



The Effect Of Whatsapp Text Messaging Style On Students' Writing Capability In Umar Suleiman College Of Education Gashua

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ABSTRACT

Many studies have been carried out on learners' different problems with mission to bring effective solutions to the different problems. Regarding Whatsapp text message writing style, researchers suggest that learners of English as second Language face great challenges and that negatively affect their academic performance. As such, this study examined the effect of Whatsapp text messaging style on students' writing capability in Umar Suleiman College of Education Gashua, Yobe State. Experimental research design was used to examine and analyze how students apply Whatsapp text messaging style in their academic writings through giving writing task. A total of 360 students were sampled out using Taroyamani's sampling rule. Hence, they were divided into two groups. 180 participated as experimental group and equally 180 as control group respectively. Achievement test item format with and without treatment was used as instrument for data collection. A valid and reliable writing task was used to test the experimental group. While the control group, was examined without given treatment in order to make a comparison between the two groups. The experiment was carried out in duplicate and data collected were analyzed using T-test statistical package. The research adapted inter-language transfer as its theoretical framework propounded by Olagoke in 1983. Findings revealed that majority of the students have adapted Whatsapp text messaging writing style into their academic writings especially the use of contractions, illusions, wrong use of punctuation marks and spellings too mention few. Also, findings showed that even though Whatsapp text messaging style help students in speeding up their ability of taking notes, yet it really weakens the students' effective academic writing standard. Thereafter, possible solutions have been recommended based on the findings from the study.

Keywords: Whatsapp, Text messaging, Students' writing style, English language, Academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, English language occupied a status of second, official and basic language for education purposes. As far as education is concern, English is synonymous to literacy and a failure in the use of English is equivalent to failure in education. Therefore, English language has occupied status of compulsory requirement for success at all level of education. As such, the present research focuses on examining the effect of Whatsapp text messaging style on students' writing capability particularly those Students majoring in English language in department of English language at Utmar Suleiman College of Education, Gashua.

Researches proved that learners have important role to play in making new learning methods functional, and raising their awareness on the learning strategies and helping them to utilize the strategies effectively

is a fundamental aim of teachers. Even though, the advent of social media in the 21st century has summoned creativity to language users but it affect students' academic writing standard in tremendous ways. Academic writing as opposed to text messaging (language of social media) is guide by some norms, rules and conventions and survives through observing the necessary rules to ensure complete compliance set down by linguist. Harrison (1987) sees writing as a way through which we communicate and convey information by making marks on paper with pen. That is to say writing is a visual representation of human thoughts, feeling, and imaginations. Furthermore, Mcquade and Atwan (1980) state that thinking is a kind of internalized preparatory activity and writing is a useful means of communication that formed bedrock for human civilization and it is a concept that separates the literate from the non-illiterate. This is to say that academic writing is any writing done to fulfill a requirement of formal standard. (Academic writing would also be used for publications which could be any written assignment in academic settings).

The term text messaging (TM) refers to act of composing and sending messages through electronic devices such as mobile phones, desktops/laptops, or on any type of compatible computer, and it typically consists of alphabetic and numeric characters. Or text messaging denotes act of sending short and alphanumeric communications between cell-phones, pages or other devices as implemented through wireless carrier. May be sending over a cellular network, or may also be sending via an internet connection. It involves the use of short language forms to draft Short Message Services (SMS), Instant Messages (IM), and Black Berry Messages (BBM). This type of communication does not usually follow any language pattern, standards grammatical and other linguistic rules.

In everyday activity, people send text messages to express feelings or to communicate new development. However, most of the text messaging is composed by way of flouting acidic and formal writing standards. The creation of the internet has brought about social networking among individuals and the social networking is rampant because of the access to gadgets such as desktops, laptops, tablets, mobile phones, Smartphone, Androids and so on. Yet, it causes lots of dilemma to many students.

According to McLuhan (1964) "The world is now a global village where the whole world is compressed into a single electronic chartroom. Seen as computer mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information or ideas. Social media depends on mobile or web based technology to create highly interactive platforms through which people can communicate, share and discuss user generated content.

Social media also, allow language users to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events and other important things. That is to say social media is seen as computer mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information or ideas. Thus, for this research, text messaging via Whastapp will be considered as it is one of the most recent social media chart room that needs to be investigated on how it affect students' writing capability through text messaging.

