Exploring the Effect of Texting on Students' English Writing Skills at Intermediate level

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Abstract

This study aims to ascertain the effect of texting messaging on students' English writing skills at intermediate level in Lahore. It was descriptive research based on mixed method, survey design, in nature. Data was collected from 200 students and 15 teachers from the government colleges of Lahore district which were selected through purposive sampling techniques via self developed questionnaire and interview protocol for teachers. This study uses George Gerbner's Cultivation theory which provides a ground to the researcher to ascertain the effects of constant mobile using on the spelling skills of students. With the help of SPSS, Statistical analysis was done of the quantitative data. Qualitative data were explored by text analysis. The quantitative results largely illustrated that negative correlation between text language and writing skills was found which indicates that spelling skills of the text user students are negatively affected by text language or chat acronyms while texting. In the similar manner, a majority of professors believed that the students' writing skills are negatively effected by textism. Whereas, only minority of the professor believes that the SMS language has positive effects on the students' writing skills. It is recommended that students should come to know the effect of texting language on their writing skill and should focus their formal writing style to avoid any trouble in English writing skill in future.
Keywords: Effect, Texting' Writing Skill, Intermediate Students

1. Introduction

The internet has become a major new technology in the last few years, permeating a variety of fields including commerce, economics, education, and others (Rosen et al., 2010). People may readily communicate and exchange ideas with others thanks to these new ways of communication. The so-called "media-written interactions" or new written interactions brought about by the internet include new linguistic style variants, new communication channels, and new written interactions (Thurlow, 2016). Thus, the method in which individuals interact in a "Networked World" influences the new ways in which pupils write. (Maarten, & Sandra, 2018)

In the world of education, new communication tools are becoming essential. Electronic communication has a significant impact on how pupils use language to interact with others, especially at the educational level (Barasa, 2013). This situation has given rise to a brand-new language known as "texting" or "chat language." According to Omar (2015), chat language is a novel kind of writing that requires new words coined by social media users in order to facilitate communication. In reality, this new jargon causes the creation of new writing norms. For instance, one of the new writing features is the use of acronyms and abbreviations, such as LOL for "laugh out loud," BTW for "by the way," BRB for "be right back," etc. These novel ways of speaking gave rise to short messaging service (SMS), which is now used in educational settings. Users controlled by the internet, Email, and text, which were made possible by SMS, are well-known conversational mediums in which students use basic language with casual sentence patterns (Bodomo, 2018). Students' formal language would be impacted by these changes in this new language. (Dansieh & Solomon, 2020)

Language, as a system of communication, has an extensive role in the lives of the human beings (Eldridge, 2014). With the expansion in modern technology, the instruments like mobile phones have become a common medium of communication. Almost the whole globe interacts through using the latest tools of technology. The calculations show that the worldwide users of cell phones approached around a billion (Aakhus and Katz , 2012). These figures may have been more than doubled for the use of the technology has grown very fast. One of the sequels of this widespread communication media is writing change generally every users, especially the writing skills of students through text messaging. (Miah & Omar, 2021)

A fundamental talent that students must master in order to succeed academically is writing. On a surface, it is a series of written letters, words, or symbols (Pajares, 2013). Because of this frequent talk, English language learners find it challenging to create proper sentences, and they gradually get dependent on this practise. Bushnell and Kemp, (2011) asserted that the cell phone technology and text messaging has largely affected the students writing skills. *Textese*, *textism*, *textspeak*, *texting*, *text lingo* or the *SMS (Short Message Service) lingo* are the various terms alternatively used for the language of text messaging (Badomo, 2015:12). Cingel and Sundar (2012) state that texting has become the most preferred style of communication. Across the world, the teenagers and adolescents are engaged in the phenomenon of text messaging (Koskinen, 2017; Ling and Pedersen, 2013). The teenagers are found texting from their mobile or cell phones, web browsers and Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) like smartphones (Poff and Thurlow, 2018). In this way, the youngsters have become the explorers and builders of the texting culture (Oksman, 2016). Hence, as the youngest become the part of texting culture, to explore this the researcher selected the topic as "the effect of texting on English skills of students at intermediate level in Lahore district" (Amber, & Veronica, 2022).

