Implications of Short Message Service (Text Messaging) on English Languge Writing and Learning Among Secondary School Students: A Case Study of Some Selected Secondary Schools in Olorunda Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria

Atoyebi Adeola Olusegun
Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
E-mail: adeola671@gmail.com

Adesina Taiwo Rebecca
Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Abstract
The study investigated commonly used abbreviated words among the sampled population. It also determined the difference between those that abbreviated words and those that did not abbreviated words. The study revealed the list of abbreviated words in the study. And also ascertained which gender abbreviated words most. These were with a view to provide information on the implications of SMS language on English Language writing and learning of the students. The study adopted quantitative survey research design. The population for the study Comprised 83 senior secondary school students in Olorunda Local Government, Osun State. The sample size comprised 100 respondents, selected using multistage sampling technique. One Local Government Area (LGA) was selected from thirty Local Governments in the state using simple random sampling technique. From the LGA, four senior secondary school was selected using simple random sampling technique and from each school, 25 students were selected from senior secondary school II using simple random sampling technique. The students were taught for forty minutes on how to write a letter devoid of using abbreviated words and after the lesson, the students were asked to write a letter to their father informing him about social amenities in your school. Those letters were collected, marked and converted to data for this study. Data collected was analyzed using simple percentages. Those letter were collected, marked and converted to data for this study. The result showed commonly used abbreviated words by the respondents such as, pls (please) 9 times by 9 students, u (you) 26 times by 10 students , and fyn (fine) 5 times and so on. The result also revealed 51 students (representing 61.4%) did not abbreviated words in the letter writing and 32 students (representing 38.6%) abbreviated words in the letter. The result showed that female gender was the gender that abbreviated words most in the letter with 49% and male with 35%. Lastly, the result also revealed percentage of students that used abbreviated words 38.6% of the students used abbreviated words while 61.4% of the 100% total population did not used abbreviated words The study concluded that use of abbreviated words did not have effect on English language learning and writing among secondary school students in Olorunda Local Government, Osun State.

Keywords: English language Learning and Short Message Service.

1. Introduction
1.1 Background to the Study
The school is a formal organization established for the teaching and learning of reading, writing, numeracy and communicative skills. Secondary school education is education between primary education and tertiary education. All students must pass through secondary school education before he or she can gain admission into tertiary institution. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) in the National Policy of Education recognized English Language as a compulsory cross-cutting subject along with other subjects namely: general Mathematics,

Trade/Entrepreneurship subject and Civic Education. Therefore, English language has remained a medium of instruction for all subjects from basic levels to tertiary level in Nigeria and other countries in the West-African sub-region. Consequently, English language has remained the official language of communication and instruction for all subjects from basic to tertiary levels in Nigeria and many other countries. It is a core subject that must be offered and passed (with a minimum of a Credit) at the junior and senior secondary school level as a prerequisite for admission to study any course in higher institutions. The knowledge of English language at all levels of education helps in understanding other subjects taught at school except indigenous languages like French, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa language. Despite the laudable importance and use of English Language as a medium of instruction and language of communication in the wider society of Nigeria, it has been noted that English Language competence of the Nigerian secondary school students has been on a steady decline over the years (Fakeye, 2012).

The general weak command of people in the use of this important language also reflects in the day-to-day use of the language among people of diverse age groups and socio-economic status. Unfortunately, this decline is quite noticeable in the mass failure of students in English language in public examinations and which may be due to abbreviation of words when writing. It has been noticed by researchers that the report had it that students failed English Language in particular because of the following deficiencies such as weakness in skills of writing, construction of loose sentences, transliteration from the mother tongue, abbreviation of words and abuse of the basic rules of grammar. Many candidates scored zero under mechanical accuracy aspect of the essay. Candidate's errors were listed under wrong spellings, wrong usage of concord, tense usage, poor construction of verb and abbreviation of words in particular whereby the examiner (marker) will not understand what the abbreviated words means thereby scoring the students zero.

These unwholesome situation remained the same in 2009 as 356,981 (25.9 %) of the 1,373,009 candidates that sat for WASSCE made distinctions and credit grades.

In 2010, the percentage of students who made distinctions and credit grades in English dropped to 24.9% because only 337,071 made credit and distinctions grades out of 1,351,557 candidates that sat for the examination. The chief examiner's reported for 2009 showed that failure of the subject was due to the following problems: spelling errors, ignorance of the proper use of punctuation marks, ignorance of the proper use of capital letters and small letters and used of abbreviated words in many parts. Others are ignorance of the difference between the present and past tenses, inability to re-state the ideas of a passage in different words and expressions and the inability to identify parts of speech and their functions in sentences.

