



## English Major Students' Text Messaging Practices in Discourse Production: Language Proficiency Progression vs. Regression



**Abeera Sahi**

Undergraduate Scholar (BS – English), Department of English, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

**Zainab Nasir**

Undergraduate Scholar (BS – English), Department of English, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

**Muhammad**

Professor, Department of English, University of Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

**Saboor Hussain**

**Abstract:** *This research investigates the impact of text messaging on language proficiency among English major students, particularly in discourse production. It aims to identify factors contributing to language progression or regression in students using text messaging for communication. Objectives include examining the relationship between text messaging frequency and language errors and investigating the effect of text messaging on language development. Adopting an epistemological approach, the study utilizes qualitative data analysis. Limitations involve a small sample size of fifteen English major students and one group chat. Findings reveal that text messages often mimic spoken language, facilitating friendly connections. The language used is understandable and suitable for communication purposes. Text messaging introduces abbreviations, acronyms, and new lexical forms, shaping contemporary communication practices. While some research participants argue that text messaging may hinder language proficiency, others see it as language creativity and adaptation. The influence of text messaging on language evolution remains an ongoing process that needs further research.*

**Key Words:** English Major Students, Language Evolution, Language Proficiency, New Linguistic Forms, SMS (Short for Short Message Service), Text Messaging

**Corresponding Author:** Abeera Sahi (Undergraduate Scholar (BS – English), Department of English, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.  
Email: [sahiabeera12@gmail.com](mailto:sahiabeera12@gmail.com))

### Introduction

Text messaging or SMS (Short Message Service) has become a prevalent form of communication, especially among young people. It has a distinctive style identified by conciseness, familiarity, and the use of

abbreviations (ASAP, LOL), acronyms (NASA, AIDS), and emoticons (for a smiley face :-), for a sad face, :-(, and for a wink ;-). Text messaging has unique linguistic features and style, varying from traditional written and spoken language forms. Text messaging

**Citation:** Sahi, A., Nasir, Z., & Husain, M. S. (2023). English Major Students' Text Messaging Practices in Discourse Production: Language Proficiency Progression vs. Regression. *Global Language Review*, VIII(1), 281-296.  
[https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2023\(VIII-1\).26](https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2023(VIII-1).26)

is giving way to a unique language aptitude in modern times.

Language aptitude refers to a person's competence to use a language proficiently and accurately in different contexts. It comprises abilities such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, writing, and oral communication. Language proficiency is an important characteristic of language learning improvement, especially for English major students who study English as their main study area. It leads to language competence advancement, which refers to improving language skills over time. It includes acquiring new grammatical structures, vocabulary, and communicative competence. Language accuracy and ability are important for English major students who need to improve their language abilities to communicate efficiently in their domain of study. Thus, investigating the relationship between text messaging practices and language proficiency, progression, and development is necessary to understand digital communication's effect on English major students' language skills.

### **Statement of Problem**

---

English major students' text messaging practices may take them in two drastically different directions. They may help or constrain their language proficiency and their language competence in the context of discourse production. Specifically, it needs to be explored how these practices lead to language proficiency development and pave the path to progression or how they bring regression among English major students' discourse (text and talk). Such exploratory research probe will improve discourse production and consumption in academic and professional settings and give a better understanding of the relationship between text messaging practices and language proficiency development efforts by the teachers and the taught. The problem is that no study has focused on this striking research

area in the past, and the present study intends to do so.

### **Scope and Significance**

---

The research is significant because it can help us better understand how text messaging practices affect English major students' language proficiency. After all, language proficiency is crucial for university students to develop, as it can impact their academic success and future career prospects. This is necessary because text messaging is becoming an increasingly popular and common way of communication among students, and it is important to know how it affects their language abilities. The findings can also help educators and language experts develop ways to improve students' language competence. There are concerns that text messaging may negatively affect language proficiency, but there is limited research on this topic in Pakistan. The research scope concerns English major students and their text messaging exercises. Specifically, it focuses on text messaging practices' influence on language proficiency, progression, and regression. The findings could have implications beyond this scope, as text messaging is a common form of interaction in many contexts. It could be used in educational contexts, as well as in workplace communication settings.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

---

This research has the following limitations:

- This study is limited to the sample size. Due to time and resource restrictions, we will only analyze one chat group and conduct interviews with a few people.
- This research is limited to the geographical region because this research is conducted on something other than data collected on international or national levels. It is limited to Government College

Women University Sialkot.

- Likewise, the study has the following delimitations:
- This research is limited to English major students, so the results may not apply to other departments such as psychology, chemistry, and computer science.
- The research is also limited to text messaging as a form of communication, which means that other sources of communication, such as social media, face-to-face conversations, and phone calls, are not considered.
- Another delimitation is that other means of communication may have different language norms and conventions that could differ from text messaging, which may also affect their language proficiency, so this study is mainly focused on text messaging practices on English language proficiency.

### **Aim, Objectives and Research Questions**

---

The research aims to examine the effect of text messaging practices on the language proficiency of English major students in discourse production. Moreover, the research would aim to identify the factors contributing to the progression or regression in language proficiency among English major students who use text messaging as a form of interaction.

