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Research Article

Text Messages among Students: Attendant Influences on the Proficiency in English Language of Undergraduates in Nigeria

Dare Williams Omotoyinbo[1*]

[1]PhD, Faculty of Education, Department of Arts Education, Adekunle Ajasin University, P.M.B. 001 Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State Nigeria

Abstract: The study investigates the influence of text messages on the proficiency in English Language of Undergraduates in Nigeria. The objective is to examine students use of short messages when texting: how often students use simple and correct English in text messaging; the kind of language or syntax used in text messaging; the errors identified in text messaging of Undergraduates especially in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, Nigeria. The Survey Research Design Method was adopted. One hundred and fifty (150) students were used in the University. Three research questions were answered in the study. Descriptive Statistics was used to analyze the data collected. The findings revealed that students used short text messages when texting. They also design their text in slang during texting; It also revealed that University undergraduates do not use simple and correct English in text messaging; the most dominant kind of language used among them is whole word or phrase abbreviation. Also, students commit errors in test messaging, which include vowel deletion, graphones, alpha-numeric homophony, punctuation errors and initialization among others. In conclusion, text message or chatroom slang, affects students' academic performance negatively. On the basis of the findings, it was recommended among others, that students should be more sensitized on the need to avoid SMS language in formal context of communication such as examination through special programmes conceived for such an objective. Such sensitization should not only be done for examination purposes, but for all others.

Keywords: Text-Messages, University undergraduates, vowel-deletion, graphones, punctuation errors, slangs, sensitization.

INTRODUCTION

English language has a very complex system of rules in which sound structure and meaning are integrated for the purpose of communication. The language follows general principles called rules of grammar. These rules guide the combinations of words that convert complex meanings according to the ordering of such words. No doubt, Awoyemi [1] views it as a complex part of human psychology, a phenomenon which is orderly, meaningful and creative. The creative nature of the English language is seen in the fact that though standardized, it is very flexible; that is, it can have variations and can be subject to a complex dynamism [1-3]. These variations may occur in its use in the level of formality of the language to suit the occasion (formal and informal use).

The purpose of this study is to add credence to the number of protective approaches continually adopted to check anarchy in the use of English and preserve the language from 'adulteration'. One of such

approaches is the disdain for defilement and the prohibition of such phenomena as pidgins, slang words, texting lingo and the like, (especially in formal context). These linguistic forms (texts and other computer mediated languages) are generally perceived to be a threat to the English language. Nevertheless, the emergence of technologically mediated languages and their pervasive use world-wide, constitute a serious force contradicting and frustrating these purist sentiments.

Awoyemi [1], notes that the Standard English cannot remain 'undefiled' as it daily comes in contact with different people and cultures. Thus, with the recent appearance of multiple genres of language through the internet and other forms of technologically mediated communication - such as text messaging, English is bound to be 'defiled'. In the same line of argument, Bodomo [4], concedes that new communication technologies such as the SMS do not only engender new ways of using language, but also new forms of literacy which are associated with the introduction and

uses of the new technologies. These new forms of language use are likely to affect Standard English.

In most examination situations, among Undergraduates of Nigeria Universities generally and Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba in particular, which is our scope in this research, candidates are clearly reminded of the necessity, obligation to use Standard English to render their communication more intelligible to examiners and in return earn maximal/marginal marks for their efforts. A whole lot of sanctions are provided and applied against cases of ungrammatical or syntactical errors in their use of the English language in examination situation. Mistakes in such examination situations are usually unfailingly penalized by examiners.

Nevertheless, because of frequent and profound engagement in technologically mediated communication–through chat rooms on internet, SMS messaging and the like, students are often influenced to use linguistic deviations (ungrammatical forms of language) which are theoretically sanctioned with reduction of marks. Dansieh [5] attempts a theorisation of the phenomenon when he succinctly concedes that as more and more students worldwide acquire and use mobile phones, so are they immersing themselves in text messaging. Such is the situation that some teachers, parents and students themselves are expressing concerns that students' writing skills stand the risk of being sacrificed on the altar of text messaging.

