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RESEARCH PAPER

The Impact of Communication Technology on English Language in Pakistan

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PAPER INFO	**ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the impact of the great changes that took place in the sphere of communication technology (SMS and Whatsapp) concerning the use of English language. This impact is discussed with regard to interviews conducted with the research participants. The objective of the study is to find out the effect of the shortcuts used in the text messaging language on the use of English language and on the writing tasks of the graduation and Masters' level students in the classroom. The sample of the study is comprised of 200 participants who are classified into two age level groups; first group is the graduate level students and second category is the Masters level students. Data is discussed in relation to other studies. The findings suggest that the use of shortcuts in text messaging language, specifically, by the students has an adverse effect on the use of English language in classrooms. Further, the implications of the findings are also mentioned

Introduction

Being a teacher of English language in Pakistan, I have observed the overuse of shortcuts that are used for text messaging in the pieces of writing by the students. Once the students have been assigned a certain topic to write on it, they employed the same language as they are using nowadays in typing a text messages to their acquaintances and close friends. This is not accepted as it is a clear deviation from the rules of the Standard English language employed in the teaching and learning institutions. Sweeny (2011) emphasized on the positive role being played by the text messaging technologies. It is maintained that text messaging plays a vital role in sharing information, socializing and in structure communication. On the contrary,

Rankin (2010) discussed that shortcuts used in text messaging has an adverse effect on the development of students' grammar and spelling skills. The latest cell phones provide different features with computing power supported by latest innovation and capabilities of cell phone applications. The frequent use of cell phones has triggered a new dimension of virtual mobility and more personalized the social interaction.

The text messaging is a very frequently used and common type of communication service in order to help people to develop a private chat space. The text messages can prove as a useful and interactive way of communication for the users to send and receive messages in form of text and images through cell phones. Nowadays, people specifically young generation is consuming most of the time in chatting and texting with friends and family. In order to meet the demands, the Telecommunication industries are suggesting a variety of turned up operating systems concerning distinct traits like Android OS (41%), iphone (Apple) (22%) and Symbian (Nokia 9%)4etc.

Whatsapp is one of the interesting and frequently used applications nowadays. The Nielsen India Consumer Rankings mentioned that Whatsapp is considered the leading application of latest communication technology, smartphone. Whatsapp is regarded as a cross- platform messaging application for the smartphones. It helps the users to send and receive audio notes, text messages, video clips, information and images to individual and group of friends.

The "Online" status is visible as the user is using Whatsapp and as the user stops using it then last seen moment of a Whatsapp user is visible on the top. Thus, the Whatsapp works through the internet connection and all the main elements of communication process are fulfilled like message, encoder, decoder, channel, noise and feedback. In the communication process through Whatsapp the sender and receiver are considered as a participant while the element Noise comes at any end of the communication process. So Whatsapp is an online communication application *and* nowadays, in all mobile platforms Whatsapp is termed as one of the popular app and it handles over 10 billion messages per-day. Whatsapp is available in Android, iphone, Windows Phone and Blackberry and these cell phones can send and receive data on each other. The internet data that is used for web browsing and email, is also used for Whatsapp.

- *No hidden cost*: First year Free! ($0.99USD/year after)
- *Multimedia messages*: Send Images, voice notes and videos to Friends, Family and contacts.
- *Group chat:* Group chat with Whatsapp users in contacts
- *No International Charges*: International Whatsapp messages are free.
- *No pins and username*: Whatsapp is linked with phone numbers.
- *No Log out/ In*: Whatsapp is always on and connected and there is no issue of log off from other device or computer

