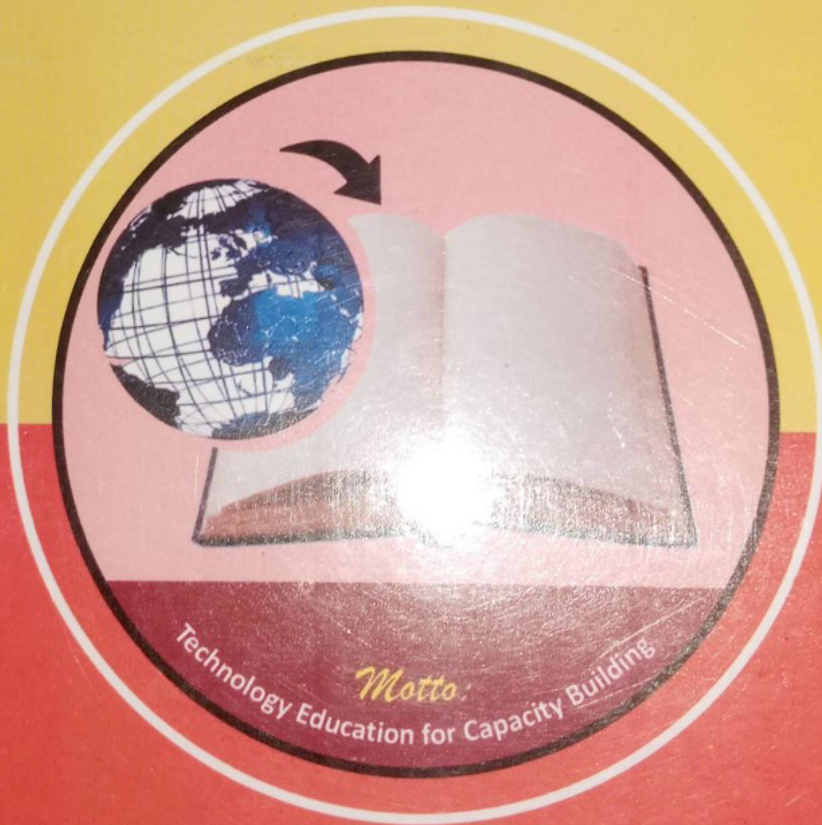


VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

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**J**ournal of Information, Education, Science and Technology (Jiest), Volume 2, Number 1, is for all who are interested in knowledge and skill acquisition, dissemination, production and utility; education, science, mathematics, information, technology and ICT. Its editorial policy is to encourage quality work which reflects a wide variety of view points, comments and review. The articles published in this issue covered: methodologies and strategies in learning; teaching and assessment; science, mathematics, ICT, professional development; integration and application. They are mostly based on theoretical and empirical research findings of the authors on studies that match the journal mandate. All these papers are selected through a double – blind peer review process.

It is hoped that 'Jiest' will in particular improve capacity of staff and researchers to produce new knowledge for development through research and analytical thought, enliven teaching, inspire scholarship, develop and improve the educational system and policies, society, define many crucial environmental and educational problems and proffer original solutions. We would like to encourage readers to give as much feedback as may be considered helpful so that, together, we can put in place a very effective and sustainable Journal School of Science and Technology Education, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria shall continue to be a facilitator to innovations on a global level.

Check us at our Website [WWW.futminna.edu.ng](http://WWW.futminna.edu.ng).

On behalf of the Editorial committee, I appreciate the authors for their quality papers and the panel of reviewers for their constructive comments. I congratulate the Journal committee for a successful packaging of this edition, Jiest, 2 (1).

Finally, I thank the University Management most sincerely for their continued good – will to the School.

