The possible effects of text messaging on the written work of grade 11 English first additional language learners at a public high school in Pretoria.

THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF TEXT MESSAGING ON THE WRITTEN WORK OF GRADE 11 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN PRETORIA

By

KATLEGO NGALETSANE SUCCESS THUBAKGALE

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Main Supervisor: Dr. CP Chaka

First co-supervisor: Dr. GW Collins

Second co-supervisor: Mrs. ML Mphahlele

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother Ivy Dikeledi Thubakgale for the moral support, for comforting me on a daily basis and always seeing the best in me even when I was losing hope.

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DECLARATION

I, **KATLEGO NGALETSANE SUCCESS THUBAKGALE (207210412),** hereby declare that this dissertation, entitled **THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF TEXT MESSAGING ON THE WRITTEN WORK OF GRADE 11 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN PRETORIA,** which I have submitted for the degree M Tech: Language Practice, at Tshwane University of Technology, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher education. I further declare that all sources cited or quoted are indicated and acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of references.

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KATLEGO NGALETSANE SUCCESS THUBAKGALE **Date**

ABSTRACT

This study set out to investigate the possible effects of text messaging language on the written school work of grade 11 English first additional language learners (EFAL) at a public high school in Soshanguve, Pretoria. It was informed by the views by Thurlow and Brown (2003) and Mahmoud (2013) that many young people seem to be addicted to the growing practice of text messaging so much that they use their mobile phones during lessons, and that a core feature of almost all young people's mobile phone use is text messaging. Thus, the study had two objectives: to identify the use of text messaging in the written school work of grade 11 EFAL at a public high school in Soshanguve; and to establish the possible effects (positive or negative) that text messaging had on these learners' written school work.

The participants for the study were thirty eight (38) grade 11 learners (n = 38, M = 10, F = 28, mean age = 17.4 years) who had mobile phones, and liked text messaging. These participants were selected through three sampling techniques: opportunistic purposeful, voluntary and convenience sampling techniques. In addition, three (3) female grade 11 EFAL teachers were requested to participate in the study. The data for this study were collected using the following materials: learner written tasks (a two-paragraph text message task and a page-long essay task); a learner questionnaire; and a teacher questionnaire.

Some of text message features the study detected from written learner activities were: shortenings; contractions; acronyms/initialisms; g-clippings; letter homophones; number homophones; no apostrophes, no full stops; omitted words; incorrect capitalisation; spelling errors; and non-conventional spelling errors. Two of the findings of the study are: text message features as a percentage of the word count in both learner activities had a lower prevalence in the written work of the learners; and except for spelling errors, it was possible for a majority of these learners to write their essays without much reliance on the text message features identified in above. On this basis, the study concludes that text messaging did not have a possible negative effect on learners' written work.

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CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the study, first, introduces both the first chapter of this study and the study itself. Second, it describes the background details of the study as well as the rationale for the study. Third, it states the problem of the study together with the aims and objectives of the study. Fourth, it provides a summary of the research location and its research approach. It, then, focuses on the following aspects: the significance of the study; and the scope and the limitations of the study. Fourth and last, it offers the chapter divisions of the study, and concludes the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Mobile technology has advanced to a point whereby mobile phones are no longer devices anyone can live without. Smith (2003:98) asserts that “texting is now more popular than any other form of communication for everyday use.” According to Winzker, Southwood and Huddlestone (2009), the nineties saw a significant development in the mobile phone industry

with the introduction of text messaging which is alternatively known as a short message service (SMS). In the nineties, mobile phones were used for making and receiving calls. But the passage of time, text messaging has become so popular that now there are more text messages sent by mobile phones than calls made on mobile phones. The use of mobile phones has been escalating in South Africa for some years now, and many South Africans send text messages every day, particularly teenagers (Winzker et al., 2009; Vosloo, 2009).

With that said, it is safe to conclude that text messaging has become the basic mode of communication not only for the teenagers, but for the adults as well. Text messaging has turned out to be a daily routine for many people as it is efficient for getting the message through; and it is relatively cheaper and it is proving to be popular amongst young people all over the world (Bushnell, Kemp & Martin, 2011). The researcher prefers using the term text message language to short message service (SMS) language throughout the research, because text messaging is more relevant to the current study than the term, SMS.

Ochonogor, Alakpodia & Achugbue (2012) define a text message as the use of abbreviations that does not usually follow any conventional lexical, syntactic, spelling and punctuation rules. They furthermore claim that text messaging is unstructured and that it violates the standard rules of the English language. According to James (1997:13), the three principal causes of learners' first additional language errors are: redundancy of code; unsuitable presentation in

class; and the interference of text messaging with Standard English. The researcher has observed from the school in question that a lot of learners at this school send text messages from their mobile phones, and have a tendency of spending most of their time glued to their phones sending and receiving text messages.

According to Vosloo (2009), text messaging is a lingua franca for the majority of youth in South Africa today. This suggests that teenagers are exposed to text messaging in all aspects of their daily lives. According to the Pew Research Center (2011:1), "text messaging is a global phenomenon". Hence, text messaging is regarded as a global phenomenon that is rapidly evolving, and that is increasingly attracting teenagers. There are many instant messaging applications, social networking sites, and online chatting sites on which these teenagers spend most of their times as well. Examples of these applications and sites are Mxit, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, WeChat, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), iMessage, Skype, and Twitter (cf. O'Hara, Massimi, Harper, Rubens & Morris, 2014). Accessing these social networking applications on any mobile phone costs less than making mobile phone calls. So, as such, many teenagers, and especially those at the school to be investigated, tend to use them as cost-saving modes of communication.

In this case, Barkhuus and Polichar (2010) point out that text messaging also functions as a social medium for general up-keeping among friends and, sometimes, among colleagues. It is

argued here that text messaging establishes a new type of communication which is already an important and integrated part of the lives of young adults. Because of the currency text messaging has among young users, claims have emerged that linguistic evils would be unleashed to these young users' formal school writing (see Aziz, Shamim, Aziz & Avais, 2013; Crystal, 2008; Mphahlele & Mashamaite, 2006; Vosloo, 2009). Some of these claims were as follows:

- Text messaging would erode teenagers' ability to spell, punctuate, form coherent sentences, and capitalise words correctly.
- Texters would transfer their text messaging habits to their formal written school work.
- Texters would score poor marks in their written examinations and, eventually, their written language would be seriously affected (Crystal, 2008:151).

In this regard, Ochonogor et al. (2012) state that, if the use of text messaging is not currently checked, it will completely erode proper use of the English language. However, none of the above-mentioned claims have been proven to be true beyond reasonable doubt, as there has not been any convincing evidence to back them up (see Aziz et al., 2013; Crystal, 2008; Proysen, 2009). Studies conducted to investigate the possible effects of text messaging practice on teenagers' formal writing are torn between two opposing positions: those supporting the negative effects of text messaging, and those arguing for the positive effects of text messaging.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The researcher was of the view that many youths in Pretoria today - especially learners at a public high school in Pretoria - spend most of their time on their mobile phones sending text messages. The researcher also had a suspicion that since most of these learners get so addicted to using text messages in their daily lives, they are likely to end up using them in their written school work as well. This either could help them improve their English writing proficiency or could ruin it. In this regard, text messaging is, on the one hand, seen as having the potential to negatively affect learner formal writing and learner spelling (see Dansieh 2011; Geertsema, Hyman & Van Deventer, 2011; Ochonogor et al., 2012; Salem, 2013; Vosloo, 2009; Yousaf and Ahmed, 2013). On the other hand, it is deemed to be enhancing learner formal writing and learner spelling (see Aziz et al., 2013; Drouin and Davis, 2009; Mahmoud, 2013; Plester et al., 2008; Powell and Dixon, 2011; Rosen, Chang, Erwin, Carrier & Cheever, 2010). Thus, the current study set out to explore the possible effects (positive or negative) of text messaging on grade 11 EFAL learners' formal written school work at a public high school in Pretoria. Based on the problem stated above, the study's main research question was: what influence does text messaging have on the grade 11 EFAL learners' ability to properly compose and formulate written school work in class? Its three subordinate research questions were as follows:

- Does text messaging affect grade 11 EFAL learners' written school work positively or negatively?

- What type of text message features do these learners use in their written school work?

- Can grade 11 EFAL learners write their formal school work without using any form of text messaging?

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study had two aims: to establish if there was any use of text messaging language in the written school work of grade 11 English first additional learners at a public high school in Pretoria; and to determine if there was any influence that text messaging language had on the written school work of these learners. To this end, the two objectives of the study were to: identify if there were any instances or uses of text messaging in the written school work of grade 11 English first additional language learners at a public school in Pretoria; and establish the possible effects (positive or negative) of text messaging on grade 11 English first additional language learners' written school work.

1.5 SUMMARY INDICATION OF THE RESEARCH LOCATION AND RESEARCH APPROACH

The research was conducted at a public high school in Soshanguve, Pretoria. The study specifically focused on grade 11 English first additional language learners and three grade 11 English first additional language teachers. The Gauteng Department of Education was contacted with regard to the permission to conduct the study at this school. It also requested all the requisite documents (see Appendixes 1 to 6) to be submitted to it and to be issued by it before the study was conducted. The approval to conduct the study was granted on the 17th June 2014.

With reference to a research approach, this study adopted a qualitative approach and used a case study design. It was, thus, rooted in a qualitative research paradigm. One characteristic of a qualitative research approach as identified by Merriam (2001) is that the researcher should understand a phenomenon investigated from the point of view of participants. The current study approached its data and the aspects of its investigation from participants' perspective to avoid misrepresenting them. A case study design focuses on a specific case or on specific cases. It, then, investigates such a case or such cases in-depth by drawing its data from a variety of sources (Creswell, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yin, 2014). The present study garnered its data from four sources: two learner written tasks; learner questionnaires; and teacher questionnaires.

1.5.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study was to identify and establish the possible effects of text messaging on the written work of grade 11 English first additional language (EFAL) learners at a public high school in Soshanguve, Pretoria. Identifying and establishing possible effects of text messaging on the written work of the learners is one of the central aspects that EFAL teachers that need know as most of the blame for declining learner formal writing and learner spelling is often put on them. Moreover, getting to identify and establish such possible effects is crucial in that text messaging is perceived to either enhance or ruin learners' formal English writing and spelling proficiency (cf. Aziz et al., 2013; Drouin and Davis, 2009; Geertsema et al., 2011; Ochonogor et al., 2012; Mahmoud, 2013; Salem, 2013; Vosloo, 2009; Yousaf & Ahmed, 2013).