However, text message (TM) simply refers to the use of abbreviations that might not necessarily be universally accepted, because it does not usually follow any language pattern, standards, rules spellings, syntax or other acceptable forms. It makes use of short language forms to craft short message services (SMS), instant messages (IM), Black Berry Messages (BBM), WhatsApp messenges, Yahoo Messenges, and Facebook Messenges etc...

Texting is so pervasive that some regard it as an emergent language register in its own right [6], This is largely due to the proliferation of mobile phones as well as internet base IM and the chartroom. 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 [7]. It appears as if learners are not able to use appropriate language in different context: their informal textisms appear in formal writing assignments [6].

In our daily activity, people send text messages. It has affected our lives so much 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 [6]. SMS language ignores orthographic and syntactic regulations of a language with enormous stress on written sounds and compressions e.g, 8 for 'ate', 4 for 'four and for', bcz for 'because' , and short sentences as 'how r u? hop u'll b busy in ur stdy. Me 2. When r w gona meet 4 dat work? Here the main concern derives the attention of this paper to check the effect of those phenomena on university students regarding their writing skills.

Crystal [8], states that texters are prone to ignore spellings, either intentionally or reflexively. The accepted credence is that texting has developed as a twenty-first-century trend as a highly idiosyncratic vivid style, full of contractions and out of the ordinary uses of language, used by an immature generation that does not worry about standards. There is a broadly voiced apprehension that the practice is nurturing a decline in literacy.

There is a paradigm shift from the conventional English language writing to what researchers have now called, Global System for Mobile Communication/Short Message Service (GSM/SMS) Internet/e-mail systems of communication. The fact that English language in Nigeria is studied in a second language situation creates enough problem, but the emergence of GSM/SMS and e-mail system of communication makes the learning of English more complex with the interference features from this new development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The following Research Questions are raised to guide this study.
1. How often do students use simple and correct English in text messaging?
2. What is the kind of language or syntax used in text messaging?
3. What are the errors identified in text messaging of Undergraduates in Nigeria?

Concept of Short Message Service

SMS is an abbreviation standing for "Short Message Service". It is a technology that enables the transmission of typed text messages from a mobile phone to another. As a service, it makes it possible for users of mobile and portable devices to exchange brief written information/messages through cellular network. The SMS technology emerged in Africa around the 2000's, with the coming of the mobile telephony. Though it is somehow difficult to reveal the exact statistics on its evolution in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, grossly, it can be suggested that its use has exponentially increased over the years.

According to Dansieh [5], there is a remarkable proliferation of mobile phones in Africa. Such a proliferation defied all prediction in the area of mobile cellular telephony. Subscriptions to mobile telephony operators have been on the rise: from just 5% in 2003, it augmented to over 30% by the end of 2008. According to a report released by the International Telecommunications Union 2009, Africa is rated as "The region with the highest mobile growth rate".

SMS messaging is undoubtedly the most widespread communication method in Africa, probably because of its affordability and reliability. An SMS is virtually cheaper than a voice mail. In addition, it is a relatively fast way of reaching out to a correspondent. The service has evolved over the years from a simple person-to- person messaging to include interaction with automated system. Barasa and Mous [2] summarize the advantages of SMS thus:

1. It is cheaper than the voice mail,
2. It is less intrusive, that is, nobody hears you sending the message and nobody can decipher what the incoming message is all about,
3. It makes direct conveyance of the message without interruption from the recipient,
4. It can be saved for future reference unlike the spontaneous spoken word, among others.

