



Impact of Mass Media in the Use of English Slang Words/Short Forms among Pakistani Students

Muhammad Ahmad Hashmi¹, Muhammad Ilyas Mahmood² and Tahira Naz³

¹SESE English, School Education Department, Okara, Punjab, Pakistan

²Department of English, University of Okara, Punjab, Pakistan

²Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,
43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

³SESE English, School Education Department, Okara, Punjab, Pakistan

E-mail: ¹<muhammadahmadhashmi@gmail.com>, ²<ilyas.edu.tesl@gmail.com>,
³<tahira.naaz15@yahoo.com>

KEYWORDS Academic Writing. Communication Skills. Digital devices. Non-standard English. Writing Skills

ABSTRACT The present study's aim is to investigate the influence of slang words in Pakistani context, where students have started using the slangs/short forms in their academic writing. To investigate this impact, the sample of 40 students with 25 males and 15 females have been selected by random sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire has been administered, which consisted of 10 questions related to the use of slang words in different situations. The results have identified that students use and develop slang words/short forms while texting, tweeting and talking *via* digital devices. It has also been reported that students' excessive use of cell phone during their class timings has also influenced their writing skills. The current study is significant as it addresses the parents and teachers to monitor their children's academic performance in order to use digital devices and to take necessary measures to improve students' writing skills.

INTRODUCTION

The present study deals with the adverse use of slangs in English language with its negative impacts on the writing skills of students. The use of shortcuts in instant messaging has left a significant damage to students' spellings and grammar development skills (Rankin 2010). This results in deviation of learners from standard use of English language. On the other hand, Goldstuck (2006) explains that language is changing with time. For example, "thank you" was modified to "tnk" and later to "tx" which also has positive impact in instant text messaging and quick use of communication technologies. This finally has increased the flow of information and communication (Sweeny 2011). Internet slangs (including Internet shorthand, SMS speak, Cyber-slang...etc.) refer to a number of everyday expressions that people use on internet. Furthermore, this is the result of finding an ease in communication and this kind of com-

munication is totally different from what is found in semiotic situations.

The use of slangs is very common in American society on the side of students and teachers feel very strange to use these slangs but they are of the view that they need to learn these slangs otherwise people will make fun of them (Olsen 2000). The base of these slangs is from Short Messaging Service (SMS) which is non-standard typographic forms that finally leads to send messages in code words rather than proper standard language (Thurlow and Brown 2003). He further adds that these codes are hardly understood by the outsiders because the slangs/short forms lack proper structure and grammar. For example, the repeated use of: letter (as in oooops) (Crystal 2001: 34), punctuation marks (as in hello!!!!) and capitalization for the sake of stress (Thurlow et al. 2004: 125), self-made use of blends and compounds for example, weblish for web English, so-called use of similes and exclusion of pronouns (Herring 1996: 3; Werry 1996: 54).

Today electronic communication has resulted in serious grammatical and spelling errors which has changed the language of students' assignments from formal to informal (Barseghyan 2013). Barseghyan further explains that the

Address for correspondence:

Muhammad Ahmad Hashmi
SESE English, School Education Department
Okara, Punjab, Pakistan
Telephone: +923454487686,
E-mail: muhammadahmadhashmi@gmail.com

mis-use of language has been found very common in university-level research papers by the students such as use of slangs like LOL, OMG and IMHO. Many of these slangs have been made permanent part of dictionaries.

So, the current study's aim is to find out the extent of English slangs/short forms which students are using in their academic writing and in formal situations.

Significance of Study

The current study is significant in exploring the use of slang words in damaging academic writing of the students. This study will help learners to pay serious attention in order to avoid the use of slang words/short forms to improve their writing deficiencies. This will also be useful for parents to monitor their children activities in using technological devices. Moreover, it will lead to develop necessary measures to improve students' writing skills.