1.5.2 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on the possible effects of text messaging on the written work of grade 11 EFAL learners at a public high school in Soshanguve. It did not investigate why learners happen

to use text messaging in their written school work so as to get to know what informs their use of text messaging. It also did not examine the morphological and syntactic structure of the learners' text messaging. Neither did it set out to investigate the message complexity of and the types of discourse markers used in learners' text messaging.

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

The chapter divisions of this dissertation are as shown in a schematic representation displayed in Figure 1.1:

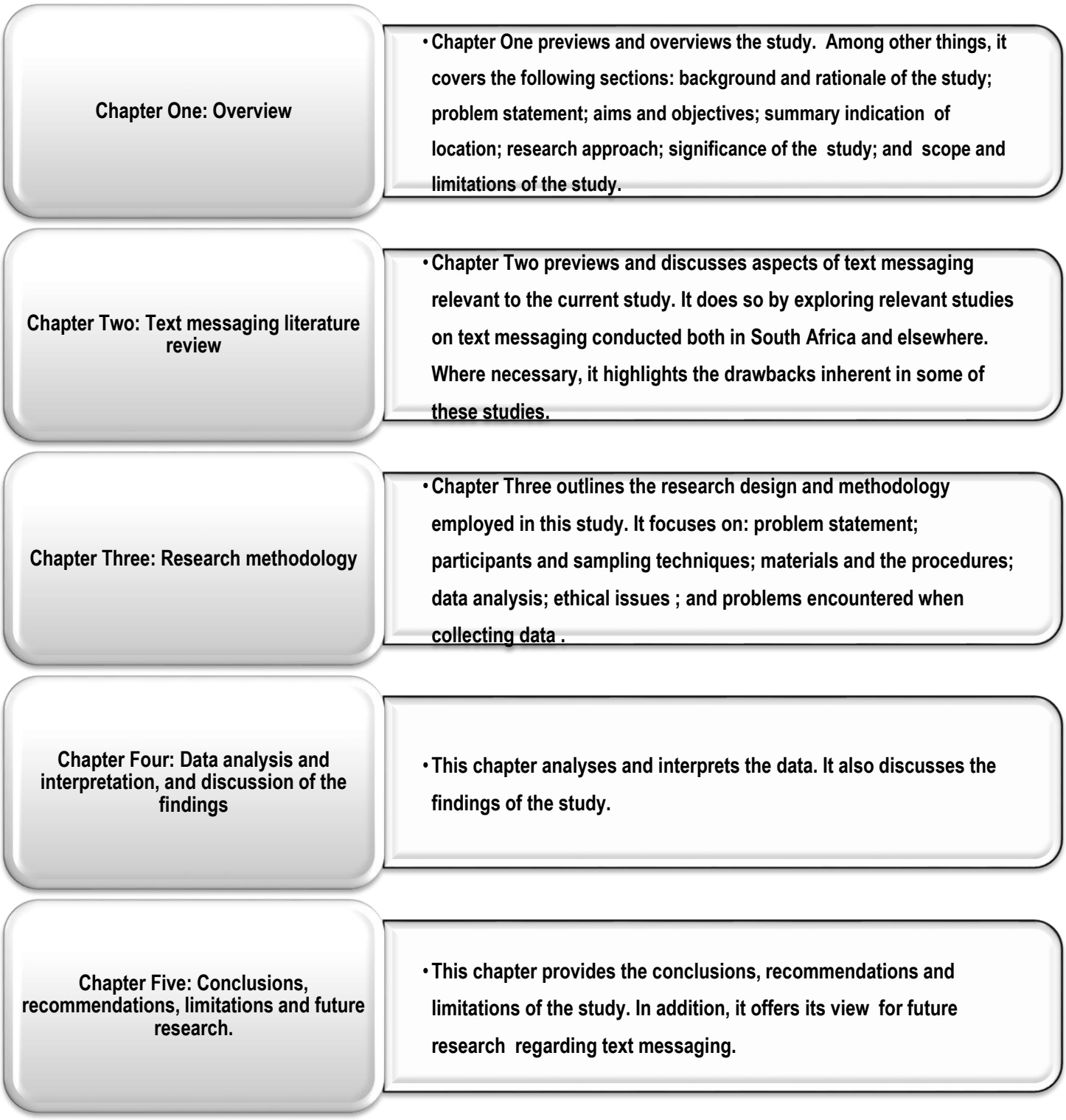

*Figure 1.*1**:** Schematic representation of the chapter divisions of the dissertation

1.7 CONCLUSION

This section of the study has, first, introduced both the first chapter of this study and the study itself. Second, it has described the background details of the study as well as the rationale for the study. Third, it has stated the problem of the study together with the aims and objectives of the study. Fourth, it has provided a summary of the research location and its research approach. It, then, has focused on the following aspects: the significance of the study; and the scope and the limitations of the study. Fourth and last, it has offered the chapter divisions of the study, and concluded the chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: TEXT MESSAGING LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter previews and discusses aspects of text messaging relevant to the current study. It does so by exploring relevant studies on text messaging conducted both in South Africa and elsewhere. Again, where necessary, it highlights the drawbacks inherent in some of these studies. In terms of its structure, the sub-headings it presents are: background to text messaging; some of the features of text messaging; text messaging and its avid users; some of the previous studies on text messaging and their findings. In respect of the last sub-heading, the chapter pinpoint how scholars position themselves vis-à-vis text messaging: those arguing that text messaging affects learners' or students' formal writing positively; those maintaining that text messaging affects learners' or students' formal writing negatively; and those advocating that there is no correlation between text messaging and learners' or students' formal writing. Lastly, the study associates itself with the first and last groups of scholars, and offers a justification for its standpoint.

2.2 BACKGROUND TO TEXT MESSAGING

Text messaging is generally seen as short text-based messages sent or received as part of a short message service (SMS) through mobile phones or other mobile devices such as personal digital assistants (PDAs) (see Aziz et al., 2013; Chiad, 2008: Lewis-Mohabir, 2013; Thurlow & Brown, 2003; Thurlow & Poff, 2013), tablets, phablets (phone + tablets), or through web browsers. It consists mainly of shortened or abbreviated forms often referred to as textisms (see Bernicot, Volckaert-Legrier, Goumi & Bert-Erboul, 2012; Vosloo, 2009; Wood, Kemp & Waldron, 2014). Mostly, it is variously referred to as: texting; textese; text language; SMS language; SMS speak; and textspeak (Verheijen, 2013; cf. Prøysen, 2009; Tagg, Baron & Rayson, 2012). While it has a 160 character limit, it is, however, distinguishable for conveying intelligible and functional messages that are interpreted within the context of their use and according to the intended meaning of users. It also largely employs speech-like forms (Aziz et al., 2013; Crystal, 2008; Tagg et al., 2012; Thurlow & Poff, 2013).

In this regard, Tagg et al. (2012) contend that most spelling variants (spelling forms) employed in text messaging are functional, principled and meaningful in nature. They argue that spelling variants are functional since they are constructed as a direct response to instant functional demands of the interaction taking place between users. That is, they are not prescribed, but rather, picked up by users in the context of their text messaging. Tagg et al. (2012) also maintain that spelling variants are principled in that they often observe existing orthographic principles and conventions of given languages, and that they can only be meaningful to the

extent that they do so. This three-dimensional view of text messaging contrasts markedly with the often hyped view that text messaging is chaotic, or ruins spelling and meaning, as it deviates from accepted writing norms and conventions (cf. Drouin & Davis 2009; Lyddy, Farina, Hanney, Farrell & O'Neill, 2013; Pathan, 2012). To this end, some of the studies that view text messaging as negatively affecting learner literacy and spelling are those by Geertsema et al. (2011), Mphahlele and Mashamaite (2005), and Yousaf and Ahmed (2013).

Given the two contrasting views about text messaging highlighted above, the current study aligns itself with the first view of text messaging, especially the three dimensions of this view: that text messaging is functional, principled and meaningful. It is functional as it serves the communicative functions of texters in an SMS environment proscribed by a 160 character quota powered through mobile devices – especially mobile phones – whose screens are relatively small. Again, it is principled in that employ spelling variants based on existing full words of a given language: even though texters may, in exceptional cases, use idiosyncratic spelling forms, overall their spelling variants are based on or extracted from the existing orthography of a given language. Lastly, text messaging is meaningful as the meanings of the short forms used are recoverable from the context of SMS usage as determined by the intentions texters as part of communities of users. Thus even when learners use text messaging, they do so as part of their different communities of users.

2.2.1 Shorthand Writing and Text Messaging

In the light of the preceding sub-section, one can argue that text messaging is not an entirely new phenomenon. This is so, especially taking into account the idea that text message forms are based on existing orthographies of given languages. For example, Crystal (2010:417) points out that text messaging seems to use and adapt features operational in shorthand writing and that the latter predates the advent of cell phones. The practice of shorthand writing is known as stenography (narrow writing) or tachygraphy (quick writing). So, text messaging tends to use such features which are often known for their brevity and informality as dictated to by speed and the smallness of mobile phone screens (see Thurlow & Brown, 2003; Thurlow and Poff, 2013; cf. Prøysen, 2009). In addition, Crystal (2010:417) highlights that shorthand writing has prehistoric and ancient use dating back to ancient Greeks and Romans.

2.2.2 Text Messaging in the Context of Language Change

Text messaging is both an evolving genre and an emerging means of communication that has to be seen within a broader context of language change. Most human languages evolve over time and across social geographies in which they spoken. This evolution is responsive to and is facilitated by prevailing communication technologies. In this sense, the phenomenon of language change is better understood through the notion of *periodisation*: that each period of

human existence is accompanied by changes in language that are specific or unique to a given period, and that these changes are also abetted by the types of communication technologies that are in vogue at a given time within that period. Following this line of thinking and taking the English language as an example, it is logical to say that the invention of the printing press and the computer (especially the personal computer (the PC), has played a pivotal role in the evolution of the English language (and its associated formal and informal features). This is true of the different periods (eras) which both the printing press and the computer as communication technologies prevailed. Their invention has had a knock-on effect on communication, with the PC having had a disruptive effect to the printing press (cf. Lewis-Mohabir, 2013; Park & Wang, 2015; Thurlow & Brown, 2003). But in this evolutionary ecosystem in which the printing press and the computer existed, the invention of the email technology brought about a major disruptive element not only in terms of communication, but also in terms of *informalising* or *conversationalising* (see Fairclough, 1995) communication.