In this light, Richardson and Lenarcic [9] opine that the SMS service represents a facilitating tool which institutes a state of 'constant touch' to dominate between those connected in what has become a ubiquitous social network. According to them, SMS are also pervasive and indispensable 'talismans' to the masses that are vital to some as conduits for personal well-being. This is true as they offer some comfort to their users. Despite all these advantages, the SMS service is difficult to use because of its obvious constraint of 160 characters which represents a reduced size for communication. This dictates a circumstantial use of language.

Use of Language in SMS Messaging
Richardson and Lenarcic [9], note that Products are often designed to be easy to use, but perhaps, sometimes they may become too easy to use, in which case, their utility in application is almost an unconscious process for the consumer. This is certainly not the case with the text messaging, given the obvious systematic constraint of 160 characters, being the maximum size of a single communication […] the puzzle of text messaging is an ongoing challenge to craft miniscule missives, malformed in appearance perhaps, but with cohesive meaning that at times may appear to border on lyrical composition.

The limited number of characters per message, remarkably affects language use in text messaging, as there naturally arises the need for the message to be compacted to fit the limited size provided for the communication, without sacrificing the intelligibility of the message sent. This calls for a great deal of creativity on the part of the encoder (texter) and really puts to test the latter's capacity to phrase his message concisely, in an economy of words [10, 2, 9, 11].

Richardson and Lenarcic [9] make reference to this creative and 'artistic' use of language in SMS messaging when they note that the relatively limited supply of 160 characters that constitute the expanse of a single text message very much compels the author of such a message to adopt a strategy to "relate cogent meaning and this becomes a shared approach to generate a dynamic mobile social network". The systematic constraint of the number of character has therefore given rise to linguistic creativity with the development by texters of a whole lot of imaginative and innovative techniques aimed at making the technology work best for them. These techniques include phenomena like multilingualism, abbreviation, the use of numeral and graphology, the use of single pronounceable letters and multiple other forms of word and phrase shortening. Text messaging involves the use of such forms like pictograms and logograms. The texter may employ shortened phrases through use of symbols in order to represent the word. A text may equally consist of a series of alphanumeric blending.

According to researchers [10, 8, 5] BBC-Focus on Africa, 2004. The Examples of such compositions include the following: "4 u" used for "for you",
"luv u" used for "love you",
"b4" used for "before",
"love you with all my heart" used for "luwamh",
"to whom it may concern" in the place of "twimc",
"2d8" used for "to date"
and "db8" used for "debate"

All these language techniques have caused the SMS language to be considered a kind of independent written register which does not necessarily depend on the conventions of the standard written language. A number of labels and terminologies have therefore been coined to refer to it. These labels include technologically mediated language, internet slang, chattisch, netspeak, webslang, netlingual, digital English, textese among others [2, 5, 12-14]. Suntherland [13] offers an insightful description of the SMS language in his submission that: "as a dialect, text ('textese') is thin and –compared, say with Californian personalized license plates – unimaginative. It is bleak, bald, sad shorthand. Drab, shrinktalk. In fact, linguistically, it's all pig's ear and best described as penmanship for illiterates".

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer mediated communication (CMC) means that human beings communicate with each other with the help of computer [15]. The media has never been as influential as it is today. As most people spend many hours per day in front of the Television (TV), they probably hear more language from the media than they do in conversations. One can therefore say that the society is influenced by the language that occurs in the media. CMC has features of both written and spoken language and is mainly used in e-mails, text-messages and internet Chat Rooms. The most distinct feature of CMC is the use of abbreviations and emotions (*lol* and ☺). This shows that in a way language is going back to where it all started: the use of pictures to convey meaning (Hieroglyphyics). Computer Mediated Communication has features that do not conform to the standards of English and that is the point where linguists and other professionals are dissatisfied with the system. This rising development among the young people of today is beginning to hinder their effective use of English language which emanates from their over reliance on mobile phones and mobile text messages which is detrimental to their writing. It is observed that mobile text-messaging, is characterized by students' unusual abbreviations, contractions, tense and grammatical infelicities, replacement of spelling with sounds and concord incongruity.

