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Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Foreign Languages

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**Investigating the effect of texting and online chatting on EFL  
learners' writing skill.**

**The Case of Third Year LMD Students of English at Mohamed  
kheider University of Biskra**

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Dissertation submitted to the Department of Foreign languages in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the Degree of **Master in Sciences of Language**

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## **Dedication**

### **This work is dedicated:**

To my beloved parents and brother whose love, constant support and sacrifice have shielded me from everything that life threw at me.

To all my brothers;

to my sisters in law;

to my uncle Abdellah;

to my dearest friends and soul mate;

and finally to anyone who ever reads this.

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## **Abstract**

Text messaging has been a source of debate since it became a popular tool of communication. It is criticized for its negative effect on students' academic writing because of its constant presence in formal situation. This dissertation presents a study on the effect of texting on the writing skills that targeted third year students of English at the University of Biskra. The five participants were asked to hand over screenshots of their text messages from their mobile phones. In addition, they were asked to answer a question in a form of a paragraph to be the representation of their academic writing skill. The results of the analysis of both texts and paragraphs confirmed the hypotheses. It showed that there is a negative effect which appears on the lexical level and the structural one in students' writing in forms of informal language and misuse of punctuation. This study should provide help to teachers and students to be aware of the effect that texting has on writing in order to be able to control it.

**Keywords:** text messaging; texts; academic writing; lexical level, structural level.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**ASAP:** As Soon As Possible

**AW:** Academic writing

**AWC:** Academic Writing Course

**BRB:** Be Right Back

**EFL:** English as a foreign language

**ESL:** English as Second Language

**GSM:** group special mobile

**KS2:** Key Stage 2

**SMS:** Short Messages Service

**US:** United States

**WAS:** Writing Assessment Scale

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## **General Introduction**

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## **General Introduction**

### **Introduction**

Academic writing is one of the most interesting topics in EFL. Though the writing skill comes second as a communication tool, it is more important especially in the academic field. However, it comes with a lot of challenges and can be influenced by a lot of factors and daily habits. This study is interested in studying the effect of one of the new communication means which is called texting. Texting is estimated to have an impact on academic writing because of the similarities in language use. Students seem not to know the difference between the two situations. In this study we are estimated to figure out the relation between texting and academic writing using the available data.

### **2.1 Statement of the Problem**

Writing is one of the four essential skills that any language speaker should have. Though it comes second after speaking, it is more important in the academic world and the hardest to master. With the appearance of technology many domains were effected including the writing skill. Since the new generation tend to use their phones more than anything else, their writing changed through time to cope with the speed of the age. This change in language is disturbing teachers as well as linguists who are worried that this may make eternal damages to it. However, there are other scholars, such as David Crystal(2008) who believe that it has many positive outcomes on students' psychological and academic performance.

EFL learners are ought to be the highly affected ones since they have to write more as a part of their studies. Mastering academic writing is a challenge itself for them, how about having another influence that may interfere in the process. Scholars, such Coulter (2008), through the years, have highlighted spelling mistakes and linked them to the daily use of texting. Since spelling mistakes are not tolerated by teachers especially in formal tests, students are doomed to lose marks which eventually affect their final scoring.

It is also important to consider that texting and online chatting may have a good side. Some researchers claim that it is not the evil we think it is (Crystal, 2001), since it may be used to enhance students' language in use and communication abilities. It also helps in breaking the barriers of shyness. In addition to the fact that it enables them to use the language outside the classroom even with native speakers which gives them an insight on English in its real context. Therefore, the debate still stand between those who believe in the positive influence of texting and those who argue that it only has a negative effect on students' writing.

However, the available literature seem to neglect other factures such as bilingualism in texting. Some students who come from bilingual societies use two up to three languages while texting or chatting online, which may be noticed in their writing at the beginning. In addition to the use of phonetic substitutions that can be explained by the replacement of certain diphthongs by numbers such as 2day instead of today. It is also important to note that students have acquired the habit of neglecting indentation and misusing punctuation marks which can be directly related to SMS texting.

## **2.2 Aims of the Study**

In this study, we generally aim to investigate the influence that the frequent use of texting has on students' academic writings. It also aims at revealing the negative effect that the previous

phenomenon has. In addition, it will highlight the ways and forms in which the effect is demonstrated in students' pieces of writing, to make it easier for teachers to detect and control them. Finally, it will attempt to reveal certain factors that might cause the effect.

## **2.4 Research Questions**

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

Q1: Does the daily use of texting and online chatting effect EFLlearners' writing skill?

Q2: How is the effect of texting and online chatting, negative or positive, demonstrated in students' writing?

## **2.5 Research Hypotheses**

Based on the above research questions, we formulate the following research hypotheses:

H1: We hypothesise that the extensive use of texting and online chatting can have an influence on students writing skills.

H2: We hypothesise that the effect whether negative or positive will appear on the lexical and the structural level in their writings.

## **2.6 Research Methodology**

In this qualitative research, we target the population of third year English at the University of Biskra. The sample, which was selected based on volunteering, consists of five students from

two different groups of third year. The data was collected using two main techniques of data collection. First, the participants were asked to choose three to four text messages from their phones sent to different people (parent, friend, teacher/ classmate) and sent them to the researcher's phone or email in a form of screenshots. Second, students' were asked to answer a test question in a form of a paragraphs. They were also asked to present their academic level of achievement as it is given by the administration. These texts and paragraphs were analysed and compared to each other see if there are any traces of texting on the lexical level and structural one.

## **2.7 Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consist mainly of three chapters. In the first chapter that is made for the academic writing variables, we tried to give a general understanding of the academic writing course. Students tend to feel intimidated by this course and that is why we tried to explain what it is mainly about, plus providing an insight on composing a piece of writing. In addition, the first chapter focuses on writing assessment and evaluation since it is a challenging task. It explains what the assessment scales are with exemplifications from different systems.

Furthermore, the second chapter which was about texting and online chatting, presents a historical background of the phenomenon in order to explain how it developed to be what it is today. It also argue on how texting is having its own language by mixing both criteria of spoken and written forms of language. In addition, it presents pros and cons of the studied phenomenon so that the readers get familiar with both sides.

The last chapter of this dissertation was dedicated to explaining the study that was conducted to answer the research questions. It presented the procedure, results and interpretation of the findings. Finally, it answers the research questions and confirmed the hypotheses that we

suggested at the beginning. By the end of this chapter, we concluded that there is an effect on academic writing from daily texting and it is influenced by other factors such as proficiency in texting.

## **Chapter one**

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## **Chapter One**

### **Academic Writing**

#### **Introduction**

Students and researchers alike, might find writing as a not very pleasant task to do. However, it is a necessary for them because it enables them transmit information to others. It is also clear that writing is the hardest skill in any language, simply because we do not learn to write by being exposed to it as we do in speaking. The task gets harder for academics since they cannot just write anything in the way they please. It also does not get any easier for EFL learners who did not have a specialized writing course during middle school and high school in Algeria. In relation to their context, they are obliged to write following certain criteria that fall under what is named “academic writing”. This course is one of the indispensable courses all students must take since they cannot master the universal rules of writing different reports and articles to publish their work without being taught. This course comes with many difficulties for both students and teachers. It also has many curricula depending on the objective of the course.

#### **2.1 General understanding of Academic Writing**

As a freshman at university, many things can be a source of ambiguity and academic writing can be put on top of the list. Though it might seem absurd but it is true; the key to overcome these feelings of fear and anxiety is understanding what academic writing is.

The general understanding that anyone can have is that in an academic writing course one will learn about writing, mainly applying certain explicit rules. Apparently, it is not an easy task to

perform, when a student does not know what he is doing. Therefore, the secret to success in academic writing is understanding what one is writing about and then how to perform this task (Lowe & Zemliansky, 2011, p.3). It means that students need to have a clear idea about writing and how the final product is supposed to be.

However, writers are not supposed to start writing only when they have figured everything out. Most people start writing something and end up by having a complete different thing. Ideas flow when one start writing and this is why drafting is needed as a first step. However, it is debatable whether writers need to rigorously follow certain steps' order or skip some. Lowe and Zemliansky called it a “myth”, saying that writing is a recursive and writers might need to repeat many activities while writing (Lowe & Zemliansky, 2011, p.4).

Finally, a freshman writer needs to know certain things in order to be able to write. Writing is ought to be ambiguous. Writers do not know to whom they are writing or where they are. They have to create the context themselves and use punctuation to give the words a voice.

In conclusion, students come to the course with fear and fascination especially of the word “academic”. Nevertheless, all they need to do is get familiar with what they might face. They are required to understand what writing is and prepare for the task.

## **2.2 Composing a piece of writing**

Writing a paragraph or an essay is a hard work. It is a process that includes many steps which can be rigid, and writers are more often restricted to follow those steps as they are. Before writing anything, a student is supposed to put in mind the general process. He has to think of the three main stages of writing: the pre writing, writing and rewriting. According to Reigstad and McAndrew (1984) these stages are the ones to go through in order to compose an effective essay.

First, in prewriting students are supposed to do the CCR: collect, connect and rehearse. Therefore, they should collect enough accurate information about the given topic through different reading and intensive researching. Since meaning appears when different pieces of information are connected together, writers should manipulate the relationship between the present pieces of information to get different patterns of meaning. Then they put it all in a first draft where they try to connect all the collected information to find the voice and form that suits the essay.

Writing, or in other cases called drafting, is what comes next. In this stage, writers attempt to start constructing sentences and phrases using the previously collected information. Usually writing here does not take time, they write as fast as they can. This is where the writer has a general idea how the composition will be and what course will it take. Therefore, he/she will be able to develop it correctly.

Developing the draft is considered as the final stage. This is where the writer can add definitions, further explanations and even exemplifications. He can even reconstruct the draft to make it more comprehensive to the readers. He also ends up by editing it by going through what he wrote again to remove, add, or even correct spelling or grammar mistakes to make it more effective.

Overall, any effective piece of writing needs to be coherent and cohesive. The reader must be able to understand what the writer is trying to say and get the best of it. Therefore, the writer must take the time he has, use a suitable correct language in a clear way to best present his ideas for his audience.