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2. Literature Review

2.1. SMS vs Texting

Today, texting is essential to real-time mobile communication. We utilise it for private purposes like chatting with pals and keeping tabs on our loved ones. Additionally, it is commonly utilised in corporate sectors also for customer service and marketing communications. Because SMS is accessible, well-known, and quick, it is so widely used for both sorts of communicating. (Alias & Binti, 2019)

2.2. Difference between SMS vs Text Messages

According to Lieke (2013), both words are used for texting; many people refer to it as SMS and others as texting. Technically speaking, the service utilized to send text messages is called Short Message Service (SMS). To put it another way, it is a method of transmitting text-based messages or texting from a computer to a mobile device. (Hamdan, Jihad, & Rami, 2018)

2.3. Linguistic Characteristics

The introduction of abbreviations (such as "lol" for laughing out loud) and nonstandard spelling are the two key characteristics that define chat. By examining the organizational structures of chat and oral communication, Schonfeld (2001) compared written and face-to-face interaction (Werry, 2006). Then he inquired as to how "typed conversation" in chats relates to other subjects. According to Storer (2011), the written conversation is founded on two distinctions between spoken and written dialogues: the way turn-taking is organized and the use of deictic and regional phrases. (Ahmed, Mehmood, & Zahid, 2021)

2.4. Orthographic Features

The excessive use of punctuation, capital letters, spelling, and expressing oneself (in italics, boldface, etc.) are all considered orthographic features. Examples of informal spelling used by English speakers in Pakistan include: thnx instead of thanks and (c u latter) rather than see you later. Sometimes, numerals that have the same sound as some letters are used instead, such as in the phrases "thanks for your help" (thnx 4 ur hlp) and "talk to you after" (tlk 2 u lttr). (Sutherland, 2018)

2.5. Lexical Features

Lexical features are a key component of conversation.
It focuses on how to communicate online using casual language.   I'm lucky, Oh my goodness,   Ex: Boy, Come on, etc.

- Ohhh, mmmm, ahhh.
- The use of interjections.
- The use of abbreviations (LOL, BTW, etc) (Crystal, Leung, & Louis, 2017)

2.6. Descriptive linguistics Property

Because people talk too often, they develop a new form of communication that mimics spoken language and uses "telegraphic" language; chat's grammatical elements may be seen in word order, sentence structure, and word intonation. (Veronica et al., 2016)

2.7. Language of Chat

Chat dialect is any conversational or messaging style that is distinct from other CMC mediums. Popular elements of the chat language include: acronyms, short forms, polysemy, synonyms, etc.

2.8. Acronyms

It is a term made composed of the first letters or clusters of the words that make up a name or a phrase, such as UNESCO for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation. "Acronym is made up of the first letters of an organization's name," (claim Ya-dong & Kui, 2016; 108).

2.9. Short Forms

It involves shortening phrases that might otherwise be long with shorter ones. e.g., 'abt' for about, 'pic' for picture, 'rcd' for received, etc. (Crispin, Michele, & Thurlow, 2019)

2.10.   The Language of Student and Chatting

A glossary of new terms and acronyms based on abbreviations has emerged with the introduction of texting and online social networking. Grammatical mistakes have been seen to occur more frequently when people spend more time on mobile phone and communicating via text. Some aspects of the medium might be problematic for the student. In an essay published in 2013, Burnett summarized these as follows:

- Contributions should not exceed two or three lines in length, since this might indicate superficial things and a lack of cohesiveness.
- Someone's purpose and tone or purpose may easily misunderstand by paralinguistic clue.
- Due to lack of focus and quick 'topic decay', lots of text users can be composing and posting at the same time can lead to a multi-stranded conversation (Connie & Varnhagen, 2019)