Similarly, text messaging is a genre and a mode of communication that is sensitive to its own periodisation, employed by its specific users (largely, even though not exclusively, teenagers and young adult users), and involves both mobile phones and SMSs as its associated technologies. Most textism scholars such as Chiad (2008), Faulkner and Culwin (2005), Lewis-Mohabir (2013) and Thurlow and Poff (2013) trace the advent of text messaging to the mid-nineties. This, therefore, means that its periodisation can be located from the mid-nineties to the present (2015). In the period between its advent and the present, text messaging has

evolved a lot. This evolution has been occasioned by its avid users (teenagers and young adult users), its associated technologies and the era in which its users live. For example, since the advent of text messaging (or SMS), a cognate form of messaging – instant messaging - has also come into play, and has had a disruptive and game-changing effect on how young people communicate. It is true that instant messaging – which itself has evolved from the Internet-based chatroom communication (cf. Grinter, Palen & Eldridge, 2006; Park & Wang, 2015; Prøysen, 2009; Tagg et al., 2012; Thurlow & Brown, 2003; Varnhagen, McFall, Pugh, Routledge, Sumida-MacDonald & Kwong, 2010) - is a primary form of language used in instant messaging technologies such as WhatsApp. Thus, in the course of its existence and its evolution, text messaging has been affected by instant messaging and several other emerging technologies such as Facebook and Mxit.

In the South African context, text messaging is often used by school learners as a substitute for voice calls in situations where it is not possible to call someone. These school learners spend most of their times on their mobile phones text messaging. In this regard, the researcher wants to discover whether learners at the school under investigation in this study can distinguish text messaging English language and the type of English they are expected to use when they write their school work, and whether they know which form of English is acceptable and which is not for their written school work. On this note, Mphahlele & Mashamaite (2005) assert that learners have a tendency of using text messaging language in their written work. Moreover, Aziz et al. (2013) state that there is a growing concern that the ever increasing use

of text messaging, especially among teenage learners, is damaging their formal writing. Nonetheless, a study they conducted among undergraduate students proved otherwise.

Furthermore, text messaging is so pervasive that it is sometimes regarded as an emergent language register and a language variety in its own right. Added to this, is the assumption that text messaging is likely to turn teenagers who use it into a generation of poor spellers and writers at school. One of the reasons underlying this assumption is that text messaging is a non-standard form of writing which is often distinguishable for its unique spelling variation (see Aziz et al., 2013; Crystal, 2008; Blommaert, 2008; Prøysen, 2009). As highlighted earlier on, the current study does not subscribe to the view that text messaging is inherently detrimental to the development of learner literacy and spelling. To test this view and to contribute to the on-going debate on text messaging, the study set out to explore the possible effects of text messaging on the written work of grade 11 learners at a public high school in Pretoria. Its overriding goal was to establish whether text messaging possibly had positive or negative effects on these learners' written school work.

2.3 SOME OF THE FEATURES OF TEXT MESSAGING

According to Thurlow and Brown (2003:18-21) text messaging may be perceived as non-standard typographic or orthographic forms, some of the noticeable features of which include the following:

- G-Clippings (excluding the end -g letter), for example: "Goin" (Going)
- Shortenings (deletion of end letters, excluding the -g letter), for example: "Aftr" (After)
- Contractions (deletion of middle letters), for example: "Nxt" (Next)
- Acronyms and initials (formed from initial letters of various words), for example:
  - "LOL" (Laugh out loud)
- Number homophones, for example: "B4" (Before)
- Letter homophones, for example: "U" (You)
- Non-conventional spellings, for example: "Nite" (Night)
- Smileys ☺☹😐

In the same vein, Crystal (2008:37-50), identifies the following features of text messaging:

- The use of pictograms and logograms

  Logograms may be used alone or combined with other words or logograms.

  Example:

  Xxx - Hugs and kisses

  Zzz - Sleep

- The use of single letters, numerals and typographic symbols to represent words and noises associated with sounds.
- The use of initialisms and omitting letters.
- Non-standard spelling.
- Shortenings.

Furthermore, Proysen (2009:8) lists examples of the text messaging language features that are often used by high school teenagers. These include, among others, the following:

I. **Contractions**

Tmrw - Tomorrow

Abt - About

Nxt – Next

II. **G- Clippings**

Goin - Going

Comin – Coming

III. **Other clippings**

Hav/ Hv - Have

Wit – With

IV. **Initialisms**

BRB – Be Right Back

LOL – Laugh Out Loud

LOL – Lots of Love

Most studies conducted to establish the possible effects of text messaging on the written school work of learners tend to focus mainly on all or on some of the text messaging features represented in the three sets of examples provided above. The present study, too, used the afore-mentioned text messaging features to analyse and categorise its data sourced from learners' written activities. When learners construct text messages, some of the punctuation marks they often rely on are exclamation marks, question marks and full stops. Hence, most teenage text messages have fewer or no other relevant punctuation marks common in formal writing. According to Wood, Jackson, Hart, Plester and Wilde (2011) text messaging fulfils some of the criteria of written language as it is space-constrained and as it is continuously revisable. However, some of its other features such as the use of smileys and symbols are beginning to be codified as it matures with time.

To this effect, Crystal (2010:417) distinguishes between the myths and the realities about text messaging as follows:

The myth	**The reality**
• Text messages are full of abbreviated forms.	• Only a small portion of words used in text messages are abbreviated.

• Text message language is a now language.	• Most abbreviations were in use long before mobile phones were invented.
• Texters foster bad spelling in young people.	• People have to know how to spell before they can send text messages.
• Text message language features are used in exams and essays.	• It is very rare to find text message features in learners' school work and exam scripts.
• Text messaging leads to poorer literacy.	• The more the children send text messages, the more they get practice in reading and writing and the better their marks will be.
• Text messaging causes language deterioration.	• New creative genres such as text messaging are the end result that shows how the expressive richness of language has increased.

Table 2.1: The myths and the realities about texting.

2.4 TEXT MESSAGING AND ITS AVID USERS

It is generally accepted that teenagers are among the avid users of text messaging world-wide as they send text messages among themselves because they are convenient, cheap, quick, and cost effective (Chaka & Ngesi, 2010; Horstmanshof, 2004; Kasesniemi & Rautiainen, 2002). To this end, Smith (2003) points out that text messaging is increasingly becoming more popular as an everyday means of communication when compared to other forms of communication. This assertion seems to be undisputable given that even in South Africa many learners tend to be using text messaging more than making calls.

Aziz et al. (2013) state that text messaging helps learners to become more aware of the different language situations and that it can benefit weak readers and spellers who normally avoid books. Similarly, Paton (2011) also believes that text messaging helps improve learners' literacy. This is a sentiment echoed by Shortis (2007) who suggests that the linguistic creativity of text messaging poses a little threat to standard spelling (also see Crystal, 2008; 2010). However, there are contrary views that text messaging may harm learners' spelling, literacy and grammar (cf. Dansieh, 2011; Geertsema et al., 2011; Mphahlele & Mashamaite, 2005; Yousaf & Ahmed, 2013).

According to Horstmanshof (2004), text messaging is particularly favoured by 18-24 year-old users, who often tend to make it their preferred mode of communication. Often young people like communicating through text messaging, which in turn, allows them to send and receive

short messages from handheld, digital mobile phones, giving them almost instant access to unlimited communication opportunities. Horstmanshof (2005) and Thurlow and Brown (2003), believe that these young people are adapting and inventing text messaging to accommodate the 160-character limit, with the result that their text messaging involves a creative use of language which is mostly made up of abbreviations, acronyms or even combinations of letters, numbers, and the development of a code between those who text regularly. With the compressed forms and limited number of characters, that encourages texters to reduce redundancy in communication so as to fit their messages into 160 characters. In this regard, Aziz et al. (2013) argue that the prime objective of text messaging is to use the minimum number of characters needed to convey an intelligible message as many telecommunication companies restrict words to 160 characters for one text message.

For their part, Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002) and Winzker, Southwood and Huddlestone (2009) maintain that the text messaging employed by young people mostly bears more resemblance to a special code than to a standard language. This distinct style of writing offers young people a lot of creativity. Overall, text messaging language is informal, brief and speech-like in nature. Winzker et al. (2009) maintain that only people who are text messaging insiders can often decipher the short form messages constituting text messaging. Most often, the text messaging orthography involves little or no punctuation marks, the wrong or incorrect spelling of words, and poor sentence construction. As a result, texters are highly likely to commit these errors, intentionally or unintentionally.

2.5 SOME OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES ON TEXT MESSAGING AND THEIR FINDINGS

Traditionally, there are two opposing groups of scholars as regards the effect text messaging has on learners' writing or literacy practice: those contending that learners/students do not use many text messaging features in their formal writing, and that such features do not affect their spelling and literacy negatively; and those arguing that learners/students tend to use many text messaging features in their formal writing, and that such features do affect their spelling and literacy negatively. The former group comprises scholars such as Aziz et al. (2013), Crystal (2008), Freudenberg (2009), Mahmoud (2013) and Shortis (2007), while the latter group is represented by scholars such as Geertsema et al. (2011), Mphahlele and Mashamaite (2005), Prøysen (2009) and Yousaf and Ahmed (2013). However, there is a mid-range group consisting of scholars who maintain that text messaging does not affect learners' or students' spelling and literacy either positively or negatively. That is, according to these scholars, text messaging is not correlated to learners' or to students' good or poor writing skills (see, for example, Bernicot, Goumi, Bert-Erboul & Volckaert-Legrier, 2014; Drouin & Davis, 2009; Plester, Wood & Bell, 2008; Powell & Dixon, 2011; Rosen et al. (2010). Reflecting on the research conducted on the impact of text messaging on young users' formal writing, Wardyga (2012) contends that much of the research done in this area is contradictory.