Application: *Whatsapp (www.Whatsapp.com)*

Features: Chat, group chat, sending and receiving images, videos, audio notes, local information, sharing v-cards and contact information
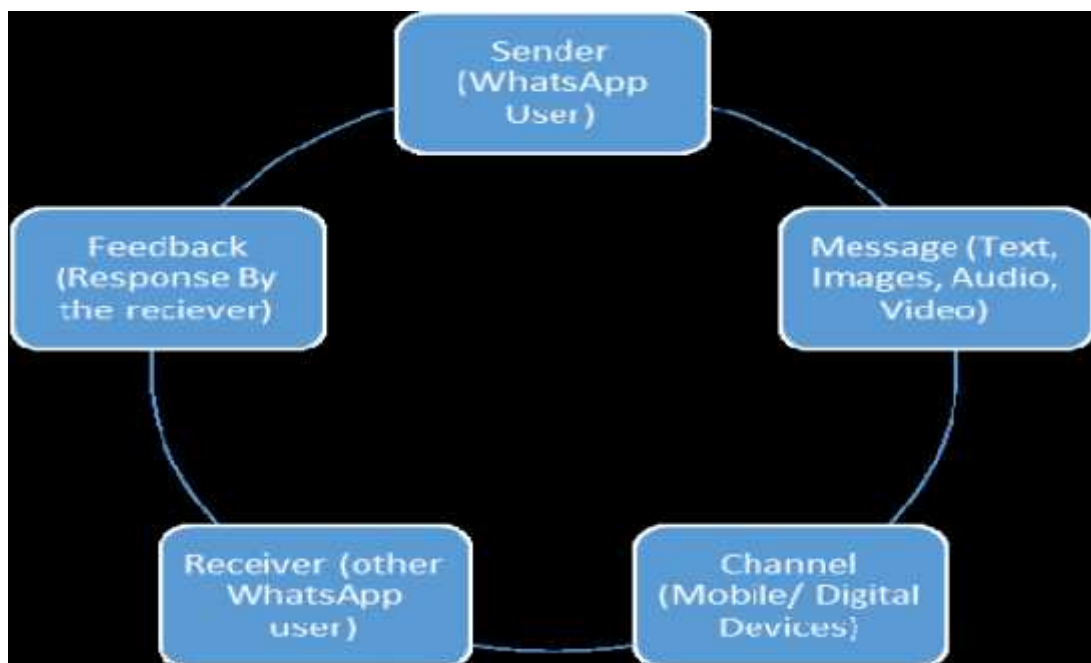

Fig: 1 representing communication process

Table1
Presenting the process of *Whatsapp Communication* with sender, message, channel, receiver and feedback as elements of the communication process where noise element can occur at any place.

Sender: Whatsapp User	Message: Text, Audio, Video, Image	Channel: Tablets, Cellphones, Smartphones	Receiver: other Whatsapp user in the contact list	Feedback: Response by the User
Noise can take place at any level	Noise….	Noise…	Noise…	Noise…

The study investigates the actual use of the shortcuts used in the text messaging concerning the writing tasks of graduation and Masters' level students and also its impact on the use of English language. The researchers expect the study to be more than the evaluation of the actual use of the shortcuts used in the text messaging regarding writing tasks at advance level. Further, it proposes to investigate the positive and negative impact of using text messaging on English linguistics in Pakistan. Moreover, the research is expected to set off more studies

related with the influence of new communication technologies on English linguistics, generally and specifically regarding English writing skills. The research attempts to answer the following question: "To what extent does the text messaging has the adverse effect on the use of English language (concerning grammar, spelling and vocabulary) in Pakistan?"

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

The use of English language is greatly affected by the innovative communication technologies. In today's world the innovative communication technology plays pivotal role in the communication process. In this regard, at worldwide level cell phones and internet are the most frequently used convenient and effective instruments of innovative technology for the communication process. The text messages (SMS) through cell phone are the most frequently used communication tool nowadays. According to Mphahlele and Mashamaite (2005) SMS is relatively cheaper, economically and in terms of time consumed in the communication process. On the one hand, the Internet communication applications comprising chartrooms, Whatsapp and email and on the other hand, the text messaging (SMS) plays an important role in maintaining rapid and accessible communication. No doubt, these communication tools have negative effects also. Mphahlele and Mashamite (2005) maintained that there are detrimental effects on the language competence of the learners of English language. The learners of English language employing innovative communication technology tools specifically in text messaging (SMS) commit multiple errors including ungrammatical sentence structure and incorrect spellings.

According to Walter, et.al.(2012) the students consumed an average of five hours per day on their cell phones while interacting with others through Whatsapp and text messaging. The students selected for sampling preferred to communicate through Whatsapp and text messages. The research conducted by Ashraf Atta M. S. Salem (2013) mentioned that by experimental research design, it was highlighted that the usage of cell phones with different applications like Blackberry text messages and other multiple applications that they have proven unsatisfactory regarding the use of English language.