2.13. Texting and Writing Skills

Using instant messaging and other popular technologies (text messaging, video games, etc.) are distinguished by one crucial consideration: the potential learning tool. It plays a significant role in assisting students in composing school-related information, as stated by professors who "encourage pupils to employ instant messaging shorthand to stimulate their thought processes.' (Lee, 2020)

According to Forgery (2012), when pupils write initial draughts, he doesn't care how they spell anything as long as they write...More power to them if they can get their thoughts and ideas down on paper as soon as possible" (Ibid, 2016:36). Other professors regard students' interest in writing as "recreation" rather than "work." When utilising internet-speak in a chat room, students employ casual writing. According to Jackson (2016), part of an educator's responsibility is to assist students "turn off their informal habits where they leave the chat room," and "this gives us a good opportunity to speak to students about what language to use where." (Helderman, 2017)

The usage of texting has a severe influence on students' English writing abilities, and they make a large number of errors, such as the use of abbreviations and incorrect spelling. They begin by employing short forms in their writing to substitute words such as "you" with "u" or "S'to say "yes", or occasionally the use of number values to convey some letters that have the same pronunciations such as "4" to denote "for", and "gr8" for "great". The abuse of chat by students has become so deep and thorough that professors and educationalists are concerned about its harmful effects on pupils' writing. (Freudenberg & Grinter, 2019)

2.14. Statement of the Problem

Communicating is viewed as a speedier mode of communication that is frequently used by the majority of users. It has been observed that students' English writing skills in Pakistan suffer as a result of their frequent usage of social networking sites and chat language. As a result, the writing skills of students suffer, particularly first-year pupils, as most professors are exposed. This subject needed to be studied at the intermediate level. Recently, several chat language traits have been found in students' academic works, resulting in poor writing abilities. The present study was call for to explore the effect of texting on students' English writing skill at intermediate level.

2.15. Objectives of the Study

The following were the research objectives of the present study:

- To explore the effect of texting on students' English writing skill at intermediate level;
- To find out chat acronyms which students use in texting; and
- To describe the teachers' opinion about the effect of texting on students' English writing skills.

2.16. Research Questions

- How texting affects students' English writing skill?
- Which chat acronyms do the students use in texting?
- What is the perception of teachers about the effect of texting on students' English writing skills?

3. Methodology and Procedure

Present study was aiming to ascertain the effect of texting on students' English writing skills at intermediate level in Lahore. It was descriptive research based on survey design in nature. Population was comprised all intermediate students (38657) who were studying in government collages in Lahore district in the academic year of 2018-2020, and all teachers (839) who were teaching in these colleges. Data (opinions regarding use of texting and conversation) were collected from 200 students and 15 teachers from the govt. Colleges from Lahore district which were selected through purposive sampling techniques via self developed questionnaire and interview protocol. Research tools were pilot tested by 15 students of the 2nd year and 5 teachers who were not included in the sample. Questionnaire was pilot tested by 20 teachers of the different designation who were not included in the sample. This study used George Gerbner's Cultivation theory which provides a ground to the researcher to ascertain the effects of constant mobile using on the spelling skills of the teenage students. Inter items method was employed to determine questionnaire's internal consistency of the items. The computed Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient value of the administered questionnaire was 0.91 which showed items in the questionnaire were highly co-related. To check students' writing skill, paper pencil test (Essay 250 to 300 words) was administered to the selected students and chat acronyms were ascertained form their chat conversation. Teachers were interviewed diagnosing the effect of students' texting on their writing skills. The gathered data was arranged, coded, and entered into computer for analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed with the help of SPSS (V 22) software by applying inferential and descriptive statistics. Thematic analysis was done of the qualitative data and conversational analysis was done of the respondents' texting/chat messaging analyzing chat acronyms. The results are shown in the following tables:

4. Results and Findings

Question1: How texting effect students' English writing skill?

