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## MOBILE SMSING: A VIABLE MEDIA FOR ESL LEARNERS

Gajanan Pandurang Patil

MA, M.Phil. SET , Assistant professor , Department of English , Smt. H.R.Patel Arts Mahila College, SHIRPUR  
Dist: Dhule- MAHARASHTRA (INDIA)

**Abstract:**-On the Planet, Mobile has been the most pervasive media incorporating several viable applications for ESL learner. In mobile technology smsing with its features- Create Message, Inbox, Outbox, etc meet the user with the actual and practical sense of the second language either in typed or saved form. The mobile phone inbuilt features such as, templets, T9 dictionary, smileys, chat, sms storage etc support the ESL learner. The process offers a friendly, interactive, fun-oriented, functional and the non-correctional attitude towards ELL. The process avails user the first-hand experience and experiment of the words, phrases, spellings, syntax etc of the foreign language.

In India, an average user sends 29 SMS per month (TRAI) and about 80% of the semi-urban students practice the communication. The paper is a short research made on the students of 10+2 and the undergraduate level from the semi-urban area of Shirpur Tehsil in the Northern part of Maharashtra. The methodology consists of a questionnaire of 20 questions on SMSing, about mobile as an effective ELL tool. The survey brings out astonishing results as SMSing fosters communication, collaboration, assessment, performance support, knowledge, capture evidence of learning activity and welcomes mobile as a handheld guide and a close companion.

**Keywords:** Mobile SMSing, ESL learner, functional, non-correctional, first-hand experience, ELL, collaboration, handheld guide, etc.

### INTRODUCTION:

Text messaging has been quite common and the student centered personal involvement found among the students ageing 16 to 24. It's a regular practice found among common college goers of the urban and semi-urban area. Young students seek to establish communication by text messaging or SMS that allows them to send and receive short messages from a handheld guide i.e. cell-phone giving the quick access to the recipient.

It opens wider scope among students to form thr quickest and the easiest communication with classmates, friends, teachers etc. It has been widely popular as a suitable communication medium working with faster speed and doing their work done within a fraction of second. Text messaging affords students a relatively inexpensive way of delivering important messages to anybody, anytime and anywhere to get back quick responses.

### What's SMS?

It's a Short Message System (SMS), having an act of SMSing or also referred to as texting. Texting has developed an evolved version of the written English language which has created its own lexicons or say signs. Cell-phones have offered its users a way to access everything related to knowledge resources. The idea of adding text messaging has begun in the 80s of the last century. It included the exchange of text messages either directly between mobile stations, or transmitted via Message Handling Systems widely in use since the beginning of the 1980s. The concept of smsing was initiated in the Franco-German GSM cooperation in 1984 by Friedhelm Hillebrand and Bernard Ghillebert. The proposal to develop SMS started in the year 1985 in Oslo with the contribution of Germany and France. Today, after almost 30 years the sms wave has taken up an undeniable influence on the young minds bringing about a specific user group called young smsers

### **Revolution:**

The new rise in technology has supported a lot of things that has changed the way to look at English language. The sms revolution has brought out an unprecedented use of the English vocabulary, lexicons, emoticons, grammar, meanings etc. Therefore the communication is revolutionized with the digital resources and is much viable for second language learning. The use of terms, idioms, phrases, proverbs and other expressiveness using emoticons has given a considerable input in English language vocabulary. It's popular not only because it is so much easier to use but also because it is quite funny, interesting, and interactive in its own way.

Today, the CUG plans offered by India's largest mobile service- BSNL with almost no charges among the group members except the fixed charges per month. SMS system can be used to help students learn foreign languages and teachers can use SMS to communicate with one student or even one group of students.

### **Importance of the Study:**

This decade seems to have opened a vast knowledge sharing attitude. Majority of its users are the students or the college goers who come across millions of messages sent and received with several purposes. The study brings out a message that, the sms repeatedly sent and received undeniably or unintentionally keep their linguistic influence along with their necessary content. The linguistic skills used through smsing get developed in case of sharing feelings such as appreciation, congratulation, consolation, suggestion, wishes, greetings etc. While smsing a user compulsorily and also quite attentively reads through its content the grammatical properties of the foreign language. From social and educational point of view such smsing does not only keep users developing social skills but it also creates among them an attempt of learning a foreign language gradually with its regular occurrence through sms. It's even from students' point of view is cheaper and more accessible and feasible too to form social, educational, cultural bonds with the underlined means of English language.