While the aforesaid studies are not exhaustive in the respective areas of text messaging on which they focus, the current study briefly reviews some of them with a view to pinpointing their relevance to it. For instance, with reference to the first group, Aziz et al.'s (2013) study involved 50 undergraduate students at an institute of information technology in Pakistan who were enrolled in two degree programmes, Bachelor of Computer Engineering and Bachelor of Telecommunication Engineering. Forty-two of these students were males, while eight of them were females. All together, their overall ages ranged from 19 to 25 years. In addition to learner and educator questionnaires, students were requested to write a paragraph essay (ranging from 150 to 250 words) on any of the three given topics for one hour in one of their class periods.

A major finding of this study pertaining to student essays is that there was no significant prevalence of SMS features (e.g., abbreviations, emoticons and omissions of punctuation marks) in these essays. This indicates that, the study argues, students were able to switch to an appropriate register or style when writing formally (Aziz et al., 2013). One of the weaknesses of this study is that it did not employ authentic student text messages. Notwithstanding this shortcoming, what it highlights in the context of the current study is that text messaging did not affect students' formal writing (essay writing) as they were able to move from the language of text messaging to that of essay writing.

The second study in the first group is Freudenberg's (2009) study. The latter investigated the impact of SMS speak on the written school work of English first language (L1) and English second language (L2) high school learners at an English-Afrikaans dual medium high school in the Western Cape, South Africa. The study had 88 learners as its participants, of whom 43 were grade eight learners and 45 were grade eleven learners. Of these learners, 51 were English L1 speakers and 37 were Afrikaans L1 speakers. Questionnaires and a written English task were employed as two data collection instruments. Questionnaires were used to assess the frequency and the volume of participants' use of SMS speak together with the features of participants' SMS speak. Similarly, a written English task was used to elicit participants' written English samples so as to establish specific features of SMS speak in these samples.

Two of the findings of this study are relevant to the current study. First, all participants pointed out that they used features of SMS speak in their SMS messages, while many reported using SMS speak in their written school work. Second, and contrastingly however, participants' written work samples did not contain a great number of SMS speak features (Freudenberg, 2009). As is the case with Aziz et al.'s (2013) study, one of the shortcomings of this study is that it did not elicit authentic learner text messages as part of its data. However, despite this drawback, this study serves to show that text messaging did not negatively affect learners' formal written work.

The third study is Mahmoud's (2013) project. This study examined the effect of English SMS language on the development of 40 foundation year students' speaking and writing skills at a university in Saudi Arabia. It was conducted over six weeks in 2012/2013. It had one main research question: does the frequent use of SMS affect students' spoken and written communication skills? The participants were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups, each of which comprised 20 participants. The control group received instruction through conventional strategies, whereas the experimental group received its instruction through both conventional strategies and SMS messages as an extra communication means.

Three instruments were used to collect data: SMS messages written in full English words, and which did not contain short forms and abbreviations; an oral test comprising two tasks; and a written test in which participants had to write a well-organised paragraph about one of the two topics related to their foundation module. One of the findings of this study is that the performance of the experimental group improved more significantly than that of the control group (Mahmoud, 2013). While this study had a smaller sample, overall, overall its findings prove that exposure to text messaging helped enhance students' performance: that is, students exposed to text messaging performed significantly better than those who were not exposed to text messaging.

In respect of the second group of scholars arguing that text messaging tends to affect learners' or students' spelling and literacy negatively, Geertsema et al.'s (2011) study is the case in point. This study was an educator perception investigation into SMS language conducted in an independent secondary school in Gauteng. To this end, its main objective was to determine the views twenty-two grade 8 and 9 educators had regarding the possible influence of text messaging on some aspects of their learners' writing skills. The aspects in question were spelling, sentence length and punctuation. It used purposive sampling as its sampling technique, and selected participants who taught English as a home language to Grade 8 or 9 learners. In addition, it employed questionnaires to collect data from its participants.

In the main, this study found that educators perceived SMS language as negatively affecting the written language skills of grade 8 and 9 English home language learners. Participants' perceived influence related primarily to spelling adaptations, shortened sentences, and incorrect punctuation use (Geertsema et al., 2011). Even though this study surveyed educators' perceptions regarding the use of SMS language by learners in their formal school writing (English home language), and it did not survey learners' perceptions nor studied learners' real-world writing samples, it nonetheless serves as an example of a study that regards text messaging language as having a negative influence on learners' formal writing.

The other study that regards text messaging as having a negative impact on young users' formal writing is Prøysen's (2009) investigation. The study was conducted in 2008 in Wisconsin, in the United States of America (the U.S.A), and involved 50 high school learners and 50 university students. The former's aged ranged between 14 and 18 years, while the latter's age ranged between 18 and 29 years. The study had three research questions with three hypotheses based on the three research questions. One of the research questions was: how does text messaging influence standard written English? Its related hypothesis was: high school students do not keep the language of text messaging separate from standard written English texts, and text messaging language is used in school work (Prøysen, 2009:42). Written essays and questionnaires were used a means of collecting data.

In the final analysis, the number of essays and questionnaires available for analysis were as follows: 51 type-written essays from high school learners; 58 hand-written essays from high school learners; 55 questionnaires from high school learners; and 24 questionnaires from university students. The top four occurring text messaging features observed from both type-written and hand-written essays were as follows in each case, respectively: contractions (207/119); abbreviations (6/167); lower case letters (32/161); and non-standard use of the apostrophe (45/49). On this basis, the study concludes that all its three hypotheses were strongly corroborated by the data collected from two sets of essays and from two sets of questionnaires (Prøysen, 2009). In this instance, it makes a strong case that text messaging tends to interfere with texters' ability to spell, punctuate and capitalise words correctly, and

that texters often transfer their text messaging habits to their schoolwork, notwithstanding the contrary view advanced by scholars such as Crystal (2008). However, if the top four occurring text messaging features as cited above are anything to go by, then, the conclusion reached by the study seems to be a bit far-fetched.

Another study that views text messaging as having a negative impact on young learners' or young students' formal writing is Yousaf and Ahmed's (2013) project. This study took place in 2010 at a university in Pakistan, and had 100 students as its participants. Its main objective was to examine the impact of SMS usage on these students' writing skills. Based on this objective, it framed its hypothesis thus: the more the use of SMS language by students, the more negative impact that will have on their writing skills. Employing multi-phasing sampling, the study collected its data through questionnaires. The study discovered that: 50% of the respondents reported sending or receiving between 50 and 200 SMSs per day; 66% of the respondents said that they experienced spelling mistakes in their written work due to SMS language; 76% of the participants indicated that they text messaging affected their writing skills; and 54% of the participants pointed out that texting manifested itself in their written examination responses (Yousaf & Ahmed, 2013). Despite its findings, one of the shortcomings of this study is that it is surveyed students' perceptions of how text messaging affected their writing skills. As such, it did not have students' actual instances of text messaging use as part of its data.

As mentioned earlier on, there are studies that maintain that text messaging is not correlated to learners' or to students' good or poor writing skills. One such study is Bernicot et al.'s (2009) investigation into the connection between learners' text-messaging practice and their spelling level. It took place during the 2009-2010 school year. Its participants comprised two groups – experimental and control groups. The experimental group consisted of 19 sixth and seventh grade adolescents (10 girls and 9 boys, mean age = 11.79 years, SD^2 = .59 of a year) who were enlisted from a public junior high school situated in a town in France. All of them had not owned or used a mobile phone before taking part the study, but were provided with a mobile phone handset each, and each was requested to send at least 20 text messages (selected from the text messages that they had sent throughout the month, and that they, themselves, had written) to a research group. In the end, a total corpus of 4,524 text messages was collected from the experimental group. The control group was made up of 30 sixth and seventh grade adolescents (11 girls and 19 boys, mean age = 11.93 years, SD = .59 of a year) who were also recruited from the same public junior high school, and from the same grades. This group was not provided with mobile phone handsets (Bernicot et al., 2009).

During the 9^{th} month of the text message collection process, both the experimental and control groups were requested to take a standardised spelling test from the analysis of reading ability (ANALEC). The test entailed a classic six-line dictation that required a usage-based spelling score (from 0 to 28), and a rule-based spelling score (from 0 to 16). For the experimental group, each participant's grades in a French class at school were, in addition,

collected for each of the four trimesters during which text messages were collected. However, for the control group, only the first three trimesters were taken into considered. In all, the study reports that the comparison between the experimental and control groups indicated no difference between the level of traditional (formal) writing at the onset of the text-message collection and during the collection. On this basis, it argues that learners who were less skilled or skilled in formal writing at the start of the text-message collection process remained respectively less skilled or skilled throughout the year. This was so, despite learners' text-messaging use (both in terms of textism types and textism density) (Bernicot et al., 2009). On the whole, this study highlights a case for no correlation between learners' text message use and their formal writing.

The other study is Drouin and Davis' (2009) investigation which explored the use of text speak through different measures. It had 80 introductory psychology students (M = 24, F = 56; mean age = 21.8) from a mid-western university in the U.S.A. as its participants. Thirty-four of these participants were classified as text speak users, while 46 of them were identified as non-text speak users. The study had a dual purpose: to explore the usage of text speak among college students; and to test whether the use of text speak had a significant negative relationship with literacy performance. All the participants were assessed on their proficiency and familiarity with text speak, and on their standardised literacy levels and misspellings of common text speak words. They were expected to complete six tests in a chronological order: an e-mail task; a translation task; a word ID task; a reading fluency test; a spelling test, and a survey.

The following measures were used: textism use in formal versus informal communication in e-mails; text speak proficiency: translating Standard English (SE) to text; text speak familiarity: translating text speak to SE; literacy processing speed: speed of translation to and from SE; spelling errors: translating target textisms to SE; standardised literacy (reading and speaking); and survey. Overall, the study showed that both groups displayed familiarity with text speak, but that text speak users were more proficient with the vocabulary. However, there were no significant between-group differences in standardised literacy scores, or in misspellings of common text speak words. Thus, the study concludes that its analyses indicated that the use of text speak is not related to low literacy performance (Drouin and Davis 2009).