These aims lead towards the objectives of the research:

- To determine English major students' most common language errors in text messaging.
- To examine whether there is a relationship between the frequency of text messaging and the types of language errors made by English major

students.

- To investigate whether text messaging practices have brought progression and regression in language proficiency development among University English major students.

Here are some research questions that could be used to explore each of the objectives:

- What are English major students' most common language errors in text messaging?
- Are there any differences in the language errors made by English major students who text more frequently than those who text less frequently?
- How text messaging practices have brought progression and regression in language proficiency development among University English Major Students?

### **Literature Review**

---

Numerous research studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of text messaging on language evolution. According to Crystal (2008), text messaging provides a new linguistic medium that encourages the emergence of innovative language forms, such as abbreviations, acronyms, and emoticons. While some researchers argue that this may lead to language regression, others suggest that it represents a natural progression in language evolution (Thurlow & Brown, 2003). Analyzing English major students' specific text messaging practices can provide valuable insights into this ongoing debate.

Text messaging has been lauded for its potential benefits and criticized for its potentially detrimental effects on language proficiency. Wood (2014) found that text messaging can enhance language skills, such as vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency, among English learners. However, some researchers have expressed concerns

that frequent text messaging may lead to a decline in grammatical accuracy and spelling proficiency (Kemp, 2012). Examining the text messaging habits of English major students can help determine the extent to which these concerns are valid and whether there is a correlation between text messaging habits and language proficiency levels.

Code-switching, or alternating between multiple languages or language varieties, is common in text messaging. English major students may use code-switching to accommodate different communication needs and interact with diverse social groups. Thurlow Poff (2003) suggests that code-switching in text messaging can enhance linguistic flexibility and communicative competence. Examining the code-switching strategies employed by English major students in their text messaging practices can provide valuable insights into their language proficiency.

Further, Sociolinguistic factors such as peer group dynamics, social identity, and linguistic norms can influence text messaging practices. A study by Ling (2005) reveals that text messaging often reflects specific social groups' unique linguistic styles and characteristics. Understanding the sociolinguistic context of English major students' text messaging practices can help determine how these practices align with or diverge from formal language norms, contributing to language proficiency.

## Recent Studies

Some brief recent research related to this research article is discussed below:

a) Ahmed, S. T. S. (2019) studied the effectiveness of WhatsApp for enhancing EFL learners' reading and writing skills. The study found that WhatsApp helped learners improve their language skills and increased their motivation to learn. The author suggests that WhatsApp can be used as a pedagogical tool to supplement traditional

classroom instruction.

b) Batianeh, A.M. (2014) explores the impact of online chat and word processors on Saudi English major students' writing skills. The study found that using online text chat assisted with word processors helped undergraduate students develop their writing skills more than traditional teaching methods.

c) Boutin, A. B. (2017) conducted a study on the use of SMS texting, email, IM, and SMS chats in computer-mediated communication in Kenya. The study found that SMS texting is the most popular form of communication, followed by IM and email. The author suggests that these forms of communication can be used to promote social and economic development in Kenya.

d) Bilal, A., Rextin, A., Kakakhel, A., & Nasim, M. (2017) explored the forms and functions of Roman Urdu texting. The study found that Roman Urdu texting is used for informal communication and is popular among young people. The authors suggest that Roman Urdu texting can be used as a tool for cultural preservation and language learning.

e) Bigelow et al. (2020) conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of using text messaging to enhance home visiting programs for parents of young children. The study found that parents who received text messages with tips and strategies for improving their child's language-learning environment showed greater improvement in their parenting practices compared to those who did not receive text messages. The authors suggest that text messaging can be a valuable tool for home visiting programs to build parents' capacity to support their children's development.

f) Beforouz and Frumuselu, (2021) investigated the effect of text messaging on second-language learners' writing proficiency and attitudes. They found that text messaging positively affected the learners' writing proficiency but negatively

affected their attitudes towards writing.

**g)** Developing Transmedia Skills and Informal Learning Strategies Through the Use of WhatsApp—A Case Study with Teenagers From Spain. *Social Media + Society*,” by (Costa-Sánchez & Guerrero-Pico, 2020) examines the impact of text messaging on the development of language skills in teenagers. The study found that text messaging can have positive and negative effects on language skills, depending on the individual and their level of proficiency.

**h)** Endong and Odey, (2014) explored the effects of text messaging on the writing skills of university students in Nigeria. They found that text messaging had a negative impact on the students' writing proficiency and that students who used more SMS features tended to have lower writing scores.

**I)** Handayani and Aminatun (2020) found that students who used WhatsApp groups improved their writing skills. The study showed that students' writing ability increased significantly after using WhatsApp groups.

**j)** Jafari and Chalak, (2016) investigates the impact of text messaging on the English language learning of Iranian EFL learners. The study found that text messaging can have a positive impact on language learning, particularly in the areas of vocabulary and spelling.

**k)** Khatoo et al., (2020) examines the impact of text messaging on the English language proficiency of university students in Pakistan. The study found that text messaging has a negative impact on English language proficiency, particularly in the areas of grammar and vocabulary.

**l)** Plester, Wood, and Joshi (2009) Explored the relationship between children's knowledge of text message abbreviations and school literacy outcome.