Ezekwesili and Chinedu [16] state that the global systems mobile has completely eroded the little writing ability acquired by (English) learners. It has also become the major source of corrupt influence on the use of English of students in Nigeria. Text messages sent through GSM are highly coded and abbreviated that an ordinary person cannot decode them. These abbreviations have so destroyed the spelling competence of learners that if nothing is done to stem, the tide of this disturbing flow, writing will suffer a devastating decline.

Academics bemoan the effects that e-mail and text messages have on teenagers communicative skills. What more is to be said about the influence of GSM/SMS language than to explore necessary avenues to curb the excess usage starting from the primary level because some pupils in primary schools already have access to mobile phones and to the Internet either directly or indirectly. The future implication of negligence may lead to a complete loss of the rubric of functional writing, because even in the area of grammar, text messages are filled with structural deviants.

SMS Language and English Language Literacy

There are suppositions and apprehensions among literate adults, language educationists and linguists that the SMS language is a serious threat to standard written English. Indeed, there is a great debate over the question and a great deal of arguments and counter arguments have been offered to contribute to this hot debate. Detractors of the SMS language argue that technologically mediated communication and its resulting languages (nets-peak, net-slang, SMS languages and the like) constitute a veritable curse as they impact very negatively on student communicational skills, particularly on their writing skills. This school of thought argues that regular use of the technology affects the writing reflexes of the texter (in the long term) and influences him/her to use the SMS language even in formal context. For instance, Oluga and Babalola [17], make a critique on the service and present it as a phenomenon which affects the spelling system of the texts, making it difficult for the students to get the correct orthography of words as they are used to spelling incorrectly and using abbreviated forms of words in text messaging.

Oluga and Babalola [17], offer some of these negative impacts of SMS on Nigerian students' writing skills thus, they [students who frequently use SMS language] use abbreviated forms of words unconsciously even in formal written communication like application letters for employment purposes, essays written during examination etc. Therefore, words like 'that', 'this', 'what', 'because' and 'people' are mistakenly written as 'dat' or 'dis', 'wot' or 'wt', 'bcs' and 'pple' respectively. Such mistakes as far as application letters are concerned give a bad impression of the writers. Those who are used to the very short text messages become lazy writers and may not find it easy writing an error-free continuous writing, letters, essays, and reports.

This position is, however, challenged by two schools of thought. The first is led by Crystal [8] basing his counter argument on six principal observations. He points to the fact that (1) in a typical text message, less that 10% of the words are abbreviated; (2) the use of abbreviations is not a new phenomenon in the world. It has been in practice for decades; therefore it cannot be viewed as a new language and therefore, not as a threat to the English language literacy. (3) Children and adults alike use text language, the latter being more likely to do so; (4)Students do not habitually use abbreviations in their homework and examinations; (5) Before people can text, they must first have acquired language literacy that is, they must have learned how to spell. Therefore, text messaging cannot be a cause of bad spelling; (6) Given the fact that texting provides people with the opportunity of engaging with the language through reading and writing, it improves people's literacy. Based on these observations, Crystal [8] firmly argues that the SMS language does not negatively affect language literacy.

A second counter school of thought led by Russell [18] based its argument on the status of the SMS language as an independent and new language as well as on the need for students to acquire the basis of the English language so as to be empowered to distinguish between wrong (ungrammatical) uses and good (grammatical) uses of the English language. This school of thought argues that, since the learning of a new language does not affect students' ability to use English grammar, it would be fallacious to conclude that texting have potentials of affecting students' mastery of English grammar. This school of thought equally holds that, the emergence of various jargons in the history of languages have never caused a dynamism to occur in English grammar. English grammar has not changed despite the survival of these jargons. It would therefore be recommendable for students to seek and try to have a mastery of the basics of the English language (in pedagogic situations) so as to be able to distinguish between "slang, texting lingo (ungrammatical languages) and correct English".