## **2.3 Difficulties in academic writing**

For students, to write an effective essay explaining or discussing a certain matter, they go through different challenges that may impede the writing process. These challenges can be categorized as followed:

1. Vocabulary or lexical.
2. Spelling.
3. Grammar and punctuation.
4. Structure and organization.

It is important for both writers and reader to be aware of the topic of the essay's vocabulary and jargon. However, knowing all the vocabulary to use in the essay can be hard work for freshmen writers if not impossible. Being aware of all the necessary jargon of the specialty requires a lot of knowledge based on loads of readings. Not only extensive reading, but writers, in this case students, have to be able to explain those "new" words and simplify them to the readers. Unlike what is commonly believed, vocabulary does not necessarily mean complicated.

As much as vocabulary is important in the academic field, spelling words correctly is of high importance too. It is worth mentioning that the amount of spelling and grammar mistakes do say something about the writer's level and commitment to the task. Brown (nd) said in one of his articles online, that a student send him a short note asking to enroll in his class. However, that note was full of spelling mistakes, which led to rejecting the student's request. Some people tend to neglect the importance of spelling due to the existence of autocorrect on our PCs, but we should pay attention that these spellcheck are not 100% reliable since they will accept all English words (Lund University, 2017). It is worth mentioning that knowing the etymology of unfamiliar words helps spelling them correctly. This was explained by Waugh(2019), saying that being

familiar with the way words was brought to English can be of great help with finding their meaning and correct spelling.

No matter how much important all the above mentioned elements are, they can not outstand grammar. Grammar is considered the pillar of any language and for several centuries ago it was the only part of language that was studied. Myhill (2012, p.22) states: “.... *But using grammar to help young writers to see through language, to see how language constructs socially shaped meaning, to see how great users break rules- this is where grammar realises its potentials as a dynamic and vibrant element of English.*” Grammar is not only about writing correctly but also about creating meanings.

However, grammar is always peered with punctuation. Another element that most students fail to fulfill due to its difficulty and the fact that most of them underestimate its power. Punctuation as it is known today can be traced back to the early English and Latin manuscripts (Numberge, 1990). Punctuation is crucial in writing because it marks the intonation and help the reader understand more about the writer. For example, the absence or presence of a simple comma can make dramatic changes to the meaning. In saying “ let’s eat Grandma” instead of “ let’s eat, Grandma” lays a huge difference. There is only a comma between a natural statement and a statement of cannibalism.

Having enough information about the topic and grammar rules may be insufficient to write and effective essay. Why is that? Because we still need something called structure. Structuring an essay or a paragraph can be simply referred to as putting the knowledge we have about the given topic together using the correct grammar and moving smoothly from one idea to another. We cannot, however, stack all the information in one block where it is difficult to read. Most of the essays are linear; they present different ideas in an order that makes sense to the reader. Therefore, organizing information is crucial for the readers to catch up and relate different ideas to each other, for the essay to be comprehensive.

Different writing stages and skills are of high importance for researchers and students to be aware of. However, the bigger issue is how to teach them to realize all that in their pieces of writing and that is where the role of academic writing course comes .

## **2.4 Teaching Academic Writing**

Students are taught academic writing and written expression courses from their early years at university due to its importance. Though speaking comes first as a tool of communication, writing is of a higher importance in the academic field. It is not enough to have the information but also to have the skill of writing to deliver that information to a larger population. Unfortunately, students find it challenging because they do not have previous knowledge on what to write for a specific task. What may seem easy for a teacher, such as writing a report or a research paper, is confusing for a student. What to write and how to write it so that it fits the requirement of the task can be tricky for novice writers. Many studies have investigated the types of texts that students are required to write as a part of their academic progress and the results showed that each type of these texts has its own requirements that distinguishes it from the others (Brian,et al., 2009, p.20)

For students to be able to make the difference between each type of text and when to use them, teachers need to be familiar with what their students are required to use through the course of their studies. Teachers of academic writing need to be up to date and provide students with the different techniques that helps them writing a comprehensive paragraph or essay that serves the main purpose of the whole task. What to teach them is completely related to what they need in their particular field of study. For example, you do not teach math students creative writing while they need to know how to write a report and not short story.

## 2.5 Academic Writing Curriculum

There are many questions raised on how a writing curriculum should be designed, what to include and how to present it in an effective way Delhunt,et.al (2012) said that it is commonly known that writing is completely related to subject content and the process of learning. This answers one of the previous questions that the content of an academic writing course must answer the needs of the students. In this course, students are taught how to write relevant essays or reports using relevant topics to their majors. It also provides them with the sort of skills they need in addition to practicing the knowledge they acquired. The particularity of the essay writing denies the thought that “one size fits all” which makes it a bit hard for students, the reason why the curriculum should aim at making them familiar with all types of essay.

An academic writing module or course is supposed to be taught in the early years of study. It is crucial for students to “learn how to learn” (Delhunt, et al., 2012); therefore, the writing skill becomes a major one to learn where they get familiar with the proper ways of using sources and synthesizing. This will teach them what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

Furthermore, it is estimated that most of ESL or EFL find more difficulties in writing in English than natives. That is due to the fact they have started writing in English in their very early years. It is also estimated that ESL and EFL tend to be more careful with following the rules of writing because they pay more attention and take nothing for granted. However, there are recent models that explains the difficulties students face. Two of them were presented by Biggs (2003) which are the deficit model and contextual model. He explained in the first model that the authority predicts that students have deficiencies which require remedies, which should take place before they enroll the academic program. However, the contextual approach states that the problem with EFL students and teachers is not a deficit but more likely learning in context. Accordingly, Biggs affirms that any sort of contextual learning will lead to deep learning no

matter what learning style the student has (Angeniet & Yvette, 2017, p.4). Therefore, teaching EFL students academic writing in relation to their context will lead to improving their critical thinking and analytical skills and not only writing blocks of previously stated information.

## **2.6 Assessment and Evaluation in Academic Writing**

Most of the times, especially among students, assessment and evaluation are used interchangeably, which is not a proper use of the two terms because they are quite different.

First, we need to state clear the difference between the two terms assessment and evaluation. Brindley (2001) defined them saying: “The term **assessment** refers to a variety of ways of collecting information on a learner's language ability or achievement. Although **testing** and **assessment** are often used interchangeably, the latter is an umbrella term encompassing measurement instruments administered on a 'one-off basis such as tests”. He continued “Assessment is also distinguished from **evaluation** which is concerned with the overall language programme and not just with what individual students have learnt.” In other words, assessment and evaluation are two different techniques used by teachers to follow the progress of their student. Assessment is continuous, i.e performed by the end of each lecture or unit; while evaluation is usually presented by tests conducted at the end of the program which may be semesterial or annual. The difference between the two terms can also be related to the use or not of marks. Nevertheless, knowing the difference does not make it any easier for teachers to perform any of them.

Like most social science courses, academic writing presents many difficulties whether for students or for teachers. Assessment and evaluation is ought to be the hardest task mainly for teachers, since it requires objectivity, knowledge and a good sense of judgment. However, one cannot avoid subjectivity especially in writing, because one will always refer to his own style while evaluating others' work. Students' writings are evaluated by teacher with certain writing

preferable writing style. However, this style may or may not be the one of the student, which will hinder the evaluation process.

Grading or marking someone's work is not an easy task, and it is even more challenging when the work is a paragraph or an essay. Therefore, scholars in the field such as William Maritte, came up with the writing assessment scales that eased the job a little bit for teachers and made it somehow fairer for students.

## **2.7 Writing Assessment Scales**

The writing assessment scales (WAS) came as a result to teachers and students complaints from the difficulty in assessing different writing works. Early studies proven the unreliability of the ordinary essay- type examination, which made a lot of teachers avoid questions that fully depend on essay writing in their tests. Later, a new system developed by William Maritte.Sale.JR emerged for a more careful essay analysis ( Norbert & Kilduff, 2008, p.15). This was the beginning of a whole new era in writing assessment, and in 1950s Diederich, who later became the best figure in writing assessment, collaborated with other scholars to make the assessment of writing a more regularized process.

However, things are slightly different in Europe where students writings are assessed based on the focus of the course itself. The assessment will takes into consideration the goal of the course. For example, if the course is aimed to teach students grammar then the type of assessment should be able to determine to what extent students are applying grammar rules. Though this may sound convenient, but if the assessment is focused on the content rather than the form, based on the course aims, this may result in poor writing skills. These skills are extremely important because the reader will be influenced by the overall writing style including cohesion and register, which inevitably effects the final grade though they were not taking in consideration in the making of the assessment scale (Breez, 2012, p.147).

## **2.7.1 Types of Scales**

There are two main concepts to achieve in any assessment context, validity and reliability (Breez, 2012, p.147). Validity as a concept stands for the extent to which a test can measure what it designed to measure. In other words, how much does it actually work; while reliability is the degree to which a measurement tool measures the same way in the same circumstances and the same subject (Bachman, 1990 , p.160). Henceforth, researchers, under the names of different universities and governmental systems, developed many types of writing assessment scales using these two concepts to raise the credibility of the grades and test results in writing; among these are the key stage 2 from the English system and the E8 Writing Scale.

### **2.7.1.1 Key stage 2**

Many schools in England and Wales follow a national curriculum that is based on key stages. This curriculum tells them what to teach exactly and tells teachers what topics they should tackle in their lessons. Key Stage 2 (KS2) is the key stage taught in Years 3 to 6, to 7-11-year-olds. By the end of this key stage, the ks2, students are assessed to see how far the goals set were achieved; the assessment is made by comparison to the expected level set by the government. As far as English is concerned, pupils in ks2 take two tests: the English grammar, punctuation and spelling plus the English reading one which mainly focuses on pupils ability to read and understand different texts (Educationquizzes, nd). Next are some key elements to be considered taken from the National Curriculum Assessment ks2 for English Writing :

- Exemplification materials provide examples of pupils' work to support teachers in making judgments.
- Assessment needs to be made according to the school's assessment policy, yet teachers are allowed to use their own judgment at the end of the key stage.

- Exemplification materials show only how ‘pupil can’ statements in the frameworks might be met. They do not strictly state a particular method of teaching because it might change due to the variations and peculiarities of each school.