**m)** Steyn and Evans, (2015) investigated 'Textese' and Secondary School Learners' Formal Written English. They found that text

messaging positively affected the learners' writing fluency and accuracy but negatively affected their writing complexity.

**n)** Verheijen, L. (2013) researched the effects of text messaging and instant messaging on literacy. The study found that text messaging and instant messaging can have positive effects on literacy skills, such as reading speed and vocabulary. The author suggests that these communication tools can be used to enhance language learning.

**o)** Yousaf, Z., & Ahmed, M. (2013) conducted a case study on the effects of SMS on writing skills of university students in Pakistan. The study found that SMS can have a negative impact on students' writing skills. The authors suggest that educators should be aware of the negative effects of SMS and develop strategies to mitigate them

## Research Gaps

One main research gap for the research topic could be the limited research on the impact of text messaging practices in discourse production among English major students. While some studies have explored the impact of text messaging on language proficiency, there needs to be more research that examines the impact of text messaging practices in discourse production, particularly among English major students. This research gap is important because it can provide insights into how text messaging practices may affect students' ability to produce coherent and effective discourse, a critical skill for success in academic and professional settings. By exploring this research gap, educators can gain a deeper understanding of how to incorporate text messaging practices into language learning to support students' discourse production skills.

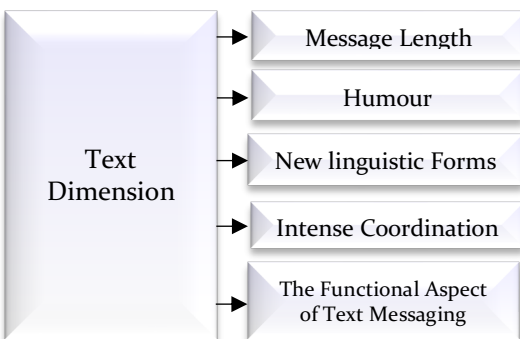
## Theoretical Framework

Fairclough's 3D model is a framework for analyzing discourse with three dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice.

The text dimension focuses on the analysis of the linguistic features of a text, such as grammar, vocabulary, and discourse markers. The discourse practice dimension examines how texts are produced and consumed, including the context of production, the intended audience, and the communicative purpose. The social practice dimension considers the broader social context in which the text is situated, including the cultural, political, and historical factors that influence the production and interpretation of the text. By analyzing texts across all three dimensions, we can better understand how language is used to construct and reproduce social power relations.

### Analytical Framework

This research article will be limited to Fairclough's model's first dimension, the text dimension, for data analysis. This model would involve identifying and analyzing specific linguistic features in the text messaging of English major students. Moreover, the analytical framework would help to analyze how these features relate to language proficiency, progression, or regression among University English major students. Based on the following features, data will be analyzed:



### Methodology

#### Research Design

This research takes an epistemology approach to analyze the qualitative data. The

data collected from the mentioned tools would help to probe into research questions and find a suitable solution.

### Population and Sampling

As mentioned earlier, in limitations, the population and sample size would be limited to one group chat and interview of almost 10-15 people.

### Research Tools

The tools for this research study would be a textual analysis of one group chat of English major students and a semi-structured interview of almost 10-15 English major students.

### Data Generation

In conducting research on specific topics, employing appropriate data generation methods or instruments is crucial. A combined data generation method of interviews and text message analysis yielded a rich dataset for the research study. We employed a comprehensive approach to analyzing the collected data, employing qualitative and quantitative techniques to ensure a holistic understanding of the English major students' experiences and perspectives. Interviews were conducted with 60 English major students aged 19-22. Of the 15 participants, 10 were females, and the rest were males. A comprehensive analysis of 100 text messages from an English major students group chat was undertaken to gain valuable insights into their communication patterns. This combined approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

We recognized the significance of gathering firsthand information from the target population. Therefore, we conducted interviews with 15 English major students. The students were selected randomly from different academic years and represented diverse backgrounds and experiences. The

interviews aimed to delve into various aspects related to the students' text messaging habits (e.g. how often they use text messaging services to communicate and, most importantly, the impact of text messaging on language proficiency both on spoken and writing skills, how text messaging has evolved and has influenced daily or professional communication). The Interview questions were carefully designed to elicit detailed responses and encourage participants to share their thoughts openly.

To supplement the insights from the interviews, we also comprehensively analyzed text messages exchanged within an English major students' group chat. The participants were asked to transcribe the messages accurately, ensuring that no personal information was disclosed without consent.

By analyzing the text messages, we aimed to capture the informal conversations, discussions, and interactions among English major students and how these text messaging practices could influence their language proficiency. The analysis encompassed various aspects, including the students' language usage, academic concerns, and social dynamics within the group. The goal was to identify common themes, trends, and patterns that emerged from the text messages, providing additional context to the interview findings.