Somehow in line with Russell's [18] exhortation addressed to learners of the English language (to seek to distinguish between SMS language and Standard English), net-slang and other forms of languages characterizing technologically mediated communication have been included to school curriculums in a number of western countries. A report released by Australia's ABC radio, for instance, stipulates that Australian educators in Victoria are stirring up a bit of storm by teaching SMS text messaging as part of a language arts curriculum, to high school students [2, 19].

Similarly, an article posted on 'Wikinews' reports that, in November 2006, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority gave its approval to the move that secondary school students be allowed to use mobile phone text language in the end of year examination papers [5, 20]. This may indicate that the SMS language is now relatively tolerated in some pedagogic situations (formal context) such as examination contexts in some parts of the world.

However, in Nigeria, most schools combat the use of SMS language and all other linguistic deviations from the English language in examination situations. They do this partly by seriously sanctioning such use with penalties, notably reduction of marks [1, 21, 17]. Indeed, Students, in examination situations, are often reminded of the necessity, or obligation to use language properly for an effective communication of their ideas and a grammatical formulation of their answers. Improper use of language, in this respect, is often sanctioned in various glaring ways, notably through reduction of marks. However, despite this linguistic and examination requisites, students often, advertently or inadvertently, violate language rules, sometimes with

the influence of intensive use of particular communication technology notably the SMS texting.

GSM Texting and the Nigerian Situation

Ezekwesili [22] reports, that there is a paradigm shift in the mode of communication particularly among students, since the introduction of the global systems mobile (GSM) in Nigeria. This situation has to be seriously examined because it compounds the problem Nigerians already have in the learning of English as a second language. In this era of information and communication technology, Nigeria must join the rest of the world to harness all that there is, in the technological super highway. The need for territorial expansion, politics, trade, science and technology has established English as a world language. Nigeria like many other nations of the world is part of the global network of information and technology [23].

The internet revolution has provided marginalized and economically under-developed nations with an opportunity to get into the international playing field access an array of information that can help modernize their lives and societies… to promote African civilization. So, the internet and the GSM services are relevant to Nigeria at the present state of development, especially in the areas of research, business, medical and legal practices, E-mail, document transfer, image protection, advertising, publishing and commercial transactions. An important element in social change remains the technology and Nigeria cannot do without it, especially now that the whole world is becoming one. The medium is the message, because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human communication and action. It may be difficult to avoid GSM/SMS or Internet/e-mail, so what is to be done is to build the capacity of persons in charge of the flow of English language, since the trend in communication among our students today is mainly through phone calls and text messages. The apparent existence of many unrelated languages in Nigeria makes it imperative for Nigerians to be proficient in English communicative skills, and more so since it is Nigeria's means of getting access to the world of scholarship in Science, Arts, Literature, Philosophy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as asserted by Ezekwesili and Chinedu [22].

Have been brought closer than ever before. They went on to say that GSM companies in Nigeria have contributed immensely to the growth of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs), thereby boosting the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)of the country as well as boosting the informed sections like transportation and the artisans, etc. It has been a source of motivation, improved education through e-learning, promotion of culture and integration, entertainment and most of all economic empowerment to many Nigerians. Little wonder why over 82% of Nigerians preferred

GSM to landlines phones [24]. It has been speculated that GSM operators have contributed billions of Naira to the Nigerian economy and created over one hundred thousand jobs. Most important advantage, which is a great feat, is that, GSM is available to all, regardless of status or locality.

It is, therefore, not surprising that this technology so much talked about has impacted the lives and performance of students worldwide due to its applications and services.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: How often do students use simple and correct English in text messaging?