Objectives

- ◆ To know the extent of English slang words students use in their learning environment?
- ◆ To investigate where and how students learn and develop these slang words/short forms?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research Design

The current research is descriptive in nature. A survey based questionnaire has been used to collect the responses of the participants. A self-developed questionnaire with 10 closely related questions has been piloted and administered. The questions are close ended to collect the factual information (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000). Some of the questions were open-ended in order to know the views of the participants.

Participants

This research has been conducted in University of Okara, a public sector university of Pakistan. Participants from English department had been selected through random sampling. Forty (40) participants comprising of 25 males and 15 females of MA English have been selected to answer the questions. All the students were in the final semester of their degree.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers administered the questionnaire personally among the participants. The responses had been recorded without the assistance and interference of researcher (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000). The results are interpretatively analyzed in Table 1.

Table 1: Impact of slang words on students' performance

S. No.	Item	Responses
1	<i>Have You Ever Heard of the Word Slang?</i>	
	a) Yes	36 (90)
	b) No	4 (10)
2	<i>What Do You Say About the Use of English slang?</i>	
	a) Interesting	39 (97.5)
	b) Bored	1 (2.5)
3	<i>Where Do You Learn English Slang Words?</i>	
	a) TV	12 (30)
	b) Social media	16 (40)
	c) Friend's chat	12 (30)
4	<i>When Do You Usually Use English Slang?</i>	
	a) With friends	4 (10)
	b) When texting with friends	32 (80)
	c) I do not use	4 (10)
5	<i>At Which Place Do You Often Use English Slang Words? Write A Reason.</i>	
	a) At class	32 (80)
	b) At home	8 (20)
6	<i>Do You Use Abbreviations or Substitute Symbols in Your Academic Writing?</i>	
	a) Never	20 (50)
	b) Sometimes	20 (50)
	c) Many times	
7	<i>Do You Use Punctuation or Capitalization while Messaging?</i>	
	a) Yes	32 (80)
	b) No	0 (0)
	c) Sometimes	8 (20)
8	<i>Do You Use Slang Words while Attempting Paper? If Yes Write a Reason.</i>	
	a) Yes	28 (70)
	b) No	12 (30)
9	<i>How Many Hours a Day Do You Spend on the Computer/Phone Texting/Instant Messaging Someone?</i>	
	a) 0-1 hour	4 (10)
	b) 1-2 hour	5 (12.5)
	c) 2-3 hour	10 (25)
	d) 3-4 hour	13 (32.5)
	e) 4-5 hour	8 (20)
10	<i>How Often You Response on Cell Phone While Attending Class?</i>	
	a) After 10 minutes	22 (55)
	b) All the times	16 (40)
	c) I do not check my phone	2 (5)

N = 40, Percentage (%) in bracket

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Question Number 1 and 2

Have you ever heard of the word slang? The analysis of 1st question in Table 1 showed the positive response of 36 participants that they know the word 'slang'. In recording the response of 2nd question, what do you say about the use of English slang? From Table 1, 39 participants had a view that it is interesting to use slang words and short forms. This shows the influence of slangs/short forms on participants that they have learnt these structures because it is interesting to use these informal and non-standard vocabulary items. Actually, students use slangs and non-standard contracted forms in their classrooms and academic learning environment where English serves as a second language (Dansieh 2011). Furthermore, Dansieh discussed the other school of thought as well who consider the use of slang words as a blessing as it enhances student's communication skills.

Analysis of Question Number 3

Where do you learn English slang words? Analyzing the source of these slang words from Table 1, thirty percent responses were in favor of TV, forty percent in favour of social media and thirty percent were supporting the source of friends chat. Daniesh (2011) has reported the students' excessive use of mobile phones via text messaging service. Moreover, students are found in habit of using social media which has damaged their writing skills.