## Data Analysis

### Message Length

---

The individual message lengths were determined using the standard 'word count' function in Microsoft Word. It is worth noting that this calculation had limitations when distinguishing lexical items connected by punctuation marks, such as in the example "I'll be there later tonight. what time are u showing up?". Nonetheless, it did involve single-character lexemes like the 'u' in the similar example. According to this

calculation, the typical word count in text messages averaged around 14 words. As expected, participants tended to write longer messages in asynchronous communication like SMS. Despite emphasizing brevity in SMS, our participants rarely fully used the available space. Therefore, the length of messages and the use of abbreviated forms appeared to be influenced by the need for speed, ease of typing, and potentially other symbolic considerations. In this sense, the language used in SMS shares similarities with the "interactive written discourse" found in conventional computer-mediated communication platforms like IRC (Werry, 1996, p. 48).

### Non-Standard Language/ New Linguistic Forms

---

A comprehensive list of distinct instances found in participants' transcribed messages that can be considered non-standard in terms of orthography and/or typography. Rather than aiming for quantitative analysis, these examples are categorized as per (Crispin Thurlow, 2003) for descriptive purposes:

- (1) shortenings (omitting end letters), contractions (omitting middle letters), G-clippings, and other clippings (omitting final letters),
- (2) acronyms and initialisms,
- (3) homophones involving letters and numbers,
- (4) 'misspellings' and typographical errors,
- (5) unconventional spellings, and
- (6) stylizations of accents (note 8).

However, upon examining the actual text messages, we found only 1401 abbreviations, equating to approximately three abbreviations per message. With abbreviations making up only 18.75% of the overall message content, the usage of letter-number homophones (e.g., Gr8 for 'great', RU for 'are you') was relatively infrequent, with only 73 instances noted. Interestingly, these homophones are often depicted as the most distinctive feature of text messaging. The text messages showed a higher

occurrence of language play through accent stylizations or phonetic approximations such as the spelling of "helluva" for 'hell of a'. Additionally, there were various onomatopoeic and exclamatory spellings (e.g., haha!, yep, mchwa!, eh?, IDK! (I don't know!), BTW! (By the way!), ICYMI! (In case you missed it!), TGIF! (Thank God it's Friday!)

OMW! (On my way!), BRB! (Be right back!), OMGosh! (Oh my gosh!), LMAO! (Laughing my \*ss off!), FTW (for the win) as well as a couple of other typographic and linguistic technique used to add intonational effect (e.g., tick-tock, hush-hush, thump-thump, knick-knack, bye-bye, hurry-hurry). It was challenging to ascertain the purpose of capitalization unless it was used noticeably as shown in the example below:

"IT WaS HELLUVA FUN" was employed intentionally for prosodic effect or alternatively, it could be that the sender preferred to write all their messages in capital letters due to their personal style choice.

Lastly, 192 instances of apostrophes were used in the 544 messages. Surprising as it may seem, these messages account for around 35% of the total, which amounts to approximately one in every three messages. This is remarkable given the technological emphasis on quick and easy typing. We do not intend to make any definitive claims based on this figure without a comparative reference. However, it is worth noting that, at least in the context of the participants in our study, the apostrophe does not appear to be completely obsolete!

## The Functional Aspect of Text Messaging

Language always serves multiple functions and relies on context to convey meaning. Consequently, it was only sometimes possible to ascertain the precise meaning of certain participants' messages, let alone their intended communicative purpose. However, when coding the text messages, we

endeavored to identify the main purpose or functional focus of each message. Based on this approach, we categorized individual messages into six broad categories. To some extent, we preserved the multi-functionality of the messages by coding them under multiple categories where appropriate (n = 121 messages, 22%). It's important to note that these functional categories are not mutually exclusive and mainly serve as a thorough explanation.

We provide brief descriptions of each category and two or three example messages to ensure transparency in the categorization process. The paper displays original messages using a distinct font and colour. For ease of reference, all messages have been sequentially numbered and anonymized.

### Informational – Practical Theme

Messages like these contain practical information or a direct request for guidance.

**M1:** Where's Amina? Reply me hurriedly.

**M2:** Top up your mobile phone

### Orientation towards Sharing Information and Building Relationships

Messages in this classification primarily revolved around exchanging informative content or requesting personal favours.

**M4:** I passed!

**M5:** I'm feeling somewhat unwell at the moment. I. Could you kindly retrieve the lecture notes for me, please?

### Orientation towards Practical Arrangements

While these texts may have an underlying recreational aspect, their main focus was planning to meet or coordinating activities like shopping or household tasks.

**M6:** Where should we meet up tonight and at what time? Catch you later!



**M7:** Do you want to come to the mall?

### Orientation towards Social Arrangements

---

Like the previous category, these messages were about planning social activities, such as hanging out together in the evening, attending the concert, or making other outing plans.

**M8:** Are we having lunch this week? Cheers!

**M9:** Hi! Maha and I want to go to the park tomorrow. Do you want us to buy tickets for you?

### Salutary Orientation

---

Messages in this category were often brief, nonspecific, and casual, mainly consisting of friendly greetings.

**M10:** Hey, what's up?

**M11:** Good morning! How are you today?

### Orientation towards Maintaining Friendships

---

Messages in this category primarily focused on maintaining friendships through activities such as apologizing, offering words of support, and expressing gratitude.