Table-1: Descriptive Statistics showing how often students use simple and correct English in text messaging

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not often	96	64.00
Occasionally	34	22.67
Often	7	4.66
Most Often	8	5.33
Every time	5	3.33
Total	**150**	**100.0**

Table-1 above is another contrast to the real life situation of text message, slang-use among undergraduates in Nigeria Universities as many users do not actually know that they are deeply involved in its use. From the data collected, a total of 96 representing 64% of the respondents do not use simple and correct English often; while those who use it occasionally are 34 (22.67%); most times with 8 (5.33%), and those who

use it often are 7, representing 4.66%. This indicates that students of Adekunle Ajasin University for example, do not use simple and correct English in text messaging.

Research Question 2: What is the kind of language or syntax used in text messaging?

Table-2: The kind of language or syntax used in text messaging

Kind of Languages Used	Full form/standard	SMS Text
Words or phrases used	*I don't care*	IDC
	At The Moment	ATM
	You're On Your Own	OYO
	As Soon As Possible	ASAP
	Oh My god	OMG
	Hugs And Kisses	XOXO
	Laughing Out Loud	LOL
	Rolling On The Floor Laughing	ROFL or ROTFL
	Message	MSG
	Please	PLZ
	Talk To You Later	TTYL
	I Love You	ILU or ILY
Single Letter	*Are*	R
	Be	B
	Oh	O
	Why	Y
	You	U
Emotions	*Love*	♥
	At	@
Combination of Multiple words	*your* and *you're*	Ur
	Wonderful	1drfl
	Easy	Ez
	Someone	Sum 1
	See you	Cu or cy u
	Tomorrow	2mro,2mo or tmr

The result in Table-2 indicated that Undergraduate students often use four major kinds of language or syntax in text messaging which includes

whole word or phrase abbreviation, a single latter, emotions and combination of multiple words. This most

dominant in text messaging among University undergraduates is whole word or phrase abbreviation.

Research Question 3: What are the errors identified in text messaging of Undergraduates in Nigeria Universities?

Table-3: The errors identified in text messaging of Undergraduates

Errors in Text Messaging	Occurrences	Percentage
Truncation	15	10.0%
Vowel-deletion	27	18.0%
Alpha-numerichomophony	19	12.67%
Graphones	17	11.33%
Initialization	17	11.33%
Lackof Inter-wordspace	17	11.33%
Logographicemoticons	13	8.67%
Onomatopoeic-expression	14	9.33%
Punctuation	11	7.33%
Total	**150**	**100.0**

As shown in the Table-3 above, almost all the features of the SMS language considered for this study were found in students Text messages. The five most dominant features of this SMS language (as observed in the study) include, vowel deletion, alphanumeric homophony graphones (letter homophony), punctuation 'errors' and initialisation (in decreasing order).

Vowel deletion represents the most dominant SMS linguistic feature constituting 18.0% of such features in SMS messages. Like truncation, vowel deletion is often used for the purpose of brevity. A situation of vowel deletion is said to have occurred when the texter creates a contracted version of the word(s) he/she intends using. While the vowels of the intended word are omitted, the consonants are maintained to represent the whole word. Examples drawn from the study include 'pls' for 'please'; 'kds' for 'kids'; 'yr' for 'your'; 'nt' for 'not', 'Gd' for 'good'; 'sde' for 'side'; 'mther' for 'mother'; 'fther' for 'father'; 'bcs' for 'because';'wt' for what'; 'msg' for 'message'; 'txt' for 'text'; 'ltd' for 'limited'; 'frm' for 'from' among others. For example, the word 'ltd' found in one of the texters's SMS message reads ("God is nt ltd" meaning [God is not limited])."

The second most dominant feature of the SMS language observed in the messages was the phenomenon of alphanumeric homophony. This feature represented 12.67% in SMS messages. As a feature of the SMS language, alphanumeric homophonies have to do with the more or less arbitrary blending of letter and number to represent word, phrases or clauses. In such situations, the texter – often partially – substitutes the word, phrase or sentence with phonetically similar letters or numbers that sound almost the same as the substituted word or phrase. Example drawn from this study include 'b4' for 'before'; '2d n 4ever' for 'today and forever'; '2 g 4 U' for 'to go for you'; 'w8' for'wait'; '2 r bt@ than 1' for 'two are better than one'.