Table 1: Pearson correlation analysis for the analysis to find out relationship between texting and students' writing skills

Variable	r	Sig
Texting	.612(**)	.021
Writing Skills		

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level of significant

The above table 1 exhibits that the computed r-value is .612 and sig value is .021 which shows moderate significant relation between texting and students' writing skills exist. Hence, said that texting effects students' writing skill at intermediate level.

Question 2: Which chat acronyms do the students use in texting?

Table 2: Descriptive analysis for the analysis to find out frequency and percentage of used chat acronyms (Phonology)

Sr.#	English Form	Chat Acronyms	*f* & %	Total
01	School	sQl	23%(46)	200
02	Laughing	hahahaha	31%(62)	200
03	Oh	Oooooo	32%(64)	200
04	Busy	b.z	31%(62)	200
05	Wow	wah	31%(62)	200
06	Okay	Hmmmmm	34%(68)	200
07	Waite	W8	47% (94)	200
08	Please	plzzzzz	49%(98)	200
09	Love	lv	43%(86)	200
10	Sleeping	zzzzzzz	43%(86)	200
11	Academy	akdmy	44%(88)	200
12	Laugh out louder	lolzzz	55%(110)	200
13	To you	2u	52%(104)	200
14	Hello	hlooooo	59%(118)	200
15	I wait for you	Iw84u	53%(106)	200
16	Bye	by	51%(102)	200
17	Your	ur	59%(118)	200
18	Night	9i8	62%(124)	200
19	Take care	t.c	69%(138)	200
20	Good night	G.N.	70%(140)	200
21	Do not	dont	62%(124)	200
22	Right	Ri8	64%(128)	200
23	Miss	mis	61%(122)	200
24	Welcome	wlcm	62%(124)	200
25	What	wt	80%(160)	200
26	Number	num	75%(150)	200
27	Thanks	thnx	77%(154)	200
28	But	bt	80%(160)	200
29	For	4	76%(152)	200
30	On the way	on d w	71%(142)	200
31	You	u	86%(172)	200
32	College	clg	87%(174)	200
33	Why	y	85%(170)	200
34	Fine	F9	85%(170)	200

Sr.#	English Form	Chat Acronyms	ƒ & %	Total
35	Waalaikumassalam	W.a	82%(164)	200
36	Birthday	bday	81%(162)	200
37	Good	gud	92%(184)	200
38	Okay	k	96%(192)	200
39	Message	msg	93%(186)	200
40	AssalamoAlaikum	AOA	96%(92)	200
41	Are	r	92%(184)	200
42	Morning	mor9ng	91%(182)	200
43	Cousin	czn	95%(190)	200
44	How are you	h r u	99%(198)	200
45	Because	bcz	92%(184)	200
46	Call	cl	96%(192)	200
47	Pictures	pics	92%(184)	200
48	Package	pkg	95%(190)	200
49	Where are you	w r u	100%(200)	200
50	Am	m	91%(182)	200
51	Geat	Gr8	100%(200)	200

Table 2 exhibits chat acronyms which respondents' used while conversation. cellphones. 23%(46) of the respondents were using 'sQl' for school. 31% to 40% of the respondents were using 'hahahaha'for laughing, 'Oooooo' for Oh, 'bz' for busy, 'wah' for Wow, and 'Hmmmmm'for okay while texting. 43% to 49% of the respondents were using 'W8' for waite, 'plz' for please, 'lv' for love, 'zzzzzzz' for sleeping, and 'akdmy' for academy. 51% to 59% of the respondents were using acronyms whicle texting as 'lolzzz' for laugh out louder, '2u' for to you, 'hlooooo' for hello, 'Iw84u' I waite for you, 'by' for bye, and 'ur' for your. 61% to 70% of the respondents were using chat acronyms as '9i8' for night, 't.c' take care, 'G.N' for good night, 'dont' for do not, 'Ri8' for right, 'mis' for miss, and 'wlcm' for well come. 71% to 80% of the respondents were using chat acronyms as 'wt' for what, 'num' for number, 'thnx' for thanks, 'bt' for but, '4' for for, and 'on d w' for on the way. 81% to 90% of the respondents were using acronyms as 'u' for you, 'clg' for college, 'y' for why, 'F9' for fine, 'W.a' for Waalaikumassalam, and 'bday' for Birthday. 91% to 100% of the respondents were using acronyms while chatting as 'gud' for good, 'k' for okay, 'msg' for message, 'AOA' for Assalam-o-Alaikum, 'r' for are, 'mor9ng' for morning, 'czn' fro cousin, 'h r u' for how are you, 'bcz' for because, 'cl' for call, 'pics' pictures, 'pkg' for package, 'w r u' for where are you, 'm' for am, and 'Gr8' for great.