The foregoing remark by the chief examiner suggested that spelling errors, ignorance of the proper use of punctuation marks, and ignorance of the proper use of capital, small letters and abbreviation of words can be attributed to various limiting factors that students often hold tightly to over the years. These limiting factors include but are not limited to use of slangy languages, Pidgin English and even the recent Short Message Service (SMS) texting language style that unconsciously interferes with ones spellings in formal writings.

Short Messaging Service (SMS) texting is a practice that involves the sending of messages through the Short Messaging Service (SMS) of a mobile phone using abbreviated words and sentences shortened into alpha-numeric formats. It is a general term that is used to refer to the short written messages usually sent through phone and other portable devices via a telecommunication network. SMS according to Oladoye (2011) was first used in December 1992 by a 22-year old named Neil Papworth. He says that the concept of SMS was developed by Friedhelm Hillebrand, Bernard Ghillebaert and Oculy Silaban in 1984, in the Franco-German GSM cooperation. Since the invention, the mobile telephone has been the latest way to communicate quickly. SMS is a generic part of a phone, web or mobile communication system that supported the exchange of short messages between people. Dansieh (2011) defined text messaging as the practice whereby users of mobile and portable devices exchange brief written messages via cellular networks.

It is used in place of voice calls in circumstances where it may be impossible or inexpedient. Tomita (2009) defined the technology of SMS as a communications protocol used to deliver short text messages, up to 160 characters, via Global Systems for Mobile Communication (GSM) enabled mobile phones. Uhunmwangho (2009) defined a text message as "any linguistic event, usually a written form of speech that is imbued with meaning". Ong'onda, Matu and Oloo (2011) observed that the European Journal of Language Studies terms 'text messaging' or just 'texting' referred to the brief typed messages sent using the Short Message Service (SMS) of mobile/cell phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), smart phones or web browsers.

The SMS (short message service) is one of the latest and quick forms of written communication since the invention of mobile phone technology. The effectiveness of this medium of communication depends on the appropriate combination of the alphabets, letters, template pictures, figures and even punctuation marks by one known as 'the sender or texter' to another 'the message recipient'. This communication technique is currently in used in advertisements, newsletters, television and by people on social media. Many people generally believed that

mobile phones unlike the conventional landline telephone system that were in existence before now have revolutionized communication because of the many facilities embedded in the phones. Apart from engaging in voice communication, substituting as cameras, clocks, radio sets and a host of other utilities, it offers users the opportunity of sending text messages popularly referred to as Short Message Service (SMS). The 'SMS' is a miniature and abridged style of transmitting written information.

Text messaging as a form of communication involved communicating through a composed message or a piece of information typed using the phone's alphabetical keys which is then sent to the intended recipient who reads the visual written message or information. This style of communication became prominent in Nigeria with the introduction of the mobile phones (handsets/GSM). This SMS style of communication is used for different communication purposes such as exchanging information on events; invitation to religious, social, political, academic meetings, making business contacts and sending goodwill messages among others (Taiwo, 2009). Scholars argued that this form of communication has systematically revolutionalized human communication system the world over and has systematically transformed written communication (Atanda & Umar, 2006; Oluga & Babalola, 2012).
It is observable that people generally spend a greater part of their time communicating in one form or the other. Aside making phone calls, sending messages has become second nature of communication for many people. This mode of communication through texting is a common habit especially among youths who constituted students in secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Many reasons adduced for this form of communication include that; it saves time and energy, it is quick in message delivery, it does not adhere to the rules of English grammar, it is relatively cheap, it is more convenient than making calls, it allows for creativity in writing, it is used in establishing new and re-enforcing old relationships etc. Young people in particular are increasingly prone to texting and the implication is that the speed at which texting takes place, is the speed at which mistakes and short hands used in texting are becoming common place in most of their writings including academic works.

In as much as mobile phone usage and telecommunication has been one of the many successes of the twenty-first century, many people especially teachers have expressed concern at the rate at which literacy levels are dropping among youths and children. Educationists also have observed that text messaging is completely devastating the English language. According to Dansieh (2011) 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. It is arguable that before this mobile technology came into existence, school children in the 1960s and 1970s were far more literate in terms of usage of the English language and essential writing skills than school children of today.

In recent times, the average school child struggles more with spelling, grammar and essay-writing. These essential skills were before now considered key to a good grasp of the English language. Scholars still insist that SMS language has seemingly destroyed the way school children read, think, and write the conventional English Language. O'Connor (2005) reported that the more students use tools like instant messaging, the less they are able to separate formal and informal English. For instance, they abbreviate "y-o-u", as "u". He also observed that another major problem currently being noticed is that students no longer punctuate accurately but instead, their text messages often contain run on sentences and hardly punctuations. He further argues that papers are being written with shortened words, improper capitalization and punctuation, and characters such as &, $, @ and so on.