Text messages can be received with minimal disruption, unlike mobile phone calls. It is cheaper, easier, quicker in forming communication; and it offers the smsers a large scope to afford it and make it as a viable media for language learning.

The semi-urban area students rely on the sms which are either sent and received from the CUG subscribers or other individuals subscribers. This study brings out the experiences of a group of students smsing through mobile phones to communicate their fellow students, teachers, family members etc.. It analyses how students from semi-urban area get benefited and encouraged by messaging apart from their text based English language knowledge. Besides supporting the smsing as the exposure, the study also discusses on the hazards of smsing in ruining the structure of English language.

### **Enrichment of English Vocabulary through SMS:**

SMS proves as an innovative attribute of today's mobile technology. Nowadays teenagers are quite prompt in using this facility with great pace. It has thus become the hottest drug amongst the young smsers, who apart from mobile phone smsing access it through other media resources like internet supported free sms services such as way2sms.com, 160by2.com, Google messaging service (09870807070); which provide daily messages for English vocabulary, word power, writing tips etc. The free message service enriches vocabulary about the personal, social, political occasions such as, the good day, nights, festive occasions, love, anniversary, inspirational quotes, etc.

The students' regular smsing expose the several knowledge resources used either online or offline downloaded sms apps like- 25,000+ Text Messages, 50,000+ Messages on variety of topic heads. This everyday interaction keeps the user in close association with the basic English language learning skills as- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). This interactive process naturally makes them concentrate on words, phrases, idioms, expressions, spellings, vocabulary, syntax (articles, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, punctuations etc.). The process also plays a vital role in developing creativity and curiosity towards punch lines, key-words, proverbs, good thoughts, etc. This close dealing with the texting certainly creates among the user a responsible state to use and practice the text in proper sense. This process keeps students feel more comfortable and relaxed because they can utilize their own personal time and thereby find a self-authoritative practice with the foreign language.

The most sustainable benefit the user gets is to learn and practice the text at his/her own will. His/her communication, thus, remains a very personal and private talk which he further develops by inviting his own previous knowledge of the language taught in by his teachers. Smsing normally relies on sending and receiving; where receiving to the user is a copy sent by somebody which he learns and adopts (ie. copying). Here, the language acquisition happens by copying a text and reproducing it by some addition and deletion ie. Editing. The process of editing itself avails the user an opportunity to meddle up with the text or simply grasp it with repeated syntax. The entire process from receiving to sending or forwarding a text works at the personal linguistic approach and understanding of the user. It seems purely an unembarrassed and mind free activity; hence he/she enjoys the process and discharges his/her role quite confidently.

### **The Texting input method:**

Normally, a mobile keypad consists of 10 keys ie. 0-9, with each of the 1-9 buttons having three or four letters

associated with it. A user inputs a letter by pressing the corresponding numeric key until reached. The predictive text as has a feature of mobile phone i.e. T9 (Text on 9 keys) can reduce the time for text typing time and deduct efforts and time to the most likely word from the combination of pressed keys. The android phones have brought out an easy way of texting simply by touching/ pressing a letter/s; the letter/s predicts remaining texture in the form of words, compound words, phrases, idioms etc. The typed text can be copied and pasted i.e. edited as per the user's need.

#### **Lingua-Shrunka:**

SMSing has altered English language and made more condensed and compact with an individualist's addition (User). It has evolved a word from a letter, sentence from a word and paragraph from a sentence. The smsers have formed creative acronyms and abbreviations which are made widely acceptable among the youngsters. The new construction such as GNTC (Good Night Take Care) and RU Re D (are you ready?) are but the smsers' friendly signs substituting the existing traditional English language culture. In this way common phrases and expressions are often reduced to a character sequence produced from the first letter of each word.