Analysis of Question Number 4

When do you usually use English slang? Eighty percent of the students responded that they use slang words while chatting with their friends. Ten percent were in favour of using slang words when they meet with their friends and same percentage has been recorded in choosing option d. It seems that the use of social media on digital devices is the root cause of spreading slangs, where one to one chat has become very common and students remain busy all the time on their mobile phones. According to Muhartoyo and Wijaya (2014), social media is serv-

ing as a bridge to communicate among friends or maybe among strangers where students are the victim of multiple chatting applications, for example, Facebook, Path, Messenger, WhatsApp, Twitter, Line and WeChat.

Analysis of Question Number 5

At which place do you often use English slang words? Write a reason. The result of question 5 from Table 1 shows eighty percent response in favour of using slang words in university while twenty percent of the students have a view of using slangs at homes. While recording the reason behind using the slang words and short forms at university the students have a view that they do it because they want to create an informal environment with their friends and to show closeness. The other reasons include saving of time, finding an ease of communication, unaware of standard English, feel it as an interesting way, for fun, to create humor, to be different, to be novel, to create a strong relation, to keep secret...etc. This also shows that the slang words and short forms are different and dynamic in nature which depend upon the particular situation, time and space. According to Hubáèek (1979: 83-84), the usage of slangs by the students is restricted to specific time or concrete place, level and nature of institution, for example, the slang words of school going children are different from those of college and university students. It also depends upon the culture and geographical region, level of formality and educational background. In this way the practice of these slangs finally affects the productive skill of writing, which directly alters the students' academic performance.

Analysis of Question Number 6

The response of the question of using slang words in academic writing which is the main objective of the current study, the result shows that fifty percent response is in favour of using abbreviations or substitute symbols. No doubt slang words are specific vocabulary items but their use and pronunciation patterns are also very unique which include rhythm, intonation and special stress pattern which may vary from situation to situation. According to Burdová

(2009), these slang words are used in a more relaxed and easy way excluding the difficult stress pattern which result in inappropriate blending and inaccurate punctuation patterns, for example, the week forms: Where 'm I going t'have it?; Ah'm over there; lemme (let me). On the same lines colloquial words, idioms and use of positive adjectives for showing or indicating negative qualities. So these structural combinations exploiting variety of themes disturb the academic writing of the students because these are often associated with dirty language related to taboo topics including sex.

Analysis of Question Number 7

Do you use punctuation or capitalization while messaging? On analyzing the question about the use of punctuation and capitalization, eighty percent students were sure that they use these elements while typing messages and twenty percent were having a mixed opinion that sometimes they use while typing abbreviations like LOL, OMG, WTF, BBQ, FTW, ROFLCAKE, ROFLMAO. These abbreviations are not the standard forms. This also shows that students use inappropriate capitalization to stress on the particular slang words which damage their academic writing performance.

Analysis of Question Number 8

Do you use slang words while attempting paper? If yes write a reason. On the response of a question about using slang word/short forms in paper, seventy percent response were in favour of the question. The common reason behind using slang words and short forms in paper was the shortage of time, inducing their own views in their own style, to be more specific, natural, novel and different. This indicates the influence of slangs which are the temporary structures (Eble 1996) on the academic writing of the students which results in the breakage of strict rules between literary and non-literary writing. According to Mehmood and Taswir (2013), use of slang words shift the student's formal style to casual style of writing where they suffer with lack of compact and refined structure of language and finally damage their writing skills.

Analysis of Question Number 9

How many hours a day do you spend on the computer/phone texting/instant messaging someone? The response of students from Table 1 in order to use cell phones for messaging their friends is around 3-4 hours a day. This shows the influence of mobile phones on the lives of students especially when they talk, tweet or message. According to Muhartoyo and Wijaya (2014), the communication which is done by digital device through mobile phones, laptops and computers is called indirect communication which is less effective and passive and the root cause of wrong and inappropriate structures.

