

TEXTESE AND ITS INFLUENCE TO ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the influence of “textese” to the English grammar of Grade 7 students of the University of St. Louis in Tuguegarao City, Philippines. Specifically, it identified the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, first language, type of message sent, frequency of mobile phone use, and level of English grammar performance of the students particularly in abbreviation, spelling, mechanics, vocabulary and sentence structure. Moreover, the study also evaluated the deviations that can be found from the respondents’ English grammar through their textese in terms of abbreviations, mechanics, vocabulary, sentence structure, code mixing and code switching. The study utilized both qualitative-quantitative method in which qualitative was used to measure the deviations of students’ grammar through their textese and quantitative was used for English grammar performance involving 57 junior high school students. This study used a questionnaire and gathered sample text messages from the students.

The results of the study revealed that textese greatly affects the performance of the students in English grammar in general. Students create words that are not found in the Standard English. Textese gave birth to some words that are widely used by the students in their oral and written communication. Thus, this case has deteriorated the English grammar of the students even in their L1 because they deviate from the standard usage of the English language. Hence, the results of this study would be beneficial to both teachers and learners who are engaged in the process of teaching and learning grammar.

Keywords: Textese, Grammar, First Language, Deviation, English grammar performance

INTRODUCTION

Societies nowadays live in a world where communication through modern technology is almost required. Everywhere, people are texting, emailing, writing blogs and tweeting. It is hard to go anywhere without seeing someone using a phone or the Internet to connect with others.

As cell phone and internet emerge, text messaging also had been brought to life. Unfortunately, text messaging, like most technology fad is two-faced; it is blessing and curse, boon and bane. The medium perse is good. With its mass appeal, text messaging has spawned a sizable and growing number of subscribers. The rank of pre-occupied with this high tech pass time includes not only the low earners but also some “have nuts” are deep into these fads. It is alarming that almost all teen agers all over the world are hooked with these especially in the language that is being used. Texting even affects student’s learning acquisition. When it comes to text messaging, the biggest effect to the users is that they are used to spell words in abbreviated form, improper abbreviation and wrong spelling in the effort to shorten the words and sentences. Many related studies found out that teens often use informal English or text-speak in their schoolwork because of the influence of text messages and electronic mails.

In the study conducted by Chantal Nvan (2016), he found out that with children's increasing use of mobile phones, concerns have been raised about its influence on their literacy skills. One well-known

feature of children's text messages is that they do not always adhere to conventional written language rules and use a register that is called textese. In this register, children make use of phonetic replacements, such as ur instead of your and acronyms, such as lol and drop words. This has led to the assumption that characteristics of textese may leak into children's general writing, ultimately resulting in language deterioration. However, this is in sharp contrast to findings from several studies showing that children who used textese frequently did not perform poorly on spelling and tasks measuring literacy abilities. Nevertheless, variability in coding of textese between studies and use of written tasks, which do not strictly represent grammar, may have masked the effect of textese on children's grammar abilities.

As time progresses, textisms may no longer be thought of as incorrect. This is attributed to the idea that our language is constantly changing (Verheijen 2007). Those students that participated in a survey conducted said that they consider texting as an informal writing style, similar to phone calls and hallway salutations (Cingel and Sundar 2007). Even with some results that texting may indeed have a positive effect on the literacy skills of students, there is also evidence that points to there being negative effects for this action as well. On average, eighty two percent of twelve to fifteen year olds and forty nine percent of eight to eleven year olds have a cell (Plester, Wood, Bell 2006). The adolescents mainly used their phones for texting. When talking to friends, they seem to ignore punctuation and capitalization concepts while texting (Cingel and Sundar 2007).

According to AHN Media Corp (2010), Philippines has been tagged as the “texting capital of the world”. Many Filipinos exchange text messages with the use of their mobile phones. People have become frequent texters, and they have started sending messages in shortened ways. This problem cropped up with the innovation of this new technology, and its possible effects on the students’ language proficiency. In text messaging, abbreviations used, assaults written English and resulted into students poor writing composition. Even teachers are often victims of this. If teachers would do such blunders, how much more to the students? This occurrence is somehow bringing educational crisis which institutions like school should battle.

As former English Teachers in one of the private institutions in Tuguegarao City, it is a common observation that one of the most common mistakes students made was writing as if they were speaking. Most of the English teachers in that institution also found students’ essays to be full of unnecessary fillers and poor sentence structure. Some students even wrote papers using the second person point of view. The quick back-and-forth of mobile communication has jeopardized students’ ability to convey thoughts and meaning. People know they are using poor grammar when they text, but the question remains whether or not it will affect our overall ability to write and communicate.