Another study in this category is Rosen et al.'s (2010) project. It comprised two studies, and had 718 young adults as its participants. There were 335 and 385 participants in study one and in study two, respectively, whose ages ranged from 18 to 25-years in both cases. These participants were selected through convenience sampling, and had diverse demographic backgrounds. Educationally, they either held a college degree, had some college courses, or had not taken any college courses. In both studies, the purpose was to investigate whether the reported use of textisms in daily electronic communication was related to the quality of either informal or formal writing. Based on this, three research questions were formulated. To this effect, four measures were used to answer these research questions: a reported use of communication tools; a formal writing sample; an informal writing sample; a reported general

daily use of textisms. Three of the findings of this two-pronged study are instructive for the current study. Firstly, textism use was low. Secondly, there were negative associations between reported use of textisms in everyday electronic communication and writing skill, especially for formal writing. Thirdly and lastly, the negative associations between texting and literacy seemed to moderate in a way by gender and by the educational level in young adults (Rosen et al 2010).

Having reviewed some of the previous studies on text messaging and their findings, and having expressed the view that such studies can be categorised in three manifest groups, the present study aligns itself with two groups: the one that views text messaging as enhancing – and not eroding – learners' formal writing skills; and the other that articulates the view that there is no correlation, or that text messaging does not affect learners' or students' formal writing either positively or negatively (cf. Verheijen, 2013). The reason this study positions itself thus is that it views text messaging as both an evolving genre and an emerging mode of communication that has to be understood within a broader perspective of language change. Moreover, even though the study's participants were drawn from a public high school - which as is the case with many public schools countrywide that are often regarded as offering low quality education – they had been exposed for some years to the EFAL curriculum that subscribes to standard English. Currently this curriculum outlaws text messaging as a genre that can be used at school and as part of formal school writing. As such, many learners and

their teachers are aware of the fact that text messaging is not part of the EFAL curriculum in South Africa.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed and discussed aspects of text messaging relevant to the current study. In doing so, it has discussed relevant studies on text messaging conducted both in South Africa and elsewhere. In addition, where necessary, it has highlighted the shortcomings of some of these studies. In terms of its outline, the sub-headings it has presented are: background to text messaging; some of the features of text messaging; text messaging and its avid users; some of the previous studies on text messaging and their findings. In relation to the last sub-heading, the chapter has characterised how scholars position themselves vis-à-vis text messaging: those contending that text messaging affects learners' or students' formal writing positively; those arguing text messaging affects learners' or students' formal writing negatively; and those advocating that there is no correlation between text messaging and learners' or students' formal writing. Finally, the study aligns itself with the first and last groups of scholars, and has provided the rationale for its stance.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed in this study. In this regard, it describes the problem of the study. It also describes the participants, the sampling techniques, and the materials and the procedures as they relate to the study. In addition, it briefly explains how the study for the study was analysed. Lastly, it describes the ethical issues and the problems encountered when collecting data, and concludes the chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach and employed a case study design. It was, therefore, predicated in a qualitative research paradigm. One of the characteristics of a qualitative research approach as identified by Merriam (2001) is that the researcher should understand a phenomenon investigated from the point of view of participants. The current study treated its data and the aspects of its investigation from participants' perspective to avoid distorting or misrepresenting them. A case study design gives special attention to a specific case or to specific cases. It, then, studies such a case or such cases in-depth by drawing its data from multiple sources (Creswell 2006; Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Yin 2014). The present study

garnered its data from four sources: two learner written tasks; learner questionnaires; and teacher questionnaires.

3.2.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher cherished the view that many youths in Pretoria today - especially learners at a public high school in Pretoria - spend most of their time on their mobile phones sending text messages. The researcher also had a suspicion that since most of these learners get so addicted to using text messages in their daily lives, they are likely to end up using them in their written school work as well. This either could help them improve their English writing proficiency or could ruin it. In this regard, text messaging is, on the one hand, seen as having the potential to negatively affect learner formal writing and learner spelling (see Dansieh 2011; Geertsema et al., 2011; Ochonogor et al., 2012; Salem, 2013; Vosloo, 2009; Yousaf and Ahmed, 2013). On the other hand, it is deemed to be enhancing learner formal writing and learner spelling (see Aziz et al., 2013; Drouin and Davis, 2009; Mahmoud, 2013; Plester et al., 2008; Powell and Dixon, 2011; Rosen et al., 2010). Thus, the current study set out to explore the possible effects (positive or negative) of text messaging on grade 11 EFAL learners' formal written school work at a public high school in Pretoria. Based on the problem stated above, the study's main research question was: what influence does text messaging have on the grade

11 EFAL learners' ability to properly compose and formulate written school work in class? Its three subordinate research questions were as follows:

- Does text messaging affect grade 11 EFAL learners' written school work positively or negatively?
- What type of text message features do these learners use in their written school work?
- Can grade 11 EFAL learners write their formal school work without using any form of text messaging?

3.2.2 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The study had 41 participants - 38 grade eleven EFAL learners (M = 10, F = 28, mean age = 17.4 years) and 3 female grade eleven EFAL teachers – from a public high school in Pretoria, Gauteng. Three sampling techniques were used to select participants: opportunistic purposeful, voluntary and convenience sampling techniques. The first sampling technique entails exploiting the opportunity presented by participants in yielding the information required for the main purpose of the study, while the second involves allowing participants to take part in a study on a voluntary basis. The third sampling technique is about selecting participants based on the unhindered and easy access the researcher has to them (Myers and

Barnes 2005). The present study employed these three sampling techniques for the reason briefly described in the two preceding sentences. Before the study was conducted, permission to conduct such a study was obtained from both the relevant authorities (the Gauteng provincial education department and the school principal). In addition, consent was secured from participants and from parents (in the case of minor learners).

3.2.3 MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

The data for this study were collected using the following materials: learner written tasks (a two-paragraph text message task and a page-long essay task); a learner questionnaire; and a teacher questionnaire. All the data were collected over four days in August 2014. For a text message task, participants were given a topic on which to write two paragraphs using text message features. The topic in question was: should cell phones be used for teaching and learning at school or not? Participants were required to do this task for 20 minutes in class shortly after school. In respect of an essay task, participants were requested to write a page-long essay on the following topic: should text messaging (SMS language) be allowed or not be allowed in written school work? They wrote this essay task a day after they wrote a text message task. They did it in class immediately after school, and had to spend 30 minutes doing it. Both learner and teacher questionnaires were administered on the third day, and both

consisted of open-ended items. These two types of questionnaires assessed learner and teacher perceptions of text messaging in relation to written school work.

3.2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

All the responses to each questionnaire item in both learner and teacher questionnaires were tallied and contrasted. They were, then, thematically and inductively coded and content-analysed using the categories of text message features represented in Table 3.1. A competent English language rater was consulted to help with the coding and analysis of the data, and to ensure inter-rater reliability. Two key questions learners had to respond to in their questionnaire were:

- Do you think that using text messages has affected the way you write at school?
- Provide three reasons for your response above.

Shortenings	Contractions	Acronyms and initialisms	G-clippings	Letter homophones	Number homophones	Symbols	Lowercase "i" and ë	No apostrophes	No commas	No full stops	Incorrect capitalisation	Omitted words	Spelling errors	Non-conventional spelling errors

Table 3.1: A typology of text messaging features as modified and adapted from Lyddy et al. (2013), Shortis (2007) and Thurlow and Brown (2003)

Learners' two written activities - text message paragraphs and written essay responses were coded and content-analysed using a modified version of Lyddy et al.'s (2013) typology of text messaging features as adapted from Shortis' (2007) and Thurlow and Brown's (2003) typologies of text messaging features (see Table 3.1). The major units of analysis were as illustrated in the same table. Text messaging features were tallied and contrasted with those identified in written essay responses. With reference to written essay responses, the prevalence of the same-self text messaging features as displayed in Table 3.1, was determined. Here, too, a competent English language rater was consulted to help with the coding and analysis of the data, and to ensure inter-rater reliability.

3.3 ETHICAL ISSUES

Throughout the course of the study, participants involved were not harmed in any way. Neither were their rights to take part in the study violated in any way. The following ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the duration of the research:

- Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Departmental Committee for Research and Innovation (DCRI), the Faculty Committee for Research and Innovation (FCRI), and the Faculty Committee for Research Ethics (FCRE) within the University.
- Permission to conduct the study was secured from the Gauteng Department of Basic Education.
- The principal of the public high school gave permission to conduct the study
- Parents were given consent forms and information leaflets which fully explained the purpose of the study.
- All participants were fully briefed by the researcher about the study, and about the aims and objectives of the study. Written consent forms were obtained from participants, and from the parents of minor participants.
- The teachers who took part in the study had to agree to take part in the research.
- All participants were guaranteed anonymity and the right to confidentiality.
- No one was forced to participate in the study without their consent.

- The teachers involved were addressed using labels (e.g. T_1, T_2. T_3)
- The three learner activities as data elicitation instruments involved no physical and emotional discomfort to learners.
- All the participants took part in this study voluntarily and anonymously. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without the prospect of being penalised or disadvantaged whatsoever. They did not even have to provide the reason/s for their decision. In addition, participants were not in any way discriminated against as a result of their responses or their non-responses.

3.4 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE FIELD

- Some of the learners were absent on the day of the survey.
- Only 38 learners took part in the study instead of 50.
- There were clashes with the examination period and fun days so the researcher was given other dates than the originally agreed ones.
- The teachers were busy on the day of the interview and their schedules were full for them to take part in the interview. So, the researcher had to change an interview schedule into a questionnaire schedule to better suit the teachers' hectic work schedule. The interview questions were printed and given to the teachers to fill in.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the research design and methodology employed in this study. In particular, it has stated the problem of the study, and described the participants, the sampling techniques, and the materials and the procedures related to the study. In addition, it has briefly explained how the data for the study was analysed. Finally, it has described the ethical issues and the problems encountered when collecting data, and concluded the chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses and interprets the data for the current study. It does so in the following order: teacher questionnaires; learner questionnaires; and two-paragraph text message and written essay activities. It, then, discusses the findings in terms of the following sub-headings: learner text message features as reported by teachers; learner text message features as reported by learners; and text message features identified in text message paragraphs and in written essays. Lastly, the chapter has a section to conclude its discussion.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents the findings of the study. Its structure is intended to respond to the main research question together with the subordinate research questions as mentioned earlier on. In addition, the section attempts to presents the findings in terms of the two types of questionnaires administered to teachers and learners, and the two written learner tasks. As the study was a case study, it is vital to point out that its findings are contextual and, thus, not generalisable.