**M12:** Happy Bornday! I hope you're enjoying your day. Catch up with you in a few days.

**M13:** Don't worry about the exam! Just got a haircut and now I look like Medusa! Argh!

### Humour

---

As we read the messages, we noticed a strong presence of humour and teasing. Understanding humour from an outsider's perspective can be challenging, especially since it heavily depends on the context. However, there were many instances where the sender's intention to be funny was quite

evident.

**M14:** "CDA in the context of social theory has been explained". Check out this wholesome review given to me by her.

**M15:** You don't say

The text mentioned above is the supposedly humorous caption of a meme that the recipient immediately understands. However, hard to make sense from the observer's perspective. Memes often utilize expressive human faces or recognizable characters, which can help people connect emotionally with the message being conveyed. This emotional connection can be crucial in driving a paradigm shift or encouraging critical thinking, as it grabs attention and stimulates engagement. Memes offer a unique form of expression that combines visuals and concise captions, allowing for a deeper understanding and engagement as it surpasses the limitations of traditional text-based messages.

### Intense Coordination

---

The 'Practical Arrangement' category of messages exemplifies a form of interpersonal coordination known as 'hyper-coordination'. It involves everyday tasks like changing plans, notifying delays, and confirming details. This type of coordination, facilitated by mobile telephony, has shaped a unique style of social interaction. Young people value constant accessibility and connectivity, emphasizing the importance of continual contact for social purposes. The data we have collected includes the following examples:

**M16:** See you In 5 minutes

**M17:** Running late.

**M18:** Where are you? We're at the back of the block on the left.

### Simultaneous Presence and Defiance

---

Concerning this concept of endless contact, and as another example of how text messages take advantage of technological capabilities

(further elaborated below), some participants' messages indicated an exceptionally continuous level of contact, almost as if they were physically present with each other:

**M19:** the girls your with is she one of your best friends?

**M20:** Turn to your left. I can see you from here.

In both of these cases, where the sender and receiver are seemingly close, users can engage in covert interaction, allowing for communication that is instant and possibly close or personal. The undermining aspect of this clandestine messaging becomes even more apparent in M30 which shows another message exchanged in the presence of each other. In this context, the sender and receiver seem as though they are attending the same lecture in person but can violate social norms of interaction without being detected.

**M21:** I may look fine on the outside, but I'm curling my toes at their performance

**M22:** I'm at the wrong place

Once again, the emphasis on a "culture of concealed use" (Ling & Yttri, 2002, p. 164) underscores the seamless integration of text messaging into young people's social lives. Instead of completely replacing face-to-face interaction, mobile phones and SMS actually augment communication by enabling multiple or simultaneous communication events. They provide an attractive blend of mobility, confidentiality, discretion, and enjoyment.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The interviews with the participants reveal that the evolution of text messaging practices has significantly impacted language proficiency development, with varying perspectives on the outcomes. Approximately 50% of people believe that text messaging practices have led to a decline in language proficiency. This perspective

emphasizes the reliance on online materials and the loss of reading books and proper material, which can hinder the development of grammatical and vocabulary skills. Additionally, an impersonal and phone-addicted culture has emerged, further affecting language proficiency.

On the other hand, the remaining 50% of individuals view the advancements in text messaging as beneficial for language proficiency. They stated: "Messing around with different ways of spelling and writing can be a really powerful way to express yourself. It lets you capture the realness, genuine vibes, and all the different flavours of how we talk. Plus, it has the potential to shake things up and challenge the usual pecking order of languages and dialects."

Regarding the impact on communication skills in other contexts, approximately 54% of people believe that text messaging has greatly affected their ability to communicate effectively in academic writing and professional communication. They may struggle to adapt to different contexts, as they are accustomed to writing informally. The reliance on autocorrect and other digital tools has also eroded their spelling skills, leading to more mistakes in their handwritten work.

In contrast, approximately 46% of people do not feel that text messaging has significantly impacted their communication skills in other contexts. They consciously avoid informal practices in text messages or consciously try to adapt their communication skills accordingly. These individuals maintain a strong grasp of formal language and are able to communicate effectively in academic and professional settings.

Regarding writing skills, approximately 67% of people believe that text messaging practices have affected their abilities. They cite difficulties using formal language and note a decline in memory, vocabulary, and

grammar skills. However, around 33% of people feel that text messaging has actually improved their spelling and language skills.

Text messaging practices also vary between age groups or generations. Younger generations are more likely to embrace the latest features and utilize abbreviations, slang, acronyms, contractions, and emojis in their messages. They are comfortable with informal language usage. In contrast, older generations resist change and stick to traditional texting techniques, relying more on formal language.

The impact of text messaging practices on language proficiency development is multifaceted. While it provides certain conveniences and language learning tools, it can also contribute to a decline in formal language skills and hinder effective communication in other contexts. Striking a balance between the benefits and drawbacks of text messaging practices is crucial for individuals to maintain and enhance their language proficiency in the evolving digital landscape.

### **Main Interpretations from the Textual Analysis**

It is interesting to note that the non-standard things or "new" ways of using language in the current collection of texts are not all that new or hard to understand. Very few examples were completely incomprehensible without their original context. A lot of what the participants wrote would fit right in as a quick note left on the fridge, the dining table, or next to the phone, where brevity and speed are important. So, claims that the SMS language is impenetrable and exclusive are exaggerated and ignore communication's nuanced and contextual nature.