It is a common scenario in every school seeing students using their cell phones during their free time. Instead of going to the library to read books in order for them to enrich their vocabulary, they spend most of their time holding their phones. Even at homes, parents would tend to complain and blame their children’s low performance in quizzes and exams in English because students would spend their time holding their phone to text rather than browsing their books to widen their vocabulary. Does their texting affect their English grammar? Hence, the researchers ventured on this study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study determined the influence of textese to the English Grammar of G7 students in one of the private institutions in Tuguegarao City who are currently enrolled this summer 2016.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 sex
 - 1.2 first language
 - 1.3 type of message sent
 - 1.4 frequency of mobile phone use
2. What is the level of English grammar performance of the Grade 7 students in terms of:

- 2.1 abbreviation
- 2.2 spelling
- 2.3 mechanics
- 2.4 vocabulary
- 2.5 sentence structure
- 3. What deviations in English grammar can be found in the respondents' textese in terms of:
 - 3.1 abbreviations
 - 3.2 mechanics
 - 3.3 vocabulary
 - 3.4 sentence structure
 - 3.5 code mixing
 - 3.6 code Switching

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the qualitative-quantitative research method. It was qualitative as it identified the deviations that are found from the respondents' English grammar through their textese in terms of Abbreviations, Mechanics, Vocabulary, Sentence structure, Code mixing and Code Switching from the examples of students' text messages. Moreover, it was quantitative because a set of questionnaire was utilized to test level of English grammar performance of the Grade 7 students in terms of Abbreviation, Spelling, Mechanics, Vocabulary, and Sentence Structure. This study was participated by 57 Grade 7 High School students in one of the private institutions in Tuguegarao City during the summer of 2016.

To gather the data, the researchers made use of a questionnaire which consisted of two parts. The first part included personal-related questions which asked the profile of the respondents and questions related to the respondents' sex, first language, type of message sent and frequency of mobile phone use. The second part of the questionnaire asked questions that were specific to measure the literacy skills of students in Abbreviation, Spelling, Mechanics, Vocabulary, and Sentence Structure. The researcher patterned her questionnaire from the study "Proposed Spelling Activities" by Mrs Mariette Briz (2002); Grammar Exercise from the book Prentice Hall Grammar and Composition page 234 and 2013 National Achievement Examination.

Other than the questionnaire as the principal source in gathering data, the researchers also collected two samples of students' text messages that they send in a day. The researchers secured the consent of the respondents before collecting samples of their text messages. The samples of text messages should be less than twenty words. The researchers themselves copied the messages from students' cell phone to avoid the students from editing it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

The profile of the respondents in terms of Sex, First Language, Type of message sent and Frequency of mobile phone use are shown in Table 1. The table indicates that at USL high school department, Grade 7 is male dominated. The table further explains that when respondents are grouped according to their first language, Ilokano has the biggest population in Region 2. When grouped according to frequency of mobile phone use, majority of the respondents are heavily engaged in texting and most of them are really exposed to textese.

Table 1. Profile of respondents		
Sex	Count	Percentage
Male	31	31
Female	26	26
Total	57	57
First Language	Count	Percentage
Ilokano	24	42.10%
Tagalog	16	28.10%
Ybanag	9	15.80%
Itawes	8	14.00%
Total	57	100%
Frequency of Using Cell Phones	Count	Percentage
More than 28 hours a week	23	40.40%
20-25 hours a week	13	22.80%
25-28 hours a week	11	19.30%
15-20 hours a week	8	14.00%
Less than 15 hours a week	2	3.50%
Total	57	100%
Type of Message sent*	Count	Percentage
Personal Greetings	57	100.00%
Jokes	29	50.90%
Spiritual Messages	26	45.60%
Others	19	33.30%
Total	131	

*Multiple Response

When asked about the type of message send by the respondents, students at USL are exposed to textese. It is observed that even when students are in the same classroom or building inside the school campus, they still send text messages to a classmate or a friend. During their vacant time, texting is also rampant as this is the easiest and most convenient way for them to communicate with their parents or relatives if the need arises.

Level of English Grammar Performance of the Grade 7 Students

Table 2 shows the result of the English proficiency test of Grade 7 students in abbreviation, spelling, vocabulary, mechanics and sentence structure. Based on the results, the students perform fairly in spelling and vocabulary; however, they perform poorly in abbreviation, mechanics and sentence structure. Meaning, students have difficulty when it comes to abbreviation, mechanics and sentence structure.