4.2.1 Teacher Questionnaires – Third Party Reporting

Three grade 11 EFAL teachers filled in an open-ended questionnaire which sought to solicit their views regarding learners' use of text messaging in their written school work. The questionnaire also required them to provide examples of text message features they encountered in their learners' written work. A summarised version of these respondents' responses shows that:

- They agree that they come across text messaging features in their learners' written work
- They think learners transfer text messaging to their formal written work
- Learners forget to turn to formal writing and end up using this text language in their written work
- Learners often struggle to distinguish between formal and informal writing when using text messaging
- Text messaging has a negative effect on learners' language and spellings
- Learners often struggle to write full sentences
- Examples of text message features they encounter in learners' written work are: u (you); 2 (to, two or too); skul (school); csta (sister); b4 (before); c (see); coz/bcos (because); n (and); gutnite (good night); wud (would); and 4 u (for you).

The text message features reported encountered by teachers in learners' written work are represented in Table 4.1. As evident from this table, these text message features are classifiable into three textism categories.

Letter homophones	Number homophones	Non-conventional spelling errors
U	2	skul
b4	4	csta
C		coz/bcos
N		gutnite
		wud

Table 4.1: Some of the text message features learners use in their written work as reported by teachers

4.2.2 Learner Questionnaires – Self-Reporting

Thirty eight grade 11 EFAL learners who were learner participants filled out an open-ended questionnaire which sought to solicit their views regarding their use of text messaging in and how text messaging affected their written school work. Of these 38 learners, 20 learners

indicated that text messaging affected how they wrote at school. In a summary form, the reasons they provided were that they:

- Forget to use proper language and spelling in their school work, and that they usually shorten their words without noticing, and they get penalised for using improper language;
- Forget to spell words, capitalise and punctuate correctly since they are so used to the abbreviated language they even use it in their formal school work;
- Experience poor spelling, are used to writing shortened words ,and acknowledge that text messaging has minimised their abilities to spell and formulate proper and grammatically correct sentences;
- Spend most of their time sending text messages when they should be studying;
- Edit what they have written, but do not see any difference - they cannot even realise that i have made a mistake in their work
- Tend to cut words while writing their school homework and essays; and
- See text messages affecting their english spelling and vocabulary.

By contrast, 18 learners pointed out that text messaging did not affect how they wrote at school. The reasons they provided were that they:

- Use the correct form of language and re-check their work for mistakes after writing;
- Know that text message language is not appropriate for school and that it is not allowed;
- Do not fully understand the language of text messaging that is why they do not use the abbreviated form of language;
- Use proper english when sending text messages;
- Send less text messages so they do not use the informal language;
- Spend most of their time studying than texting, and make sure they use the correct language in their work; and
- Can switch between the two.

4.2.3 Two-Paragraph Text Message and Written Essay Activities

As mentioned earlier on, 38 learners each wrote a two-paragraph text message task on the topic: should cell phones be used for teaching and learning at school or not? A typology of text message features (textisms) that were identified in this activity is displayed in Table 4.2.

Shortenings	Contractions	Acronyms/ Initialisms	G-clippings	Letter homophones	Number homophones	Symbols	Incorrect capitalisation	Spelling errors	Non-conventional spelling errors
com	lrning	wrld	learnin	b	2	@	ShoulD Text Messaging Be alloweD	becouse	cellfones founes cellf4n 4ne
hav	pple	schl	prvdin	c	4		tolD	vecabulary	skul skool scul
don	dne	wrk	tichin	n	1		shoulD	confussed	den
mus	uzng	wrttn	preparin	r			worK	convinient	de
Wil	thig	cll	anythn	y				grammer	lyk
	cmunctng	txt	benefitin					persepective	dey
	hw	msg	teachin					wrighing	lykly
	evn	ys						writting	luv
		lrng						becouse	bcoz
		hw						ceell	coz becoz,
								schooll	gud
								masage	sumtimes
								potable	deir
								comming	tym
								prefare	dat
								diruption	dem
								morden	wat,
								concentraite	yung,
								techers	cud
									sym
									rader

Table 4.2: Text messaging features found in the text message paragraph activity

As shown from this table, text message features that participants used in their text message paragraphs were classified into ten textism categories. Of these ten categories, the two most commonly prevalent text message features were non-conventional spelling errors and spelling errors. They were followed by acronyms/initialisms, contractions, g-clippings, shortenings

and letter homophones. Incorrect capitalisation and number homophones were the less prevalent text message features with the feature, symbols, being the least prevalent.

Shortenings	Contractions	G-clippings	Letter homophones	Number homophones	Spelling errors	Non-conventional spelling errors
infor	strggle	providin	u	4	becouse	fones
wher	prvde	teachin		2	short-cart	wyst
importanc	usd	learnin		1	robberie	lyf
mor	expsd				opopriate	sym
thou					persepective	lyk
com					esayest	nite
					vecabulary	rite
					adeated (addicted)	
					wrighing	
					abreveations	
					rusult	
					funiliar	
					bulling	
					reit (write)	
					posebility	
					frastrated	
					quotion (question)	
					imagen	
					univesity	
					falfill	
					worng	

Table 4.3: Text messaging features found in the written essay activity

As depicted in Table 4.3, text message features that were identified in participants' written essay responses, were classified into seven textism categories. Of these features, the most commonly prevalent ones were spelling errors and non-conventional spelling errors. They were followed by shortenings and contractions, and by g-clippings and number homophones. The feature, letter homophones, was the least prevalent.

Categories of text message features	**Text message activity (N = 38)**			**Essay activity (N = 38)**		
	No. of text message paragraphs	**No. of errors committed**	**Frequency %**	**No. of written essay scripts**	**No. of errors committed**	**Frequency %**
Shortenings	19	53	5.3	2	6	2.2
Contractions	13	122	12.2	3	4	1.5
Acronyms/ initialisms	1	2	0.2	0	0	0
G-Clippings	1	3	0.3	2	3	1.1
Letter homophones	7	27	2.7	1	1	0.3
Number homophones	12	45	4.5	1	3	1.1
Symbols	4	4	0.4	0	0	0
Lower case "e"	4	4	0.4	8	29	10.7
Lowercase "i"	1	1	0.1	2	2	0.7
No apostrophes	7	9	0.9	13	34	12.5
No commas	0	0	0	3	3	1.1
No full stops	12	22	2.2	12	19	7
Incorrect capitalisation	12	34	3.4	14	47	17
Omitted words	2	4	0.4	6	7	2.6
Spelling errors	36	501	50.2	29	106	39.1
Non-conventional spelling errors	18	168	16.8	4	7	2.6
Total errors committed		999 (22%)	100		271 (3%)	100
Total word count		4632			9900	

Table 4.4: A comparison of the text message features and errors found in the two learner activities.

Moreover, the text message features and errors found in the two learner activities (a two-paragraph text message activity and a written essay activity) were tallied and contrasted as depicted in Table 4.4. These features and errors were classified into sixteen textism categories. Of these sixteen categories, the three most commonly occurring text message features were: spelling errors (50.2%); non-conventional spelling (16.8%); and contractions (12.2%). They were followed by shortenings (5.3%); number homophones (4.5%); incorrect capitalisation (3.4%); letter homophones (2.7%); and no full stops (2.2%). The least occurring text message features were no apostrophes (0.9%); symbols (0.4%); lower case “e” (0.4%); omitted words (0.4%); g-clippings (0.3%); and lowercase “i” (0.7%). The feature, no commas, had a zero occurrence. Lastly, the total number of text message features identified in text message paragraphs was 999 out of a total word count of 4 632.

Thus, text message features accounted for 22% of the total word count in this activity. In relation to written essay responses, the total number of text message features identified was 271 out of a total word count of 9 900. Of these features, the most occurring ones were: spelling errors (39.1%); incorrect capitalisation (17%); no apostrophes (12.5%); and lower case “e” (10.7%). These were followed by the feature, no full stops (7%). The least occurring features were non-conventional spelling errors (2.6%); omitted words (2.6%); shortenings (2.2%); contractions (1.5%); g-clippings (1.1%); number homophones (1.1%); no commas (1.1%); lowercase “i” (0.8%); and letter homophones (0.3%). Acronyms/initialisms and symbols had a zero occurrence. Overall, the text message features accounted for 3% of the total word count in this activity.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

As mentioned earlier on, this study set out to answer its main research question together with the three subordinate research questions based on this main research question. It did so through four data collection processes: two types of questionnaires and two written learner activities.

4.3.1 Learner Text Message Features as Reported by Teachers

In a teacher questionnaire, the three respondents indicated that learners used text message features in their written work or transferred text messaging to their formal written work. They also pointed out that: learners failed to distinguish between formal and informal writing when using text messaging; learners often struggled to write full sentences; and text messaging had a negative effect on learners' language and spellings. In addition, they provided some of the examples of text messaging that they thought learners used in their written work. These examples were classified into three textism categories: letter homophones; number homophones; and non-conventional spelling errors (see Table 2). All this served as the perceptions teachers had of the possible effects text messaging had on their learners' written

work. That is, in relation to the main research question and the first subordinate research question of this study, teachers maintained that text messaging had a possible negative effect on their learners' written work. With reference to the second and third subordinate research questions, teachers believed that letter homophones, number homophones and non-conventional spelling errors (see Table 4.1) were the text message features that learners used in their written work, and that learners transferred text messaging to their formal written school work.

These teacher perceptions regarding learner text messaging are consistent with those reported in Geertsema et al.'s (2011), Freudenberg's (2009), Odey, Essoh and Endong's (2014), and Salem's (2013) studies. For example, Geertsema et al.'s (2011) study concludes that most of the teachers who participated in a teacher questionnaire, perceived text messaging as having a negative influence on grade 8 and 9 learners' written skills such as spelling, punctuation, and sentence length. In a similar vein, Freudenberg (2009) highlights that 5 of the 7 teachers who participated in a teacher questionnaire reported having noticed features of SMS speak (e.g., spelling errors, lack of punctuation, abbreviations/acronyms, emoticons and rebus writing) making inroad in some of grade 8 and 11 learners' written work. In this regard, Odey et al. (2014) point out that the intensive use of SMS texting negatively affected the writing skills of university students at a given university college in Nigeria. They argue that texting tended to be consciously or unconsciously transferred to these students' written essays. Similarly and as mentioned earlier on, Dansieh's (2011) study demonstrates that

lecturers' responses to a questionnaire about the impact of text messaging on student writing indicated that text messaging posed a threat to student writing skills. However, the teacher perceptions of the current study are inconsistent with the view that text messaging helps enhance learners' spelling and literacy (see, for example, Aziz et al., 2013; Crystal, 2008; Mahmoud, 2013; Shortis, 2007; Wood et al., 2014).

