



The Linguistic Influence of Social Media on Cameroon English

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ABSTRACT

Social media has emerged as a popular technology which has spread all over the different sectors in Cameroon; education, business, government, print media, audio visual media, etc. This new means of communication has eased the exchange of thoughts and ideas. The internet, as an aspect of social media, has come along with a deviant form of writing peculiar to the younger generation in general and Cameroonian youths in particular. This new system of communication has given rise to what is known as Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) which has become widely spread within the educational milieu in Cameroon. Social media thus, is greatly influencing Cameroon English, especially written texts, given that aspects of CMC are rapidly replacing conversational writing forms. Such development in communication has an effect on language which is gradually shifting from its original sound/sign/symbol and complex sentence structures governed by grammatical rules, to the language of text messaging with its simple syntax, incomplete sentence forms, informal structures and modified ideograms known as emojis (happy faces, sad faces, excitement figures, blushing faces, etc).

Key words: Internet, computer-mediated-communication, new technologies, language, grammatical rules, sentence structure, social media, textese, SMS speak features.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Proysen (2009), language has developed immensely from its origin to the 21st century. At the dawn of the 20th century, a new language was introduced to the world - the language of text messaging and electronic communication. This language is characterized by its simple syntax, incomplete sentences and informal structure and the orthographic conventions which are different from those of Standard English and other world Englishes.

Text messaging does not adhere to conventional written language rules but it uses a register known as 'textese' which includes abbreviations and phonetic replacements such as 'ur' for 'your' or acronyms such as 'lol' for 'laugh out loud' or 'lots of love' depending on the context

of usage. Rebus-like slangs are commonly used because of the essential patterns of mobile phones text messaging etiquette. This has led to the assumption that text message features may appear into users' general writing ultimately resulting in linguistic deviances. Thurlow (2001) opines that "young people are both 'teentalk' and 'netting' and are often blamed for the negative impact on Standard English or on traditional ways of communication." The casual language used in text messaging in general and by some English Language users in Cameroon in particular, is a source of hindrance to some students in understanding grammatical rules applicable to Standard English. As a result of such misunderstanding, it is the context of usage that helps when interpreting some text messages. The objective of such messages is to use the least number of characters, to economize space, time and money.

The aim of the present article is to show the extent to which text messaging is drastically influencing the quality of the written rendition of Cameroon English at the levels of grammar, syntax, semantics, orthography and punctuation by students of the University of Buea. This is not only as a result of word contraction but equally as a result of the frequent use of non-standard spellings, interference, abbreviations or alphanumeric which are common features in texting. This study is based on the premise that the continuous use of text messaging on social media by some users of Cameroon English is a cause for concern which merits to be investigated, given its negative influence. The study will equally outline the harm being done by text messaging on Cameroon English.

The theory adopted for the present investigation is Howard Giles' (1971) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). Communication accommodation is a communication theory which emphasizes the adjustments that people make while communicating. Giles developed the theory which according to him is, "when people try to emphasize or minimize the social difference between the others whom they interact with". The factors that lead to the accommodation activity are adjustments



which can be through verbal communication or through gestures.

II. THE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is global in nature, it is outstanding and popularly worldwide and as such, it has attracted the attention of many researchers. Social media is “websites and computer programs that allow users to communicate and share information on the internet, using a computer or a mobile phone”. Although different generations have embraced the challenges brought about by social media, the younger generations are the most fanatic users of applications such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Skype, LinkedIn, Reddit, Pinterest and DUO. Research on online social network has revealed that these applications are greatly impacting the lives of most Cameroonian youths as well as their English language proficiency. Social media applications have provided a platform where the younger generations create groups and pages based on common disciplines and up-building connections and opportunities to update various topics of discussion.

The field of Computer Mediated Communication deals with how human behaviors are maintained or altered by the exchange of information through machines. Wood and Smith (2005) describe the rapidly changing nature of communication technologies as the “process by which people create exchange and perceive information using networking telecommunication systems that facilitate encoding, transmission and decoding of messages.” Computer Mediated Communication can equally be referred to as the coding and decoding of linguistic and other symbolic systems between the sender and the receiver for information processing in multiple format through the medium of the computer and other technologies like phones and tablets, and through media networks like the Internet, email, chat systems, text messaging, YouTube, Skype, etc.

III. CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE VIEWS OF COMMUNICATION

The Communication Accommodation Theory adopted for this study looks at interpersonal relationship and links it with the larger social context of intergroup communication. The theory developed from speech adjustment theory which demonstrates the value of psychological concepts to understand the dynamics of speech. Language users accommodate their communication activities to get approval and to set a positive image in front

of interactants. The environment in which language users are interacting also affects their communication behaviors. Two accommodation processes explain the Communication Accommodation Theory; the convergence and divergence processes.

Convergence is a process whereby an encoder tends to adapt the decoder's communication characteristics to reduce social distance; this includes the use of pronunciation, pause and utterance length, vocal intensity, non-verbal behaviors and intimacy of self-disclosure (Giles and Smith 1979). People with similar beliefs, personalities and behaviors tend to be more attracted to each other and as such desire to achieve a certain social distance. The desire to create social interaction flow leads to convergence. When a user tries to converge or shift his or her language for the purpose of assimilating the other, it can result to a more favorable appraisal. As such, convergence is perceived as positive and can enhance both the conversation and attraction of both the speaker and the listener. Convergence reflects an individual's desire for social approval from his interlocutor.

Divergence on the other hand, is a linguistic strategy to accentuate the linguistic differences between the speaker and the interlocutor. The individual's emphasis is on the social difference and the nonverbal differences between the interactants. The two processes usually are dependent on the characteristics of the interactants. Users accommodate their communication while interacting with those who have higher standards and other characteristics which they believe are better than theirs. Communication Accommodation Theory is influenced by social psychology and is guided by four major components: the socio-historical context, the communicator's accommodative orientation, the immediate situation and evaluation and future intentions. These components are essential to Communication Accommodation Theory and affect the course and outcome of intercultural conversations. In the communication process, there are similarities and differences in the speech and behaviors of users. The characteristics that language users exhibit are based on their experiences and cultural backgrounds.

A conversation is evaluated by understanding the perception of the speech and behavior of the other. Through evaluation, people decide to accommodate and fit in the social status and belonging is determined by language and behaviors. While communicating, people tend to accommodate the behaviors of others. Norms guide



the accommodation process which varies in degree of appropriateness. Norms define the behaviors of people who are expected to act accordingly.

Convergence and divergence can either be upward or downward. Upward convergence can be illustrated by an interviewee's adoption of the prestige patterns of an upper class interviewer, while downward divergence can be seen in the emphasis of one's low prestige minority heritage.

There are some basic principles of the Communication Accommodation Theory applicable to the present article. The theory is not only influenced by features of immediate situations but can also be influenced by socio-historical context in which the interactant is embedded. Interactants are specific strategies (convergence and divergence) to signal their attitudes towards each other and their respective social groups. This is done to show a balance need to social inclusiveness on one hand and differentiation on the other hand.

The Communication Accommodation Theory is applicable in various communication processes. In the new media, it can be used among youths and teenagers for effective communication. It enables them adapt while communicating with their peers. It is feasible to apply Communication Accommodation Theory to new media related settings though research in this field is still at its early stage in Cameroon. There are possible accommodation tendencies of many people when faced with cyber language used through messaging technology. A clear cut example can occur if two users both use smiley-face emotions in a text message. Convergence is present at two levels; the message matches the same type of emotional display (smiling), and the message equally matches the same type of representation used to convey the message (an emotion). Alibi (2008) holds that if one uses a smiley-face emoticon and the respondent uses the phrase "I'm smiling", though there is convergence at the emotional display level (smiling), there is equally divergence in the representation of the display because the message is presented in words rather than in textism. Convergence can equally occur in a situation where the respondent replies with the phrase "am smilx". In a formal setting, both users can likely be tempted to use the same phrase with its text message features; "am smilx" instead of "I'm smiling". The use of the informal phrase by both speakers is convergence with a negative effect on their English language usage.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

The writing process of formal teaching is becoming complicated. Alibi (2002) thinks that "the writing process of formal teaching and learning in English is becoming confusing because most students nowadays read little or no novels and textbooks or teachers' notes which could help shape their writing skills". He holds that through experience, writers are able to switch between the written language of text messaging and formal writing, though many students who send and receive messages still find it difficult to switch easily or are unwilling to switch at all from informal to formal language.