Teachers are provided with a document that is mentioned above to guide them through the English teaching process. It includes how to use it, in addition to real exemplifications of pupils’ writing from the same stage. It also include the teacher’s framework that clears the expected standards which students supposed to meet. They may also refer to the website (cov.uk) to get the entire suite of materials that exemplifies the national standards for ks2 English writing assessment.

#### **2.7.1.2 The E8 Writing Rating Scale**

The E8 writing rating scale is designed to assess the E8 test takers who are mainly Australian pupils of the three different levels. This test aims at revealing the strengths and weaknesses of the test takers in writing, when the results are used to improve the classroom procedures and to monitor the system (Lackenbauer, et al., 2017, p.16). The difficulty of this test is based on level A1 to level B2; however, those who are used to being scaffolded in their writing will find it quite difficult. Pupils’ writing in four different tasks are assessed by professional raters using an analytical rating scale as shown in the table below:

E8 Writing Rating Scale (June 2016)				
	Task Achievement	Coherence and Cohesion	Grammar	Vocabulary
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ complete TA</li> <li>■ all 4 content points mentioned &amp; 1 or more elaborated</li> <li>■ all 6 content points mentioned &amp; 3 or more elaborated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ clear and coherent text</li> <li>■ cohesion on both sentence and paragraph level</li> <li>■ cohesive devices used successfully to produce a fairly fluent text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ good range of structures</li> <li>■ relatively high degree of control, with few inaccuracies which do not impair communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ good range of vocabulary</li> <li>■ generally accurate vocabulary</li> <li>■ formulations sometimes varied to avoid repetition</li> </ul>
6				
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ good TA</li> <li>■ all 4 content points mentioned &amp; 1 weakly elaborated</li> <li>■ 5 content points mentioned &amp; 2 or 3 elaborated</li> <li>OR</li> <li>■ all 6 content points mentioned &amp; 1 or 2 elaborated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ mostly clear and coherent text</li> <li>■ good sentence level cohesion as a linear sequence on a simple level</li> <li>■ some paragraph level coherence and cohesion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ sufficient range of structures</li> <li>■ occasional inaccuracies which do not impair communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ sufficient range of vocabulary</li> <li>■ occasionally inaccurate vocabulary</li> <li>■ major errors possible when expressing more complex ideas</li> </ul>
4				
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ sufficient TA</li> <li>■ 3 content points mentioned &amp; no elaboration</li> <li>OR</li> <li>■ 2 content points mentioned &amp; 1 elaborated</li> <li>■ 4 content points mentioned &amp; 1 or 2 elaborated</li> <li>OR</li> <li>■ all 6 content points mentioned &amp; no elaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ text often lacks clarity and/or coherence</li> <li>■ some simple sentence level cohesion using simple connectors like <i>and</i>, <i>but</i> and <i>because</i></li> <li>■ frequent lack of coherence and cohesion on paragraph level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ limited range of simple structures</li> <li>■ some inaccuracies which can impair communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ limited range of vocabulary</li> <li>■ frequently inaccurate vocabulary, generally without causing breakdown of communication</li> <li>■ tendency to use phrases from the prompt</li> </ul>
2				
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ some TA</li> <li>■ 2 content points mentioned &amp; no elaboration</li> <li>■ 3 content points mentioned &amp; no elaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ text not coherent</li> <li>■ basic linear connectors (<i>and</i>, <i>then</i>) on word or word group level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ extremely limited range of simple structures</li> <li>■ limited control, with frequent inaccuracies sometimes causing breakdown of communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ extremely limited range of vocabulary</li> <li>■ mostly inaccurate vocabulary causing frequent breakdown of communication</li> <li>■ several chunks lifted from the prompt</li> </ul>
0				

Table 2.7.1.2: E8 Writing Rating Scale (ibid).

The previous table shows the four areas of assessment within the E8 which are: task achievement, coherence and cohesion, grammar, and vocabulary. It states the level of achievement in each of them next to the proper mark or grade that should be given in the case of a similar answer. The different grades go from 1 to 7 depending on how well the answer is in relation to the task where 1 is the lowest possible grade. It also includes potential grades for when the answer does not suit completely what is mentioned in the column.

These two scales are made by governments to fit their teaching systems. Yet, it is possible to use them for general purposes to assess all types of students, as long as they fit the requirements of the program they are enrolling, since they are ready to be used and already tested to prove efficiency.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the writing skill is indispensable for any academic persons especially for students who are in the process of research. Though it may seem easy to just pick a pen and write, writing has more to it than just writing down words. It requires different steps depending on the nature of the targeted text to be written. Therefore, students in different levels are compelled to take academic writing course to ease things a bit for them since each field and each text has its own properties. However, this course presents many challenges not only for students, but for teachers as well. One of the main challenges that face teachers of AW is assessment, where it is hard to neglect ones' background and previous knowledge in making the final judgment. That is why different institutions came up with ready-made writing assessment scales to make the process more objective. Yet, teachers still have to customize them to suite the particular environment of the class.

## **Chapter Two**

### **TEXTING AND ONLINE CHATTING**

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## **Chapter two**

### **Texting and Online Chatting**

#### **Introduction**

Sending texts instead of calling has become a trend especially among teenagers. Whether it is internet-related or mobile services, they seem to never put their phones away. Texting as a phenomenon gained its own language with its specific criteria, mainly shortening and abbreviating words to use less space and less time writing them. They also tend to ignore all sort of writing rules in the process, or at least this is what the media is promoting. Text messaging gained a lot of attention lately due to its spread but it is not a new technology. Yet many questions are raised when it comes to language use and its potential effect such as: Is the language used in texting a written language or a spoken one? Is it beneficial or harmful to learning? These are some of the questions we attempt to answer.

#### **2.1 Brief History of Texting**

Texting, text messaging, or textese, is the most known and common way of communication of the modern world, where face to face conversations are replaced with few abbreviations. It is commonly associated to mobile phones whether with or without internet.

It's hard to believe that this "trend" is not so modern, more specifically it goes back to almost 31 years ago where Emails were introduced by Neon SMS. If you ever google the history of text messaging, the common information you find is that the first text message was sent in 1992 by a developer named Neil Papworth, but it had to be from a pc since the first phone with a keyboard was released a year later by Nokia. However, it was until seven years later that people were able to exchange text messages and only in 2010 that the term "texting" entered in the dictionary (Barker,2015).

Texting, surprisingly, was not invented for communicational purposes nor to replace voice messages as it is doing now. It was made for merely commercial purposes or even as mobile service to notify voice messages or missed calls. For example, European companies developed the Group Special Mobile (GSM) as a way to stay in touch with their mobile subscribers and send them short alerts (James, 2011, p.3).

Furthermore, the fact that text messages are short is not a matter of choice. It actually started as technological limitation where people had only around 160 letters per message. They had to say so much, very fast in a short space, which made them creative in their writing. This led to the emergence of the texting form such as manipulating words, dropping letters, and even inserting numbers to replace phonemic sounds or syllables just to save space. Phonetic replacement came as “obvious” because it is easy to write words as we pronounce them such as: b4, c u, gr8 (Crystal, 2008, p.262).

Therefore, what we have today as a form of writing in texting is a product of a long journey plus a group of circumstances. Texting is not a new born, but a result of the development of technology that made people cope with it. The shift from speaking to writing as a communication tool made people take certain characteristics of the speaking form of language to its writing form, which gave birth to a completely different form.

## **2.2 Texting and Language**

From the first appearance of texting until today, the phenomenon has been in an observable development. It started as regular writing and became the mixture of abbreviations and numbers that we are using daily. This huge development is frightening scholars who think it is harmful to language; even the former French president Jack Chirac made a comment saying that this new form of communication may have an impact on language. However, there are others such as David Crystal, who believe that texting does not harm language unlike many are promoting.

Through centuries of human existence and inventions, people have been rejecting everything new that comes to them. They believed that new things, whether they are religious or innovative, will bring them evil. For example, in the fifteenth century, the emergence of printing was viewed by the church as “an invention of Satan” (Crystal, 2008, p.2). This fear was not from the invention itself but it was from what it may bring. They were afraid of the ideas that can flourish against the church, which came to be true later. It did not stop here, this rejection extended to the telegraph until it reached telephones and internet.

In today’s world, the internet is a common thing. People from different ethnicity and age groups know what the internet is. In addition to its development in parallel with smart phones, the style of writing has developed, too. Texting is not really new, it is its spread that caught the attention of people. According to a Nielsen Mobile survey, for the second quarter of 2008, U.S. mobile subscribers sent and received on average 357 text messages per month. Compared with making and receiving 204 phone calls a month (CBC NEWS, 2008). Which is an indication that Americans are clearly switching to SMS messaging as the main communication tool.

In order to cope with the speed of the age and the need for constant communication, people started to write as they speak ([Mcwhorter](#), 2013). They started to use abbreviations, misspelling words and completely neglect grammar rules. Craig (2003) says that the results of his research show that phonetic replacement or abbreviations take 50% of girls’ normal SMS messaging (p.6).

However, the true threat came to the surface when they started to write in the same way in formal writings. The outrage burst when a student answered the English GCSE exam in text messaging form (Beard, 2004, p.50). In addition, scholars and educators in the USA started to raise questions, such as: “will a 12-year-old texter who drops vowels and word endings consistently in his text messages develop permanent spelling deficiencies? Do adolescents find it appropriate to use textese in formal writings?” (James, 2011, p.5).

On the one hand, the current concerns that are been shown are mainly spelling-related. Scholars such as (Coulter,2008) argue that texting has negative effect on students, sharing the story of a teacher who attempted to grab students' attention to "proper writing" by handing them papers, called "wake up call", with abbreviations and symbols to understand. (Wood, et al., 2014, p.17 ) another opponent to texting, claim that even adults can be a subject to the effect of texting on spelling suggesting that it has to do with unconsciousness.

On the other hand, many scholars are refusing the huge fuss about texting. They are not neglecting the literacy problem but they question whether texting is the one to blame as many are promoting or not. They say that the claims made are not supported with enough empirical data. Some even went to the extreme opposite saying that it actually has positive effect on writing. (Craig ,2003, p.2) states that it is beneficial to the development of youth literacy since it promote regular contact with words, and the use of writing as the main means of communication. In addition to Crystal (2008) who agrees that internet can be motivational for students learning. Therefore, teachers can use internet, more specifically texting and online chatting, to motivate students to write more (p.265).