Communication Technology and English Linguistics

In the present era, communication technology has replaced handwriting on a large scale. In this regard, for writing documents and drafts, keyboards and typewriting machine are widely spreading everywhere. Once the effect of new communication technology has been considered then due attention needs to be given to its affectivities and affordances. Considering the affordances of the new communication technology, computers provide comprehensive keyboards and larger display screens which make it easier for its users to type longer messages in

the context of communication. On the other hand, the new communication technology possesses constraints or negative effects.

In reality using text messaging consists of making use of certain non-standard abbreviations, verb omission and reduced endings which are clearly ungrammatical. SMS users always type the texts as the way they pronounce the words. For instance, a person type "shud "in place of "should". The reason is that they write the words in the same way as they pronounce the words. The following Table 2 presents the complete appropriate words and its abbreviations that are used in the text messaging language.

Table 2
Words in full abbreviations of SMS Language

As Far as I remember	AFAIR
Love	LUV
Thanks	THANX
Today	2DAY
Before	B4
Have a nice day	HAND
See you	CU
So what's your problem?	SWYP
At	@
Tear in my eyes	TIME
Sealed with a Kiss	SWAK
Keep it simple, Stupid	KISS
Such a laugh	SAL
At the moment	ATM
Parents are watching	PAW
Random act of Kindness	RAK
Please reply	PER
Second	SEC
You are on your own	YOYO
As soon as possible	ASAP
Hugs and Kisses	HAK
Date of Birth	DOB

Table 2: Full words and its abbreviations in text messaging language (Mphalele and Mshamaite, 2005)

Thus, teachers got perplexed due to the language of text messaging language as people will consider the word "HAND" as a part of a body while text messagers mean "have a nice day".

According to Mphahlele and Mashamite (2005, p166) the language of text messages(SMS) greatly affects the language competence of the learners. The

language of Cell phone has influence on two aspects of language competence that are represented through two types of skills; the skill of employing words appropriately in a context and the skill of expressing oneself comprehensively through writing. Faulkner & Cluwin (2004 as cited in Geertsema, Hyman and Van Deventer, 2011) considered text messaging as a byproduct of the cell phone industry. Goldstuck (2004 cited in Geertsema, Hyman and van Deventer 2001) claims that text messaging (SMS) depicts a direct link with online rooms that have been extended to cellphones so to make use of applications that can be downloaded to the handset. Goldstuck (2004) expressed that with the due passage of time text messages(SMS) has altered language. He mentioned different examples like the word "thank you" which was earlier condensed in text messages language (SMS)to "tnx "and then later further shortened to "tx".

According to Thurlow (2003 as cited Geertsema, Hyman and Van Deventer, 2011) text messages (SMS) can be recognized as a non–standard orthographic or typographic forms; these forms can be classified into different types, following is the list of few examples:

- G_ Clippings (excluding the end –g letter), for example: "Goin" (going).
- Shortenings (delectation of end letters, excluding the final letter) for example: "After" (Aft)
- Contractions (deletion of middle letters) for example: Nxt (Next).
- Acronyms (formed from initial letters of various words), for example: "LOL" (laugh out loud)
- Number homophones, for example: "b4" (Before)
- Letter homophones, for example: "U" (you)
- Non-conventional spellings, for example: "Nite" (night)

According to Sutherland (2002, p.5) young people specifically teenagers have been termed as "Net generation", "generation grunt " and" generation text" whereas descriptions like "sad shorthand, bleak and bald" have been credited to text messaging(SMS). Blair (2004) recommended that in young generation an over-dependency on communication technology has been raised with lacking of communication skills which encourages Thurlow (2006, p.11) to mention that it becomes the cause of a "lowering of standards" and "dumping down" of language. According to Denis and Taglimonte (2008) people employ the standard language in text messaging (SMS). Sometimes, in a creative form they employ the non-standard language for serving the communication purposes and also to reflect the skilled command of language. Examples of textism regarding text messaging (SMS) is the non- conventional spelling like (fone-phone) and example of shortenings (goin/going). This can be justified as text messages have limit of 160 characters and writing a text message needs employing the complex multiple keystrokes on different cell phones. Hence, it encourages the use of abbreviations like "fri" instead of "Friday" example of clippings "don" instead of "do not" and example of accent stylizations "gonna" instead of "going to". Bell, Plester & Wood (2008) as well as

Brown & Thurlow (2003) enumerated the frequently used abbreviated forms in text messages (SMS); "cuL8r" in place of using "what you up to" and "BCNU" in place of "be seeing you". It is worth noting that months and days are also commonly abbreviated.Thelwall (2009) maintained that accent stylization like"wanna" inspite of "want to "and "gonna" instead of 'going to" is mostly used as a humorous alternative.

