

Table 6 above is a clear indication that even though the students engage in text message slang, they do also write letters. In this table, it shows that 170(52.47%) have in recent times written either formal or informal letters, while 150(46.30%) have not. This is not a healthy situation as academic environment involves huge writing of either formal and informal messages or letters.

Table 6. have you recently written a formal and or informal letter?

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	170	52.47
No	150	46.30

From table 7 above, it shows that there is a shortfall on students English writing skills. From the table, it was observed that' coordination and language design amuse the student more with 88 and 77 responses representing 24.58% and 20.39% respectively. Following these are manner of writing and flow of ideas with 58 and 51 representing 16.20% and 14.25% respectively. The other responses are slang 40(11.17%); use of syntax 16 representing 4.47%; improper abbreviation 13(3.63%); improper paragraphing 12 representing 3.35% and poor construction of the English language with 7 representing 1.96%.

Table 7. what amused you during and after your letter writing?

Responses	Frequency	%
Language design	73	20.39
Coordination	88	24.58
Slang	40	11.17
Flow of ideas	51	14.25
Manner of writing	58	16.20
Use of syntax	16	4.47
Improper abbreviation	13	3.63
Improper paragraphing	12	3.35
Poor construction of the English language	7	1.96
others	-	-

Table 8 above is a representation of the reasons for the use of SMS by students of the Delta state university, Abraka. The highest rank is when am out of credit of 95 representing 20.04%), while because others are doing it ranked second with 80(16.88%). Next is when am discussing some important issues with 67(14.14%), while when am shy to express myself records 65(13.71%). Closely following this is when i do not want to be disturbed or receive calls with 44(9.28%), for the fun of using SMS with 43(9.07%) when the network is fluctuating has 35 representing 7.38% and when am in the public and when am angry and don't want to speak with 17(3.59%) respectively.

Table 8. Why send SMS?

Responses	Frequency	%
When am out of credit	95	20.04
When i do not want to be disturbed or receive calls	44	9.28
When am discussing some important issues	67	14.14
For the fun of using SMS	43	9.07
When am angry and don't want to speak	17	3.59
When am in the public	28	5.90
When the network is fluctuating	35	7.38
When am shy to express myself	65	13.71
Because others are doing so	80	16.88

From table 9 above, there is a clear indication that SMS has become deep rooted in our modern day academic environment. No wonder 288 of the total respondents answered in affirmative when they were asked the question on whether they would advice that students should stop using text message (SMS) for the sake of their education as they vehemently say no with 89.44%, while only a small number of the respondents agreed that students should stop the use of SMS for the sake of their education.

Table 9. would you advice that students should stop using text message SMS for the sake of their education?

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	34	10.56
No	288	89.44

From table 10 above, the respondents agreed that it would be good if they use simple and correct English in their use of SMS with 211 representing 63.36%, while to avoid the use of slang at all times received 70(21.02%) and assume that all written SMS are read in the public with 52(15.62%). What is absolutely true is that our children are writing short pieces. Is it because we are truncating language when we text? No, we are truncating our lives. We have less to write because we see less, notice less, and knock around ideas with our friends less. It is so much the same as fear of television rotting our brains-it's not so much what we watch, who we call, how fast we text, what gaming we prefer-it's what we are not doing when we are fumbling with our little techno-toys (7)

Table 10. what can be done to improve student's use of SMS visa-avis their spoken and written English?

Responses	Frequency	%
Use simple and correct English in their SMS	211	63.36
Avoid the use of slang at all times	70	21.02
Assume that all written SMS are read in the public	52	15.62

5. Conclusions

Text message or chatroom slang affects students' academic performance either positively or negatively. Positively because some use it for important academic message or family members or friends both at school and at home for information especially when they are out of credit and cannot make voice calls. Negative when they become addicted to SMS, IM, BBM and so on when they use text slangs to the point of writing such slangs in their continuous assessment

and examinations. It is most astonishing to note that even though the students are aware of the dangers associated with the use of SMS slangs especially during examinations, they still cannot stop it because they uncautiously use it. However, the use of SMS slangs can be overcome if only its users can adopt the use of only simple and correct English when doing so.

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