

Perceived Effects of Texting and the Spelling Skills of High School Students in Misamis University

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ABSTRACT

Text messaging or texting is economical and fastest means of exchanging written messages, hence, become popular and affordable to students. Its limited characters make texters follow a system of texting called “textese” as to its effects to users. This study examined the relationship between the perceived effects of texting and the spelling skills of the high school students in Misamis University. The results show that the students are highly aware of the positive and negative effects of texting. The students have a good level of spelling skills despite being avid texters. The study failed to gather evidences to associate the perceived effects of texting and the spelling skills of the students. However, students revealed that texting disturbs their study time, and they use texting in classroom cheating. The study calls for a regulation on the use of mobile phones during classes as this could be used by the students in academic dishonesty.

Keywords – Texting, Cellular Phone, Texters and Textese, Perceived Effects, Spelling Skills, Descriptive-Correlational Study

INTRODUCTION

The rise of mobile inventions has increased the use of text messaging or texting by people all around the world. Texting feature in cellular phones has become a “blessing” for most of the people. This feature has made communication very easy to everyone. Philippines is tagged as the “texting capital of the world” (AHN Media Corporation, 2009).

Using cellular phones with limited characters, text message users or “texters” sacrifice correct use of language for fast and easy communication. Texters use write in all lowercase or all capital letters, omit spaces between words, and alter the spelling of words to communicate faster to their families and friends (Starovoit, 2012; Tomita, 2009).

Over the years, “texters” have saved time by creating a new form of shorthand known as “textese”. Textese developed contractions and nonstandard spellings to reduce the length of words for fast text messaging. Texting becomes the fastest and the cheapest among the communication fad because of its shortened messages. This feature permits people to communicate with each other regardless of distance (Montiel & Estuar, 2006; Myhra, 2010; Ling & Baron, 2007; Crystal, 2008).

Moreover, the overuse of texting has been detrimental to the way students write formally in the classroom and the real world. The character limitations on text messages have caused students to form their own style of writing. Frequent use this style has caused them to carry it over to formal writing projects. Although students are writing more than ever, they are writing with terrible grammar and are abbreviating words they write (Myhra, 2010).

Some teachers think that abbreviations used in text messaging are negatively affecting students’ written English. They reported that students write and submit papers without regard to proper punctuation, good grammar, and standard abbreviations (O’Connor, 2005).

The literature described above reveals that previous research studies on text messaging have only collected data from foreign countries. Very few studies were conducted on the subject matter in the Philippine setting. Furthermore, most of the studies related the effects of texting to the students’ communication skills in general.

The present investigation described the relationship between the perceived effects of texting and the spelling skills of the high school students in Misamis University.

FRAMEWORK

The conflicting ideas that texting has both positive and negative effects to students communication skills served as the basis of the study.

There are different effects of frequent text messaging. The effects could be in spelling and grammar (Rusell, 2010; Yau-hau Tse, 2012). Texting weakens the spelling skills and grammar to texters. Text abbreviation has a negative effect on the texters’ academic work (Dansieh, 2011; Rosen et al., 2009).

Text messaging does not pose a threat as many fear it does. The more students write, the more they improve their writing skills. Mobile phone text messaging can enhance children’s spelling skills. The use of textisms can improve literacy among children as it gives them extra exposure to word composition outside the school (Crystal, 2008; Paton, 2011). Text messaging could be considered as

another language. Learning a new language does not necessarily affect a student's ability to use English grammar; text messaging as another language cannot either (Russell, 2010). These conflicting effects of experiences with texting need further study (Plester, et al., 2008).

In this investigation, the researchers assessed both the positive and negative effects of texting. It considered the perceived effects of texting as a variable that affects the spelling skills of the students.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explored the significant relationship between the perceived effects of texting and the spelling skills of high school students in Misamis University. This study assumes that the perceived effects of texting significantly relate to the students' spelling skills.

METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive correlational method of research. The researchers believed that descriptive correlational research is appropriate in describing relationships among variables where the researcher has no control over the independent variables (Lappe, 2000).

The researchers conducted the study in the High School Department of Misamis University. Misamis University is a private non-sectarian institution located in Ozamiz City, Northern Mindanao, Philippines. The respondents of this study were the sophomores, juniors and seniors of the high school Department of the University. Using the Slovin's formula, a sample size of 143 students was obtained from the total population of 224. However, only 130 of the 143 (90.91 %) students voluntarily participated in the study. At the time of the study, High School Department of the Misamis University was composed of sophomores, juniors and seniors. Freshmen (renamed Grade 7 schoolers) were excluded because the group is no longer under the supervision of the Department.

In this study, male and female students are well-represented (F = 55.00 %, M = 45.00 %). The respondents had ages ranging from 13 – 16 years old (96.00 %); they used Nokia phones (38.00 %), Samsung phones (31.00 %), Cherry Mobile phones (18.00 %), and LG, Myphone, iPhone, Star Mobile and Motorola units (13.00 %).

The respondents were Smart Network subscribers (83.00 %); with an average weekly allowance of Php 50.00 (82.00 %); and they sent about 100 messages a

day (80.00 %).