**Prof. Victoria I. Ezenwa**  
Editor – in - Chief

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**IMPACT OF TEXT MESSAGING ON THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE OF ONE HUNDRED  
LEVEL UNDERGRADUATES OF IBRAHIM BADAMASI BABANGIDA  
UNIVERSITY, LAPAI, NIGER STATE**

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**Abstract**

*The study investigated the likely occurrence of SMS short forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. This was done after a test-re-test pilot study on one hundred and twenty students which gave a reliability index of 0.95. The study sampled three hundred and twenty students from nine departments which were organized to represent the three fields of study, the Arts, Social science, and Science. The instrument used for the study was students' essays on a given topic, 'Corruption in Nigeria and Measures to curb it'. The essays were analyzed using content analysis method in order to establish the appearance or otherwise of SMS forms. Five classes of SMS forms were utilized for the study. They are non-conventional spellings, phonological approximation, shortenings, letter-number homophones, and grammatical peculiarities. Four research questions and hypotheses were formulated and tested using ANOVA statistics. The major findings revealed that SMS forms were found in students' essays across disciplines. It was also revealed that there is significant difference in frequency of SMS forms across the three disciplines. In the light of this, the study recommended among others, that teachers at the various levels of education should discourage the use of text message forms in formal writings as it may affect the intended meaning of the message being conveyed.*

**Key Words:** SMS, Text Messaging, Text Message Forms, Written Language, Undergraduates, Impact.

**Introduction**

Language is defined as a coding system and a means by which information is transmitted or shared between two or more communicators for purpose of command, instruction and play (Locker by, 2009). Language is a potent vehicle for transmitting cultures, values, norms and beliefs from generation to generation. It is also a vehicle of social interaction and we need language to function properly in the workplace, social interaction, and indeed, for functional literacy.

Ker (2006) asserts that 75% of the language of information and communication technology is English. Hassan (1990) also points out that English has become a basic resource with which our present world is built and organized and, therefore, a fundamental part of our educational process. The National Policy on Education (2004) also gives prominence to English language as medium of instruction right from primary four to other levels of the country's educational system

However, with the advent of GSM in 2001 in Nigeria and with the availability of the text message facility, many people irrespective of age and social status frequently use text messages to communicate with friends, colleagues, siblings, and even parents with some of these messages containing SMS forms. Thurlow (2006) reports how SMS is severally described as slang, a novice language, slanguage, a digital virus, a new language, technobbable, textese, etc. Sutherland (2002) also describes SMS as "bleak, bald, sad shorthand, drab shrink talk, which masks dyslexic poor spelling and mental laziness." Egya (2009) observes that courtesy of the GSM, the art of letter writing has almost disappeared. According to her, young people write letters only if they have to apply for job positions and that such letters are full of basic errors. She observes that some students, consciously or unconsciously, bring GSM text message forms into their official writings such as examinations and essays.

### Statement of the Problem

The most fundamental problem envisaged by this study is that the SMS forms may consciously or unconsciously creep into the formal, academic, written English of the users. In some parts of the world, this phenomenon has been reported as shown in studies by Thurlow (2006); Lee (2002); Sutherland (2002); Humphreys (2007), among others. In Nigeria, alarm is being raised by many stakeholders in the education sector even though not many empirical studies have been carried out. For instance, Egya (2009) states that "a really appalling and embarrassing part of this GSM language intrusion is that some students unconsciously bring shorthand into their official writing, such as examinations. In various fields of study, such as arts, the sciences and social sciences, the use of text message forms to write biological example, a biology teacher once complained that her students use text message forms to write biological terms. This is a disturbing trend because such terms would lose their original meaning. It also results in making such terms ambiguous because some SMS forms have different and confusing representations. These observations apart, there is the fear that the younger generation will not be able to read texts such as the classics in the form we have them today.

### Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the occurrence or otherwise of text message short forms, also known as SMS forms, in the written communication of one hundred level undergraduates of Ibrahim Babagida Badamasi University, Lapai. Specifically, the study

- i. looked at the occurrence of SMS forms in the written English of one hundred undergraduates in three fields of study- Arts, Social Science and Science.
- ii compared the occurrence of SMS forms across the three disciplines-Arts, Social Science, and Science

### Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research question

1. Are there SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Arts?
2. Are there SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Social Science?
3. Are there SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Science?
4. Is there any difference in the frequency of occurrence of SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates across the three disciplines?

### Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There are no SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Arts.
2. There are no SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Social Science
3. There are no SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Science
4. There is no significant difference in the frequency of occurrence of SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates across the three disciplines

### Significance of the Study

It is expected that the study will help to provide a clear picture on the controversy surrounding the impact of SMS on users' written English language. This is because studies have reported diverse results on the impact of SMS or text messaging on users of English as second language. Hence, it is hoped that the study would awaken the consciousness of teachers of English as second language and encourage them to pay more attention to the writings of students in order to eliminate cases of SMS forms or other substandard expressions. This would also help language teachers to design relevant instructional materials for language learners. In addition, the study would hopefully provide an avenue for instructional innovation for English language teachers. The study would provide the teachers with the opportunity to explore the use of text messages to as a language teaching device and help in effective language teaching by ensuring communicative and personalized learning by students. Textbook writers would also benefit from this study as it will alert them to the changes sweeping through the English language due to the influence of media technologies. This would enable them to produce interesting materials that would motivate and inculcate in the learners the love for reading and writing using the standard forms of English.

### Review of Related Literature

Hamzah, Ghorbani and Abdullahi (2009) in their study of international students in the University of Putra, Malaysia, indicate that the language used in students' email and SMS was full of spoken-like spelling, unconventional use of punctuation, abbreviations, and ungrammatical sentences. They also found from the more in-depth content analysis of data collected that the written language was being creatively adapted, developed, and enhanced to suit the conditions of the electronic communication age. Abdullahi (1998), cited by Hamzah et al (2009), opines that since the language of email and SMS is associated with acronyms and changes in spelling norms it is an inherently informal communication system.

SMS text message is characterized by the use of short forms using abbreviations, acronyms, numbers, pictures, single letters, etc, to represent whole words. It also ignores punctuation, grammar, and syntactic rules (Wikipedia, 2010). According to Rafi (2007), SMS overlooks orthographic and syntactic rules of a language with a great emphasis on written sounds and compressions.

Several views have been expressed about SMS. Some researchers and language teachers are of the view that SMS contributes to declining literacy. (Thurlow 2006; Sutherland, 2002). On the other hand, SMS is seen in some studies as having a positive impact on literacy rather than being destructive. According to Wood, Plester, and Bowyer (2008), cited by Vosloo (2009), despite the popular view that texting is responsible for linguistic deterioration the "impact of children's use of 'textisms' on their reading and writing development is not well understood" largely due to lack of empirical research. They believe that up until this time, the limited research conducted on texting has either focused on the language of texts or the uses to which texting has been put, rather than linking SMS language with other literacy measures.

Crystal (2008) sees SMS as the latest manifestation of the human ability to be linguistically creative and to adapt language to suit the demands of diverse settings. SMS is seen as language in evolution. According to him, children could not be good at texting if they had not developed considerable literacy awareness and using a language in any form helps teach that language. The proponents of the use of SMS as a language learning facilitator have cited a number of language learning programmes where SMS facility has made positive impact. For instance, Levy and Kennedy (2005) created a programme for learners of the Italian language in Australia by sending them vocabulary words and idioms, definitions and sample sentences through SMS. They also sent learners language learning related text notifications through SMS about what they had learnt during class or details of upcoming television programmes they wanted the learners to watch. Reports indicated that all of these programmes have had positive impacts, particularly on students' grammar and vocabulary development.

On the other hand, Vamhagen's (2009) study group found that SMS had no impact on children's spelling. The finding came from a class-based study group consisting of third year psychology students of the University of Alberta. The research group surveyed 40 students from ages 12-17. The participants were asked to save their instant messages for a week. At the end of the week, they completed a standardized spelling test. The result of the test showed that "kids who were good spellers (academically) were good spellers in instant messaging and kids who were poor spellers in English class were poor spellers in SMS text messaging". Russell (2009) also argues that text messaging has no effect on the use of English language because it is itself another language, and learning a new language should not affect a person's ability to use English or any other language.

### Methodology

The research was a survey of content analysis of students' essays to establish the occurrence or otherwise of short message service (SMS) forms of the global system for mobile communications technology (GSM). Content analysis is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or set of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner. In the study, the content analysis of essays of the three hundred and twenty students was done with a view to investigating the occurrence or otherwise of short message forms used in composing text messages found in students' essays. The essays were analyzed and instances of SMS forms and their frequency of occurrence compared across three the disciplines – Arts, Social Science, and Science. The population of the study is the two thousand and eight (2008) one hundred level undergraduates of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai who registered for the 2012-2013 academic session. The sample size comprised of three hundred and twenty students sampled across the faculties thus: Arts 110, Social



Science 90, and Science 120 students. The Students were instructed to write an essay of three hundred and fifty (350) words on the topic "Corruption in Nigeria and Measures to Curb it". The time allowed for the essay was one hour. The test question was administered faculty by faculty by the investigator with the help of two trained assistants and the course lecturers of the concerned courses. The test was strictly supervised and students were warned against the use of mobile phones to write the test. In scoring the data, the frequency of appearance of a particular class of SMS forms was determined and scored accordingly. Five classes of text message forms- Non-conventional spellings, Phonological approximation, Shortenings, Letter-number homophones, and Grammatical peculiarities were used for the study.