Question 3: What is the perception of teachers about the effect of texting on students' English writing skills?

To find the answer of the above question, teachers of the selected colleges were also interviewed to obtained the opinions regarding the effect of texting on students English writing skills. When they were asked as:

4.1. To what extent does mobile texting affect the students' writing skills?

One the response, according to majority of the teachers opinions, texting has significant effect on students' writing skills. As the cell phone has changed the level of life, occupations, communication, and speaking style, not to mention the importance of language. Thus, the emergence of mobile phones, laptops, and so on had an impact on student language, as did the excessive use of chat. They asserted that number of spelling affected by SMS writing/ texting as majority of the students use short form of words in texting.In basic terms, brief forms are words or statements that are derived from various phrases while retaining the exact same meaning and omitting extensive courses to minimise size e.g. thx for 'thanks'. The structure in texting language is concerned with using abbreviations and acronyms which have no relation with the rules of formal writing, because abbreviations and acronyms are short forms of words, such as: you (u), for (4), to you (2 u)... etc. As a result, texting has had an impact on students' writing skills, as they choose to use short forms and abbreviations instead of writing the entire word or sentence. Whenever these pupils emerge in their academic writing, they do not follow its conventions, such as emphasising the significance of punctuation and capitalising letters at the beginning of sentences; they also truncate words in formal writing, such as using "u r" instead of "your." As a result, excessive usage of chat has become a major source of error/errors in writing abilities. This practise of

utilising chat language has a detrimental impact on the usage of language in writing and influences conventional forms of writing since chat language differs from academic writing language.

4.2. Which features of textism are prevalent in the write up of the students? Please tell in detail.

On the response of this question, majority of the teachers asserted that the features of texting which are found in students' writing, well, most of the features are related to phrases and spellings. This is affecting more and not complete sentences, because according them, they have seen students using bilingual sentences. Means they integrate an English phrase into an Urdu sentence. So phrases are being used by them, and secondly they committing spellings errors. Spellings are being affected a great due to chat language. They are more prone to use abbreviations or they practiced a lot textual language or language of SMS. So they are found using them and especially when they are doing free writing or when they are writing in hurry, they are found using acronyms and abbreviations of a complete word. So, in this is texting has great effect on students' writing skills.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Present study was design to explore the effect of texting on students' English writing skills at intermediate level in Lahore. In this regards, data were collected from students and teachers. It was found that 19%(38) of the respondents were using mobile phone since > 4 year, 23%(46) were using since 4 to 6 year, 41% (82) were using since 7 to 9 year, and 17%(34) of the respondents were using mobile phone since < 9 year. So far as the concern is frequency of texting, 15%(30) of the respondents texting > 10 time in a day, 28%(56) texting 11 to 20 time, 33%(66) were texting 21 to 30 time, 19%(38) were texting 31 to 40 time, and 5%(10) of the respondents were texting < 40 time in a day. The purpose of texting of the 19%(48) respondents was personal matters, 39%(78) were texting for academic purposes, and 40%(80) of the respondents were texting for general purposes. Moreover, moderate significant relation between texting and students' writing skills was found which shows that texting effects moderately students' writing skill at intermediate level. Jafein and Abdullah, (2019) found in their research that SMS elements have a significant impact on pupils' formal writing. Saleem and Bakhsn (2017) discovered in their study that the widespread use of short text messages has a negative impact on students' writing skills, and that spelling errors in students' writings are common as a result of the extensive use of non-standardized words while composing text messages. Dounia (2016) shown in her research study that excessive talking has a detrimental impact on students' formal writing. The research of student questionnaires, Facebook excerpts, and student written texts reveals that first-year Master of English students at Biskra University struggle with formal writing owing to the influence of cyber language.