Whatsapp was founded in (2009) by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, an instant messaging application for smart phones that operates under a subscription or a data plan. It uses the internet to send text messages, images, videos and audio media messages. According to Parmy (2013) Whatsapp is the most globally popular messaging application with more than 700 million active users in India alone. Whatsapp messenger is one of the social networking applications that are commonly used on specific tablets and mobile phones. The application is currently available for Android phones, Windows phones, iPhones, Symbian phones, Blackberry phones and Samsun among others. Due to the frequent use of Whatapp by students it begin to creep in their academic writing which they do unconsciously without knowing how much it affected their writing performance. Some students are unable to spell some words correctly because they are using the text messaging language.

Texting which is the exchange of brief written messages through mobile phones and portable devices over cellular networks is now widely used among students. Text message may be seen as only messages sent as short message service (SMS). It has over the years been extended to include messages containing images, videos, sound and other forms of messaging. In other words, Text messaging is totally colloquial and the depth depends on the extent of involvement just as it varies from one region to another. For example, text message is referred as text or texto in North America, an SMS in the United Kingdom, and most of Europe, and TMS in the Middle East, Asia, and Australia. With text message becoming a more

common way for teenagers to communicate, it is also posing a great problem in schools and even in higher institutions. Lecturers in higher institutions are complaining of students being unable to read and write. It is hereby observed that students in both formal and informal writing do use text messaging and so most students have lost their grip on good written English.

According to Sutherland (2002), it would be possible to text the whole Hamlet; it may be poetic but quick reading. Sutherland finds language used in text message as “dyslexia poor spelling and mental laziness”, and concludes that language of texting is “penmanship for illiterates”. Poor punctuation, bad grammar and improper abbreviations are evidently obvious in the language of text messages but to say that the language of texting is “unimaginative” is like been very unfair and acceptable as the creativity in it makes it the latest manifestation of the human ability to adapt language to suit the demand of deviate settings. Text message is a wonderful innovation and creativity in language use that is commendable but the inability of the student to switch off these informal habits in formal context is what has attracted so much attention. The idea of text messaging should not be seen as an act of illiteracy because even the elite use it in texting and they sees it as an act that saves time and space.

Burrow (2005) opposes the view of Sutherland (2002) by asserting that the language of text message is “communicatively adept” having “linguistic creativity” and a ‘robust sense of play’. This is to a large extend acceptable but context plays an important role in the realization of meaning and students must learn how to switch from a formal to informal context to communicate appropriately

Lee (2002) appreciates the language of text message; he believes that text messages can be potential learning tools in the hand of teachers. He further states that language of texting can be harnessed by educator to help student learn school related contents. Which that, he further says “could spark thinking process” in as much as these research does not object to text message, there must be that consciousness of its context when it is appropriate than making it a habit or the only way of using language especially in writing. Crystal (2008) supports the view of lee (2002) by stating that text messaging is a new genre. It began to be used in poetry very early on, in the guardian’s text messaging poetry competitions. It was only a matter of time before a texting poet arrived on the scene. Text message stories – even novel are also already being circulated” text messages place premium on space and the creativity in its word formation accounts formation accounts for its uniqueness. The view depicts that text message as distinct feature that make it different from formal writing, because in formal writing the rules of grammar, punctuations and spellings etc are well observed. While text messaging does not concerns itself with grammar or rules of a language but the ability to pass information from one person to another to achieve easier and faster communication.

According to Mphahlele and Mashamaite (2005) “Text messaging has overcome the requirement in language versatility and it is being increasingly used in social communication, business transactions and even in advertisements”. They see text message as a new dimension in language use, which has the ability to communicate effectively with ease.

Crystal (2006) opines that despite many text message writers’ enjoying flouting linguistic rules, it is also realized that they should be understood. When messages are longer, containing more information, they use more of standard orthography. The above definition explain that although the rule of grammar is broken by text message writers, still it tries to make what they are writing meaningful to readers.