Table 2. Level of performance of Grade 7 as a whole

English Proficiency Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
Vocabulary	5.11	1.961	Fair
Spelling	5.02	2.416	Fair
Abbreviation	4.53	1.681	Poor
Mechanics	4.35	1.289	Poor
Sentence Structure	3.47	1.39	Poor

Table 3 reveals the performance of respondents when grouped according to their sex. The data indicates that male and female perform poorly in abbreviation, mechanics and sentence structure, respectively. Male respondents perform fairly in spelling and vocabulary while female respondents perform poorly in both spelling and vocabulary.

Table 3. Level of performance of Grade 7 based on sex

English Proficiency Test	Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
Abbreviation	Male	4.58	1.747	Poor
	Female	4.46	1.63	Poor
Spelling	Male	5.16	2.325	Fair
	Female	4.85	2.556	Poor
Vocabulary	Male	5.26	2.065	Fair
	Female	4.92	1.853	Poor
Mechanics	Male	4.29	4.29	Poor
	Female	4.42	1.362	Poor
Sentence Structure	Male	3.71	3.71	Poor
	Female	3.19	3.47	Poor

Table 4 indicates the individual performance of respondents when grouped according to their first language. It can be gleaned from the data presented that the Ybanag-speaking group performs poorly in abbreviation, spelling, vocabulary, mechanics and sentence structure. This demonstrates that the students from the Ybanag group don't have mastery of English grammar since they perform poorly in all the tests given to them.

Itawes-speaking group performs fairly in abbreviation, spelling, and vocabulary but performs poorly in mechanics and sentence structure. It can be implied that although they have fair retention on abbreviation, spelling, and vocabulary, they still struggle when it comes to mechanics and sentence structure.

The Ilokano-speaking group yields the same result with Ybanag-speaking group where they perform poorly in abbreviation, spelling, vocabulary, mechanics and sentence structure. This also reveals that the students from the Ybanag group are not proficient of the English grammar as they perform poorly in all the assessments given to them.

Tagalog-speaking group manages to perform fairly in abbreviation, spelling, vocabulary but performs poorly in mechanics and sentence structure. It can be inferred that although they have average retention

on abbreviation, spelling, and vocabulary, they also still struggle when it comes to mechanics and sentence structure just like the Itawes group.

Table 4. Level of performance of Grade 7 based on first language

English Proficiency Test	First Language	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
Abbreviation	Itawes	5.25	1.753	Fair
	Tagalog	5.19	1.759	Fair
	Ybanag	4.11	1.537	Poor
	Ilokano	4.00	1.504	Poor
Spelling	Itawes	6.25	3.240	Fair
	Tagalog	5.56	2.529	Fair
	Ilokano	4.50	1.888	Poor
	Ybanag	4.33	2.449	Poor
Vocabulary	Itawes	6.25	2.053	Fair
	Tagalog	5.50	2.098	Fair
	Ilokano	4.75	1.700	Poor
	Ybanag	4.33	2.000	Poor
Mechanics	Tagalog	4.75	1.291	Poor
	Itawes	4.62	1.302	Poor
	Ilokano	4.29	1.334	Poor
	Ybanag	3.56	0.882	Poor
Sentence Structure	Tagalog	3.69	1.250	Poor
	Ybanag	3.44	1.130	Poor
	Itawes	3.38	1.923	Poor
	Ilokano	3.38	1.439	Poor

Table 5 shows the individual performance of respondents when grouped according to the frequency of mobile phone use to send text message. Respondents who often use phone to send text message for more than 28 hours a week perform poorly in abbreviation, spelling, vocabulary, mechanics and sentence structure. It can be implied from the data that the more students are exposed to cell phone texting, the lower the score that they get in their English Proficiency tests.

