

## How is Text Messaging affecting Literacy?

**Dr. Reena Mittal**

M.A. (Eng.).Ph.D., M.B.A. Department of English, DAK Degree College, Moradabad

E-mail id: - [mittal.reena23@gmail.com](mailto:mittal.reena23@gmail.com)

M: 09412135835

### **Abstract:-**

*Technology has given a new direction not only to our daily life but it has entered and captured teaching learning system too. Today we have so many innovative practices in our teaching pattern too. The idea of texting is also an innovative practice which came into existence in 1993 and by the year 2007, it has completely enraptured the youth. At that time, messaging was considered a convenient mode of communication. But by the passing of time, we are bound to think where actually our youth is leading. The language of texting has completely changed writing, grammar, and punctuation of the youth. So, the present paper is writer's endeavour to think about impacts of texting and some suggestions to overcome.*

**Keywords:** - Punctuation; Grammar; Writing; Language; Spellings

English language is evolving and so flexible that it accept all the changes that come in its way. We can compare it with the flow of water which find place this or that way and flows on. Similarly English has seen many changes and accepts them with all by passing times. The purpose of this study is to see all the features related texting in the limelight of English language teaching. The sole purpose is to look and analyse how and why texting is affecting students and literacy. The basic idea behind the study is a result of some random text and writing assignment which I give to my 1st year students and their response to the quick answers is in the form of texting only. When I asked them, they shyly and innocently answered that this slang is inevitably a part of their brain and hands. I think the topic is grave and important because this issue is really affecting our community of students and may harm in many ways such as language and literary beauty.

Today the text messaging has become 23 years old nearly. I still remember that when I was a student, I use to write letters for my grandparents and cousins which they received after 3 to 5 days once they are posted. By the

passing of time letters have been replaced by Telephones and after that Mobile and internet replaced each and everything. The texting start in the form of SMS (Short Messaging Service) 23 years back when Mobiles were invented; and when Internet came, we have plenty of Social Media and different apps and devices, where students use in the form of texting. The texting has taken so varied shapes now a day that a person, who is unaware of it, cannot understand it.

Many people are against texting as it is destroying beauty of language. No doubt, that English is evolving language and to say that texting is killing language is to show ignorance of how language is living thing and grows and adapts to changing use. We can say that texting is affecting written English only and restrictions of vocabulary and expression lead to decline of language. We all agree to this point that technology is here and an integral part of our life. Our dependency on our gadgets and devices is increasing and will increase in the years to come as each passing year replace a new and exciting advanced version of technology which is not only making our living easier but

shortening the distances, and more connections to the people living far and wide. But still we see our adolescence learners; we really are shocked to see their writing skills. If you have seen them conversing to their friends on social sites, you will really be shocked to notice their vocabulary, Grammar and construction.

While researching on the topic some very interesting facts come into my knowledge. Texting started in New York in 1992 and since 2015; we see many drastic changes in this field. From 1992 to 1999 it was only used to wish Christmas. But in 1999 people started using SMS by texting and by 2014 we have a survey which shows that 75% of adolescence are using it whereas till 2004 we have only 45%. This survey says 55% people find texting good for literacy whereas 45% find it that. We have some astonishing but true researches about this texting.

### **Does Texting really affect Writing?**

We have some really worth thinking facts- Sometimes kids write the way they text because it becomes permanently stored in their brain. Researchers have found that texting improves language skills and emotional relief. Edutopia had an online poll regarding text messaging vs. grammar. Out of 346 votes, 193 said, "Yes, I believe students are carrying over the writing habits they pick up through text messaging into school assignments." Whereas 98 said, "No, I believe students can write one way to their friends and another way in class. They can keep the two separate." 55 others said, "Maybe. Although text messaging may have some impact on how students write, I don't think its significant problem." Adolescence usually text about 2272 times a month and make only 203 calls.

16% students send 51-100 texts each day. 28% students send 11-50 texts each day.

22% students only send 1-10 texts each day where as 3% send no texts at all. Most interestingly all this says that they send messages to their friends but make calls to parents and family.

I asked some of my students and some of randomly found about how many texts they do in a day and in one month. To my surprise one of them has texted nearly 300 pages!!!! Students statistically have the highest number of sent texts and that number is increasing rapidly. Most people claim that texting makes youngsters lazy because it doesn't force them to use proper grammar and spelling. Parents have found that many students have admitted that the "text language" has shown in class work. Most colleges ban phones, but neither college that nor parents control have much influence on how much they use phones.