In gathering data, the study employed Effects of Texting Questionnaire (ETQ) and Spelling Test. ETQ is a researcher-made questionnaire; hence it underwent validation and reliability testing. Originally, ETQ had 15 items in each subscale, but after the validation and reliability processes, 10 items left for each subscale. The questionnaire obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79 and 0.89 for the Positive and Negative Effects subscales respectively.

The study utilized an online material for the Spelling Test. The material is originally composed of 15 items. After the processes of validation and reliability, 12 items left for the final form. The instrument has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.68 which denotes that the material reached a moderate level of reliability (Bergeron et al., 2010).

Prior to the data-gathering, the researchers asked permission from the Principal, and they also sought consent from each respondent and their parent. They informed the student-respondents that respondents' identity is secured, and they are free to discontinue if they get disinterested in the study.

The study used descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to describe the students' perceived effects of texting and their spelling skills. The researchers computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Pearson r) to establish significant relationship between the perceived effects of texting and the students' spelling skills

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceived Effects of Texting

Data (Table 1) show that the respondents perceived a high degree of positive effects of texting ($M = 3.10$). The survey reveals that texting makes students communication quick and fast. It enables them communicate with their classmates silently to more than one person at once anytime and anywhere. The respondents perceived the item to have very high positive effects of texting in their lives as students.

In the survey, students reveal that texting has a little effect in developing their writing skills; contradictory to the findings of Petrillo (2006) which says that text messaging is giving students an exposure to the written words, which relates to a higher literacy attainment.

The data (Table 1) also show that the students perceived a high level of negative effects of texting ($M = 2.83$). Students confessed that texting disturbs

them during study time. This means that the students realized that texting got a portion of their study time that could eventually affect their school performance. As also revealed, texting enables students to cheat in the classroom.

Studies proved that students used texting to cheat during school examinations among students. Students sent text messages containing answers during examinations (Starovoit, 2012). The findings are alarming to teachers and school administrators. With this, the study recommends that schools and teachers prohibit students to use cell phones during classes.

Spelling Skills of High School Students

The result of the spelling test (Table 1) shows that the students had a “Good” level ($M = 7.66$) of spelling skills. This means that out of the 12-item test, on the average students got 7 items correctly. As good texters, students still spell words at a good level. This finding negates the ideas that texting weakens the spelling skills and grammar of the texters and it affects negatively on the texters’ academic work (Dansieh, 2011; Rosen et al., 2009).

Educators criticized the invented spelling used in texting because it appears that students are learning bad habits by misspelling words (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), but as students learn more about spelling, their invented spellings become more sophisticated to reflect their new knowledge. Even if in texting students spell some words incorrectly, they still have chances of spelling more and more words correctly as they move through the stages of spelling development (Tompkins, 2013).

Table 1. Perceived effects of texting and the students’ level of spelling test

Variables	Mean	SD
<i>Perceived Effects of Texting</i>		
Positive	3.09	0.42
Negative	2.82	0.64
<i>Spelling Test</i>	7.66	2.32

Notes: Effects of Texting Scale: Very High (3.26 -4.00); High (2.51 – 3.25); Low (1.76 – 2.50); and Very Low (1.00 – 1.75).
Spelling Skills Scale: Very Good (10-12); Good (7- 9); Fair (4 - 6); and Poor (1 - 3).

Correlation between the Perceived Effects of Texting and the Students' Spelling Skills

Results of the correlation show that both the perceived positive effects ($r = -0.04$, $p = 0.64$) and negative effects ($r = 0.02$; $p = 0.82$) of texting are not significantly correlated with the students' spelling skills. The r value of -0.04 would mean that the perceived positive effects of texting and the spelling skills of the students have weak negative linear relationship (Paler-Calmorin & Calmorin-Piedad, 2009). If the positive effects of texting gets lower, the spelling skills of the students gets better. It could also mean that as students apportion greater time for text messaging, which leads to the use of shorthand method of texting, their spelling and grammar skills deteriorate (Garrido & Viernes, 2011).

In this study, the relationship between the variables is weak and not significant hence it is not alarming. The r value of 0.020 denotes that the linear relationship between the perceived negative effects of texting and the students' spelling skills yet positive but weak.

This finding is consistent with the Preliminary Investigation on the Linguistic Aspects of Text Messaging, that there is no significant effect and difference between the spelling and grammar efficiency of students who own cellular phones and those who do not. The respondents' proficiency in spelling and grammar is independent to whether they have cellular phones or not. Among owners of cellular phones, their frequent text messaging does not affect their spelling and grammar proficiency (Laurilla, 2009).

Though this study failed to gather evidences that texting affects the students' spelling skills, parents and teachers should not be complacent on this finding. Harmful effects of text messaging on students' writing skills are yet to become a major threat. This is the best time to adopt conscious and pragmatic measures to prevent the phenomenon from further worsening students' writing skills (Dansieh, 2011).

CONCLUSIONS

The high school students are highly aware of the positive and negative effects of texting. They are good in spelling. The students' being avid texters does not influence their good level of spelling skills. Parents and teachers must be made aware that texting disturbs the study time of the students, and they use texting in cheating. The study calls for a regulation on the use of mobile phones during classes as this could be used by the students in cheating.

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