Material and Methods

Experimental Design

The qualitative research design is used by the researchers. This design is appropriate for this study as it concentrates on the explanations and description of different phenomena involved in the study. In the qualitative study, the researchers are the tool for designing, collecting and analyzing the data. In contrast to the quantitative research the qualitative research mostly doesn't translate into mathematical numbers the aspects of phenomena in order to be analyzed mathematically. In spite of that, the researchers analyze the phenomena through the lenses to maintain the data. Moreover, the researchers have employed the descriptive research design also for reviewing the related studies that makes link with the existing research in order to know the differences and similarities. In order to write down the theoretical background of the research, the descriptive research design was also employed by the researchers.

Area Description

Pakistan is a multiethnic and populous <u>country</u> of South Asia. Pakistan is culturally and historically associated with its neighbors India, <u>Afghanistan</u>, and Iran. Since Pakistan got independence in 1947 so due to its overwhelming Muslim population (as compared to the predominance of Hindus in India) Pakistan got distinguished from its larger southeastern neighbor. Its largest city is Karachi and its capital is <u>Islamabad</u>, in the foothills of the <u>Himalayas</u> in the northern part of the country.

The demography and geography of Pakistan as well as internationalization and globalization of the country makes English an important language in Pakistan. Undoubtedly Urdu is the national language of Pakistan but English has attained the status of the official language in Pakistan. The signs of modernization are evident in the urban centers of the country. Specifically, shopping malls, restaurants, cafes and foreign community signal the extent of civilization and progress in Pakistan. Generally, these features are manifesting the great significance and relevance of English language in Pakistan as a second language. In the education system particularly concerning the English curriculum, it's significance has had its own implications.

Participants Characteristics

Randomly two hundred (200) participants were selected for this research by the researchers. The sample of the research was also comprised of two hundred (200) research participants. The sample is classified in two age level groups; first group is the graduate level students (100 research participants and their ages range from 19 to 22 years) the second group is the Masters' level students (100 research participants and their ages range from 23 to 25 years). The research participants are used to of frequently using Whatsapp and text messaging for a long time.

Instruments Employed

The structured and oral interviews were conducted but they were in written form also so to maintain a record of softcopy (in audio form) and hardcopy (the written transcript). Fifty items were presented in each interview and in that the first fifteen items are formulated for clarifying the personal data of the research participants. The complete profile of the research participants was discussed in the whole interview.

Sampling Procedures

Randomly, the sample of the research was taken from the similar socio-economical background. The researchers opted a homogeneous group (such as, age, academic record and socio-economic level). In the following table the distribution of the sample is presented:

Table 2
The Sample Distribution

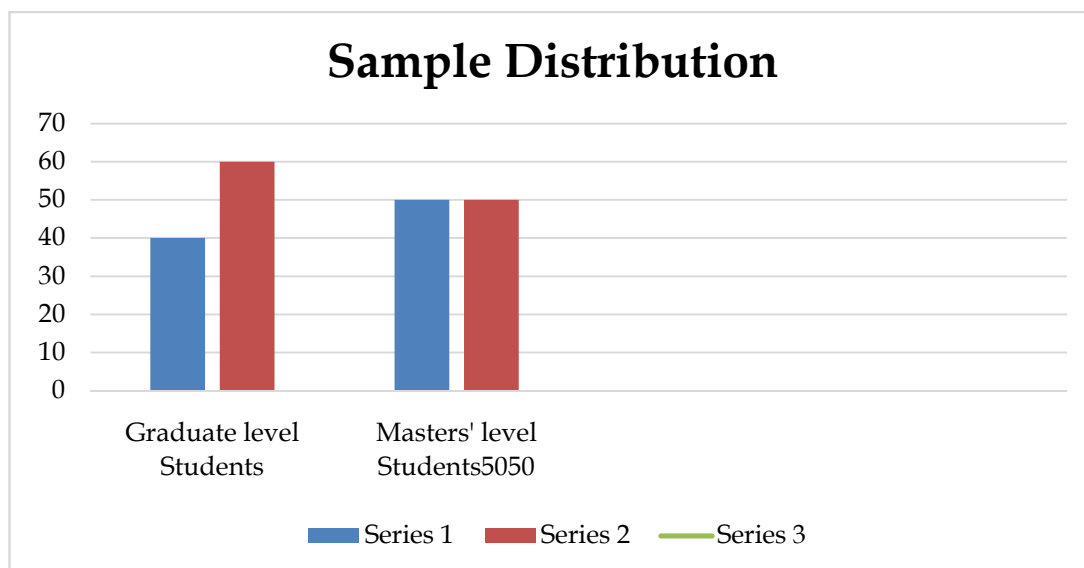| Age Level	Total	Percentage
Graduate level Students	100	100%
Part 1	40	40%
Part 2	60	60%
Masters' level Students	100	100%
Part 1	50	50%
Part 2	50	50%