### **And texting has even its own language. Can we believe that following vocabulary is worth understanding?**

Here is just a selection of the most common words that have infiltrated not just the way we write but also the way we speak:

**LOL** Laugh out loud, **TBH** To be honest, **B4N** Bye for now, **OMG** Oh my God, **ROTFL** Rolling on the floor laughing, **ASL** Age, sex, location, **BFF** Best friends forever, **ASAP** As soon as possible, **CU** See you, **LMAO** Laugh my a\*\* off, **FoMo** Fear of missing out, **AML** All my love, **Thx** Thanks, **YoLo** You only live once, **Srsly** Seriously, **Swak** Sealed with a kiss, **WTH** What the hell, **RU** Are you, **Gr8** Great, **TTFN** Ta ta for now, **M8** Mate, **Atm** At the moment, **FYI** For your information, **B4** Before, **POV** point of view, **AFC** away from keyboard, **L8r** Later, **TTYL** talk to you later, **BBL** be back later, **XOXO** Hugs and kisses.

While discussing the topic, and seeing the changes in my students learning and writing skills, I came across following problems:-

- Texting has completely beamed the writing skills and the place is taken by spoken language that too the slangs. We can say spoken language is getting richer as we are getting new words day by day but written language is diminishing.
- We all know that talking or spoken language history is much older than written language history but that too we are diminishing.
- Use of conventional Grammar is totally changed the above slangs they use but that completely changed the concept of writing.
- Direct communication, eye to eye contact has become an obsolete thing and youngster's speed of writing is reducing day by day as they have become used to electronic devices and typing.
- One bad effects of texting is that it promotes mis-spelling. English is really a rich and beautiful historically important language in which present system has given so many confused abbreviations that it is losings its shape.
- Texting sometimes creates so much confusion that the situation really changed completely. I am attaching some incidents that changed the situation when narrated with the help of texting:
- 2009: Canada's Transport Minister, a Conservative called John Baird, sent a text to Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, telling him that his cat Thatcher had died. But Harper took the message, which simply read 'Thatcher has died', to mean the former British Prime Minister had passed away. The prime minister asked an aide to prepare an official statement and the rumour mill went into overdrive. The British government later confirmed that Margaret Thatcher was very much alive.
- JANUARY 2011:SMS was blocked in Egypt on January 27, 2011.
- JULY 22, 2011: Anders Breivik launched a devastating attack in Norway, and then A 16-year-old girl caught on the island somehow sent a message to her mother that read 'tell the police to hurry. People are dying here!' She could not call her mother as the noise would have attracted attention but through text was able to keep her family informed of the unfolding situation.
- 2012: The infamous text exchange between ex-News International chief executive Rebekah Brooks and David Cameron was revealed during the Elverson inquiry earlier this year.

**This is the List of Some Texts messages that Shock the World;**

- 1992: 'Merry Christmas', the first text message ever written was sent by Neil Papworth in 1992.
- 2004: Rebecca Loos claimed she had an affair with David Beckham while he was living in Spain and said the pair texted each other as much as 30 times a day...

All this reveal that texting has some good and bad effects as well. The recent education statics show that text messaging is completely devastating the English language. Recent researches show that students in 60s and 70s were better in reading, writing and understanding as compare to present times. They have struggled more with Grammar, Vocabulary and writing assignments. I still remember my first assignment to every year BA I students is to ask them about making a small

Dictionary of their own by learning words and incorporating in their own note books. But hardly 10% students follow it by the end of session as they really lack practice of writing. When I discuss with them they admit that they really don't like writing.

### **What's Appropriate and When?**

It would be a mistake to assume that students do not understand basic grammar rules just because they send potentially of texts in a month. What students need to understand, is when they must abandon their texting. We must help them understand the importance of sounding educated and professional when the occasion calls for it. Many students realize that their texting are not grammatically correct, but simple, fast communication is their primary concern when texting. If a student struggles making the transition from texting to proper grammar then a teacher must give some additional help.

### **Social Media and texting**

If a teacher has seen any students Facebook or Twitter account, then we can most likely see texting in their posts. This is a great opportunity to teach them that social media also has instances in which they need to sound educated and professional. For example, many employers will browse through the social media profiles of their applicants; if there is status updates filled with texting or inappropriate pictures from a party, those could affect their ability to get a job. Many companies and brands now have their own social media profiles, and they use these platforms to promote their image. It is absolutely not professional for a law firm or news site to use texting in their posts. We live in a world where students could potentially have a career in social media, but they still need to know proper grammar and how to express themselves in an educated manner. If we notice that youngsters are spending more time on

screen than to face to face conversation and pencil mode, we are really right. Even many teachers, parents and mature young people also feel that written English language is deteriorating day by day. The kind of writing these adolescence are using and their spoiled spelling are creeping them from formal writing.