Just like someone leaving a note on the fridge, SMS users also understand the need for their messages to be intelligible. They recognize the importance of clarity, quantity, and manner of communication, similar to

what linguist Grice described. For example, abbreviations that use consonant clusters (like "THX") are widely understood because in English, consonants convey greater significance than vowels do. Additionally, many unconventional spellings we find in the messages have been around for a while and are not specific to SMS. Examples include using "z" in words like "girlz" or "k" in "koolaid," as well as phonetic approximations like "gonna," or "coz," and clipped words like "pumpin" or "havin."

In reality, the spelling and typographic conventions used in text messaging, as seen in this collection of texts, are quite interesting but not all that remarkable in many ways. The idea of what is considered "standard" in written language is merely a tradition and is consistently one level removed from spoken communication. In this context, the typographic practices of text messaging, much like a note on the fridge or phonetic transcriptions by expert linguists, can actually provide more accurate and authentic representations of speech.

When young people send text messages, they often write in a way that mimics spoken language. This informal style helps them establish a friendly and close connection with the recipient. The language they use is understandable and suitable for the overall purpose of communication.

This self-awareness might explain why texters use seemingly overused forms like letter-number combinations and emoticons. They use them ironically or as a way to perform or embody the act of texting itself. In other words, texting serves both interpersonal and textual functions. Not only do people send messages to fulfill communication goals like connecting and forming relationships, but they also use texting and mobile phones as a means of showcasing their active participation in texting culture. These devices have taken on cultural significance, functioning as fashion accessories and playful tools.

## **Text Messaging Practices Language Evolution or Regression**

---

Language evolves and adapts over time through a process known as language change. Various factors drive this process, including cultural shifts, technological advancements, and social interactions. Language change occurs in both spoken and written forms of language, and it can be observed in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and usage. One way in which language evolves is through lexical innovations. New words and phrases are constantly being coined to reflect societal, technological, and cultural changes. Text messaging has played a role in this process by introducing abbreviations, acronyms, and new lexical forms. These linguistic shortcuts allow for quick and efficient communication, particularly in the context of limited character counts in text messages. For example, terms like "LOL" (laugh out loud) and "BRB" (be right back) originated from text messaging and have now become widely recognized and used in everyday language.

In addition to vocabulary, language adapts in terms of grammar and syntax. Text messaging has led to the development of new grammatical patterns and conventions. For instance, omitting articles, punctuation, and verb conjugations is common in text messages to save time and characters. These linguistic adaptations can be seen as part of a natural process of language change, where language users find ways to communicate more efficiently within specific contexts.

Furthermore, text messaging has also influenced the pragmatics of language. Pragmatics refers to how language is used in different social and communicative contexts. Text messaging has its own norms and conventions, with users often employing abbreviations, emojis, and other symbols to convey emotions and tone. This adaptation in communicative practices reflects the need for efficient and expressive communication

within the constraints of digital platforms.

While some argue that text messaging may lead to a decline in language proficiency due to using non-standard forms and shortcuts, others contend that it represents a form of language creativity and adaptation to modern communication needs. The influence of text messaging on language evolution is a dynamic and ongoing process, with its effects shaping contemporary communication practices.

Overall, text messaging can be seen as a way language evolves and adapts to the demands of modern communication. It introduces new linguistic features and changes how we interact and express ourselves in written language. While it is important to consider the potential impact on language proficiency, it is also crucial to recognize the role of text messaging as a catalyst for language change and innovation.

## **Conclusion**

---

English majors use text messaging to communicate with each other. Text messaging tells how students' language proficiency can either be enhanced, or it has the role of diminishing it. For teaching and learning language, it is an interesting area of study observed by analysts that excessive use of text messaging and social media can negatively impact language proficiency. In contrast, others have found that it can actually help improve language abilities by allowing learners to practice reading, writing, and speaking in a foreign language in an informal and stress-free situation. Promoters of text messaging proclaim that it can actually strengthen language proficiency. They suggest that the swift, real-time nature of text messaging necessitates quick thinking and language production, thus sharpening students' linguistic skills. Additionally, supporters claim that text messaging encourages creativity, as users must find innovative ways to convey meaning within

the limitations of character counts and time constraints. While critics claim that it can deteriorate the grammatical structures, there are more chances of spelling mistakes during texting, which can affect academic work.

The impact of text messaging on language is a topic of ongoing debate. Some argue that text messaging is leading to the emergence of a new variety of spoken language, while others view it as a regression in language skills. Those who see text messaging as a new variety of spoken language believe it has unique features, such as abbreviations, acronyms, and emoticons, which serve as a form of linguistic expression and creativity. They argue that these innovations are similar to how spoken language evolves and adapts over time. They also emphasize the efficiency and conciseness of text messaging, which can be seen as a positive aspect in our fast-paced digital world.

On the other hand, critics view text messaging as a regression in language proficiency. They argue that the informal nature of text messaging, using abbreviations and non-standard spelling, may lead to a decline in formal language skills. They express concerns that frequent use of text messaging could negatively impact grammar, vocabulary, and spelling, especially among younger generations. Additionally, they argue that reliance on digital tools like autocorrect may weaken spelling abilities and hinder the development of accurate written expression.