In conclusion, the dilemma stands. There are those who are promoting the use of texting as a beneficial technology for students' learning and getting acquaintance to writing, on the contrary those who are scared of the linguistic change that this technology might bring to English. The main question is who is right and who is wrong? Or do both sides got a point?

### **2.3 Characteristics of Texting (is it becoming a language?)**

Since its huge spread, texting raised a lot of controversial. One of the most highlighted ones is whether texting language is in the spoken or written form? Many researchers tried through their studies to answer this question. For instance, Crystal came up with the term "netspeak" which he says is neither speaking nor writing but a new form of communication (Harper et al, 2005, p.35).

In addition, Ling (2003) agrees saying that from a linguistic perspective texting language appears to be “trans-linguistic dragqueen”. It has features of both spoken and written language, though it leans towards spoken form more. It has the element of instancy, informality and a high level of solidarity between the interlocutors, which characterises spoken communication more. Furthermore, Ling claims that SMS messaging takes the assumption that the interlocutors are not physically present ( Ling, 2003).

It is hard to determine one form of language or a style in texting because the texter is influenced by many variables. This leads to different changes in language use from one person to another. Teenagers, for example, in Algeria are influenced by bilingualism which is clear in their use of words from different languages in the same sentence. However those who learned other languages tend to include them in their daily text messaging. They also insert emojis or smileys to express emotions. Being able to express different emotions through the use of codes and stickers took texting beyond written language (Castels, et al., 2007, p.182).

With all the new technologies available, adopting a new technology must be for the best convenience. It differs from one social group to another depending on the utilities they need. For example, a voice call is easier to adopt and does not require certain skills, but still cost more money unlike texting which requires more skills like literacy and extra time but is relatively cheaper. So, people make the preference between voice calls and texting mainly based on two criteria, saving time or saving money (Castels, et al., 2007, p.39). Therefore, the use of language in texting will change according to age and social group of the users.

However, it is clear that social groups do not only determine what kind of technology to use but also how to use it. For instance, most of the youngsters are choosing texting over voice calling which made texting more of a younger trend that is not for older people. Teenagers introduced new forms of writing to texting, the use of abbreviations and omission of certain vowels. It is obvious that teenagers always try to stand out in the crowd. They keep creating their own

abbreviations and acronyms. They also omit pronouns, neglect grammar rules and use punctuation to suit their own needs, to save time and sometimes just for fun (Beard, 2004, p.50).

These linguistic changes in parallel with its widespread, made people start believing that it is becoming a language of its own. Therefore, it is not weird when one finds it quite confusing when it comes to understanding the common abbreviations used in SMS and even online chatting. To solve this problem many tables that collect all the commonly used abbreviations were created.

Here is one of those tables:

Acronyms A to L		Acronyms M to Z	
2F4U	Too Fast For You	MMW	Mark my Words
4YEO FYEO	For Your Eyes Only	N/A	Not Available / Applicable
AAMOF	As a Matter of Fact	NaN	Not a Number
ACK	Acknowledgment	NNTR	No need to Reply
AFAIK	As far as I know	noob n00b	Newbie
AFAIR	As far as I remember / recall	NOYB	None of your Business
AFK	Away from Keyboard	NRN	No Reply Necessary
AKA	Also known as	OMG	Oh my God
B2K BTK	Back to Keyboard	OP	Original Poster, Original Post
BTT	Back to Topic	OT	Off Topic
BTW	By the Way	OTOH	On the other Hand
B/C	Because	PEBKAC	Problem exists between Keyboard and Chair
C&P	Copy and Paste	POV	Point of View
CU	See you	ROTFL	Rolling on the Floor Laughing
CYS	Check your Settings	RSVP	Repondez s'il vous plait (French: Please reply)
DIY	Do it Yourself	RTFM	Read the fine Manual
EOBD	End of Business Day	SCNR	Sorry, could not Resist
EOD	End of Discussion	SFLR	Sorry, for late Reply
EOM	End of Message	SPOC	Single Point of Contact
EOT	End of Thread / ... Text / ... Transmission	TBA	To be Announced
FAQ	Frequently asked Questions	TBC	To be Continued / To be Confirmed
FACK	Full Acknowledge	TIA	Thanks in Advance
FKA	Formerly known as	THX TNX	Thanks
FWIW	For what it's Worth	TQ	Thank You
FYI / JFYI	(Just) For your Information	TYVM	Thank You Very Much
HF	Have fun	TYT	Take your Time
HTH	Hope this Helps	TTYL	Talk to you Later
IIRC	If I Recall / Remember Correctly	w00t	Whoomp, there it is; Meaning "Hooray"
IMHO	In my Humble Opinion	WFM	Works for Me
IMO	In my Opinion	WRT	With Regard to
IMNSHO	In my not so Humble / Honest Opinion	WTH	What the Hell / What the Heck
IOW	In other Words	YMMD	You made my Day
ITT	In this Thread	YMMV	Your Mileage may vary
LOL	Laughing out loud	YAM	Yet Another Meeting

**Table 2.3.1: Table of Internet Abbreviations.**

As one might notice, most of these abbreviations listed above are the initials of the actual sentences or phrases that are daily used as a part of text messaging, such as “ASAP” for as soon as possible. Yet not all of them are group of initials and here appears the creativity of texters who introduced the phonetic replacement. For example, number four “4” is used to replace “for” if it is in forever “4ever” or in “4u” as it is stated in the previous table. This phonetic

replacement does not use number only but letters as well, as in u for you and r for are. Texters, especially teenagers, are known for their creativity. Therefore, one may encounter different abbreviations or acronyms that are not in this table, but it is usually the same pattern followed to create them.

With all these multiple characteristics, texting language has been seen by the media as “weird”. It has been given different names “textese”, “hybrid shorthand”, even “digital virus”. It was viewed as a new language that texters were called bilingual (Crystal,2008, p13). This new language was attacked by scholars and the media as well. An article published in 2002 in the Guardian, attacked texters saying that they are illiterate and lazy. Crystal (2008) claims that most abbreviations used in texting are standards, and not all texters use abbreviations. He also added that what caught people’s attention is the distinctive spelling and the new symbols and made them call it “foreign”. Here are few samples of text messages:

“what R U sayin”

“landed safely. on way to town”

However, the level of formality and grammar awareness rises when texts messages are longer. For instance, “if u cn send me the disk by post I’ll get it copied. Make sure u get a receipt 4 it so tht we cn claim the cost of the postage back.” (Crystal,2008, p.20).

To sum up, texting language is a hybrid language form that combined characteristics from both written and spoken language. It is described as foreign because of the introduction of symbols into it. Yet, it is quite misleading to do so since it has many characteristics of English. Therefore, it is better to call it a form of English rather than a new language.

## **2.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Texting**

As it is a subject of a huge controversial, texting made scholars, such as David Crystal and Craig, talk about it and searched it for years. Some of them came up with good sides of it supporting its use, while others brought the bad side of it claiming that it is harmful to language and to the new generation in general.

Adolescents adopted texting as their main communication tool, and adapted it to suit their needs and emotions. They literally started to write as they speak which made them include new symbols and be more creative to keep up with the speed of constant communication. Though the daily repetitive use they develop proficiency with phonetic replacement and abbreviations. This gives them subconscious knowledge of metalinguistics that is proven to increase literacy (Craig, 2003, p.8). In addition, metalinguistics includes the skill of writing in different tones and styles. Though the general assumption is that human cannot have both texting skills and academic writing skills, it is safe to say that it is false. Ordinary humans have the abilities to acquire and use different varieties of language forms (Craig, 2003, p.8). For examples, Mark twain, when writing Huckleberry Finn, used his knowledge of the local speech and included it in the dialogues. Yet it did not effect negatively his writing abilities in standard English.

Furthermore, it is important to note that most abbreviations used in daily texting, such as: BRB for be right back, and LOL for laughing out loud, are in English (Crystal, 2008, p.124). This English domination gives students of English an opportunity to practice the language and be more familiar with its use. In addition, students start having more contact with foreign words which widens their vocabulary and knowledge about lexicography. Henceforth, it improves their writing skills in general. Another important point to mention is that texting allows people to express their feelings and emotional status with the simple use of emoticons and smilies. When three successive exclamation marks means surprised, a :/ means the sender is unsure. This is an upgrade that regular writing does not have.

However, the constant use of text messaging among young adult can be addictive and overtake other forms of communication (Caroll, 2007, p.56). Adolescents today write more than they speak, which makes it hard for them to communicate face-to-face. Their overuse of writing may stand in the way of their public speaking skills. They get used to behind the screen communication that may create shyness and make them introverts. This prevent them from being able to present their hard work in the different presentations in school, which may hander their academic course. It may also effect their spelling abilities, when they get confused believing that words' spelling within SMS language are the correct ones (Bălcescu, 2015).

Moreover, the way these teenagers relay completely on texting today makes them acquaintance with particular forms of writing. If students are not taught how to differentiate between different styles of writing and forms of language, they may bring the texting style to academic settings. This language change is what makes linguists worry on literacy among youngsters. Though it might seem reasonable to think that texting is harmful, it is still has not been proven yet.

To sum up, any new or old technology has both pros and cons and texting is of no difference. It may improve students writing abilities as it may be the reason of declined literacy. Yet it is up to us to decide how we want to use it.

## **Conclusion**

Text messaging is a relatively new technology that allows people to communicate while being apart. It has its own form of language that mainly consist of abbreviations and vowel dropping. It is also the most preferable way of communication among teenagers who tend to twist language and be creative in using it. However, it has been a subject of controversial for years. Some say it is a threat to language and literacy while other say it is harmless and may even be used to promote learning. It does have both good and bad sides, but and it is our duty to

pick to the right one. Unfortunately, nothing has being proven yet and many researches need to be conducted to confirm any of the previous assumptions or decline them.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

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## **Chapter Three**

### **Data analysis and interpretation**

#### **Introduction**

This study was conducted to reveal the effect of texting on students' academic writing skills and to show the different forms that the effect can appear in. It is a corpus-based study where the data was collected directly from the participants. In order to analyze this data, content analysis was used since it is the most suitable method to the nature of the study. The procedure and results of this study will be clearly presented in the coming paragraphs, in addition to the final interpretation of the findings.