Graphones, otherwise called letter homophones constituted the third dominant SMS linguistic feature in SMS messages (11.33%). The term 'graphone' is constituted of two words: the radical "graphic" meaning written representation and suffix "phone" meaning speech sound. A graphone is therefore a neologism used to refer to a feature of SMS language in which words are written the way they are pronounced (spoken like written) (Barasa and Mous 2013). Letter homophony is the type of graphones we found the most in the sample. Example include 'D' for 'the'; 'R' for 'are'; 'U' for 'you'; '1' for 'one'.

The fifth most dominant feature of the SMS language is initialisation, representing 11.33% of such features in SMS messages. Initialisation as a feature of SMS language is a word shortening process whereby letters are used to represent whole words or sentences. Example from the corpus include 'N' for 'Naira'; 'Bk' for 'book'; and 'GM' for 'general manager'

The last feature of the SMS language observed is punctuation 'error'. It constituted 7.33% in students' text messages. Punctuation 'errors' basically included violation of grammar rules at the level of punctuation. Our sample indicates 'errors' such as omission of punctuation markers and arbitrary use of these markers (commas for instance at the place of full stop or vice versa) to fragment sentences. Example include 'Na wa 4 u, M tired' meaning "Shit! I am tired of all this"; 'Go 2 him Will giv u al d mony' for "go to him. He will give you all the money"

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Result of findings for research Question One revealed that many users do not actually know that they are deeply involved in the use of text message and slang. It also revealed that students do not use simple and correct English in text messaging. The result here corroborates the findings of Mcluhan in Akpabio [25] which contends that the medium is the message,

because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human communication and action.

The findings in respect of research question Two shows that students often use Four major kinds of language or syntax in text messaging which are words or phrases, single letters, emotions and combination of single words. This corroborates the findings of Akwanya [26] which submitted that dictionary compilation seems to be moving away from listing exclusively individual words corresponding to Chomsky's lexical items to sequences composed of distinct lexical items like the "air traffic controller", "airs and graces", "man in the street", "matter of life and death", "theatre of the absurd", "unknown quality" and so on.

The result of findings for research question Three revealed that almost all the features of the SMS languages considered for the study were found in students' text messaging which includes Vowel deletion alphanumeric homophony, graphones, punctuation errors and initialization. This is in line with the findings of Odey, Essoh, and Endong [10], which revealed that the five most dominant features or errors include vowel deletion, graphones, alphanumeric homophony, punctuation 'errors' and initialization among others. All these are harmful to the grammaticalness of the use of English Language and the abuse of lexicographical rules of the target language is displayed with impunity.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of this work reveals that Text message or chartroom 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, they use text slangs to the point of writing such slangs in their continuous assessment and examinations. It is most astonishing to find out 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 un-cautiously 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. Furthermore, university students commit too much errors in writing. This can be viewed from how they delete vowel letters during texting, committing errors of graphones, alphanumeric homophony errors, punctuation 'errors' and initialization among others. This has greatly influenced the rate at which students perform in writing examinations and other tests especially in English Language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, the following are the view of the researcher and recommendations:

- Students should be more sensitized on the need to avoid SMS language in formal context of communication such as examination through special programmes conceived for such an objective.
- Examiners should motivate the use of Standard English in examination situation by 'recompensing' SMS slang-free essays with marginal marks.
- Adequate time should be given to students in examination situations as some of the cases of 'un-authorised' use of SMS language often stem from the fact that students to not have ample time to answer questions. Because of the limited time provided for examination papers, they tend to use short forms and other features of the SMS language in order not to be caught up by the time.
- There is need for caution to university students on the use of correct English so as to reduce the use of slangs and short text messages in writing examinations.
- Students should be taught grammar rules as they pertain to the writing skill. Once the students know the rules and regulations of grammar rules.

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