It is important to note that language constantly evolves, influenced by various factors, including technology and cultural shifts. While text messaging has undoubtedly introduced new linguistic features, its overall impact on language proficiency is still a subject of ongoing research and debate. However, if experts can find a way to make these shortcuts more standard and consistent, it could be helpful for non-native English speakers. It could also benefit

teaching and learning English because students are motivated to use shortcuts in writing.

## Recommendations

Based on the research conducted on English major students' text messaging practices and their impact on language evolution and regression, the following recommendations are proposed:

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the effects of text messaging on language evolution and regression, future studies should involve a larger and more diverse participant pool. Including students from multiple universities or colleges and individuals from different age groups and linguistic backgrounds would provide a broader perspective on the topic. It would be valuable to compare English major students' text messaging practices and language skills with those of students majoring in other disciplines. This would help to determine whether the observed effects are specific to English majors or are more widespread among the student population. Comparative studies could also illuminate any differences in language evolution or regression across various academic disciplines. Given the potential impact of text messaging on language forms and usage, policymakers need to be involved in addressing this issue. Researchers should actively engage with policymakers, educational institutions, and language experts to develop guidelines or policies that standardize the new linguistic forms introduced by text messaging. This would ensure language skills are maintained and fostered within the academic environment. Education initiatives to increase language awareness should be implemented at the secondary and tertiary levels. Students should be encouraged to critically evaluate the impact of text messaging on their language skills and to reflect on the appropriateness of different linguistic forms in different contexts. By

promoting language awareness, students can make informed decisions about language usage and positively contribute to language evolution.

Further research is needed to understand better the long-term effects of text messaging on language evolution and regression. Academic institutions should support and encourage linguistic research that explores the relationship between new communication technologies and language usage. This would contribute to a deeper

understanding of how technological advancements influence language and help inform future language policies and practices. By implementing these recommendations, policymakers can play a crucial role in standardizing and preserving language forms while acknowledging the impact of text messaging on language evolution. This proactive approach will ensure that students maintain strong language skills and adapt to new linguistic forms in a balanced and appropriate manner.

**Table 1**

*Catalog of all Unconventional Typographic Variations*

| Type                            | Example   | Number of occurrences |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Shortenings                     | Prob, bro, mon, tues, bud, thurs, fri, min, Feb, sis, eng, proj, wed  | 48                    |
| Missed capitalizations          | Amina, i'd  | 14                    |
| Accent stylization              | Wantz, wanna, gona, cuz, dis, dat, afta, Hun, cos, wiv/wit, kinda   | 50                    |
| Letter/number homophones        | 2 (to), 4 (for), l8r, u, r (are), c (see), gr8, ru, 2ni (tonight), 2gether  | 25                    |
| Missed punctuations             | Don't, cant, wont, ill, Ive, youve  | 46                    |
| Contractions                    | Txt, wknd, dnt, plz, bday, gng, nxt, luv, yr self, jokn, msg, wrk, grp  | 30                    |
| Phonetic/non-standard spellings | Fone, nite, Shud, buks, lewks, sum, uve, rite, wot, wen   | 17                    |
| Initialisms                     | Tb = text back, gf = girlfriend, poa = plan of action, nntr = no need to reply, brb = be right back, V = very, TB = text back, LOL = laugh out loud | 35                    |
| Misspellings                    | Don't't (don't), juut (just), remamber (remember), thought (taught) aniversary excelent, rely,  | 20                    |
| Onomatopoeic/exclamatory        | Ha, arrrgh, woohoo, yay   | 20                    |
| G- clippings                    | Comin', ,hopin', poppin' havin', thinkin'   | 28                    |