However, not only spelling, violations of grammatical conventions and rules, but punctuation and apostrophes are also ignored. Emotions are represented not by beautiful words, but by smiley☺. When I try to collect some major thrust areas, I came across some common mistakes my students are constantly doing:-

- Omission of capital letters and marks of punctuation.
- Omission of some words while writing any sentences (they write as they are taking short hand notes)
- Using punctuation not permissible as (???!!!)
- They use some grammatically wrong words too as Does with them?

The result is even worse when we see that by advancing in class and age they develop a tendency to use them frequently and a time come when they nearly forget when and where to use capital letters and punctuations. So we the teachers, have to try our level best to reduce this effect of using text language while studying and going for serious and systematic studies. After all English language is serious and a beautiful language which cannot be learnt or expressed with doing so many oddities. It can only be learnt by doing justice to reading, writing, learning skills.

In short, we can say that the texting does not necessarily mean to bring a decline in knowledge of any. Young students know that



different types of language are required while using for different occasion. As long as they will maintain this awareness, the violation will not reduce writing skill but it will bring an added feature their understanding of language.

Gone are the days when people would just pick up the phone and talk to one another. And letter writing was the ‘norm as those days seem a long time ago now. No, technology has well and truly taken over even the way we communicate with each other now. There is nothing worse, then being on a train, a bus or just walking down the street, without seeing someone with their head buried within their mobile phone, their thumbs dancing frantically over the keys, as if they no time to even type the words down before going onto the next word.

The art of conversation is nearly dying because hardly anybody talks now, they communicate through texting. And when today’s generation do actually talk to one another they say out the word LOL (laugh out loud) or {SOZ} for ‘sorry’. And all hard work of a teacher in trying to talk them properly, to use the English Language in the way has gone down the drain. If one looks at the history of the English Language, one would see how it has subtly changed over the centuries. How certain words that where spelt and said in a certain way, has now changed. The language has developed overtime alongside the society that it happens to be in.

### **English Will Not Yield Easily**

Some may say that text messaging is merely an adaption of the English Language in today’s society? That may be so. But when students shorten words to such as extent that it actually begins to have an effect on their everybody lives, in terms of being able to spell properly, use commas, quotation marks, full stops, etc. and form properly sounding sentences, then

something has gone badly wrong. Text messaging has grown and has become an unstoppable monster invading every part of our lives. Other than the concerns being raised by employers across the globe, the long-term damage that text language could inflict upon English remains for the most part yet to be seen. It is, however, undeniable that the presence of text language, for all its minor benefits, is leading to a lazy approach to correspondence, especially among younger generations. Fortunately there is no shortage of defenders of the English language—and not only in the UK and the US. Many teachers, journalists, and employers are anxious to maintain its integrity. Those tempted to slip into text language on a regular basis must bear in mind that such culture warriors are very much aware of its presence and all the more likely to chastise those who employ it in appropriately.

### **References**

- [1.] [www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com)
- [2.] [www.britishcouncil.com](http://www.britishcouncil.com)
- [3.] R. Ellis, *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.
- [4.] Baggot, Kate. *Technology Review. Literacy and Text Messaging*: <http://www.technologyreview.com/biztech/17927/>
- [5.] Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles. As interactive approach to language pedagogy* Beijing foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [6.] Codesmas, Diane *Job Bank USA* :[http://www.jobbankusa.com/News/Employment/text\\_language\\_harms\\_employment\\_chances.html](http://www.jobbankusa.com/News/Employment/text_language_harms_employment_chances.html)

[7.] Clark, Laura. Online Mail.  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1094174/Two-thirds-teachers-allow-children-use-slang-text-message-speak-school-tests.html>

[8.] H. Reinders, “Twenty Ideas for using Mobile Phones in the language classrooms”. English Teaching forum, 2010(3).

[9.] Mobile phone Technology Engagement in EFL classroom: Lili Zhang, Schools of foreign Language and cultures, Beijing Wuzi University, Beijing China.

[10.] R. Ellis, The Study of Second Language Acquisition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.