

IMPACT OF SMS LANGUAGE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

In this research, the researchers are exploring the impact of SMS language on undergraduate students in private institutions of Malaysia. The research objectives include analysing the rising concept of SMS usage in the daily communication of students in the growing technological era. Another research objective is to identify how SMS influences daily communication presented by students in Malaysian higher education, to determine these affects in terms of both, constructive or unconstructive aspects, to provide recommendations to mobile phone manufacturers as well as undergraduate students regarding the use of SMS language in daily written and communication. Research methodology, results and data analysis and a conclusion has been provided. SMS language is the independent variable subdivided into use of abbreviations and use of phonetic spellings, while the dependent variable is daily communication amongst private Malaysian higher education institutes. To achieve the research objectives quantitative data is gathered from 100 students of Malaysian high schools. Data is collected through close ended questionnaire. Data is then analysed through SPSS by using regression and correlation tests. A reliability test was also conducted. The relationship between the dependent and independent variables is significant and positive. Finally, recommendations for the managers and future researches are included as well as recommendations for the students using mobile phones.

Keywords: SMS, undergraduate students, daily communication, Malaysian higher education.

INTRODUCTION

This research has thoroughly determined the main aspects of impact of SMS language on undergraduate students of Malaysian higher education institutions. With the expansion of text message usage amongst students due to globalization, specifically teenagers and undergraduate students, there has been a constant concern amongst parents and educators that the practice of text messaging is harmful to the students' written and verbal communication in academics and affects the standardized form in the long run. This study will investigate the impact of SMS language on the communications skills of these students and whether the impact is positive or negative. The aim is to determine SMS influence on the daily communication of Malaysian students in private institutions and whether the impact is entirely harmful or beneficial as well.

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2006) English language slang used in text messaging is termed as SMS language. In view of Thurlow (2003), use of informal expressions and words commonly used in spoken language and daily communication of text messages are codes instead of standard language. Furthermore, Ellis (2001) stated that the SMS language does not follow the rule of grammar and Standard English. Also, there are no regulations followed in creation of SMS abbreviations which is why its use in the daily written and verbal communication of students in their academic life can be negatively influenced as these abbreviations are not recognized by dictionaries or linguists.

In spite of these contradict scenario, it is interesting to know that there are only a handful of researches related to this area of study conducted in Malaysia. Hence, this created a great research gap motivating the researchers to initiate this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The origin of SMS dates back to the 1980s when it was first implemented into the GSM standards for mobile phone as a replacement for pagers (Kopomaa, 2005). The main vision is that it would become an additional tool that businesses can make use of in order to send messages on rare occasions, which is similarity with the application of pages in a single phone number. The main reason for such is that messages are generally limited to 160 characters per message and mobile phone producers couldn't visualize anyone trying to type message with a twelve button keypad. In any case, their perceptions were proven wrong following the slow start of SMS transformation in the USA following an incredible subsidization of handsets, which basically made mobile phone affordable starting from the 1990s.

On a view from Finland, it was noted that SMS was even offered in the earlier stages on a cost free bases as a result of high competition amongst telephone providers in 1997 (Kopomaa, 2005). Somewhat similar cases were experienced in numerous countries as well in the sense that SMS where made available at a very low price compared with making calls, which meant that users quickly switched their attention towards the adoption of SMS and it enhanced the penetration of the application. Researchers have also presented argument in numerous cases that SMS is the main reason why teenager adopted mobile phones as opposed to voice calling (Ling, 2004). Other studies have also looked to understand why mobile phones (Ling, 2004) and text messaging easily penetrated the market (Grinter and Eldridge, 2001; Ito and Okabe, 2005).

On past account, studies related to SMS have often been given a broader scope to cover the use of mobile telephone, with these sties viewing SMS as a form of alternative to voice communication, instead of seeing it to be able to stand on its own. In any case, there are studies in the present time that have been well focused on understanding the use of "text-messaging." The book 'The Inside Text' (Harper et al., 2005) contains a vast study of SMS usage and design with respect to issues related to digital text communication on a broader sense. Most of these studies have concentrated their observation on teenagers. This makes this research significant because it broadens the scope by looking deeper into the field with focus on students in higher education (adolescents and adults), and as such increasing the study scope to an area that has received few attention in literatures.