**Data Analysis and Results**

**Research Question One**

Are there SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Arts discipline?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Occurrence of SMS Forms in Students' Written English in Arts Discipline

SMS Classes	MEAN	N	SD	%
Non-Conventional Spellings	11.89	110	1.71	12.6
Phonological Approximation	17.85	110	5.41	19.0
Shortening s	18.87	110	5.61	20.0
Letter -Number Homophones	13.30	110	3.64	14.1
Gramma tical Peculiarities	32.23	110	14.52	34

**Table 1** shows the occurrence of SMS forms in the essays of one hundred level undergraduates in arts. It shows that non-conventional spelling has a mean of 11.89 and standard deviation of 1.71, phonological approximation has 17.85 mean and 5.41 standard deviation, Shortening has a mean of 18.87 and 5.61 and standard deviation, Letter- number homophones has a mean of 13.30, standard deviation of 3.64 and 14.1% frequency of occurrence; and Grammatical peculiarities has a mean of 32.23, standard deviation of 14.52 and 34% of frequency of occurrence. This shows that Grammatical peculiarities has higher frequency of occurrence while non-conventional spelling has least frequency of occurrence.

**Research Question Two**

Are there SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Social Science discipline?

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Occurrence of SMS Forms in Students' Written English in Social Science Discipline

SMS Classes	Mean	N	SD	%
Non-Conventional Spellings	13.73	90	3.06	16.4
Phonological Approximation	16.46	90	8.87	19.6
Shortening s	14.52	90	3.69	17.3
Letter -Number Homophones	6.83	90	3.78	8.1
Grammatical Peculiarities	32.36	90	16.89	38.6

**Table 2** shows the occurrence of SMS forms in essays written by social science students. The table shows that non-conventional spellings has a mean of 13.73, standard deviation of 3.06 and 16.4% frequency of occurrence. Phonological approximation has a mean of 16.46, standard deviation of 8.87 and 19.6 % frequency of occurrence. Shortenings has 14.52 mean, 3.67 standard deviation and 17.3% frequency of occurrence. Letter-number homophones has a mean of 6.83 and 3.78 standard deviation and least frequency of occurrence 8.1%, while grammatical peculiarities has the highest frequency of occurrence of 38.6%, 32.36 mean and 16.89 standard deviation.

**Research Question Three**

Are there SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Science discipline?

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Occurrence of SMS Forms in Students' Written English in Science Discipline

SMS Classes	Mean	N	SD	%
Non-Conventional Spellings	12.22	120	4.35	14.4
Phonological Approximation	19.37	120	4.57	22.9
Shortening s	16.18	120	4.65	19.1
Letter -Number Homophones	12.26	120	3.18	14.5
Grammatical Peculiarities	24.62	120	6.80	29.1

**Table 3** shows the occurrence of SMS forms in the essays of one hundred level undergraduates in Science discipline. It shows that a non-conventional spelling has a mean of 12.22 and standard deviation of 4.35 with 14.4% as the frequency of occurrence. Other SMS classes are phonological approximation which has a mean of 19.37, standard deviation of 4.57 and 22.9% frequency of occurrence; Shortening has 19.1% frequency of occurrence with 16.18 and 4.65 mean and standard deviation respectively; Letter- number homophones has 12.26 mean, 3.18 standard deviation and 14.5% frequency of occurrence and Grammatical peculiarity has a mean of 24.62, standard deviation of 6.80 and 29.1% frequency of occurrence. This shows that Grammatical peculiarity has highest frequency of usage while non-conventional spelling has the least frequency of occurrence.

**Research Question Four:**

Is there any difference in the frequency of occurrence of SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates across the three disciplines?