According to Crystal (2008), the introduction of printing, telegraph, telephone, and broadcasting caused similar threats but the curiosity, suspicion, fear, uncertainty, opposition, charm, excitement and enthusiasm all at once that texting has aroused in such a short span of time is surpassed by no linguistic phenomenon. Crystal contends that numerous distinguishing features give novelty to written texts, but none of them is linguistically novel, Many of them are being used in chat room interactions much before the arrival of mobile phones. He sees texting as a phenomenon that has been in use before the invention of mobile phones, it was use in chat room via computer mediated machines desktop is a good example.

Baron (2008) contends that the use of text message language manifests creative use of letters, punctuation and numbers and it increases phonetic awareness in children. It is also observed that different people have their own unique texting styles. Moreover, different messages use different patterns and styles due to their communicative function. Some are relational and others are informational and require changes in register.

Baron (2008) argues that students' writings suffer little impact from text message. She refers to a recent study published by the British Journal of Developmental Psychology which found that regularly texting students displayed a wider range of vocabulary and this may lead to a positive impact on their reading development. Baron postulates that as soon as children can distinguish between formal and informal language, text message language does not affect their literacy.

According to Crystal (2008), texting has added a new dimension to language use, but its long-term impact is negligible. It is not a disaster and will not harm the standards of language. At a personal level, text messaging has greatly improved instant communication. Crystal stated that even in text messages, only less than 10% percent of words are abbreviated. Crystal is of the opinion that all the popular beliefs about text messaging that is texting as a twenty first 21st century phenomenon, having a distinctive graphic style, full of abbreviations and deviant spelling and uses of language, used by the youth who do not care about standards, causing a decline in literacy and harming language as a whole 'are wrong', or at least 'debatable'.

The above definition sees text message as something of the 21st century which has given language a new looks but fail to look at impact on their academic writing and that is not all the spellings that abbreviated but 10% percent of the word are cut out.

Ling (2010) suggests that text messaging is a life phase and not a cohort phenomenon. That is text messaging language is more concentrated among teens and more temperate among older age groups. (British Broadcasting Company (2003) reports that text messaging has long been blamed for declining standards of spelling and grammar, particularly on paper and pencil work.

Moreover, there are other linguistic concerns about threats to standard varieties and conventional communication practices and young people and modern technologies are held responsible for these threats. Actually, students sometimes confuse the lines between formal English and the very informal text message language. This is thought to be causing them to make a lot of spelling and grammatical errors in their assignments and tests, and makes it hard for teachers to distinguish what they are trying to say.

Thurlow (2011) on the other hand opines that orthographic or typographic choices made by young people in their messages are socio-linguistically and communicatively intelligible. At the same time, text-messages are not without character or interest. Further, according to Thurlow (2011) pragmatics proposes the form and function that are mutually dependent and text-messaging have a distinctive (not unique) generic feeling due to the combination of: -

- (a) Its comparatively short in length,
- (b) It has relative concentration of non-standard typographic markers, and
- (c) It is regularly 'small-talk' content and solitary orientation simultaneously.

While few scholars insist that texting has a negative influence on standard writing, spelling and grammar Siraj and Ullah (2007) 'most experimental studies maintain that texting does not pose a threat to Standard English learning and teaching'. These scholars point out that despite diffusing texting style into 'formal' writing occasionally (e.g., school work), senders of text messages almost always recognize that language is context specific (Durscheid 2002; Chilwa 2008). The above claim sees text messaging as context bound and messages are sent between people. They think text message is a great threat to Standard English both in teaching and learning.

According to report in 2001, 74% of online teens use text messaging (Rainie and Lewis 2001). Further they assert that 69% of teens are text message users, they use text message at least several times a week". Given this high rate of use, which has only been increasing since the Pew report was published; text messaging is clearly an extremely influential element in many young people's lives. Majority of students make use of short message service (SMS), instant message (Im), Black Berry Message (BBM) and many more. The problem is that students do not know how much of this is influencing their writing performance. This is because they impulsively transmit this in their test and examination writings without knowing its effects on their academics and these further compounds to their problem. So one may now wonder, what is the fate of the unborn generation in terms written English language?

Statement of Problem

There have been great amount of researches conducted on students' problems allied to writing skills especially in the countries where English is use as second language and or foreign language. However, such works might have treated different types of learners' writing skills problems. Also, researchers suggest that many students majoring in different courses in Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) are facing great challenges with writing skills. This is happening at a time Nigeria requires considerably skilful and qualified teachers who will be teaching at the basic educational levels (primary and secondary schools) to address its needs as stated in the objectives of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (2014). This critical situation therefore, needs special consideration. As such, it seems essential to address the learners' different problems and to equip them with effective strategies that will help them to develop better use of language.