#### **2.1 Content Analysis**

When we have our data in form of texts or any written form, whether it is its original form or not, we have to conduct a content analysis to analyze it properly.

Content analysis is a scientific research technique used in social sciences to make valid deductions from texts, works of art or even maps. It also provide the researcher with more understanding to the studied phenomenon (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18). It is based on interpreting and coding data. Although it may seem to be purely qualitative since it is based mainly on texts, but it is also somehow quantitative. To analyse data properly researchers use units to be able to measure writing and one of the most popular units used is T-units.

T-units analysis is a content analysis used in social sciences especially in researches related to second language to assess writing maturity of learners on the linguistic level. However, it has

a lot of short comes that made people question its validity. Since it only measures the surface and does not go deep, it is unable to quantify important elements such as cohesion and coherence (Gaies, 1979).

T-unit is often but not always a sentence. According to Wikipedia, T-units are "shortest grammatically allowable sentences into which (writing can be split) or minimally terminable unit." Linguistically explained, it is the main clause plus any subordinating clause that comes after it or mainly attached to it .It is also suggested that the length of T-units in an analysis is an indication to the syntactic complexity (Nordquist, 2018).

In conclusion. Content analysis is a mixed method approach that has the best of both words. It enables the researcher to treat a huge amount of data and different samples that may be difficult to work on if using purely qualitative methods. Therefore, a researcher will be able to treat qualitative data using quantitative methods.

### **3.1 Population and Sample**

The population chosen for this study is third year students of English at the University of Biskra. It was chosen based on two main criteria. First, students of third year have the required level in the writing. They are neither advanced nor beginners in writing and they do not have enough training in academic writing in general. In addition, the curriculum of third year written expression includes paragraph writing and essay writing which is convenient for the study since it provides them with superficial knowledge about the structure of a paragraph. However, the sample was based on volunteering because of the sensitive nature of the study. They were asked, after one of their classes, to volunteer in order to participate in a study that requires them handing over some of their personal text messages and write paragraphs as well. We ended up by selecting five students from the volunteers based on their social media availability because all sorts of

contact with them were held online. The five selected participants are from different groups of third year with two different teachers in written expression. Also, they are all girls with different levels of academic achievement because this study do not study gender as a variable.

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

In order to conduct this qualitative research, two main data collection tools were used. First, the five participants ,who are third year Algerian English students, were asked to hand over three text messages from their mobile phones sent to different people with different level of solidarity. These three texts were supposed to be sent to a parent, a friend and a teacher, so that we will be able to measure the level of awareness of formality among students. However, they only sent text messages between them and their friends saying that they do not communicate by texting with neither their parents nor their teachers. They were also asked to write a paragraph about one topic that they had to choose together. They all chose one topic which was choosing a character that they would like to be from a movie of their preference, and write about it explaining their choice. The number of lines was not limited, so the length of the paragraphs differed from one participants to another. They all answered the question and send their paragraphs on time except for one student, which left us with four participants only. In addition, any sort of contact with the participants during this research was held online. This is a corpus-based study since the text messages were taken from the history of individuals' personal conversations and not customised for the study yet they were collected directly from the participants and not from a server.

### **3.3 Description of the Corpus**

Prior to collecting the data required to conduct the research, participants were gathered and the study was explained to them in addition to their role in it. They were reassured that their text messages will not be used in anything else except for the research purposes and their identities will remain anonymous.

Students were asked to hand over mainly five text messages taken directly from their smart phones sent to different people with different levels of “solidarity”: friends, family, colleagues and teachers. However, not all of them handed the exact number required and most of them were sent to friends only. Most of those texts are short and have no punctuation not what so ever. The use of abbreviations is obvious in most of them. The texts are genuine and not made for the study for more credibility. Those texts messages were not only from their mobile phones (SMS) but they were also form social media application such as Facebook. Those same students were also asked to write a paragraph (the number of lines was not limited) describing a character they would like to be from a movie. All students sent their paragraphs which differed in length from very long to short ones in a short time answering the exact question that they chose which was: If you were to be any character in a movie whom would you be?

It is important to mention that these students text and chat in English daily with their friends. They use text messaging more than phone calls as their communication tool with friends outside the classroom. In addition, they have a good level in English and they have been using English to communicate outside of the classroom since high school.

Furthermore, both of texts and paragraphs from the same person were compared in order to be able to deduce the main reasons behind the different level of effect of texting on academic writing. The final results of the comparison were again compared to the academic level of achievement of each of the participants to confirm or deny the relation between academic level and effect of texting on writing. In order to analyze the gathered data we had to follow the content analysis method.

### **3.4 Procedure**

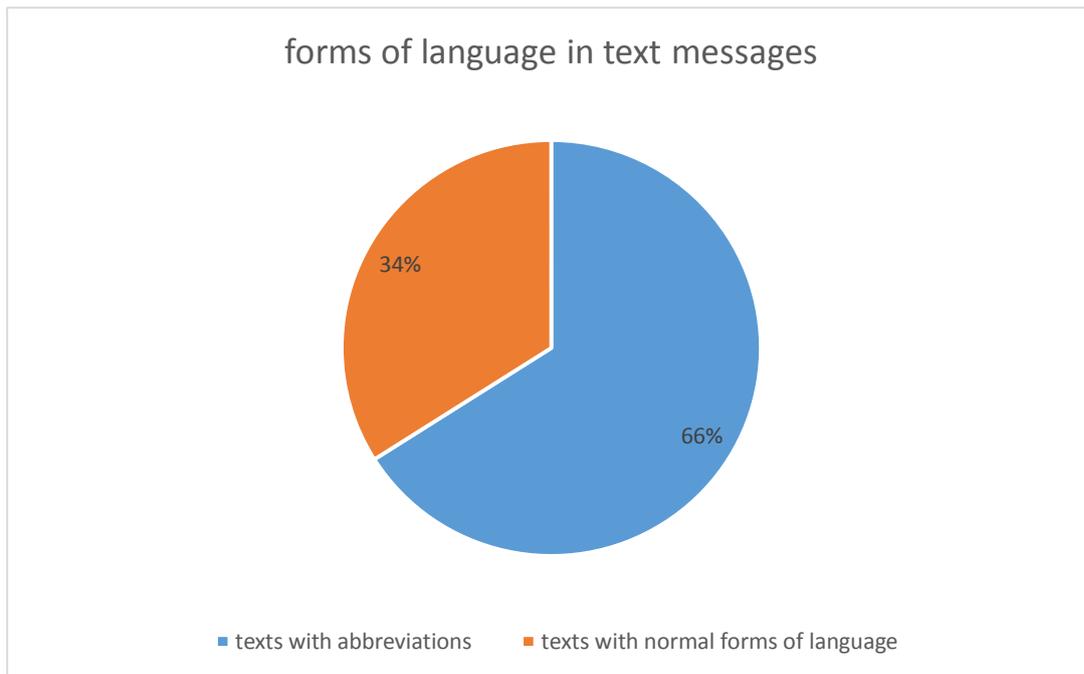
In order to analyse data and answer the research questions, a content analysis was used on the handed texts and paragraphs written by the participants which is the most suitable method for the nature of the study. The final results were also compared to two other factors: the participants' achievement level and proficiency in texting, to find out if there is a relation between these two and the level of the effect of texting.

This study focused on three main criteria of texting : abbreviations, emojis and grammar and punctuation mistakes. These three characteristics of texting were the ones we looked for in the paragraphs as well to identify the effect of texting on students' writing skills.

### **3.5 Results**

The results of the analysis varied from one student to another in a matter of frequency of the use of emojis in texting and level of formality in writing. In addition to the fact that they all sent very short messages that mainly do not exceed five words per text, the fact that made grammar mistakes quite impossible to happen since they are hardly forming sentences.

The following pie chart represents the participants' results of the forms of language that they used in texting:



**Figure 3.5.1: Forms of Language in Texting**

This pie chart shows that 66% of the forms of texting used by these participants is abbreviation, indicating that abbreviations are a common form of language used in texting. It also shows that they used emojis at a rate of 33% of their daily texting, confirming that they use more abbreviations than emojis or any other form of language in text messaging. The average use of abbreviations was 0.66 abbreviation per text while the use of emojis was 0.33, which means that most of the texts contain at least one abbreviation and not all have emojis in them.

However, when it comes to grammar, it was difficult to measure since most of the text messages are very short and the informal style dominated. In some of the texts there were no verbs and no personal pronouns but when they used verbs they did not make grammar mistakes when it comes to verb tenses and subject verb agreement. The table below presents the results of grammar use in text messages:

Participants	Punctuation	Subject-verb agreement
A	75%	100%
B	0%	90%
C	25%	90%
D	0%	100%

**Table 3.5.1: Grammar Results of the Participants**

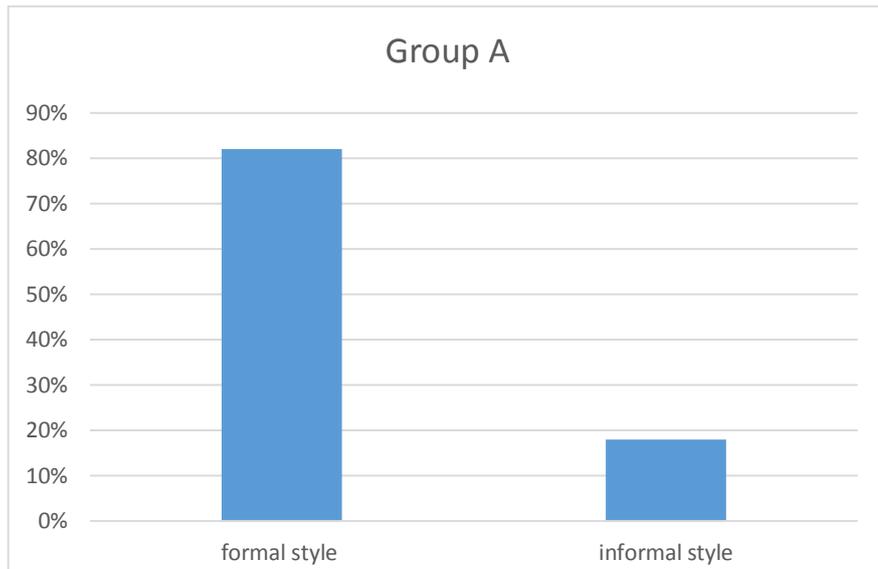
This table shows that the participants have used subject-verb agreement in most of their texts messages. It is important to note that punctuation was completely absent in the text messages where only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the participants ( as shown in the table above) used punctuation, while the rest did not include it at all only to form emojis.