Capital letters stand for syllabic consonant. Smsers type consonants more than vowels, sometimes remove them completely, to form a word such as Thnx (Thanks). Similarly, repeating of letters by culling the second repeated letter, seen in XLNT (excellent). The abbreviations have reduction of characters and are without punctuation marks are followed as the common rule for the lexicons.

Mostly the question marks and exclamations can find their own space between or among the text which purely depends on the users' notion. The textual English language is condensed. Statements are found too much personalized to abbreviate, with the global understanding of the texters. If words or letters are insufficient to convey the meaning, the emoticons are used as substitute for physical and aural cues of face-to-face communication.

Smsers are more trained with emoticons to suit the need of the expression of the sentence. Among younger users, the shorthand mirrors in many way the writing style of online chat, dropping vowels and superfluous letters, and replacing words and entire sounds with representative numbers or single letters. An example might read something like, "whr r u?" to mean, "where are you?" or, "wy dz she cme l8 evry de!" to mean, "why does she come late everyday!" This shorthand saves large amount of time over the course of numbers of SMS messages.

Following are some of the commonly used and practiced signs for smsing.

#### **SMS Abbreviations:**

Are you OK - RUOK? , Are - R , Ate - 8 , Be - B Before - B4 , Date - D8 , Excellent - XLNT , Fate - F8 , For - 4 , Great - Gr8 , Late - L8 , Later - L8R , I love you - ILU , Good night take care - GNTC , Please - Plz , Tea - T , Thanks - Thnx , Thank you - Thnq , To be - 2B Today - 2Day , Can I call you? - CICU? Etc.

#### **Emoticons:**

Happy/Smiley :-), Angry - :-( , Very happy - :)) , Confused - %-( , Sad - :-( , Sainly - O:-) , Laughing - :-D , Crying - :-( , Surprised/shocked - :-O , Kiss - :-\* , Wink - ;-)

There are more SMS shortcuts that could make up a so-called SMS dictionary. However the maximum use of words from the user can provide a blockin understanding to the receivers. Cellular phones have keyboard with considerably less buttons than there are keys that we use when we write text messages (SMS, MMS).

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The present study focuses attention on the smsing done by students in the semi-urban area of the Northern part of Maharashtra. To analyse the sms bound communication among students, following questionnaire was prepared to collect feedback on the actual practice by students.

- 1)How often do you communicate with your friends through sms?
- 2)Do you think SMSing helps you in expressing your views in English?
- 3)Which cell-phone do you prefer the '9 Key' or the 'QWERTY Keypad or Android phones'?
- 4)Do you make use of the CUG plans issued under Krishi Yojana ( For farmers) of BSNL?
- 5)Why do you prefer sms than voice call?
- 6)Do you think that sms packages are expensive?
- 7)Which features of SMS do you bring in use?
- 8)Do you think that the SMS you send and receive help you learn English?

- 9) Do you make use of the mobile dictionaries for typing sms? How often?
- 10) Can you enrich your vocabulary by smsing?
- 11) Do you make use of templets, smileys, T9 dictionary, as it helps to accelerate your speed of typing?
- 12) Are you afraid of committing mistakes of spelling, grammar etc.?
- 13) What type of sms do you normally send and receive?
- 14) Do you try to save or delete quotations, proverbs, expressions, good thoughts etc?
- 15) If you are unable to understand an SMS do you take help of an installed dictionary?
- 16) Is SMSing ruining the English language?
- 17) Can we use SMS language in formal written communication?
- 18) Is SMS serving as lingua shrunka (language shortened)?
- 19) Do you understand the shrunk/abbreviated sms?
- 20) Do you reply, forward, send message quickly?

#### **FINDINGS:**

The study is carried out with the oral and written interactive tests of the students. The data was collected and analyzed. The outcome of the study brings out the desirable expectation that smsing to their friends and family are seen moderately improved in spoken and written skills. The answers received from students made a way out to implement the practice of larger extent.

#### **Advantages of SMSing in Language Learning:**

There are following advantages of SMSing.