No matter the age variation, there is a common finding in the literature which is that text messaging increases "ad-hoc" coordination (Brown, 2002; Jenson, 2005; Ling, 2004). Ling refers to this as a micro-coordination and views it to be how message are usually replied with respect to the situation that coordinates social life, not only for teenagers but for all users of the service (Ling, 2004). Another finding that has received high attention is that text messaging is used as a tool to eliminate being under surveillance or control over people's affairs in the daily business and world settings (Elwood-Clayton, 2005; Grinter and Eldridge, 2001; Ito and Okabe, 2005). Considering the fact that the participants in this research are not subjected to any form of control, this issue becomes of no significance. In any case, there are findings those expectations from other people with respect to an issue influences the way people explore and response to such expectations.

With respect to the communication media, SMS is a "lean medium" in the sense that the messages are short and meant to deliver convey detailed information with abbreviated words and symbols. On that account, there is a need for uniform understanding to exist between users with respect to what the abbreviated words mean and results in the abbreviated words being primarily done by removing certain alphabets from a word or phrase but keeping the actual meaning of the word or phrase. For instance, "and" can be replaced with "nd" which is much understandable. Phrase like "see you" can be really shortened down to "c u," providing the much needed space for the user to pass through a vast volume of information with few words.

Elwood-Clayton (2005) made known that while this is beneficial in the sense that large information can be transferred through a small medium in the form of shortened words and symbols. The disadvantage comes in the form of negative influence it yields on the users. As the users begin to internalize the process, they are bound to adopt it in their non SMS communications and it becomes very confusing as well as complicated to understand for the non-SMS users. On the academic ground, it is lacking in standard with respect to what is obtainable in language structure as discussed earlier and the implication is that the user is pushed into failing the course because the lecturer will mark it based on the low standard presented.

On that account, this paper looks to understand how the adoption SMS influence the communication pattern obtainable amongst Malaysian students in higher institutions with respect to the differences in the

influence as a result of differences in ethnical background and spoken or written language in a multicultural Malaysian society.

Framework of the Study

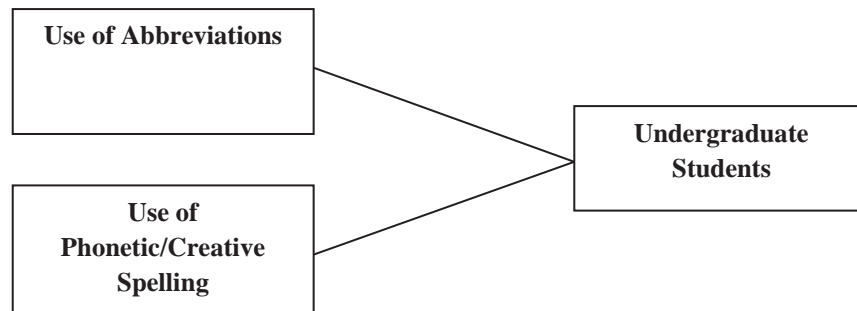


Figure 1: Framework of the Study

Figure 1 above shows that the study comprises of three variables in total. The independent variable of SMS language has been further divided into two sub variables namely usage of abbreviations and use of phonetic spellings and the dependent variable of the study are the undergraduate students of Malaysian higher education institutes.

Hypotheses

- H₁:** There is a negative impact of usage of abbreviation in SMS language on undergraduate students in Malaysian higher education.
- H₂:** There is a negative impact of phonetic/creative spellings in SMS language on undergraduate students in Malaysian higher education.

METHODOLOGY

According to Cresswell, (2007), a research design acts as a guide for the entire research completion. The different types of research designs include exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. The current research has followed the research design which is exploratory. Furthermore, in view of Beiske (2007), the different kinds of research approaches or data collection methods include a qualitative research approach or a quantitative research approach. The current research has made use of the quantitative research approach as primary data collection has been done from the undergraduate students of four Malaysian higher education institutions. The data collection tool that has been used to conduct the survey is a structured questionnaire. The responses were then quantitatively analysed. Secondary data collection has also been conducted by reviewing online journals, articles and various other online sources.