Furthermore, the paragraphs that the participants wrote for this study answering the test question were analysed as well in order to answer the main question if there is an effect on academic writing from texting or not. To do so, we aimed at foreshadowing the findings from the previous analysis of the texts messages on students' writings. The analysis focused on the same criteria: grammar, punctuation, abbreviation and emojis. All four paragraphs were divided into T\_units and analysed individually. For example, “ if I were to be a character in a movie I would be eponine from the famous hugo novel les miserable” is a T\_unit taken from one of the participants' paragraphs. In this T\_unit the participants did not capitalize any of the proper nouns. The number of T\_units differed from one participant to another due to the fact that the number of lines was not limited. The next table presents results of the content analysis of the participants' paragraphs:

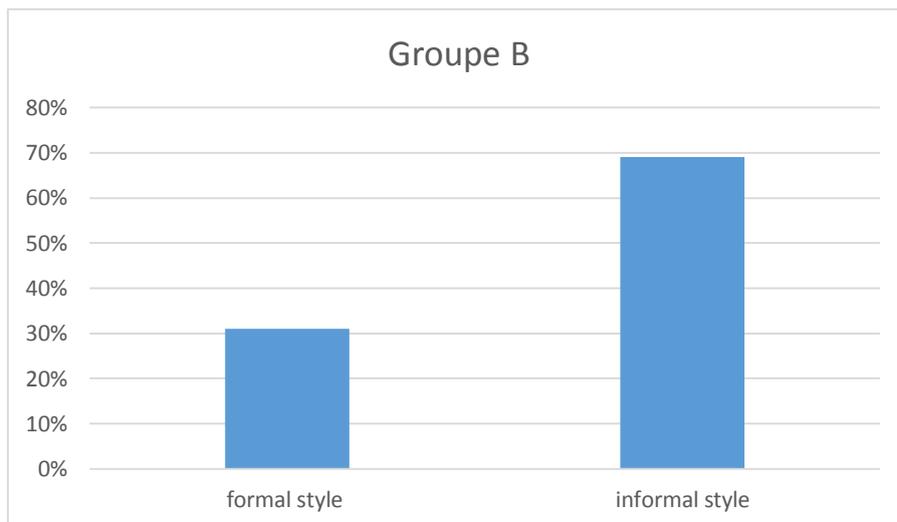
Participants	Use of abbreviations and informal language	Punctuation and grammar mistakes	Capitalization
A	0%	25%	50%
B	65%	60%	50%
C	30%	50%	45%
D	20%	40%	25%

**Table 3.5.2: Results of the Content Analysis of the Paragraphs.**

The results shows that none of the students used neither abbreviations nor emojis in their paragraphs as they did in texting. However, it is important to mention that none of them indented their paragraphs which is a clear effect of texting because indentations is absolutely absent in the text messages as well. Some of them also used very long sentences and completely misused punctuation. The variation between their individual results that appeared on the level of formality, which was measured based on the use of contractions and informal vocabulary, is presented in the following histograms.



**Figure 3.5.2 Level of Formality in Paragraphs for Group A**



**Figure 3.5.3 Level of Formality in Paragraphs for Group B**

These bar charts represent the two groups found while analyzing the different paragraphs. When it comes to formality in writing these graphs show the difference between the two groups which have the same number of participants. On the one hand, 50% of the participants, which is represented by Group A, were quite formal at the rate of 80%. On the other hand, the other 50% of the participants represented in Group B had a low level of formality at the rate of 31% only.

This difference resulted in an average of 0.92 informal word per unit for the two groups together; taking in consideration that Group A got an average of 0.11 informal word per unit. This indicate that some of the participants are aware of the requirement of the two situations, while others are unable to shift from one to another without bringing the characteristics of texting to academic writing since it is the easiest and the closest to the daily use of language.

Furthermore, The paragraph and text messages from the same participant were compared in order to find the relation between proficiency in texting and the level of the effect texting has on academic writing to test if proficiency is one of the reasons behind the level of the effect or not. The results of each of the participants are shown in the preceding table:

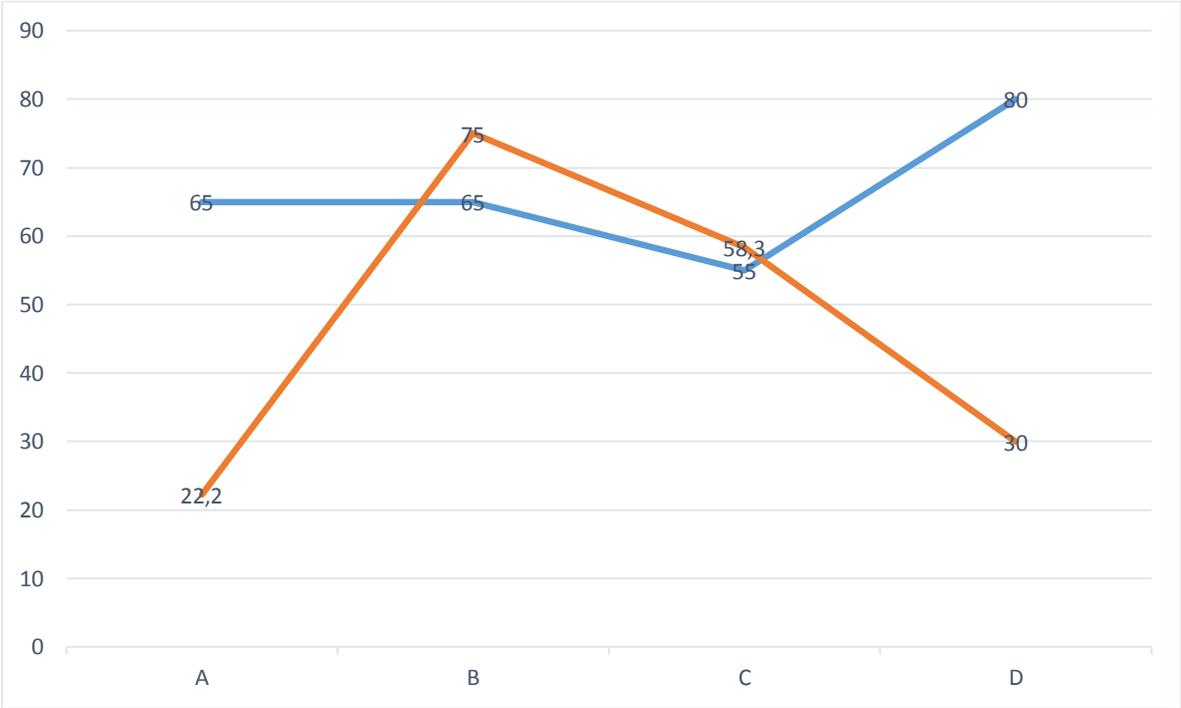
students	Level of proficiency in texting	Frequent use of texting forms in writing
A	89%	22.2%
B	66.6%	75%
C	66.6%	58.3%
D	33.3%	30%

**Table3.5.3: Level of Proficiency in Texting and Frequent Use of Texting Forms in Writing of the Participants**

The level of proficiency was measured based on the results of the analysis of text messages, while the frequent use of texting forms in writing was measured based on the analysis of the

paragraphs taking in consideration how much a student repeated them. Also, students are referred to as A,B,C and D to keep their names anonymous as they requested.

The previous table shows that students have different levels in the proficiency of texting as well as their frequent use of texting characteristics in writing. The level of proficiency is limited between 89% and 33.3% where the frequency of using texting forms is between 75% and 22.2%. Only 25% of the participants who texted well (used all the texting forms) did not have many texting criteria presented in their writings, while the rest 75% results' go in parallel. These results were put in a diagram to be compared as it is shown in the following graph:



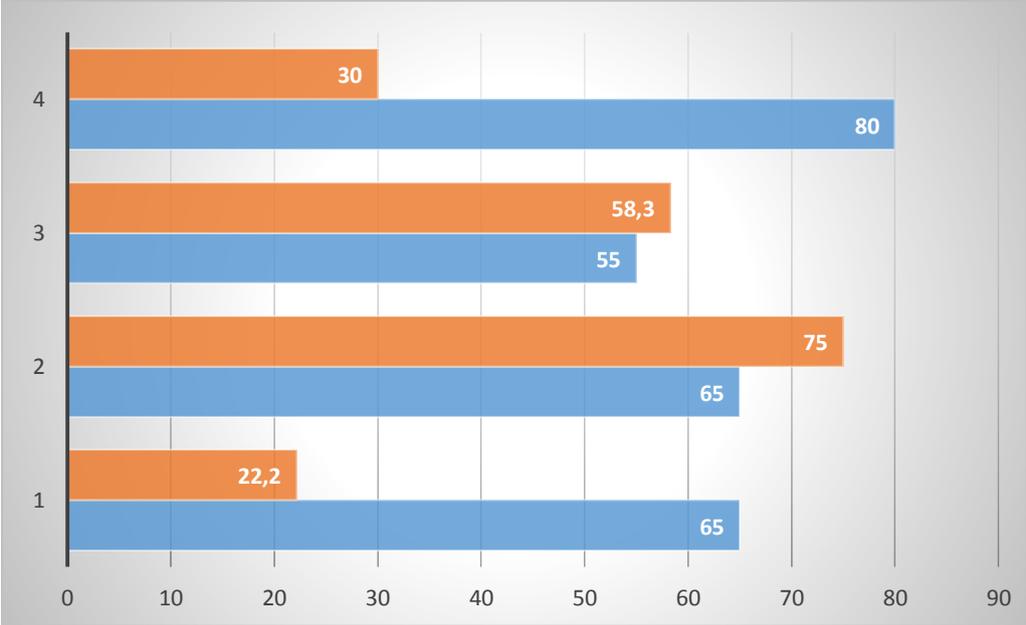
**Figure 3.5.4: Proficiency in Texting Compared to Frequent Use of Texting Forms in Writing**

The previous line graph consists of two lines where the first one in blue represents proficiency is texting while the second line in orange represents how frequent they used texting forms while writing academically.