Table 5. Level of performance of Grade 7 based on frequency of mobile phone use

English Proficiency Test	Frequency of Mobile Phone Use	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
Abbreviation	15-20 hours a week	6.13	1.458	Fair
	20-25 hours a week	5	1.915	Fair
	More than 28 hours a week	4.04	1.364	Poor
	Less than 15 hours a week	4	0	Poor
	25-28 hours a week	3.94	1.578	Poor
Spelling	15-20 hours a week	8.25	2.765	Very Satisfactory
	20-25 hours a week	5.15	1.951	Fair
	25-28 hours a week	4.82	1.94	Poor
	More than 28 hours a week	4.04	1.894	Poor
	Less than 15 hours a week	3.5	0.707	Poor
Vocabulary	15-20 hours a week	7.25	1.669	Very Satisfactory
	20-25 hours a week	5.46	1.761	Fair
	25-28 hours a week	4.82	1.991	Poor
	More than 28 hours a week	4.43	1.647	Poor
	Less than 15 hours a week	3.5	2.121	Poor
Mechanics	15-20 hours a week	5.38	0.916	Fair
	Less than 15 hours a week	5.5	0.707	Fair
	20-25 hours a week	4.62	1.71	Poor
	25-28 hours a week	4	1	Poor
	More than 28 hours a week	3.91	1.041	Poor
Structure	Less than 15 hours a week	6.5	0.707	Fair
	15-20 hours a week	4.75	1.581	Poor
	25-28 hours a week	3.18	1.168	Poor
	More than 28 hours a week	3.17	0.984	Poor
	20-25 hours a week	3	1.225	Poor

Deviations from English grammar found in respondents' textese

Students were asked to submit at least 2 text messages with minimum of 20 words that they have sent in a day to determine the deviations committed from the students' English grammar through their textese. It is noted that in all the text messages collected from the students, the practice of using improper abbreviations, poor sentence mechanics, incorrect usage of words, poor sentence structure, code mixing and code switching were very much evident. Even though students use textese to shorten the length of the text message in communicating, they believe that they are still being understood by the receiver.

From the text messages gathered from the students, the following deviations in English grammar were found in respondents' textese:

On Abbreviations

From the one hundred fourteen text messages gathered, students are fond of using inappropriate abbreviations to make their messages shorter.

Below are examples of language abbreviations that are lifted from their textese.

GM for group message	u for you
Num for number	pm for text
Tomo for tomorrow	Tnx for Thank you
Bout for about	c'wok for covered walk
BV for bad vibes	DP for profile picture
4 for four	Pix for picture

On Mechanics

The researcher also found out that students struggle when it comes to sentence mechanics such as improper capitalization and improper punctuations in their textese. It was found out that students commit errors in sentence mechanics as evidenced from the examples presented.

The following are examples of text messages with errors when it comes to subject- verb agreement.

1. A pretty face get old, a nice body will change. But a good woman will always be a good woman. Hai friends! Care 2 txt?
2. Memories warms you up from the inside. But they also tear you apart. Awtsu! #thinking of you #Good morning repa!
3. Lord, plis giv me d the strength to surpass this problems. I can said that we didn't tried. We did but u choose to say gubye. #whogoat

Aside from subject-verb agreement, the following are examples of text messages with improper capitalization.

1. te, punta u dw hir sa skul. principals office. get u slip ko ky mami. Need dw nila Mam baquiran form na nanjan sa haus.
2. "Life is nOT aLways bout Trying to Fix something broken. sometimes its bout starting over and creating sumthing better.
3. i only sleep 3 hours a day and im surviving guys. this is ur immortal fren saying hi. Selfie muna while waiting. Care 2 txt?

Findings also showed that spelling was the major evidence of the influence of text messaging in the students' English grammar. Students had not spelled words correctly. This finding indicates that although spelling of the words may be erroneous by formal standards, it is recognized that spelling is highly personalized. They may not conform to standards, but what matters is that the meaning being conveyed is understood by the communicator. Among themselves, texters have learned to understand the message even if there are alterations of the spelling.

Below are examples of the commonly misspelled words students lifted from their textese.

wat for what	sori for sorry
fon for phone	ader for other
wer for where	urself for yourself
hir for here	gudtym for good time
Bcoz for because	l8r for later
2day for today	n1 for anyone
evry1 for everyone	hapi for happy

Another finding also shows that students have difficulty in putting proper punctuations in their textese. Other than this, students do not put punctuations in their textese even if it is necessary. In other words, it is determined that students do not know the proper use of punctuations.

The following are examples of text messages with errors when it comes to proper punctuation.

1. Thank U god. 4 giving me another year of life. thanku 4 ol d people who remembered me 2day by sending gud wishes tnx ever1 gbu
2. Opo ma miss u more ma. We love u po tnx for always reminding me ingat. Po kau lge jan, ma. Hope 2, see u soon.
3. OKC wins 4-2 series Kevin Durant 37 pts arebs better luck nxt time Spurs! Moving 4 conference semifinals OKC vs GSW! #OKLAHOMACITYOFTHUNDERES

On Vocabulary

As textese has been used by the students in their everyday conversation through the use of cellphone, students have also adopted words in communicating. Other than inventing their own words, they are fond of using words that are not acceptable in the standard English. It was found out that these deviations are alarming for it causes the deterioration of the vocabulary development especially in English grammar. Other than this, they are fond of using words that deviate from their original meaning.