In the current research, the sampling technique of convenience has been used to select a segment of the undergraduate population of Malaysia. A total sample size of 100 students has been chosen on convenience basis from four private institutions of Malaysia. The collected data have been effectively analysed via descriptive and influential statistics using SPSS.

In order to assure that the research is authentic and data collected reliable, a reliability test was performed using the SPSS software. Results of the test are shown below in table 1 which depicts that the value of Cronbach’s alpha is 0.745 demonstrating that the study is reliable and results are not biased.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Factors	Cronbach’s Alpha
Undergraduates	0.745
Use of Abbreviations	0.716

Use of Phonetic Spellings	0.774
Overall	0.745
N	100

FINDINGS

Demographic Analysis

Gender

Table 2: Percentage of Respondents in Accordance with Gender

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	males	65	65.0	65.0	65.0
	females	35	35.0	35.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

Out of the 100 respondents who were students, 65% were males while 35% were females. It is obvious that more male students than female students in the population.

Age

Table 3: Percentage of Respondents in Accordance with Age

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-20	55	55.0	55.0	55.0
	21-22	45	45.0	45.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

From the 100 respondents who were surveyed from the high schools of Malaysia, 55% were aged between 18 to 20 years old. Meanwhile, 45% of the remaining respondents fell into the age group of 21-22 as shown in table 3.

Use of Abbreviations

According to the survey conducted from 100 respondents, 67% agreed that they frequently used contracted and abbreviated words while text messaging as it saves time and space. Similarly, 70% agreed that using acronyms while texting is a social trend and that is why they also use it while 62% of the students believed that using abbreviated words expressed their thoughts quickly however not appropriately. In contrast to this, 61% also agreed that they will not prefer using abbreviations in written and verbal communication in academic life as they are unable to express themselves properly while in similar view, 65% agreed and stated that they sometimes get confused between SMS slang language and correct English in their academic communication. 68% of the students themselves agreed and believed that using abbreviations negatively affected their grammar and punctuation in written academic life.

Use of Phonetic Spellings

62% of the students agreed that they tend to use letter homophones in their SMS communication with peers, while 67% agreed that they often used number homophones as it saved time. 64% often use non-conventional spellings during their text messages while 65% believed that phonetic spellings while text messaging affects their ability to correctly use spellings in written academic English. 64% of them also used emoticons to convey their emotions over text messages. Even then, 74% strongly believed that they often used phonetic spellings in SMS language while doing their academic work.

Undergraduate Students of Malaysia

This study reveals that 67% of the students agreed that written and verbal communication is negatively affected by slang used in SMS language. Similarly, 70% believed using symbols and abbreviated words distorts their ability to express through writing. 63% of the students also believed that abbreviations affect the students' ability to use words in appropriate context. However, 60% believed that most students get better at spelling and writing as command of texting indicates a broader facility for language. This depicts that SMS language and texting sometimes does have a positive and constructive impact on students as well. However, 66% believed that the overall negative experience is higher than the positive aspects of SMS language.

Impact of Usage of Abbreviation and Phonetic Spelling in SMS Language on Undergraduate Students

In order to study the impact of usage of abbreviation and phonetic spelling in SMS language on undergraduate students, multiple regression test has been conducted. The results of the test are as follows:

H₁: There is a negative impact of usage of abbreviation in SMS language on undergraduate students in Malaysian higher education.

Table 4: Model Summary (Abbreviation)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.311 ^a	.097	.088	.58996

a. Predictors: (Constant), abbreviation

Table 5: ANOVA (Abbreviation)

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.652	1	3.652	10.493	.002 ^a
	Residual	34.109	98	.348		
	Total	37.762	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant), abbreviation

b. Dependent Variable: undergraduates

Table 6: Coefficients (Abbreviation)

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.578	.252		6.257	.000
	abbreviation	.337	.104	.311	3.239	.002

a. Dependent Variable: undergraduates

$$Y = mx + K$$

Change in undergraduate students of Malaysia = slope (change in abbreviations) + constant

Change in daily communication of undergraduate students of Malaysia = 0.337 (change in abbreviations) + 1.578

Change in daily communication of undergraduate students of Malaysia = 1.915 units

Therefore, change in use of abbreviations in SMS language by 1 unit will bring about a change of 1.915 units impacting the daily communication of undergraduate students of Malaysia.

