
Shl V Txt? Its Smrt: The Impact of SMS Language on the Writing Skills of the Undergraduates with Special Focus on the Faculty of Science, University of Ruhuna

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Abstract - Texting, though it is the most convenient and prominent way of modern communication, it is also considered to be one of the silent killers of Standard English. With this escalating debate over the adverse impact of texting on language skills, the present study was carried out to investigate how and to what extent the SMS language impacts the writing skills of the undergraduates. Following a mixed-method, a target population of 90 students who followed Speech and Communication Skills of the Faculty of Science, University of Ruhuna was given close-ended questionnaires, and subsequently, the samples of the learners' English written tasks were examined for SMS language features. Besides, language instructors of the faculty were also interviewed. The findings revealed that although the learners are conscious about the context and have the ability to follow the standard writing style in academic writing, still they are influenced by text language and depict texting features in writing. Misspellings, improper abbreviations, incomplete sentence structures, lack of punctuations and capitalizations, use of numerals, and diverse shorten forms of words were found to be the aftermaths of excessive texting over the writing. Further, it was evident that the students were having difficulties in recalling the correct form of words due to extreme Sinhala and English code-mixing. The students who had language issues found to be more victimized as their writing skills were deteriorated due to the habit of excessive texting. Moreover, lack of knowledge, less exposure to the correct language usage due to lack of reading, and negligence were the root causes that made most of the students unable to shift from informal texting to formal standard writing whenever necessary. Thus, it was apparent that more attention should be paid to improve the writing skills of the undergraduates while discouraging SMS language to minimize the negative effects of texting on academic writing.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Standard English, SMS Language