It was also found that majority of students were using chat acronyms as: 'sQl' for school, 'hahahaha'for laughing, 'Oooooo' for Oh, 'bz' for busy, 'wah' for Wow, and 'Hmmmmm'for okay while texting,'W8' for waite, 'plz' for please, 'lv' for love, 'zzzzzzz' for sleeping, and 'akdmy' for academy, 'lolzzz' for laugh out louder, '2u' for to you, 'hlooooo' for hello, 'Iw84u' I waite for you, 'by' for bye, and 'ur' for your, '9i8' for night, 't.c' take care, 'G.N' for good night, 'dont' for do not, 'Ri8' for right, 'mis' for miss, and 'wlcm' for well come, 'wt' for what, 'num' for number, 'thnx' for thanks, 'bt' for but, '4' for for, and 'on d w' for on the way, 'u' for you, 'clg' for college, 'y' for why, 'F9' for fine, 'W.a' for Waalaikumassalam, and 'bday' for Birthday, 'gud' for good, 'k' for okay, 'msg' for message, 'AOA' for Assalam-o-Alaikum, 'r' for are, 'mor9ng' for morning, 'czn' fro cousin, 'h r u' for how are you, 'bcz' for because, 'cl' for call, 'pics' pictures, 'pkg' for package, 'w r u' for where are you, 'm' for am, and 'Gr8' for great while texting.

In addition to, according to opinion of majority of the teachers that texting had negative effect on the witing skills of the students. They asserted that number of spelling affected by SMS writing/ texting as majority of the students use short form of words in texting. Short forms, or abbreviations, are just words or phrases that retain the same meaning but are cut down in length, such as thx for "thanks." The structure in texting language is concerned with using abbreviations and acronyms which they do not have any relation with the rules of formal writing, because abbreviations and acronyms are short forms of words. In the formal writing in classrooms has its rules which students should follow as: respecting the punctuation, writing full and clear sentences respecting. Thus, the use of short forms and abbreviations in texts rather than spelling out the entire word or sentence has had an impact on students' writing abilities. These students break the standards of academic writing by not emphasising the significance of punctuation, capitalising the first letter of each phrase, and shortening formal terms like "u r" instead of "your" while writing in formal style. As a result, excessive chat usage has grown to be a major contributor to writing mistakes. Because chat language is different from academic writing language, this practise of utilising chat language heavily impacts the use of language in writing badly and influences the conventional forms of writing. Majority of the teachers asserted that the features of texting which are found in students' writing, well, most of the features are related to phrases and spellings. This is affecting more and not complete sentences, because according them, they have seen students using bilingual sentences. Means they integrate an English phrase into an Urdu sentence. So phrases are being used by them, and secondly they committing spellings errors. Spellings are being affected a great due to chat language. They are more prone to use abbreviations or they practiced a lot textual language in academic writing. It was found in the present research that students writing skill effect due to excessive use texting, it is recommended that students should

minimum use texting to improve their writing skills. In the present research it was also found that in formal writing, students' committed spelling errors who were indulge in texting because they use short form of words. So, it is recommended that while testing students should types whole words to avoid the mistake in formal writing. According to the opinion of majority of the teachers, texting indulge students do not respect its rules such as focusing on the importance of the punctuation, and capitalizing letters in the beginning of the sentence. This practice affects the writing skill of the mobile user. Therefore, it is recommended that while testing, students should also follow the rules of writing to avoid such types of mistake. It is recommended that students should come to know the effect of texting language on their writing skill and should focus their formal writing style to avoid any trouble in English writing skill in future.

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