One may therefore rightly argue that SMS language (abbreviated words) discourages complex vocabulary and prevents the creation of longer, more sophisticated phrases. A pertinent question that society must answer therefore is – has text message usage affected the way students presently use and learn the English language? And if it has, is it for better or for worse?

1.2 Aims and Objectives
The aims and objectives of this study are
- To examine the influence of SMS on the spelling skills of the selected students,.
- Investigate the extent to which SMS language influences the writing performance of the sampled population.
- To determine the gender that abbreviated words most in writing(male or female)

1.3 Research Questions
The following research questions will guide the study:
- What is the level of texting messaging of secondary school students in Osun State?
- What gender makes use of abbreviations of words most while writing?
- What are the commonly used abbreviated words by participants?
- What is the difference between students that abbreviated words and those that did not abbreviated words in the study?

2. Methodology

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this study. It was used because of the nature of this study because it requires students' responses in letter writing. The population for the study consisted 100 respondents, selected using multiple sampling technique. One local government was selected from all the local government in the state using simple random sampling technique. From the local government, 4 schools were selected using simple random sampling, 25 senior secondary school II students were selected using simple random sampling technique from Olorunda local government area of Osun State. Experimental design studies characteristics and opinions of relatively small samples of a population through which it seeks to determine the incidence and distribution of such characteristics and opinions in the larger population. This study adopted this research design because it sought to obtain information from a representative sample of the population which the information was gotten via letter writing. The dependent variable was English Language Learning. The independence variable was short Message Service. This study seeks to find out the effect of short Message Service on English Language Learning. The data for this study was collected through teaching of the SS II students LETTER WRITING for forty minutes on how to write a letter devoid of abbreviations. After the forty minutes teaching the student were given this topic to write on; *write a letter to your dad informing him on social amenities in your school* and they were given 30 minutes to write it. Those letters were collected, marked and converted to data for this study.

3. Results: The results of the study were presented based on the research questions and hypotheses generated for the study. Four research questions and three hypotheses were raised. The results are presented in the order of arrangement.

NOTE: 100 Participants were used for this study but only 83 responses were gotten

3.1 Used of abbreviated words and corrected words by Respondents

Abbreviated Words	**Corrected Words**
1 @, ur	At, Your
2 Fyn, u, u, pls	Fine, You, You, Please
3 Mom, Dad	Mummy, Daddy
4 ao, ur, 5n, 5n	How, Your, Fine, Fine
5 Ur	Your
6 U, fyn, y, dat, dey	You, Fine, That, day
7 U, fyn, ok, au	You, Fine, Okay, How
8 Dis, 2marrow	This, Tomarrow
9 U	You
10 2, 4	To, for
11 Pls, 2, 4, u, 2	Please, To, For, You, 12 To
13 Ok	Okay
14 2, u, pls, 4word, skulTo,	You, Please Forward, School
15 Fyn, u, dat, skull, dat, d	Fine, You, That, School, That, The
16 Ur, pls, d, 2, u, 2	Your, Please, The, To, You, To
17 How, u, dat, d, 2day	How, You, That, the, Today
18 U, u, ti	You, You, Till
19 U, u, u, d, u	You, You, You, The, You
20 How, u	How, You
21 Fyn, 2day,pls	Fine, Today, Please
22 Gud, u, ur, ok, d, skull, u	Good, You, Your, Okay, The, School, You
23 Pls	Please
24 U, hw	You, How
25 U, edu	You, Education
26 Hw, u	How, You
27 U	You
28 U	You
29 5n, 4, u	Fine, For, You
30 Ur, u, 4, u, skul	Your, You, For, You, School
31 Pls	Please

32 2, dat   To, That

Male students that participated = 34 (representing 41% of the total population)
Female students that participated= 49(representing 59% of the total population)

Note: These are the number of students that used abbreviated words in their letters and the total of number of students that participated in the study was eighty-three (83). The remaining 51 students did not abbreviated words.

Source: Field work by the researcher in 2018

3.2 Research Question 1: calculate the difference between students that abbreviated words and those that do not abbreviate words.

Total number of students = 83
Number of students that abbreviated = 32
Number of students that didn't abbreviation= 51

Result = Highest – Lowest
      51-32 = 19
Answer = 19

This means that 19 students falls between students that abbreviated and those that did not abbreviate.