One of the basic design features of language is creativity and creativity in language context means ability of language users to constantly use language devices to generate new ways of expressing their thought, feeling and ideas. The advent of mobile phone has create an avenue for language users to find ways to navigate through the small space means for communicating chunks of information to their interacts. This has no doubt brought great advancement in the world. It is pertinent to note that language is systematic hence creativity does not imply outrageous attack on systematic of language. Hence this research examines those features cauterizing text messages as a systematic and organized means of communication since anybody who subscribes to rhetorical network understands what is communicated. It's against this background that the present research intends to examine the nature of Whatsapp text messaging style and how it affect students' academic writing capability in Umar Suleiman College of Education, Gashua.

Purpose of the Study

Even though, several researches have been conducted by researchers like Cubukcu in 2008 on similar issue to this present study, there is no study conducted on examining the effect of Whatsapp text messaging style on students' writing capabilities in the present study area. Therefore, this study is unique as it aims at investigating a current issue that weakens students' academic writing standard and to find out a remedy to the situation.

Research Questions:

1. Does Whatsapp text messaging style have any effect on students' academic writing capabilities?
2. To what extent Whatsapp text messaging style affect students' correct use of spelling and punctuation marks in their academic writing?
3. How could such situations be tackling to improve the students' standard of academic writings?

Objectives of the study

The aim and objective of the study is to examine how whatsapp text messaging style affects students' writing capabilities in Umar Suleiman College of Education, Gashua and to bring effective solution to address the problem.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. According to Ali (2006) descriptive survey research design is a descriptive study which uses sample of an investigation to document, describe and explain what is in existence or not in existence on present status of phenomena being investigated. In agreement, Akuezuilo and Agu (2003) claim that a survey research design is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The design is therefore suitable for this study since it involves an attitude of students majoring in different courses in the study area.

Population of the study

The population of the study includes 1800 students which entail the entire students majoring in different courses for awarding NCE and Degree certificates at Umar Suleiman College of Education Gashua Yobe State Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for the study is 360 students which were randomly selected in Umar Suleiman College of Education Gashua Yobe State Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to ensure all the students have equal chance of being selected. A total of 360 students participated from the entire departments within the College. However, out of the 360 total numbers of the participants, 250 were males while 110 were females. The participants were divided into control and experimental groups. Where the first 180 students were considered as control group and then the other 180 students were treated as experimental group.

Research Instrument

Writing task tests on interested topics were used as instrument to collect data for this study. The researcher drafted essay writing topics that require the use of good writing skills and administered to the students. A checklist with five (5) point's likert scales was used to grade writing skills 5,4,3,1 and 0 respectively.

Validation of Research Instrument

To validate the instrument, copies of the research topic, purpose of the study, research questions, and research hypothesis together with the draft instrument were given to three experts, one from department of Psychology School of Education, and the other two from School of Science Education, Umar Suleiman College of Education Gashua Yobe State Nigeria. The experts were requested to examine and scrutinize the items in terms of content relevance, suitability, item clarity and coverage of the dimensions of the study. After the experts examined the items, suggestions and comments made guided the construction of the final draft.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher employed self-delivery techniques in data collection and a direct examination format was used presenting the task allocating equal writing time to both learners at different academic levels. Scripts were collected immediately and their writings skills were evaluated by teacher accordingly.

Data Collection procedure

To gather data for the study, the participants were given writing tasks in order to examine their level of using Whatsapp writing styles in their normal academic writings. Though, the experimental group was served with writing task at two different stages. That is, before and after given them training about writing skills. Eventually, the scores of the experimental group from both pre-training and post- training were compared and examined. While for control group, there was no treatment. This is because; a good test item is composed through considering its validity, reliability and practicability. Therefore, in order to ascertain the content of the writing task given to the students, the three criteria of a good test were considered.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation which culminate into T-test final analysis. A five point's likert scale was used with 5 point, 4 point, 3 point, 2 point, 1 point and 0 point respectively. The mean and standard deviation were calculated using the fomulae as described below:

$$X = \sum FX / N$$

Where,

X= mean

F= frequency

X= nominal value of option

\sum = summation sign

N= number of the respondent

$$4+3+2+1/4 = 10/4 = 2.50$$

The decision rule is 2.50. This means that any mean score equal to or greater than (\geq) 2.50 was considered as positive response and any mean score less than ($<$) 2.50 was considered as negative responses.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The table below presents the result of the null hypothesis after given pre and post-test to the experimental group which was analyzed using t-test. The result is also interpreted underneath of the table for better understanding.

Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	P-Value	α - level	df	Decision
Xbar1=42.57	SD1=5.00	V1=25.04	-3.49	0.05	358	Not significant
Xbar2=57.00	SD2=1.67	V2=2.8				

From the table, it could be seen that the p- value (-3.49) is less than the level (0.05). Hence, the hypothesis is rejected, and then the alternative hypothesis is accepted. That is, the students need to be advised against using Whatsapp text messaging style in their formal academic writings as it affects their performance and clarity of their writings. This follows from result of the study where 180 students were tested before and after given training on writing skills. The study exposed that the experimental group performed more than the control group who were not given treatment at all. Equally, the performance of the experimental group too is greater than before they were given training.

DISCUSSION

The outcome of this study revealed that, use of Whatsapp text messaging language has negative effects on students’ academic writings and it highly touches the performance of the students. Positively, students will blend to technology in terms of social media. Nevertheless, the negative implication of it is that text messaging language is gradual progression in writing process and it definitely affected the writing performance of students to a greater extent. Text message is seen as a fractured language and definitely not as elegant or polished as per as Standard English language is concern. This was obtained from the fact that before given treatment to the experimental group, their performance was less than after given treatment. It is also indicated in this study that the students are having problems with knowing how to make use of good punctuation and spelling words correctly despite the fact that students believe that text messaging language via Whatsapp is one of the fastest means of writing, they also admit that it affects their academic writings. This equally affects and slows down their writing speed. According to Nuttall (2005), learning how to spell and punctuate words correctly is vital, and it enhances writing standard. Also finding from this research showed that the students are having insufficient vocabulary knowledge and that is a great factor that leads to their poor performance. Moreover, the results exposed that the students usually over depend on dictionary for checking spelling and meaning of chunk of words before writing. It was also examined that there was inadequate implementation of effective techniques of writing skills due to students’ frequent use of Whatsapp text messaging styles.

Equally, it was also realizing this study that the advent of social media which came up with a new language has allowed users to manipulate chat rooms synchronously. A large number of students are using mobile phones to communicate through text. The data show that written language is more compressed and there are prescriptive rules, students abbreviate the language. However, the text message form is mostly not in conformity with the academic writing standards and it can be accepted that it has an effect on the writing performance of students especially in an academic writing context.

CONCLUSION

As, this research aimed at examining the effect of whatsapp text messaging style on students’ writing capabilities, it showed that the students do not use writings skills to some extent during writing . This study claims that writing is one amongst the four basic language skills and it does not carried out haphazardly as there are guiding principles that fluent writers make use of to successfully arrive at excellent writing. In addition, the study believed that students need to be aware that writing does not only require gathering of enough vocabularies but there are other useful learning strategies such as: cognitive strategy, memory strategy, affective strategy, social strategy, compensative strategies and meta-cognitive strategy to be used during writing. Therefore, the study concluded by suggesting for students to use

effective strategies that will help them to adopt effectively writing standards and distance themselves from using Whatsapp text messaging styles in their formal writings. This is because research revealed that text messaging has both negative and positive implications on students. From positive perspective, it is believed that it makes students to write very fast especially when note taking in class, but the negative effect of it is that it can be seen in term of non-compliance to the rules of Standard English in the area of punctuations, spellings and grammar even though language is a growing phenomenon which changes also with other variable such as the society, science and technology. Therefore, considering the above view points, text messaging via Whatsapp can be said to be due to flexibility of language which allows for social media innovations yet not applicable in academic writings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research recommends other researches to try to conduct similar researches to the present one by using other methods of conducting research in order to look into the students' situation and to bring more positive solutions to the negative effects of Whatsapp text messaging style on students' academic writings.

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