Regular access and as the easiest means to communicate message in word or phrase, sometime templets.  
Individual scope to read, repeat, edit, delete, send, receive, etc.  
Practice with repetition and easy undo option for undesired actions help students learn from their mistakes.  
It offers immediate and detailed feedback regarding learner's progress and mistakes etc.  
It's cheaper hence affordable for flexible learning; anytime, anywhere, anything as per the learner's will.  
Fear free interactions and self tests, since no tutor to finalise the study approach.  
Provision for utilities such as dictionaries, templets, smileys, emoticons etc.  
Accessibility to reference materials like dictionary, thesaurus inside the software hence easy access to any words phrases.  
Makes the learners feel more homely, more stress free and comfortable at any situation.  
Promote them face different contexts with SMSing to learn the basic LSRW skills and the rules of syntax.  
Smser can modulate the speed to type messages as per his need.  
Handy and fast users get the scope to type sms faster and convey meaning in no time.  
Android phones help faster in obtaining words, phrases expressions.  
The QWERTY keypad helps them typing faster with a single stroke.  
Innovations are made in sms of quickly creating meaning.

#### **Threats and Criticism:**

The advancement in technology and the use of it in language learning has also brought some threats to English language itself. The users cell-phone SMS technology adopted by the SMS drafters have given rise to new vocabulary, which has started English language changing in both the form and the structure. The ESL users have added and created a number of words which did not exist before the Internet era.

Welsh journalist and television reporter John Humphreys has criticized SMS language as "wrecking our language". David Crystal has countered the claims that SMS has a deleterious effect on language with numerous scholarly studies. The popular notion that text messaging is damaging to the linguistic development of young people and to the English language itself persists. Following are some observations which give rise to a modernized version of English language and vocabulary. It builds coinages and create threats to the existing structure.

This change in the language is everyday found; hence they have started making a new vocabulary package for the youngsters. As in India, the Younglish (English used by Youngsters) have given rise to Hinglish (Hindi and English in combination) which did not have a long history. In the fast changing time the Language practiced by the BBC experts is seen somewhere missing. The semantic and syntactic rules, singular-plurals, capitals for proper nouns, space and margins seem to have forgotten completely.

The most hazards of the changing course of structure and identity are found in case of spellings, phrases and short expressions. SMS do not follow punctuation marks. The pronunciation is not at all strictly followed since the users concentrates on the Letters, Numbers, Emoticons and not on the full spellings.

SMS texts have plenty of spelling mistakes. Acronyms and abbreviations are excessively used. The changes are normally accepted as the messages are content oriented. In India, the ESL learners are no different practitioners of English. Following are few examples cited of the same.

CU 2 moro (See you tomorrow)  
GM/ GNTC (Good Morning/ Good Night Take Care)  
M bzy (I am busy)  
Bcoz (because)

The question remains unanswered that how far we can allow such changes on language content in teaching sometimes. The language generated from these technological devices is completely different from what we have known already.

Such variety is not at all taught anywhere across the globe. It is a variety of English used in technologically enhanced communication. It is 'Netspeak'— i.e. a language variant, according to David Crystal. It is almost around the world used and easily understood in the context by receiver.

#### CONCLUSION:

The study finds out how the influence of the mobile technology on the semi-urban area students ageing between 16 to 24. It also highlights as how the +2 and undergraduates of these areas handle mobile phones for texting the messages. The study shows us clearly that, the users of the cell-phone if are given specific directions of smsing or texting, can improve with the application of the system. The experience and experimentation sought through continuous handling of the device bring home the desired effect of acquiring vocabulary, phrases, quotations etc. The students from this experimental group show more confidence in using English in writing and speaking than other students not practicing this. The group develops an ability to express themselves in certain real-life situations better than others. The smsing has instilled among them the confidence of writing and speaking English language outside classrooms.

Finally to conclude, the study puts an approach that, if a target group of students are given practice of smsing in a controlled situation with a frequent check can surely produce the expected results. The outcome of this short research can diagnose the common problems among students especially from rural and semi-urban area.

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**Gajanan Pandurang Patil**

MA, M.Phil. SET, Assistant professor, Department of English, Smt. H.R. Patel Arts Mahila College, SHIRPUR Dist: Dhule- MAHARASHTRA (INDIA)

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