Text messaging encourages the use of abbreviations and non-conformed forms of grammatical rules and as such, the practice tends to worsen students written communication skills. Dansieh (2005) sees this claim as true. He ascertains the variable impact of the language of SMS on the writing skills of students of Wa Polytechnic in Ghana. The results of his research reveal that students struggle with grammar, lexis and sentence structure. This view has been supported by Winzker et al (2009) in their research on the impact of the use of SMS speak features on the written works of English First and Second language users. Their findings revealed that students make use of SMS speak features like spelling errors, absence of punctuation markers, the omission of function words as well as the excessive use of abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons, and rebus in formal writing. The questionnaires administered to the students in the study indicated that these learners are avid users of the SMS speak features. All participants reported using features of SMS speak features in their SMSes, and more than 40% reported using SMS speak in their written school work. Despite this, features of SMS speak infrequently occurred in the written work of the learners, which could indicate that the learners are able to assess when it is and is not appropriate to use a certain variety of language. That said, a number of SMS speak features were indeed present in the samples, which indicates that SMS speak features had some impact on the written work of these learners..

a) Text messages by students of the University of Buea

The phenomenon of text messages by students in Cameroon is similar to that of students in many other African countries. To evaluate the use of text messaging by students of the University of Buea, a questionnaire was administered to twenty students chosen at random on campus and



from different faculties to collect the required data for this study. Both sexes were taken into consideration; ten boys and ten girls. Twenty open ended and close ended questions were prepared, related to the various ways in which young Cameroonians interact with their peers using written communication. The students were asked to say how text messaging affects their written English language proficiency. The concise and simple nature of the questions as well as the relevance of the subject eased the respondents' responses and response rate. The response rate was 100%. All copies of the questionnaire administered were retrieved and analyzed. Fifty examination scripts collected from the different faculties were equally collected and analyzed. Another questionnaire was designed and administered to seven lecturers. The response rate was equally 100%. The questionnaire was measured on the basis of agreement ranging from strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree. This aimed

at investigating the lecturers' attitude towards the use of text messaging and how they think it affects their students' written rendition of the English language.

In reviewing the examination scripts of students in the University of Buea, it was realized that students tend to include in their text messaging features such as abbreviations, word shortening, acronyms, non-standard spelling forms, and improper punctuation markers which equally appear in their formal write ups. From the scripts, there were 19 instances of word shortening and word reduction, 8 instances of word combination, 13 instances of non-standard spellings, 07 instances of acronyms and abbreviations, and 04 instances of alphanumeric. These will be shown in tables 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Tables 1 to 5 present examples of the social media features that are recurrent in the write-ups while table 6 presents stylistic categories of text features in the students' write-ups.

Table 1: Word reduction and shortening

Instance	Word in full
Bro	brother
Ha	How !
Pic	Picture
Bcoz	Because
Sis	Sister
Dox	Doing
Wlcm	Welcome

Others features that dominate in students' write-ups are word combination and non-standard spellings, acronyms and abbreviations and alphanumeric as shown in tables 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 below.

Table 2: Word combination

Instance	Word in full
Lemme	Let me
Wanna	Want to
Kinda	Kind of
Whatsup	What is up?
livme	Leave me
Ateu	I tell you
Givme	Give me

In texting, students tend to combine words to create new words with similar pronunciations to these of known words.

Table 3: Non-standard spellings

Instance	Word in full
Ticha	Teacher
Huz	House
Yeah	Yes
Skul	School
Dat	That



Wify	Wife
Ryt	Right
Ya	Your/you are
Yde	Yaounde

Word shortening is a technique created by texters to invent non-existing words that are homophones to grammatical words. The oral rendition of the new word is similar to that of the known word.

Table 4: Acronyms and abbreviations

Instance	Meaning
LOL	Laugh out loud/lots of love
ASAP	As soon as possible
OMG	Oh my God!
TtYL	Talk to you later
TK	Take care

Acronyms and abbreviations are recurrent in the essays of students. According to the students, they use these techniques because their realizations take less space and less time to write.

Table 5: Alphanumeric

Instance	Meaning
2morrow	Tomorrow
2day/2dy	Today
4u	For you
L8er	Later

Alphanumeric are words formed by combining letters and figures to create non-existing and non-standard words.