H₂: There is a negative impact of phonetic/creative spellings in SMS language on undergraduate students in Malaysian higher education.

Table 7: Model Summary (Phonetic spelling)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.354 ^a	.125	.116	.58054

a. Predictors: (Constant), phonetic spelling

Table 8: ANOVA (Phonetic spelling)

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.733	1	4.733	14.044	.000 ^a
	Residual	33.028	98	.337		
	Total	37.762	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant), phonetic spelling

b. Dependent Variable: undergraduates

Table 9: (Phonetic spelling)

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.589	.217		7.325	.000
	phonetic spelling	.333	.089	.354	3.748	.000

a. Dependent Variable: undergraduates

$$Y = mx + K$$

Change in daily communication of undergraduate students = slope (change in phonetic spellings) + constant.

Change in daily communication of undergraduate students = 0.333 (change in phonetic spellings) + 1.589

Change in daily communication of undergraduate students = 1.922 units

Therefore, change in use of phonetic spellings in SMS language by 1 unit will bring about a change of 1.922 units impacting the daily communication of undergraduate students of Malaysia.

Interpretation

The tables of model summary show the value of R square which must be considered. They determine the impact caused in dependent variable due to the change in independent variables. The ANOVA tables determine the significance values which in the current case are 0.002 and 0.000. They indicate the acceptance of hypotheses and the existence of positive relationship between the three variables.

Relationship between Use of Abbreviations and Phonetic Spelling in SMS Language and Daily Communication of Undergraduate Students

Table 10: Relationship between Use of Abbreviations and Phonetic Spelling in SMS Language and Daily Communication of Undergraduate Students

		Correlations		
		undergraduates	phonetic spelling	abbreviation
undergraduates	Pearson Correlation	1	.354**	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.002
	N	100	100	100
phonetic spelling	Pearson Correlation	.354**	1	.541**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	100	100	100
abbreviation	Pearson Correlation	.311**	.541**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	
	N	100	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The value of Pearson correlation is considered which in this case depicts that there is moderate and weak relationship between use of abbreviations and phonetic spelling in SMS language and daily communication of undergraduate students in Malaysia. This depicts that the impact may not necessarily be negative, sometimes, SMS language has positive and constructive impacts as well.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of SMS language on the daily communication of undergraduate students of Malaysia. The response that was gathered from the survey conducted was analysed using the SPSS software. The regression test showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between use of abbreviations in SMS language and use of phonetic spellings in SMS language on the daily communication of undergraduate students. The variables assessed gave mostly positive responses to the fact that abbreviations are often used by students while texting as it saves time and is a social trend. However, they also agreed that when using this language, they tend to use the same kind of language in written and verbal communication when carrying out academic and professional work. Majority of the respondents agreed that they shortened words, used abbreviations and phonetic spellings so as to save time and space but also agreed that it negatively affects the grammar, punctuation and overall grammatical context when writing or conversing in professional English.

In view of Shafie, Azida and Osman (2010), teachers are against the concept of texting and do not tolerate the texting language. They believe it distorts the ability of a student to express them thoroughly. There have been reports of use of bad spellings, grammar and punctuation errors in the academic work of individuals. In contrasting view, Fjeldsoe, Marshall and Miller (2009) stated that some teachers and educators believe that since texting helps students write and express themselves, it is a positive thing as teenagers give hours to writing and expressing themselves which leads to an overall positive impact on their grammatical expressions.

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers had identified a few gaps in the area of the study. In order to fulfil these gaps, it is therefore the following recommendations are provided:

- i. The mobile manufacturers are recommended to develop an application or the feature of predictive dictionary so as to catch the misspelled words and automatically correct them.
- ii. Students are recommended to limit the use of SMS slang while text messaging and make appropriate use of words, grammar and punctuation. They must use the facility of mobile devices in a constructive manner.
- iii. Future researchers are recommended to take a larger sample size and conduct the same study with a different perspective like UK or US rather than just Malaysia so as to generalize results. A more detailed study must be conducted in future over a larger span of time.

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