## References

- Ahmed, S. T. S. (2019). Chat and Learn: Effectiveness of using WhatsApp as a pedagogical tool to enhance EFL learners reading and writing skills. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 8(2), 61–68. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.23.2019.82.61.68>
- Batianeh, A. M. (2014). The Effect of Text Chat Assisted with Word Processors on Saudi English Major Students' Writing Accuracy and Productivity of Authentic Texts. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 9(9), 32. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v9i9.4119>
- Bigelow, K. M., Walker, D., Fan, J., Irvin, D., & Turcotte, A. (2020). Text messaging as an enhancement to home visiting: Building parents' capacity to improve child language-learning environments. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 51, 416–429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2019.12.010>
- Beforeouz, B., & Frumuselu, A. (2021). The Effect of Text Messaging on EFL Learners' Lexical Depth and Breadth. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353080949\\_The\\_Effect\\_of\\_Text\\_Messaging\\_on\\_EFL\\_Learners'\\_Lexical\\_Depth\\_and\\_Breadth/citation/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353080949_The_Effect_of_Text_Messaging_on_EFL_Learners'_Lexical_Depth_and_Breadth/citation/download)
- Bilal, A., Rextin, A., Kakakhel, A., & Nasim, M. (2017, September). Roman-txt: forms and functions of roman urdu texting. In Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction with Mobile Devices and Services (pp. 1-9).
- Crystal, D. (2008). "Texting." *ELT Journal*, 62(1), 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccmo80>
- Costa-Sánchez, C., & Guerrero-Pico, M. (2020). What Is WhatsApp for? Developing Transmedia Skills and Informal Learning Strategies Through the Use of WhatsApp—A Case Study With Teenagers From Spain. *Social Media + Society*, 6(3), 205630512094288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120942886>
- Endong, F., & Odey, V. E. (2014). Effects of SMS Texting on the Writing Skills of University Students in Nigeria: Case of the College of Education Akamkpa. *Semanticscholar.org*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Effects-of-SMS-Texting-on-the-Writing-Skills-of-in-Odey-Ndobo/2e8bcad8f770c915df66bc88f57e094c7865a3c0>
- Handayani, E. T., & Aminatun, D. (2020). STUDENTS' POINT OF VIEW ON THE USE OF WHATSAPP GROUP TO ELEVATE WRITING ABILITY. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 1(2), 31-37.
- Jafari, S., & Chalak, A. (2016, June 19). The Role of WhatsApp in Teaching Vocabulary to Iranian EFL Learners at Junior High School. *Research Gate.net*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304145032\\_The\\_Role\\_of\\_WhatsApp\\_in\\_Teaching\\_Vocabulary\\_to\\_Iranian\\_EFL\\_Learners\\_at\\_Junior\\_High\\_School#:~:text=The%20results%20revealed%20that%20using,vocabulary%20knowledge%20after%20using%20WhatsApp](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304145032_The_Role_of_WhatsApp_in_Teaching_Vocabulary_to_Iranian_EFL_Learners_at_Junior_High_School#:~:text=The%20results%20revealed%20that%20using,vocabulary%20knowledge%20after%20using%20WhatsApp)
- Kemp, N. (2012, August 28). *Google Scholar*. *Scholar.google.com.pk*. <https://scholar.google.com.pk/scholar?q=kemp>
- Khatoo, S., Ali dhah, W., Abdullah, A., & Shah, A. (2020, August 29). Effects of SMS Texting on the Writing Skills of University Students: A Case Study of

- Undergraduate Students in Sindh, Pakistan. Research Gate.net. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343969778\\_Effects\\_of\\_SMS\\_Texting\\_on\\_the\\_Writing\\_Skills\\_of\\_University\\_Students\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Undergraduate\\_Students\\_in\\_Sindh\\_Pakistan](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343969778_Effects_of_SMS_Texting_on_the_Writing_Skills_of_University_Students_A_Case_Study_of_Undergraduate_Students_in_Sindh_Pakistan)
- Plester, B., Wood, C., & Joshi, P. (2009, March). Exploring the relationship between children's knowledge of text message abbreviations and school literacy outcomes. Research Gate.net; The British journal of developmental psychology. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/40459551\\_Exploring\\_the\\_relationship\\_between\\_children's\\_knowledge\\_of\\_text\\_message\\_abbreviations\\_and\\_school\\_literacy\\_outcomes/citation/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/40459551_Exploring_the_relationship_between_children's_knowledge_of_text_message_abbreviations_and_school_literacy_outcomes/citation/download)
- Rich, L. (2005). Redirect Notice. Scholar.google.com.pk. [https://scholar.google.com.pk/scholar\\_url?url=https://www.academia.edu/download/30937377/Rich\\_Ling\\_Mobile\\_Communications\\_ReNegotiation\\_o.pdf%23page%3D344&hl=en&sa=X&ei=h2rOZO7lL6XFsqLHpb6ADw&scisig=AFWw\\_aeanNAnZh4Z--tm-IX5dUPxJ&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.com.pk/scholar_url?url=https://www.academia.edu/download/30937377/Rich_Ling_Mobile_Communications_ReNegotiation_o.pdf%23page%3D344&hl=en&sa=X&ei=h2rOZO7lL6XFsqLHpb6ADw&scisig=AFWw_aeanNAnZh4Z--tm-IX5dUPxJ&oi=scholar)
- Steyn, H., & Evans, R. (2015). Textese and Secondary School Learners' Formal Written English: Is the Media Hype about Language Decay Justified? Journal for Language Teaching, 49(1), 199. [https://www.academia.edu/16245944/Textese\\_and\\_secondary\\_school\\_learners\\_formal\\_written\\_english\\_is\\_the\\_media\\_hype\\_about\\_language\\_decay\\_justified](https://www.academia.edu/16245944/Textese_and_secondary_school_learners_formal_written_english_is_the_media_hype_about_language_decay_justified)
- Thurlow, C., & Brown. (2003, January 1). Generation Txt? The sociolinguistics of young people's text-messaging. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259258527\\_Generation Txt The\\_sociolinguistics\\_of\\_young\\_people's\\_text-messaging](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259258527_Generation Txt The_sociolinguistics_of_young_people's_text-messaging)
- Verheijen, L. (2013). The Effects of Text Messaging and Instant Messaging on Literacy. *English Studies*, 94(5), 582–602. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838x.2013.795737>
- Yousaf, Z., & M Ben Ahmed. (2013). *EFFECTS OF SMS ON WRITING SKILLS OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN (A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF GUJRAT)*. 3(3), 389–397.