In analyzing the data collected, we deduced six main stylistic categories from the students' write-ups. 51 non-standard words were

retrieved from the 50 examination scripts selected at random from different faculties. Of the 51 non-standard words, 19 were word-shortening, 8 were word combination, 13 were non-standard spellings, 7 were acronyms and abbreviations, and 4 were alphanumeric as presented in the table below.

Table 6: Stylistic categories of text features

Stylistic properties	Example of instances	Frequency	Percentage %
Word shortening	Ur, de, kk, u, thru, etc	19	37.25
Word combination	Lemme, kinda, etc	8	15.68
Non-standard spelling	Lv, yeah, ya, etc	13	25.49
Acronyms	LOL, ASAP, etc	7	13.72
Alphanumeric	4U, L8er, 2dy, etc	4	7.84
TOTAL		51	100

From Table 6, word-shortening is the feature mostly used by students (37.25%). This shows that it is the feature mostly used in text messaging by the students. Non-standard spelling

and word combination occupy the 2nd and 3rd places with 25.49% and 15.68% respectively. The less used features are acronyms and alphanumeric with 13.72% and 7.84% respectively.

Table 7: Word reduction and shortening

Instance	Word	Frequency	Percentage
Ya/ur	Your	63	12
Dox	Doing	63	12
De/e	The	39	07
Ok	Okay	26	05
Gdnite	Goodnight	21	04
Pple	People	11	02



Wlcm	Welcome	11	02
Dis	This	16	03
Huz	House	05	01
Pls/plz	Please	11	02
Wer	Where/were	21	04
Sis	Sister	53	10
Bro	Brother	53	10
Ok	Okay	26	05
Thx	Thanks	26	05
Don/dn	Don't	05	01
Pic	Picture	21	04
Hw/ha	How?	11	02
Coz	Because	53	10
TOTAL	19 words	535	100

As shown in table 7 above, there are words that are mostly used by students during social media communication with their peers. The words are: sis (sister) 10%, bro (brother) 10%, dox (doing) 12%, ya/Ur (you) 12%, de (the) 7 %, ok

(okay) 5%, gnite (goodnight) 04%, pple (people) 2%, wlcm (welcome), dis (this) 3%, huz (house) 1%, pls/plz (please) 2%, wer (were) 4%, thx (thanks) 5%, don (don't) 1%, pic (picture) 4%, hw/ha (how) 25, bk (back) 4%, cos (because) 10%.

Table 8: Word Combination

Instance	Word	Frequency	Percentage
Lemme	Let me	200	16
Wanna	Want to	200	16
Kinda	Kind of	125	10
Whatsup	What is up?	188	15
Gotta	Got to	125	10
Donno	Don't know	125	10
Livmi	Leave me	100	08
Ateu	I tell you	188	15
TOTAL	08 words	1,251	100

The analysis from Table 9 shows that the word 'lemme' (let me) and 'wanna' (want to) ranked highest in the combination of words on the social media communication of students with 16%. Other words mostly used by students are; 'ateu' (I tell you) 15%, 'whatsup' (what's up?) 15%, while

those least used are; 'kinda' (kind of) 10%, 'gotta' (got to) 10%, 'donno' (do not) 10%, and 'livme' (leave me) 08%. The use of word combination is mainly for the purpose of space and time, giving that phrases are shortened to single words which are pronounced as full phrases.

Table 9: Non-standard spellings

Instance	Word	Frequency	Percentage
Lv	Love	100	13
Yeah	Yes	108	14
Wel	Well	38	05
Ya	You	77	10
Yde	Yaoundé	46	06
Wify	Wife	46	06
Wat	What	108	14
Ryt	Right	46	06
Geh	Girl	31	04
Dat	That	77	10
Huz	House	08	01
Skul	School	77	10



Dor	Door	08	01
TOTAL	13 words	770	100

One of the most significant effects of text messaging in the English language of students is the non-standard spelling of words. This is very common to a point that it is difficult to differentiate between a student who knows the correct spelling of a word but intentionally decides to use the non-standard version and the one who does not actually know the correct spelling of the word. Table 9

above shows that the most frequently misspelled words are 'yeah' (yes), and 'wat' (what) with 14% respectively and 'lv' (love) 13%. The analysis reveals that some of the words are spelled as they are pronounced; 'skul' (school), 'wat' (what), 'dat' (that), 'wel' (well). Students reproduce these non-standard spellings in their write-ups.