**Table 4.1:** Mean and Standard Deviation of 100 Level Students across Disciplines.

Discipline	Mean	N	SD
Art s	3.77	110	2.09
Science	3.39	120	1.35
Social science	3.36	90	2.46

**Table 4.1** presents the means and standard deviation of the use of SMS forms by one hundred level undergraduates across disciplines. The table shows that Arts which has a total of 110 students has a mean of 3.77 and a standard deviation of 2.09. Science with a total of 120 students has a mean 3.39 and a standard deviation of 1.35 while Social Science with 90 students has a mean score of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 2.46. This shows that there is slight difference in the use of SMS forms by the three groups representing the three disciplines

**Table 4.2: Mean and Standard Deviation of SMS Classes across Disciplines**

SMS CLASSES	N	Mean	SD
Non-conventional spellings	320	12.53	3.36
Phonetic approximation	320	18.02	6.41
Shortening s	320	16.64	5.07
Letter -number	320	11.09	4.42
Grammatic peculiarities	320	29.41	13.52

The table shows that the most used SMS form is Grammatic Peculiarities which has the highest mean of 29.41 and standard deviation of 13.52. A letter-number homophone, the least used, has the lowest mean of 11.09 and a standard deviation of 4.42.

**Hypothesis Testing**

**Hypothesis 1**

HO<sub>1</sub>: There are no SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates in Arts discipline

**Table 5: Summary of ANOVA Table on Occurrence of SMS Forms in Written English of One Hundred Level Undergraduates in Arts**

Source Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Between groups (combined)	28510.891	4	7127.723	123.825*	000
Within Groups	31371.700	545	57.563		
<b>Total</b>	<b>5988.591</b>	<b>549</b>			

Table 5 reveals that  $F(4,545) = 123.825$  and  $p = 000$  which is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore the null hypothesis one is not accepted. This means that there are SMS forms in Arts students' essays.

**Hypothesis 2**

**Table 6: Summary of ANOVA Table on Occurrence of SMS Forms in Written English of One Hundred Level Undergraduates in Social Science.**

Source Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Between groups (combined)	32035.636	4	8008.909	99.906*	000
Within Groups	35673.022	445	80.164		
<b>Total</b>	<b>67708.658</b>	<b>449</b>			

Table 6 reveals that  $F(5,445) = 99.906$  and  $p = 000$  which is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore the null hypothesis two is not accepted. This means that there are SMS forms in Social science students' essays.

**Hypothesis 3**

**Table 7:** Summary of ANOVA Table on Occurrence of SMS Forms in Written English One Hundred Level Undergraduates in Science

Source Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Between groups (combined)	13154.3604	4	3288.590	139.690*	000
Within Groups	14007.558	595	23.542		
<b>Total</b>	<b>27161.918</b>	<b>599</b>			

Table 7 reveals that  $F(4,595) = 139.690$  and  $p = 000$  which is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore the null hypothesis three is not accepted. This means that there are SMS forms in Science students' essays

**Hypothesis 4**

$H_{04}$ : There is no significant difference in the occurrence of SMS forms in the written English of one hundred level undergraduates across the three disciplines.

**Table 8.1:** Summary of ANOVA table on difference on occurrence of SMS forms across disciplines

Source Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	278.8546	2	139.4212	1.4388*	0.002
Within Groups	30950.6334	318	19.3804		
<b>Total</b>	<b>31229.481</b>	<b>320</b>			

Table 8.1 shows that  $F(2,318) = 1.4388$  and  $p = 0.002$  which is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis 4 is not accepted. This means that there is significant difference in the occurrence of SMS forms in students' essays across disciplines.

**Table 8.2:** Scheff's test – Multi comparison of the three disciplines

	1	2	3
1	-	0.3798*	0.409*
2	-0.3798*	-	0.0292
3	-0.409*	-0.0292	-

Significant at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$

**Key**

1= Arts

2= Science

3= Social Science

Table 8.2 above shows that the mean difference is significant at  $\alpha=0.05$  for Arts versus Science and Arts versus Social Science. It is also significant for Science versus Arts but not significant for Science versus Social Science. Also, it is significant for Social Science versus Arts but not for Social Science versus Science.