The two lines start from two different points with a big distance of 66.8 units on the scale. The distance between them starts to become smaller as they go further to reach points where both lines meet indicating that the different results of the same participant are close to each other.

This diagram shows that only one student had a significant difference between the results of both proficiency in texting and the frequent use of texting forms in writing. It indicates that this student does not mix up between the two different situations, which can be a result of awareness or mastering the academic writing rules. However, the rest of the participants had very close results explaining that they do not differentiate between the two situations of texting and academic writing or their small knowledge on rules of writing in formal situations.

Moreover, the same results of the frequent use of texting forms were again compared to the academic achievement level of each participant and the results are presented in the following bar chart:



**Figure 3.5.5: Comparison of the Frequent Use of Texting Forms to the Achievement Level**

This bar chart represents the different results of the participants in the academic achievement level compared to their frequent use of texting forms in academic writing. The bars in blue represent the achievement level of each student while the ones in orange represent the frequent use of texting characteristics in academic writing. It is important to mention that in order to be able to make this diagram, students' achievement levels were turned into percentages to make the comparison possible.

This diagram shows that there is no pattern between the bars which indicates that students had complete different results. Where 50% of the participants showed less achievement level in parallel with higher frequency in the use of texting characteristics, the other 50% showed no significant between the two variables.

### **3.6 Interpretations**

The results of the analysis of both text messages and paragraphs of the participants answered the two main research questions confirming that the daily use of text messaging does have an effect on academic writing. In addition, it confirmed the hypothesis that the negative effect is demonstrated on the lexical level where students are using informal vocabulary in formal situations. The effect also appeared on the grammatical level where students showed an inability to use punctuation correctly. However, the level of the influence varied depending on many factors such as students' proficiency in text messaging and chatting.

The comparison between the frequent appearance of texting forms in writing and the level of proficiency in texting among the participants also confirmed that the level of proficiency could be one of the main reasons that cause the effect of texting on writing to raise and to be different from one student to another.

At the beginning of the study, we assumed that the level of academic achievement among students would be one of the main factors that identify the level of the effect in writing. However,

the results of the comparison above denied that assumption. The two students (student A and D from the table above), who had less characteristics of texting in their writings, had two completely different academic levels where student A had 65% and student D had 80%. This indicates that there is no relation between the level of achievement and the effect of texting on writing. When these two students were asked what they think the reason behind this result is. They both answered that the achievement level does not represent their actual level in English, which makes it unreliable to judge upon in this case.

This study also aimed at finding out if students are aware of the level of solidarity among different interlocutors when texting. However, none of the participants handed any text message to a teacher or a parent as they were requested, which created a lack of data and we were unable to answer the question.

## **Conclusion**

Text messaging is a relatively new phenomenon that raised a lot of controversy since it appeared. It has a negative effect on students and especially on their writing since it is closer to its form of language. This study aimed at figuring out if there is an actual effect or not and if it is a negative or a positive one. In addition, it aimed at clearing the forms that represent this effect in students' pieces of writing. By the end, this study confirmed that there is a negative effect of the frequent use of text messaging on academic writing and it revealed two forms of it, which are informality and the misuse of punctuation. It also showed that this effect is accompanied with other factors that may raise it or lower it such as the level of proficiency in texting.

## **General Conclusion**

The effect of texting has been a source of anxiety to a lot of scholars and even parents. There are two main assumptions? Those who are arguing that it does not even have a remarkable effect, while many others have a different stand saying that it has a negative one on the academic level especially on writing. They also explained that students are not aware of the different settings between the two situations which causes the appearance of texting characteristics in formal writing.

This study focused on the debatable topic of the effect of texting on academic writing. It aimed at finding out if the effect of daily text messaging and online chatting on academic writing is a negative or a positive one. In addition to shedding light on certain mistakes that can be directly related to the extensive use of texting as a communication tools among students. It also aimed at helping teachers control the effect by presenting the main reasons such as the level of proficiency in texting that could be behind the level of influence on writing from text messaging.

In order to conduct the study, real data was collected directly from the targeted population. Therefore, the four participants who are third year English students at the University of Biskra were asked to present text messages from their daily conversations with different people. These texts were taken genuinely from their mobile phones and different social media applications for more credibility. In addition, they were asked to answer a question in a form of a paragraph to see how they write academically and compare it to what they write while texting. To analyse these different paragraphs and text messages from the participants, content analysis was used to obtain the results of this study.

This study was conducted at the university to be able to achieve the previously stated aims. The participants were asked to hand over personal text messages and answer a test in a form of a paragraph to be used as a corpus for both academic writing and texting. This collected data was

analysed using content analysis since it is the most suitable method for the nature of the study. Both texts and paragraphs from the participants were analysed individually and compared to each other in order to answer the research questions. Moreover, the results of the analysis, as explained in the third chapter, showed that texting has a negative effect on academic writing. For example, students carry texting writing style to academic writing which leads to violating certain rules, such as the misuse of punctuation at an average of 0.9, and the high level of informality at an average of 0.52 informal word per unit.

This study also focused on the reasons behind this effect and took two of them to the test: level of achievement and proficiency in texting. The results of the comparison between students' texts and paragraphs showed that the proficiency level in texting raises the effect of texting on writing. However, there was no relation found between the level of achievement of the students and the effect of texting.

Therefore, from the results of this study, we were able to confirm the hypotheses saying that there is an effect from texting on academic writing which was proven to be a negative one. Moreover, daily texting can cause students lapses in writing that may turn to habits and lower their effective writing skills. As a result, awareness among students needs to be raised in order for them to be able to shift swiftly from texting to academic writing without mixing between the two.

### **Implications of the Study**

From the findings of this research, we found that the phenomenon of texting has an effect on students' academic course especially on the writing skill that even students are not aware of. This study also cleared one of the main reasons that control the level of the effect which is the level of proficiency in texting. Therefore, these findings can be implicated in ELT to identify the source of certain writing issues that may appear on students' pieces of writing, which may help

correct them before they become habits. In addition, it provides teachers with the main criteria of texting that students can carry to the academic setting such as the absence of indentation and punctuation mistakes. It should also raise the level of awareness about the phenomenon among students and teachers to be able to overcome it easily.

Teachers could use the table presented in the second chapter (see **Table 2.3.1**) as a reference for abbreviation that might be found in students' writing and give it to their students so they know what to avoid.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations identified in this research were mainly related to the data presented by the participants. They were asked to present texts sent to different people on the level of solidarity. Yet none of them had anything rather than just the ones sent to friends. Therefore, the part where we were supposed to find out if students are aware of formality between different interlocutors was dropped due to the lack of data. In addition, the small number of the people willing to give their text messages to a stranger causes the sample to not be fully representative. Also, this study focused on students only due to the lack of time, while teachers and parents' perspective on the phenomenon was not considered thought it might be of equal importance.

Therefore, we suggest that there are more factors that could cause or influence the effect of texting which need to be investigated. In addition, teachers of academic writing should be interviewed or answer a questionnaire to have their perception of the phenomenon.

Finally, we suggest conducting a questionnaire or an interview to have direct contact with students' to evaluate their awareness about the topic.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study was able to answer the research questions asked in the beginning and confirmed the hypotheses. It showed that there is an effect of the phenomenon of text messaging on students' academic writing. The effect appears in forms of punctuation misuse and informal style of writing in a formal situation. However, the level of the effect is controlled by different factors such as proficiency in texting. Therefore, both teachers and students are supposed to be aware of these factors in order to be able to control the effect and improve the writing skill.

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Students' Text Messages.....

**Appendix 2:** Question of the Test.....

**Appendix 2:** Students' Paragraphs.....

## Appendix 1

### Students' text messages

**Student A:**

**Text 1**



Aujourd'hui 7:29 PM

Im too young -\_- bring me one  
asap



**Text 2**

Lmao

Blv me, the key is not to  
understand

**Text 3**



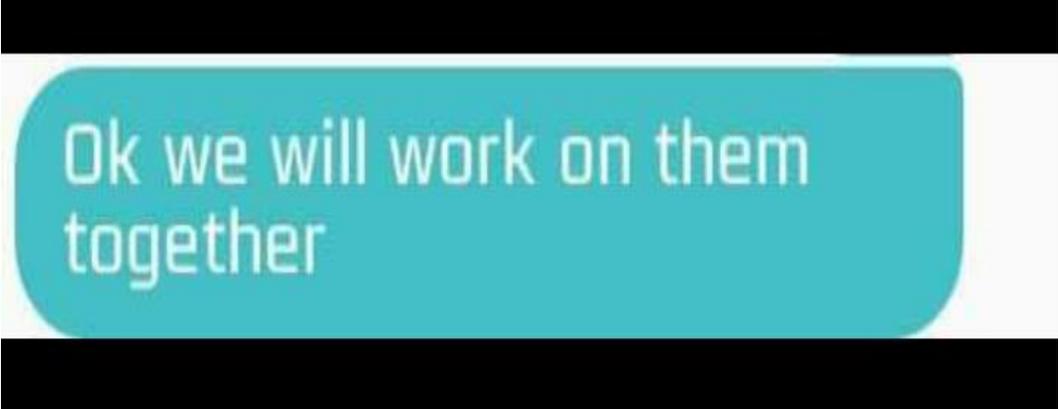
Not really

Idc anyways wlh



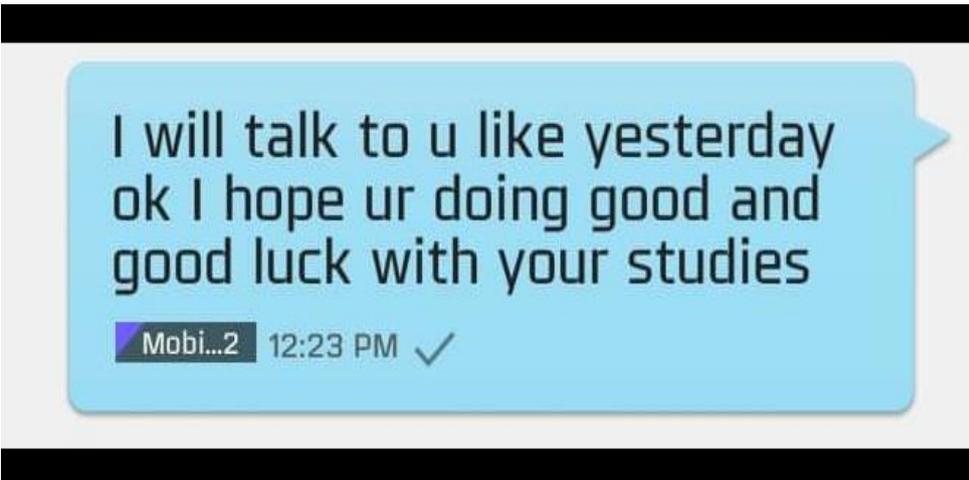
## Student B

### Text 1

A screenshot of a text message. The message is contained within a teal-colored speech bubble with rounded corners. The text is white and reads "Ok we will work on them together". The background of the screenshot is light gray, and there are black bars at the top and bottom.