Table 10: Acronyms and abbreviations

Instance	Word	Frequency	Percentage
LOL	Lots of love/laugh out loud	329	23
ASAP	As soon as possible	257	18
TK	Take care	200	14
OMG	Oh My God!	286	20
I no	I know	143	10
Idno	I don't know	143	10
Ttyl	Talk to you later	71	05
TOTAL	07 words	1429	100

Table 11 reveals that students tend to condense the language when sending text messages by shortening phrases. This is done by shortening long phrases and picking only initials of words, leaving out other parts of the words. The initials are combined and read as single words. The most

frequent amongst these are 'LOL' (lots of love/laugh out loud) 23%, 'OMG' (oh! my God) 20%, 'ASAP' (as soon as possible) 18% and 'Tk' (take care) 14%. The least used is 'Ttyl' (talk to you later) 05%.

Table 11: Alphanumeric

Instance	Word	Frequency	Percentage
4u	For you	625	25
2day	Today	625	25
2morrow	Tomorrow	500	20
2nite	Tonight	500	30
TOTAL	04 words	2250	100

At times, users tend to use figures to represent letters as shown on Table 11 above. Figures are combined with letters to create non-existing words which are understood with a given context. This is done to shorten the word with figures that sound like the words.

When asked why the students use text messages, different reasons were put forward by the respondents. Based on data collected, most of the students held that text messaging is fast and less expensive for them than direct calls. Texting allows the communicator to type whatever he/she wants to send in a few seconds and the receiver gets the information instantly. Some students wrongly think that texting affects them in a positive manner given that it helps build their writing skills and vocabulary. They equally think it helps them

develop their computer skills and their mastery of the keyboard of their phones. This has help improve their typing skills. Some of them think that texting is fun, interesting and occupies them during their idle moments.

Other respondents disclosed that texting affects their spelling ability because most of the time they use non-standard spelling forms when they are texting. Some blame their failure in examinations on their much use of text messaging which influences their written rendition. One of the respondents had this to say, "Text messaging affects my English language skills a lot because there are moments I go off track, sometimes I even forget I am writing a formal work...."

As concerns the attitude of lecturers towards the use of text messaging, the



questionnaire administered to them was measured on the basis of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree. The lecturers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that text messaging is helpful in sending assignments to students. They were equally asked whether they think text messaging affects their students negatively or positively. Three of the lecturers, who took part in the exercise, agree that text messaging helps in the transmission of messages from the school administration to students, while 2 of them strongly agree that text messaging is necessary. While 3 of them agreed that text messaging is helpful in sending assignments to students, 2 strongly agreed with the assertion. Asked if it is helpful in texting during classes to incorporate technology into teaching, 2 of the lecturers agreed that it is helpful. While 2 strongly disagreed, 3 others disagreed. Asked if the use of text messaging was appropriate in the classroom, the answer was similar to that of the previous question. 2 agreed it was, 2 strongly agreed, while 3 disagreed. Asked whether students are able to differentiate and switch between formal and informal usage, all seven lecturers were unanimous in saying that, students' scripts are fueled with aspect of social media features discussed above.

The English language of the Cameroonian youths is highly influenced by the internet in general and the social media in particular. Texters make use of aspects such as initialization in which initial letters of words are used to represent whole words or sentences. Initialization constitutes one of the methods of shortening in text messaging. Examples are seen in the following text messages.

- **Initialisation** : Cld u pls giv me d moni ASAP ?
- **Standard English**: Could you please give me the money as soon as possible?
- **Initialization**: I study mre dan u, so I ot 2 hav hire mks.
- **Standard English**: I study more than you so I ought to have higher marks.
- **Initialization**: Gd morx 2 every 1 in d hauz. Pls sen in ur assignmts dis wkend. Thx.
- **Standard English**: Good morning to everyone in the house. Please send in your assignments this weekend. Thanks.

Initialization can pose serious problems of understanding giving that some words are misspelled while others do not exist in the English language. Another linguistic aspect used by texters is letter homophones. This refers to letters that represent whole words due to similarities in pronunciation. Wanji (2009) sees such letters as

'replacements'. They are written representations of the sounds of certain words. For instance: 'u' for 'you'; 'ur' for 'your'; 'en' for 'and'; 'de' for 'the'; 'dis' for 'this'.