Below are examples of words that students invent and use in their textese.

Trashtalker – this describes a person who is annoying when speaking.

Friendzone - this refers to a person who is being ignored by the person they like or love.

Hashtag- this word is used when they want to highlight the words that they want to emphasize.

Talkshit- this refers to a statement that is useless.

Squad - this refers to a group of friends with the same interest.

Whogoat- this refers to a saying that has a deep meaning from what is usual.

Columbia- this refers to a situation wherein you thought you have it but it's totally not yours.

Pabebe- this describes to a person who is cute but irritating.

Hokage- this refers to a person who is very good in catching woman's attention.

Famewhore- this refers to a person who lacks attention.

Beastmode- this describes a person who is always mad.

On Sentence Structure

It was evident that students really have difficulty in sentence structure. It was found out that students do not observe the sentence structure whenever they compose messages with the use of textese. They fail to determine the structure of their text messages as they do not punctuate their messages properly. Moreover, even if the students use their L1 in sending text messages, they fail to observe sentence structure.

The following are examples of text messages that do not observe sentence structure.

1. I have the right 2 mis sumbody. Because I care, I treasure and I love dat person. Whoever u r. I'll not give up on you.
2. Saw ur DP. So fab ever! and so familiar ung short. Mana mo na skn bb. Gorg ka naman ei! Haha
3. Hi helo! Be wer m nakuha ang mga mega mega mong salita? Sa basura? Meron pa? Penge nga! Tho! Inggit lng be. Mas magandang shut up nlng! Sorry not sorry!

On Code Switching

Based on the text messages gathered from the students, it was found out that students do code switching when they send messages using textese. From the samples of text messages gathered, code switching is very evident. It was also found out that students are more comfortable when they code switch since they cannot express themselves using pure English. This habit of expressing their thoughts greatly affects their English grammar.

Below are examples of text messages gathered wherein code switching is very much evident.

1. Fren, wer kna? W8 kta dto rum. Wla pa si mam. Don't 4get notebook ko sa math. Lets do our homework be4 dumating mam melody.
2. Pa, sundo u me hir sa gate ng skul after my class. Mejo late na me labas gate kac pafotocopy me ng reviewer sa Math.
3. Uy! Punta me jan. Wer ka? Waley pa si mam. Weyt me si bea ir. Shes so tgal! Lets go muna sa baba.

On Code Mixing

Aside from code switching, code mixing was also very much used by the students. It was found out that majority of the students tried their best to express themselves in English; however, they still make use of their first language and mix it with the English language.

Below are examples of text messages gathered wherein code mixing is very much evident:

1. Happy b-day angela! Wish you all d best! Stay kind and humble as u r. P.S Ung treat mo ah? Hehe. Joke! GBU!
2. A human falls in love ONLY ONCE in his entire life and the other emotions are just the product of infatuation. DAw. Haha. Alam na this!
3. Don't wori. God knows what his doing in your life. Good Umaga! Sinong may handout sa English jan? Thanks sa mga magrereply.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, textese, specifically spelling greatly affects the English grammar of the students. Students use words in the textese which are not accepted in the Standard English. Textese gave birth to some words that are widely used by the students in their oral and written communication. There is also deterioration in their English grammar since it was found out that students do not know to how punctuate a simple sentence properly. It was evident that students really have difficulty in sentence structure. It was also found out that students do not observe the sentence structure whenever they

compose messages with the use of textese. They fail to determine the structure of their text messages as they do not punctuate their messages properly. Moreover, even if the students use their L1 in sending text messages, they fail to observe sentence structure.

In view of the findings presented and conclusions made, the researchers recommend that teachers should encourage students to master the English grammar by being strategic in teaching. As early as Grade 7, the students should know all the basics so that they will not have any trouble in communicating using the English language. Teachers are also encouraged to give their students extra reading and writing tasks in order for the students to allot more time in reading rather than holding their phones during their vacant time. Moreover, English Teachers must use appropriate learning strategies, methods and techniques in teaching learning process to attain an outstanding performance in grammar, vocabulary and spelling among the students.

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