Analysis of Question Number 10

How often you response on cell phone while attending class? Analyzing the question 10 about giving response on the use of cell phone during class times, fifty five percent responses were in favour of checking cell phones after every 10 minutes, while forty percent responded that they keep in touch with their cells all the time. This shows the effect on technology on the lives of students. Students always make new abbreviations and acronyms to transport their messages in simple and short way which is indirectly influencing their academic performance. Akubugwo and Burke (2013) further add that social media has negatively impacted the social behavior and academic performance of the students. This has also another diverse effect on the social lives of students on real ground where students and teenagers remain busy all the time in interacting with peers, formulating their personalities and sharing information (Boyd and Ellison 2007).

CONCLUSION

To conclude the results, it has been found that students use slang words in order to avoid the complex vocabulary and compact patterns of English language. They try to use acronyms and slang words for the ease of communication. Furthermore, the use of mobile phones have also a very strong effect on the students' use of slang words. The habit of using chatting applications have affected the students' writing skills because

they use short and ungrammatical structures while talking, texting and tweeting. It has also been found that students have started using these acronyms and non-standard vocabulary items in their academic writing. The overuse of cell phones in institutions and classroom learning environment have also been found to be the key factors for using slang words and short forms in academic writing of students. Students do not know the proper use of punctuation and capitalization while texting, which has ruined the students' skill of writing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the bases of research results the following recommendations were made.

Parents and teachers should counsel and monitor the learner's activities on digital devices. The use of technological devices should be made limited other than study hours. Learners should be made aware of the importance of standard writing by discouraging the use of ungrammatical structures while talking, texting and tweeting.

REFERENCES

- Akubugwo I, Burke M 2013. Influence of social media on social behaviour of post graduate students: A case study of Salford University, United Kingdom. *Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 3(6): 39-43.
- Barseghyan L 2013. On some aspects of internet slang. *Graduate School of Foreign Languages N*, 14: 19-31.
- Bless C, Higson-Smith C 2000. *Social Research Methods*. 3rd Edition. Cape Town: Juta and Co.
- Boyd DM, Ellison NB 2007. Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*, 13(1): 210-230.
- Burdová VB 2009. *Student Slang*. Diploma Thesis. Brno, Czech Republic: Faculty of Education, Department of English Language and Literature, Masaryk University.
- Crystal D 2001. *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dansieh SA 2011. SMS texting and its potential impacts on students' written communication skills. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 1(2): 222.
- Eble CC 1996. *Slang and Sociability*. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina.
- Goldstuck A 2006. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Going Mobile: The South African Handbook of Cellular and Wireless Communication*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books.
- Herring SC (Ed.) 1996. *Computer-mediated Communication: Linguistic, Social, and Cross-cultural Perspectives*. Volume 39. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Hubáček J 1979. *O ěeských Slanzích*. Ostrava: Profil.
- Mehmood S, Taswir T 2013. The effects of social networking sites on the academic performance of students in college of applied sciences, Nizwa, Oman. *International Journal of Arts and Commerce*, 2(1): 111-125.
- Muhartoyo M, Wijaya BS 2014. The use of English slang words in informal communication among 8th semester students of English Department in Binus University. *Humaniora*, 5(1): 197-209.
- Olsen L 2000. Learning English and learning America: Immigrants in the center of a storm. *Theory into Practice*, 39(4): 196-202.
- Rankin SL 2010. *The Impact of Text Messaging Language Shortcuts on Developmental Students' Formal Writing Skills*. Minneapolis: Walden University.
- Sweeny SM 2010. Writing for the instant messaging and text messaging generation: Using new literacies to support writing instruction. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54(2): 121-130.
- Thurlow C, Brown A 2003. Generation txt? The sociolinguistics of young people's text-messaging. *Discourse Analysis Online*, 1(1): 30.
- Thurlow C, Lengel L, Tomic A 2004. *Computer Mediated Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Werry CC 1996. Linguistic and interactional features of Internet relay chat. In: SC Herring (Ed.): *Computer-mediated Communication: Linguistic, Social and Cross-cultural Perspectives*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 47-63.

Paper received from publication in March, 2019
Paper accepted from publication in May, 2019