4.3.2 Learner Text Message Features as Reported by Learners

In a learner questionnaire, 20 learners self-reported that they: forgot to use proper language, spelling, capitalisation and punctuation in their school work; often shortened words and used abbreviations in their formal school work (e.g. school homework and essays); edited their written work but could not detect errors; and thought text messaging affected their English spelling and vocabulary. They also indicated that text messaging tended to minimise their ability to construct proper and grammatically correct sentences. Contrastingly, 18 learners self-reported that they: knew that text messaging language was not appropriate for and was not allowed for school use; did not fully understand the language of text messaging; did not use the abbreviated form of language; used the correct form of language and used proper English when sending text messages; re-checked their work for mistakes after writing; and could switch between the two (texting and formal writing).

These two contrasting sets of learner responses served as the perceptions learners had of the possible effects text messaging had on their written work. That is, concerning the main research question and the first subordinate research question of this study, learner perceptions were dichotomously polarised. Twenty learners said that they used text messaging in their written school work, and that they thought text messaging affected their formal school work (e.g. school homework and essays) negatively. In contradistinction, 18 learners said that they did not use text messaging in their school work, and that they were able to switch between the two (texting and formal writing). This suggests that they thought text messaging did not affect their written work. In connection with the second subordinate research question, learners did not mention text message features that they thought influenced their written work.

However, pertaining to the third subordinate research question, again two contrasting sets of responses from the self-same two groups of learners emerged. For example, on the one hand, the self-same 20 learners indicated that they often used short forms and abbreviations in their formal school work (e.g. school homework and essays). This particular self-reporting instance tallies with a self-reporting observation in both Freudenberg's (2009) and Yousaf and Ahmed's (2013) studies. In this regard, in Freudenberg's (2009) study, learners self-reported that they used not only SMS speak in their school writing, but also multiple features of SMS speak. Likewise, in Yousaf and Ahmed's (2013) study, a majority of 100 surveyed students at a university in Pakistan reported that SMS texting affected their formal writing (e.g., spelling)

negatively. On the other hand, the same 18 learners in the current study maintained that they were able to engage in their written work without making use of text messaging as they knew that the latter (text messaging) was not appropriate for and was not allowed for formal writing. This learner self-reported observation ties in with a similar observation in Ochonogor et al.'s (2012) study in which students said that they were aware of and were bothered about the effects of texting on their spoken and written English.

4.3.3 Text Message Features Identified in Text Message Paragraphs and in Written Essays

As evident from Table 4.2, text message features identified from learners' two-paragraph text message tasks were classified into ten textism categories. The prevalence frequency of these categories was described and presented in sub-section 4.2.3 above. For example, the two most commonly prevalent text message features were non-conventional spelling errors and spelling errors. They were followed by acronyms/initialisms, contractions, g-clippings, shortenings and letter homophones. Incorrect capitalisation and number homophones were the less prevalent text message features with the feature, symbols, being the least prevalent. In a different but related instance, Odey et al. (2014) identified the following nine SMS features in their study of 250 SMS messages generated by 50 third year education students at a university in Nigeria: truncation (short forms); vowel deletion; alphanumeric homophones; graphemes (letter homophones); initialisation; lack of inter-word space; logographic emoticons; onomatopoeic

expressions; and punctuation errors. Of these, the five most dominant were vowel deletion, graphemes, alphanumeric homophones, punctuation errors and initialisation.

As regards written essays, the text message features detected were classified into seven textism categories (see Table 4.3), of which the most commonly prevalent were spelling errors and non-conventional spelling errors. These were followed by shortenings and contractions, and by g-clippings and number homophones. The feature, letter homophones, was the least prevalent. Except for acronyms/initialisms, symbols and incorrect capitalisation, the seven text message features detected in learners' written essays are the same as those identified in the same learners' text message paragraphs (see Table 4.2). Moreover, these text message features include the three that teachers reported as being committed by learners in their written school work (see Table 4.1). In her (2009) study, Freudenberg reports nine features of SMS speak that she detected from the written work of the 88 grade 8 and 11 learners who participated in her study. These were: spelling errors; lack of punctuation; over-punctuation; abbreviations or acronyms; emoticons; rebus writing; shortened words; slang; and colloquialisms. Similarly, Odey et al (2014) point out that the same SMS language features/forms observed in their 50 students' 250 SMS messages were also observed in these students' written essays.

In addition, the text message features and errors found in the two learner activities were tallied and contrasted as depicted in Table 4.4. These features and errors were classified into ten textism categories, and presented with their frequency percentages and word counts in each case. For example, spelling errors had the highest frequency percentage in both activities, even though they were more prevalent in the text message activity (50.2%) than in the essay activity (39.1%). However, at a 39.1% occurrence frequency, spelling errors as a category could be regarded as having had the highest prevalence incidence both as compared to text messaging as an informal written activity and as a percentage of the overall text message features identified in learners' essays as a formal written activity. The same applies to incorrect capitalisation, no apostrophes, lower case "e", no full stops and omitted words as text message features with the 17%, 12.5%, 10.7%, 7% and 2.6% occurrence frequencies, respectively, in the essay activity, but whose respective frequency percentages were 3.4%, 0.9%, 0.4%, 2.2% and 0.4% in the learners' text message activity. By contrast, text message features such as contractions (1.5%), g-clippings (1.1%), number homophones (1.1%), no commas (1.1%), lowercase "i" (0.8%), and letter homophones (0.3%) occurred the least in the essay activity, while acronyms/initialisms and symbols had a zero occurrence.

Nonetheless, text message features as a percentage of the overall word count in the text message activity as an informal written activity are lower at 22%. They are even much lower at 3% of the total word count in the written essay activity as a formal written activity. So, as a percentage of the word count in both learner activities, text message features had a lower

prevalence in, and thus possibly not a negative effect on, the written work of the learners who participated in this study. Finally, taking the number of scripts in each activity (see Table 4.4) as a baseline metric, it appears that it was possible (barring spelling errors) for a majority of these learners to write their essays without relying heavily on the text message features identified in Table 4.4.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has analysed and interpreted the data for this study. It has done so by focusing, first, on teacher and learner questionnaires and, second, on the two-paragraph text message and written essay activities. In this regard, it has also discussed the findings with reference to the following sub-headings: learner text message features as reported by teachers; learner text message features as reported by learners; and text message features identified in text message paragraphs and in written essays. Finally, the chapter has concluded the discussion mounted in this part of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a summary of the main conclusions of the study. It also outlines the recommendations of the study. It, then, mentions the limitations of the study, offers directions for future research, and concludes this last part of the dissertation.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to explore the following: whether text messaging affected grade 11 EFAL learners' written school work positively or negatively; the types of text message features these learners used in their written school work; and whether these learners could write their formal school work without using any form of text messaging. In exploring these three areas, the study collected its data through two types of questionnaires and two learner activities. Some of the text message features it detected from the two written learner activities were as follows: shortenings; contractions; acronyms/initialisms; g-clippings; letter homophones; number homophones; no apostrophes, no full stops; omitted words; incorrect capitalisation;

spelling errors; and non-conventional spelling errors. Of these features, spelling errors had the highest frequency percentage in both activities. However, they were more prevalent in the text message activity (50.2%) than they were in the essay activity (39.1%). In this regard, the study argues that at a 39.1% occurrence frequency, spelling errors as a category and as a percentage of the total text message features had the highest prevalence incidence in the text message activity as an informal written activity and in the learners' essays as a formal written activity. In contrast, text message features such as number homophones, no commas and letter homophones occurred the least in the essay activity, whereas acronyms/initialisms and symbols had a zero occurrence.

However, text message features as a percentage of the total word count in the text message activity as an informal written activity were lower at 22%. They were much lower at 3% of the overall word count in the written essay activity as a formal written activity. So, as a percentage of the word count in both learner activities, text message features had a lower prevalence in the written work of the learners who participated in this study. Thus, they did not have a negative effect on these two learner activities, Lastly, using the number of scripts in each activity (see Table 4.4) as a baseline metric, it appears that it was possible (except for spelling errors) for a majority of these learners to write their essays without relying heavily on the text message features identified in Table 4.4.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings this dissertation, the researcher recommends that the public high school in Soshanguve should consider involving learners in spelling bee competitions. EFAL need to make learners aware of specific domains in which text messaging is acceptable as new genre of writing of specific domains in which it may not be deemed to be acceptable as form of writing.

In relation to the limitations, the findings of this study are largely specific and responsive to the nature of the data types solicited from the participants' text messages and writing samples. As such, there are studies that may replicate these findings and those that may not replicate them. Moreover, cross-sectional studies involving students across study levels, and involving a lot more triangulated data types, are needed to get to understand better the learner SMS language.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a summary of the main conclusions of the study. It has also outlined the recommendations of the study. Additionally, it has mentioned the limitations of the study, offered directions for future research, and concluded this last part of the dissertation.

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APPENDIX 1 : GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:
Reference no: D2015 / 076

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	**13 June 2014**
Validity of Research Approval:	**13 June 2014 to 3 October 2014**
Name of Researcher:	**Thubakgale K.N.S.**
Address of Researcher:	**803 Block F West**
	Soshanguve
	0152
Telephone Number:	**079 591 8740**
Email address:	**knsthubakgale@gmail.com**
Research Topic:	**The impact of text messaging on the written work of Grade 11 English First Additional Language learners at a public school in Soshanguve**
Number and type of schools:	**ONE Secondary School**
District/s/HO	**Tshwane North**

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

2014/06/17

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research
9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
4. *A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
5. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
6. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
7. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
8. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
9. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
10. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
12. *On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Makhado
.....