**Discussion of Findings**

This study investigated the impact of mobile phone text messaging short forms on the language of one hundred level undergraduates of IBB University Lapai in Niger State of Nigeria. It investigated the occurrence of SMS forms of mobile phone in students' essays and discovered that these forms to some extent infiltrated into students essays probably due to the frequent text messaging they engage in at leisure times.

The result of this study showed that hypothesis one, two and three which say there is no SMS forms in students' essays were not accepted, because SMS forms were found in their essays. This is in line with findings by (Mphalele and Mashamaite 2005; Ling, 2004; Rafi, 2007; Thurlow and Poff, 2011; Folake and Shehu, 2011) who found traces of SMS forms in students' essays including WEAC and NECO answer scripts across different subject areas.

The study made use of five SMS classes, but three appeared more than the other two. These three arranged in hierarchy of appearance are grammatical peculiarity, phonological approximation and shortening. Grammatical peculiarity include cases of wrong spelling, wrong use of punctuation or lack of punctuation, incomplete sentences or use of phrases as sentences, lack of agreement between subject, verb and other words in the sentence, improper use of verbs and other parts of speech, among others. Phonological approximation involves writing words the way they are pronounced. It is interesting to note that many of these errors appeared in the students' essays with some of them looking like words from local languages. Examples are once (ones), other (order), Nigeria (Nijeria), public (poblic), has (as), those (dose), there (their), affair ( affier), embezzle (embezule), company( company), struggle(stogle), leave (live), make(mek), tackle (tarcle), etc. Similarly instances of shortening were also recorded. This includes words like, the (th), safety (safty), wealth (welth), should (shoud), intrest intrst), government (govement), doing (doin), immoral (imoral), success (success), conflict (conflit) doing (doin). The other two, non-conventional spelling and letter-number homophones appeared with less frequency. Non-conventional words like '&' for "and", '@' for "at"; ubgutous, egupt, ses, offial, inundus, abuut, bribery, endouned, syphm, squrd, resount, resouresin, etc. In letter-number words like 'b4' for "before", and '4m' for "from" among others were found.

In the same vein, hypothesis four which states that there is no significant difference in occurrence of SMS forms by 100 level students of IBB University across disciplines was also not accepted. The study showed that there is difference in the use and frequency of text message short forms by the students across the different disciplines. This is so because text messaging which is frequently used by the youth, more than any other age group, cuts across different fields of knowledge and its use may also be dependent on the individual. Therefore, the possibility of the appearance of text message short forms in essays is equally dependent on the function the user attaches to it.

### Conclusion

In view of the findings reported in this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. The study revealed that the content analysis of students' essays showed the appearance of SMS forms across disciplines. It showed the following order as the hierarchy of occurrence: grammatical peculiarity, phonetic approximation, shortening, non-conventional spelling and letter-number homophones. The SMS class with the highest frequency of occurrence is grammatical approximation while the lowest is letter-number homophones. Similarly, Arts had the greatest mean of SMS usage followed by Social science and then Science. These findings are significant not only to this study but to all English as second language teachers. For the language teacher, pedagogic preparation in the content area and a greater dedication to the profession is needed. This could serve as a strong factor in enhancing students' use of the English language as well as prepare the teachers for the challenge in language teaching which is necessitated by the increasing influence of technology.

### Recommendations

In view of the findings arrived at in this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Teachers at the various levels of education should discourage the use of text message forms in formal writings such as applications, assignment, test, lecture notes etc. There is the need to teach learners what constitutes the correct language
2. Teachers should emphasize to students the concept of audience analysis. Students need to understand the importance of using the appropriate language in the appropriate setting and should know that who one is writing to affects the way in which one writes. They should know appropriate language to use in different contexts. The mnemonic devise often used in writing classes called 'SOAP' which stands for subject, occasion, audience, and purpose should be applied to text message.
3. The use of text messaging should be exploited in language teaching. Teachers should use it to build

student-teacher relationships, in enhancing students' comfort level in school settings, and in improving academic performance. Texting could be utilized to spark the learners thinking processes due to its quick, free-flowing writing style.

4. Teachers of English language should intensify the teaching of summary skills as the main reason for using the SMS forms is to shorten information in view of the small screen space of mobile phones.
5. Language teachers, curriculum planners, governments at various levels, and parents should emphasize and encourage the importance of intensive and extensive reading in learners as this will help to minimize the use of substandard forms in formal writing.

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