Figure 1. Distribution of Sample

Sample Size and Power

The total sample of the research was two hundred 200 participants and all are citizens of Pakistan. The research participants have the latest versions of communication technology in both form software and hardware. The participants are exposed to the up-to-date communication technology and this helps them in using the most advanced communication technology in daily life.

Results and Discussion

The interviews conducted with the research participants were carefully analyzed so to answer the following research question: "To what extent, does the text messaging has the adverse effect on the use of English language (concerning grammar, spelling and vocabulary) in Pakistan?". The analyses of the data gathered from the responses of the research participants manifested that text messaging has an adverse, rather damaging effect on English language concerning grammar, spelling and vocabulary. In Pakistan, usage of smart phones with different applications such as text messages and "Whatsapp" has detrimental effects on the use of English language. In Pakistan, specifically teenagers and young people mostly make use of certain codes, shortcuts and abbreviations to express their ideas and emotions and their usage is to that alarming extent that spoils English vocabulary, spelling and grammar. The following table 3 presented the most common and frequently used abbreviations in Whatsapp and text messaging exchanges and also the full form equivalents of the abbreviations:

Table 3
Full words and its equivalent abbreviations in text messaging and Whatsapp

Full Form Of Words	Text Messaging or Whatsapp Language
Thank you	Ty
I love you	I L U
Welcome	W I c
No need	Nn
No problem	Np
Now	Nw

Communication through text messages, Whatsapp and many different forms of new technologies does have adverse effects on the use of English language (concerning grammar, spelling and vocabulary). This kind of communication is termed as a Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) that is further classified in two major types, the first type is the synchronous CMC in which the communication takes place "in real time" like Real Time Chat (RTC) and Internet Relay Chat (IRC). The second type is termed as asynchronous CMC in which communication takes place "in postponed time" like SMS, emails and to some extent Whatsapp (Crystal, 2001 as cited in Alkhatib and Subbah, 2008). The usage of these new technologies greatly affect English language and the excessive use of shortcuts, abbreviations, acronyms, clippings and other different abbreviated forms which are incorrect and ungrammatical. This thing brings the over simplicity and also maintaining the habit of using incorrect English either as a first or a foreign Language. The existing study coincides with the research of Ranklin (2010) that clearly manifested the adverse impact of text messaging language shortcuts on the development of the students' grammar and spelling skills specifically. The existing study clearly shows the adverse effect of text messaging and Whatsapp on the use of English language regarding grammar, spelling and vocabulary.

Conclusion

With the emergence of great changes in the field of communication technology the latest cell phone applications like Whatsapp and text messaging are not only facilitating the users particularly the students but it also presents various aspects where the users associate themselves with it. But despite facilitating the process of communication between people the usage of text messaging and Whatsapp have a negative effect on the formal writing skills in the mainstream schools' context. The students employ shortcuts in the text messaging and Whatsapp regarding the formal writing task but the usage of these shortcuts pervert the correct use of Standard English that is the official form of learning as well as teaching. The usage of these shortcuts in the classroom brings adverse effects on the written language of the students specifically in the area of grammar, spelling and vocabulary. It has been also concluded that the usage of these shortcuts make students forget the appropriate and complete forms of the words of English language. To sum up, it is worthwhile to mention that the usage of these improper shortcuts is outmoded and cannot be replaced easily by remedial practices.

According to the results of the research the usage of Whatsapp and text messaging has an adverse effect on the learning of English language in the classroom. But, if the linguists find some way to standardize the use of these shortcuts, it would be beneficial for the Non-native speakers of English language. Moreover, it would be a great asset for the learning and teaching of English language in the classroom because the students are highly motivated to employ these shortcuts in the writing tasks.

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