3.3 Research Question 2: List of Commonly Used abbreviation words

	Number of Students	Number of Times Used
Pls	9	9
U	22	26
Fyn	5	5
Please	8	8

3.4 Research Question 3: Which gender abbreviated words most in the study?

Total number of males that participated was 34

1)   Male gender that abbreviated words

$$\frac{12 \times 100}{34 \times 1}$$

Answer = 35.3%

2)   Female gender that abbreviated words
3) 24×100

4) 49×1
5)   Answer = 49%

Therefore, female students was the gender that abbreviated words most

3.5 Research Question 4: Implications of Abbreviation on Letter Writing

Total Number of Students = 83
Students that abbreviated Words = 32
Students that did not abbreviated words= 51
(i)   Percentage of Students that Used Abbreviated Words

$$\frac{32 \times 100}{83 \times 1}$$

Answer = 38.6%
This means that 38.6% of the total population of the students used abbreviated words in this study. That is, used abbreviated words in their letter writing.

(2) Percentage of Students that didn't used Abbreviated Words
51×100

_____

83×1
Answer = 61.4%

This indicated that 61.4% of the students used in this study did not used abbreviated words in their letter writing.

Finally, this means that abbreviation of words did not have effects on English language learning and writing

4. Discussion of Findings

According to (Ling 2010), young adults 19 to 21 years of age have reached the peak of using text messaging in their life phases. (Craig 2003) argues that young people who use instant messaging – and therefore enter into a practice of using slang and phonetic replacements - subconsciously increase their knowledge of metalinguistic - the skill of understanding language and culture – thus experiencing "tangible increases in overall literacy". This shows that it is not all a waste of time but texting actually causes learners to improve in the culture of the language since no language is learned without the culture of the people who speak it. From the examination of SMS and the input of other schools of thought, we realize that SMS has come with its own lexicon which is somehow different from the English language contracted forms that we know. The use of SMS in communication has greatly eased communication in the last ten years. According to research question one; large number of students did not abbreviate words.

The use of SMS cannot only be seen as a negative force in the academic world. With constant use of short forms, students can take down classroom notes faster. However, students should be attentive when it comes to examinations. No examiner or employer will excuse a candidate who uses short forms in an examination situation because that will only be tantamount to lack of knowledge on the field of study. It was also observed that whereas the general cry is that SMS has ruined students' work, the contrary is true. Although students may not speak English most of the time, they are constrained to use letters of the English alphabet to write text messages. Therefore, unlike seeing SMS as an evil, educationists should see what good thing has come out of it and remind students of the need to discriminate between formal and informal situations. Grammar rules are flaunted because SMS texts are mostly written in haste; therefore teachers should consider the aspects of grammar as crucial for classroom emphases. The use of punctuation marks requires further manipulations on the phone which hinders many users which is why many SMS users are young people.

Another aspect of SMS usage in society which can be mentioned is its anti-social nature. Many people who text messages block out from others in society. It is regular to travel around the western world today and not able to carry a conversation with anyone as they are all buried into their phones chatting with people all over the world. In Cameroon today, the same trend is coming up in homes and social gatherings where people get silent and concentrate on sending or receiving messages through SMS. SMS texting can therefore be seen as a double-edged sword; helping in one way and spoiling on the other.

This paper set out to examine the implications of SMS text messaging on English language writing and learning skills of students at the secondary school. Having examined the various schools of thought and seen some of the ways in which students use short forms and the impact they have on their formal writings, it can be concluded that SMS text messaging has come to stay. As every innovation, it has its good and bad sides and the user has to be able to distinguish when it is appropriate to use short forms and standard forms and even when to use it in society. It was also brought out that though one school of thought thinks it is so bad, another school sees it as a way of getting students to write more which was already failing in many a classroom. Craig's 2003 argument that young people who use instant messaging subconsciously increase their knowledge of metalinguistic – (the skill of understanding language and culture) is thus founded meaning that texting should actually be encouraged in young people i.e. students – who experience "tangible increases in overall literacy" – and therefore enter into a practice of using slang and phonetic replacements when necessary and which may be part of the culture of those who speak the language. The SMS text messaging could just be seen as a necessary evil of the 21st century which could redeem the dying writing skill in our students worldwide.

5. Conclusion

The present study established that majority (51 students) of secondary school students' did not abbreviate words in the study. It was also realized that the female gender abbreviated words most in the study. The study revealed the list of abbreviated words of the participants. Finally, the study concluded that text messaging did not affect English language writing and learning.

6. Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusion of this study, various recommendations were proposed to further enhance English language writing and learning of secondary school students, which will result to academic excellence and high performance of the students. Therefore, this study should be applied in various educational and counseling settings. These recommendations are given subsequently.

There is a need for students to make realistic commitments to their academic pursuits with the intension to be successful academically. It is also important that secondary school students should develop high motivation and this will also aid their English language writing and learning which may result in academic success not academic failure. School counselors should organize periodic academic seminars for secondary school students on how to develop and maintain high reward, motivation and this will enhance their English language learning. Teachers, school owners and parents should also encourage students to develop positive value on English language writing and learning and towards their academics and this will help them to be successful at school.

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