Dr David Makhado
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 2014/06/17

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APPENDIX 2 : SCHOOL APPROVAL LETTER

LETHABONG
SECONDARY SCHOOL

ENQUIRIES: M Z SERWADI
TEL: (012) 799 8120

ADDRESS: 382 BLOCKF
SOSHANGUVE
0152

15 August 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that the bearer **Katlego Ngaletsana Success Thubakgale id no 880724 0850 081 student no 207 210412** has been granted permission to conduct a Research Project at the above mentioned school.

Thanking you in advance

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LETHABONG SECONDARY SCHOOL
2014 -08- 15
PRIVATE BAG X 19
SOSHANGUVE
TEL: 012 799 8120

Yours Sincerely

Serwadi M.Z

Principal

APPENDIX 3 : FACULTY OF HUMANITIES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE [FREC-HUM] APPROVAL LETTER

Tshwane University of Technology

Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee [FREC-HUM]

The TUT Research Ethics Committee is a registered Institutional Review Board (IRB 00005968) with the US Office for Human Research Protections (IORG# 0004997) (Expires 9 Jan 2017). Also, it has Federal Wide Assurance for the Protection of Human Subjects for International Institutions (FWA 00011501) (Expires 22 Jan 2017). In South Africa it is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-180509-21).The FCRE-HUM is a subcommittee of the Senate Committee for Research Ethics

04 SEPTEMBER 2014

Ref #: FCRE/APL/STD/2014/12
Name: Thubakgale, K.N.S..
Student #: 207210412

Thubakgale, K.N.S.
C/o Dr. C.P. Chaka
Department of Applied Languages
Faculty of Humanities

Dear Ms./Mr. Thubakgale, K.N.S.

Title: The impact of text messaging on the written work of Grade 11 English First additional language learner at a Public High school in Soshanguve

Investigator: Thubakgale, K.N.S.
Qualification: M Tech (Language Practice)
Supervisor: Dr. C.P. Chaka
Co-supervisor: Dr. G.W. Collins
Co-supervisor: Mrs. M.L Mphahlele

Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethics clearance.

Decision: Approved

In reviewing the proposal, the following comments/notes, emanating from the meeting are tabled for your consideration/attention/notification:

- The project does not involve TUT staff and/ or students as respondents, but it does involve interviews with a sample of Grade 11 learners from Soshanguve. The topic of research (impact of text messaging on written work) is not an ethically sensitive issue
- The Information leaflet and Informed Consent document is in order, and the required parental consent is also in order
- The questions of the interview schedule are in order
- Letters of permission from the school and the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct research have been provided

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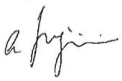
Tel. (012) 382 9932 Tel. (012) 382-9754, www.tut.ac.za • The Registrar, Private Bag X680, Pretoria 0001

The Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee reviewed the documents at its meeting on 28 August 2014. The study is **approved**.

The Committee wishes you well with your research endeavours.
Signature



04/09/2014

Chair / Deputy-Chair
Faculty Research Ethics Committee
[Ref#: FCRE/APL/STD/2014/12]

cc Dr. C.P. Chaka; Dr. G.W. Collins; Mrs. M.L. Mphahlele

APPENDIX 4 : INFORMATION LEAFLET AND RESEARCH SUBJECTS' CONSENT FORM

Tshwane University of Technology

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

INFORMATION LEAFLET AND RESEARCH SUBJECTS' CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE:

THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF TEXT MESSAGING ON THE WRITTEN WORK OF GRADE 11 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN SOSHANGUVE

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR:	Miss. K.N.S. THUBAKGALE
STUDY LEADER:	Dr. C.P. CHAKA
1st CO-STUDY LEADER:	Dr. G.W. COLLINS
2nd CO-STUDY LEADER:	Mrs. M.L. MPHAHLELE

Dear Potential Research Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study forming part of my formal M.Tech degree in Language Practice which investigates the possible effects of text messaging on the written work of grade 11 English first additional language (EFAL) learners at a public high school in Soshanguve. The information in this leaflet explains to you what will be expected of you,

should you decide to partake in the study. Before you agree to take part in this study, you should fully understand what is involved. You should not agree to take part in it unless you are completely satisfied with all aspects of it.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ALL ABOUT?

This study is an academic research project which will be conducted by Miss K.N.S. Thubakgale as part of her M.Tech degree in Language Practice. It is about investigating the possible effects of text message language on the written school work of grade 11 EFAL learners at a public school in Soshanguve.

WHAT YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO DO IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be required to do the following:

- To sign an informed consent form.
- In the case of minor children, parents must give their consent for their children's participation in the study. NB: The study will be conducted solely by the researcher with the help of three teachers which will take only one week and will be conducted after school so as not to interfere with school lessons and other school activities.
- To participate in a briefing session informing you about the aims and objectives of the study.

- To write two activities in class after school. First, as a grade 11 EFAL learner, you will be asked to a write two paragraph activity that displays text message features based on a given topic. This text message activity will take twenty minutes to do and will take place after school. Second, you will also be requested to participate in a one-page written essay activity based on a given topic. The activity will last thirty minutes.
- To complete a questionnaire schedule. Again, you will be asked to respond to a questionnaire schedule intended to find out your opinions on and/or insights into the possible effects text messaging has on the written work of grade 11 EFAL learners. The filling in of the questionnaire schedule will take twenty minutes to complete.

A Teacher Questionnaire:

- Three grade 11 EFAL teachers will be required to participate in a focus group. The intention of this interview is to find out teachers' opinions on and/or insights into the the possible effects text messaging has on the written work of grade 11 EFAL learners. This questionnaire will last forty minutes. NB: Note that the focus group discussions will be audio recorded.

ARE THERE ANY CONDITIONS THAT MAY EXCLUDE YOU FROM THE STUDY?

You will **not** be eligible to partake in the study if you are not a grade 11 EFAL learner or a grade EFAL teacher at the public high school in question.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY OR CAN ANY OF THE STUDY PROCEDURES RESULT IN PERSONAL DISCOMFORT OR INCONVENIENCE?

Learner Activities (A two paragraph activity with text message features, an essay writing activity and a learner questionnaire)

These data elicitation instruments involve no anticipated risks to participants; they also have no potential to cause any physical and emotional discomfort to participants.

Teacher Focus Group Interview

Equally, this data elicitation instrument involves no anticipated risks to participants; it also has no potential to cause any physical and emotional discomfort to participants.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS THAT MAY COME FROM THE STUDY?

The results of this study will have no direct personal benefit to you. However, one of the potential benefits of the study is to make a contribution to the literature on the possible effects of text messaging on the written school work of grade 11 EFAL learners at the school in question. In addition, a study of this nature has never been conducted in the Soshanguve area, which means you will be part of the first group to participate in a study of this nature, in this area.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY FINANCIAL COMPENSATION OR INCENTIVE FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY?

Please note that you will not be paid to participate in the study.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and anonymous. You have the right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty or future disadvantage whatsoever. You don't even have to provide the reason/s for your decision. You will not in any way be discriminated against as a result of your responses. Your withdrawal will in no way influence your continued relationship with the research team. All the information obtained from the learner written tasks, learner questionnaire and teacher interview will be strictly confidential.

HOW WILL YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY BE ENSURED IN THE STUDY?

All the information that you are required to provide in this study will be handled confidentially. Therefore, access to all your responses will be strictly limited to the researcher, to the supervisors of the study and to designated examiners (appointed by Tshwane University of Technology). In addition, all your responses (including your personal information) will be kept and stored in a confidential format that will only be accessible to the researcher.

IS THE RESEARCHER QUALIFIED TO CARRY OUT THE STUDY?

Yes, the researcher is an M.Tech Language Practice student, in the Department of Applied Languages, who is capable of conducting all the activities related to this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

Yes. Both the Departmental and Faculty Committees of Research and Innovation (DCRI and FCRI) of the Tshwane University of Technology have formally approved the study proposal.

WHO CAN YOU CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE STUDY?

The primary investigator, **Miss. K.N.S. Thubakgale**, can be contacted on her mobile phone at 071 598 3484. The study leader, **Dr C.P. Chaka**, can be contacted during office hours at Tel. (012) 382-4716. Should you have any questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact the chairperson of the TUT Research Ethics Committee, Dr WA Hoffmann, during office hours at Tel (012) 382 6265/46, E-mail hoffmannwa@tut.ac.za. Alternatively, you can report any serious unethical behaviour at the University's Toll Free Hotline 0800 21 23 41.

DECLARATION: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

A FINAL WORD

Your assistance and participation in the study will be greatly appreciated. Please sign the attached consent form if you agree to participate in the study.

CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I have been adequately informed by the researcher about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of the study. I have also received, read and understood the above written information. I am aware that the results of the study will be anonymously processed into a research report. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study. I had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and of my own free will declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

Research participant's name: _____ (please print)

Research participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's name: _____ (please print)

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 5 : TWO PARAGRAPH ACTIVITY WITH TEXT MESSAGE FEATURES

Tshwane University of Technology

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

PROJECT TITLE:

THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF TEXT MESSAGING ON THE WRITTEN WORK OF GRADE 11 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN SOSHANGUVE

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR: Miss. K.N.S. THUBAKGALE

STUDY LEADER: Dr. C.P. CHAKA

1st CO-STUDY LEADER: Dr. G.W. COLLINS

2nd CO-STUDY LEADER: Mrs. M.L. MPHAHLELE

1. 1 Activity One

1. 1. 1 Two Paragraph Activity with Text Message Features

Write two paragraphs in which you use any forms of text message (SMS language) you know of on the following topic: ***Cell phones should be used for teaching and learning at school***. Spend twenty (20) minutes doing this activity.

NB: The purpose of this activity is to elicit text message (SMS) features from learners. The activity will be administered in learners' classroom after school.

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APPENDIX 6 : ESSAY WRITING ACTIVITY

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DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

1. 2 Activity Two

PROJECT TITLE:

THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF TEXT MESSAGING ON THE WRITTEN WORK OF GRADE 11 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN SOSHANGUVE

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR: Miss. K.N.S. THUBAKGALE

STUDY LEADER: Dr. C.P. CHAKA

1st CO-STUDY LEADER: Dr. G.W. COLLINS

2nd CO-STUDY LEADER: Mrs. M.L. MPHAHLELE

1. 2. 1 Essay Writing Activity

Write a one-page essay on the following topic: ***Should text messaging (SMS language) be allowed or not allowed in written school work?*** Spend thirty (30) minutes doing this activity.

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