Ok we will work on them together

### Text 2

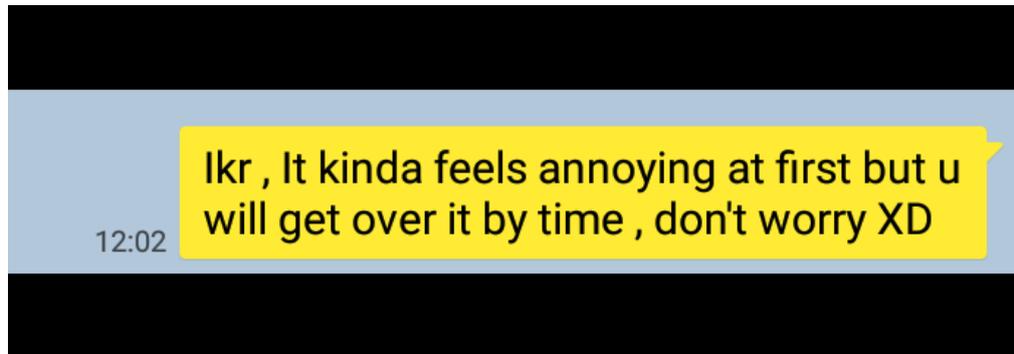
A screenshot of a text message. The message is contained within a light blue speech bubble with rounded corners and a tail pointing to the right. The text is dark gray and reads "I will talk to u like yesterday ok I hope ur doing good and good luck with your studies". Below the text, there is a purple and blue gradient bar containing the text "Mobi...2", the time "12:23 PM", and a checkmark. The background of the screenshot is light gray, and there are black bars at the top and bottom.

I will talk to u like yesterday  
ok I hope ur doing good and  
good luck with your studies

Mobi...2 12:23 PM ✓

## Student C

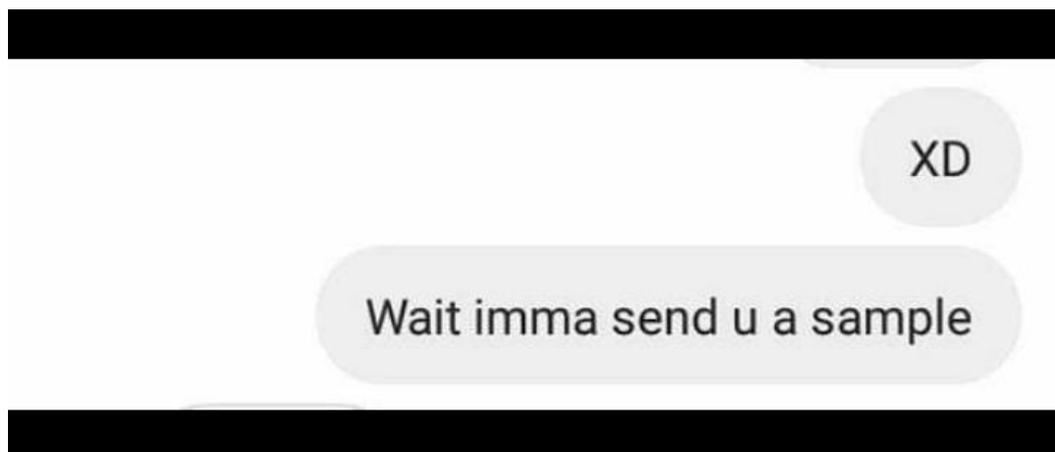
### Text 1



### Text 2

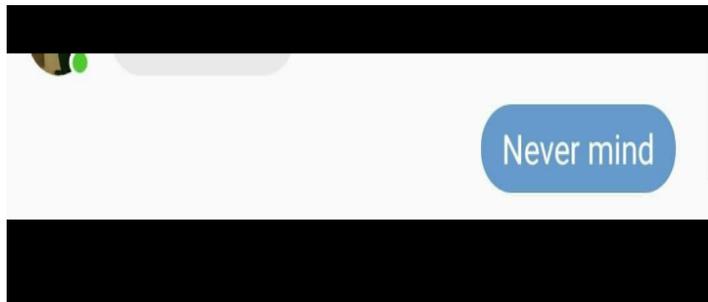


### Text 3

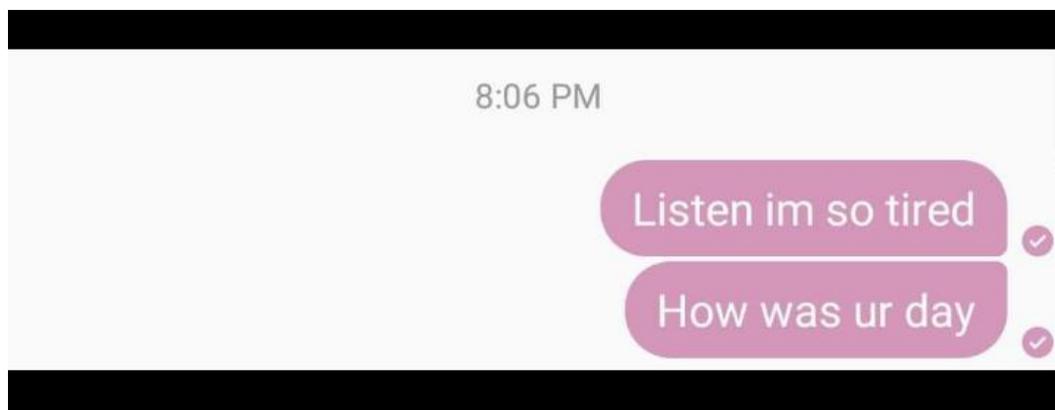


## Student D

### Text 1



### Text 2



### Text 3



## **Appendix 2**

### **Question of the test:**

**“If you were to be a character in a movie of your choice, who would you be? Write a paragraph explaining your choice.”**

## Appendix 3

### Students' Paragraphs

#### Student A

If i were to be a character in a movie or book i would be eponine from the famous hugo novel les miserables. When i watched the movie i found her character rather appealing to me because in my opinion she had the best character development in the novel. Eponine is the eldest daughter in the Thénardier family, the family that supposedly raised cosette while her mother fantine worked, they often mistreated her and made her work while eponine (a child at that time) also made her suffer. However when she matured and i saw that she became a caring person i empathized with her situation, she was forced into a life of poverty and crime against her will and rather by her wicked parents. I also admired how she sacrificed for her love. I found myself wondering how it must have felt to be in pain because the one you love is in love with another and asks you to find her for him and if i could have done that like she did. Eponine to me is a more interesting character than cosette because her life was a beautiful tragedy in a sense.

## **Student B**

Last year i watched a movie and it was really nice and i really liked the leading character in that movie because she got something that no one is capable of. The character in that movie kept on dying each day and when she wakes up again she find herself trapped on the same day over and over at first she didn't know about this till she was getting these deja vu thought and i actually want to have the same experience but not everytime waking up in the same day, i just want to wake up in the past or turn back time to only correct the mistakes that made in the past and also i wanna gather with my family and my friends that are not existing now in my life. I just want to have the time that i didn't give to them back then i really regret that i wish i did more to them they keep on telling me that iam doing more than enough but each time i say that iam busy or we can't met that make me regret everything also iam not that open person that i could not tell them what i really felt about them that's why i want go back in time just tell them these words and spend more time with them maybe this will change what is happening now. Eventhough i know it's not going to happen either ways i really wanted to experience that kind of feeling and situation.

## **Student C**

Fast And Furious is one of my favorite movies ever . If i had the chance to be on it probably i'm going to choose the role of Letty Ortiz because of many reasons . Firstly,Letty is a symbol of a real woman because she is playing the role of the smart ,beautiful and strong girl that everybody can trust her and believe in her. Secondly, im addicted to cars and driving i really want to take the risk and drive that fast as she did,thirdly and try many kinds of unique fast cars.finally, im a real fan of Vin Diesel , its gonna be an amazing experience if i can act with him and know him moreand more. All in all, i know it's impossible to be in her place but i hope that i can do what she did in this movie .

## **Student D**

Movies have been my only escape in the recent years , of course like anyone else , some movies left a great impact on me. If i could ever live a story of a protagonist i would choose Lynn of Bad Genius. She is a top secondary school student , accepted into a prestigious school, earning a scholarship for her academic achievements. Lynn begins helping her classmates cheat in exams in exchange for money after finding out that their teacher has been leaking questions in private tutoring sessions. However, Lynn starts thinking about a bigger cheating business that would earn her millions , so she decides to cheat in the STIC -an international standardised test for university admissions- and distribute answers to a great number of clients. What i really liked about Lynn is the way she used her intelligence , even though it was illegal but she has done some epic risky stuff that could entirely finish her career , her courage and confidence made everything work successfully. I am actually facing some similar situations to this in my studies like helping people to cheat and getting gifts or money back. But i could never do that not for any reward possible. I liked Lynn's character because maybe i seek what i lack ; courage and confidence , i have been working all of my life on being confident and courageous enough in everyday life. All in all , her confession by the end about everything bad she did made her my favorite. The events were based on a true story and the fact that someone had really experienced all of that make me want to take risks and be confident enough to go for whatever i am dreaming about.