Punctuation errors equally characterize the written rendition of young Cameroonians. Research has shown that there are four main punctuation markers that texters mostly use in their text messages: full stop; comma; question mark; exclamation mark. The use of punctuation markers in text messaging is quit complex. Some texters do not use commas, while some use it in the place of a full stop. The use of the full stop is not very important given that the end of a line signifies the end of an utterance. Most sentences are fragments. Another punctuation marker ignored by texters is the apostrophe marker.

- Dats how u are. (That's how you are).
For the purpose of maximizing time and space, some texters do not inter-space words. Sometimes a text is written in a block form with the use of upper case letter initials acting as the boundary. This has a significant impact on the users.

- HBD2U. (Happy birthday to you).
Text messaging in Cameroon is characterized by the construction of sentences without subjects. Personal pronouns are often omitted.

- Hav 2 finish dis work b4 midnite. (I have to finish this work before midnight).
- Do u wan us 2 do de assignmt 2day (Do you want us to do the assignment today?)

The mixing of codes equally characterizes the written rendition of the Cameroonian youths when they exchange on social media. Most of the time, texters mix French and English languages within the single sentence structure. They equally have a tendency of mixing French, English and Pidgin English.

- On go see la nga d'heir (let's go and see the girl of yesterday).
- Liv me, I wan tek my pikin 4 hospital (Sorry, I'm taking my child to the hospital)

The creation or invention of 'strange' words and the use of non-standard words by texters is detrimental to Cameroon English. Such usage negatively affects the language of texters. Some of the invented words include:

- **Friendzone**: a person ignored by the one they like or love.
- **Hashtag**: used to highlight the word being emphasized.
- **Talkshit**: a meaningless/useless sentence.
- **Squad**: a group of friends with the same interest.



It has been observed that text messaging has become a norm to many students and as such this article has investigated the effects of text messaging on students' academic productions. After a careful and critical analysis of the data collected, the findings revealed that, though text messaging has some advantages, it equally portrays lots of disadvantages. Both students and lecturers are aware of the impact of text messaging on students' write-ups which greatly affects their use of grammatical rules. On the other hand, and as Crystal (2008) believes, text messaging helps students develop the ability to write while limiting space and time. Though positive, this has an adverse effect on the content of students' writing as ideas created are presented in numbers and abbreviations which violate Standard English rules. Text messaging is not always comprehensible and understood by everyone because clarifications and understanding of a governing language rule system is needed in the understanding of communication exchange.

V. CONCLUSION

It is worth noting that the frequent and profound engagement by Cameroonians in technological mediated communication through chat rooms on the Internet, text messaging and the like, have greatly influenced them, as they develop the tendency of making use of linguistic deviations (ungrammatical language forms and structure). A research carried out by Odey et al (2014) on fifty final year students in Nigeria, with a total of 250 SMS messages, proved that there were five most dominant features of SMS in the students' scripts. These are vowel deletion, graphemes, alphanumeric homophony, punctuation 'errors' and initialization.

Testers get used to abbreviations and as such find it difficult to get the correct orthography of certain words. Babalola and Oluga (2013) criticize text messaging and present it as a phenomenon which affects the spelling system of texters, making spelling somehow difficult for them as they get used to incorrect spelling forms and abbreviated forms of words in text messaging. Research has shown that email discourse or text messaging is neither oral nor literal but a new genre in its own right. Text messaging possesses qualities of both spoken and written language.

Though research has proven that text messaging may be helpful in the development of the student's abilities, Okafor (2010) has a contrary view. He opines that it is unfortunate that the ideas in text messaging and other social communication applications are not always properly presented. For

instant, the use of signs and symbols in SMS has an effect on the development of content, organization, mechanical accuracy and expression component of the user's essay writing.

We observed during the present survey that some students and other educated persons in the University of Buea tend to have difficulties with the spelling and syntax of English language due to ignorance, carelessness, and laziness, fashionable in the use of social media. This is as a result of text messaging features of brevity, minimal space, time and lesser cost which attract the attention of most users. Among the proponents of the negative effects of text messaging is Carrington (2005) who had earlier viewed text messaging as a useful tool of communication among youths and adults, especially students, though this has led to addiction. Carrington refers to students as 'addicts' whom the much use of text messaging has made unable to shift from the phenomenon in social context to Standard English and as a result of this, formal language, especially written language may be under a threat.

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