

**THE IMPACT OF CELLULAR PHONE LANGUAGE ON ACADEMIC WRITING AT
HIGH SCHOOLS: A CASE OF MANKWENG CIRCUIT**

by

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MINI-DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TRANSLATION STUDIES AND LINGUISTICS

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

(SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

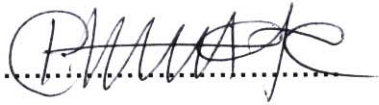
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2014

DECLARATION

I, **KWETEPE JOHN MATLAKALA** hereby declare that the mini-dissertation, **THE IMPACT OF CELLULAR PHONE LANGUAGE ON ACADEMIC WRITING AT HIGH SCHOOLS: A CASE OF MANKWENG CIRCUIT** submitted by me has not been submitted previously for any degree at the University of Limpopo or any other University and it is my own work and that all the sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.



Matlakala, K.J (Mr)



Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father Solomon Nkhakhane Matlakala and my late mother Maxangu Maria Matlakala and to five people in my life who inspired me to further my studies, my grandmother: Mnyamane Catherine Mkhabele; my two senior brothers: Maroba Jan Matlakala and Masilo Raymond Mkhabele and my two senior sisters: Mitlemi Salphina Matlakala and Lerato Emily Matlakala.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank the Almighty God for giving me the wisdom, will, skill and strength to complete this study.

My appreciation goes to my supervisor Mrs C.M. Mayevu and my co-supervisor Mr S.J. Kubayi. I thank you for your incredible support and long hours spent in making my study to be a success. You encouraged me to complete this study. I thank you.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at high schools located in Mankweng Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Data collection was done using semi-structured interviews. Fourteen English First Additional Language teachers and fifty learners participated in the study. The study revealed that cellular phone language has an impact on academic writing of learners. It is also found that cellular phone language influences the language proficiency of learners in a negative way. The study recommended that learners should not be allowed to chat in the middle of lessons. It is also recommended that parents should encourage their children to form study groups and study chats instead of wasting time on chat rooms.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research examines the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at high schools. Technology seems to be a useful survival tool in modern society. Communication is counted as one of the activities that offer an easy way of exchanging information through the use of technology. The global society is highly dependent on technology to perform its daily duties. Technologies such as cellular phones consist of mass media which are used for instant messaging in Social Networks like *Facebook*, *Mxit*, *Twitter* and *Myspace*. These Social Networks enable individuals to connect and share ideas with each other. It seems that Social Networks are highly preferred because they are simple and cheaper means of communication from one person to another. This research discusses the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at high schools.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

These days communication occurs by means of writing using advanced technology such as cellular phones. Latisha (2007:10) says that “in the past, people were using pens and papers to write postage letters”. This was the fastest means of communication before the emergence of new technology. However, things have changed and so has the mode of communication. Even in rural and semi-rural areas like Mankweng, Polokwane, the impact of technological advancements on communication is a reality.

The study was conducted in Mankweng area within the Mankweng Circuit. Mankweng Circuit is situated in Polokwane, Limpopo Province, South Africa. There are thirty-one schools in this circuit. The total number of primary schools is twenty and there are also eleven high schools. The medium of learning and teaching in high schools is English. The total number of Grade 12 learners who wrote English subject in 2011 is one thousand five hundred and seventy-two (1572) (Summary sheet, 2011).

According to Statistics South Africa (2001), Mankweng has a population of 11,592 (2,625.07 per km²). In 2001, 99,38% of the population was Black African, 0.28% Coloured , 0.18% Indian or Asian and White South Africans constituted 0.16%. Languages that are spoken in Mankweng include Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Sesotho, isiZulu, SiSwati, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and Afrikaans. The majority of high school learners who study in this area are Black Africans (Statistics South Africa, 2001). Molepo (2008:3) states that "The Department of Education gives provisions for code-switching as a method of teaching and assessing learners". Code-switching refers to the use of more than one language in a conversation. In this way, code switching helps learners to understand things better than when they are taught only in English, which is a second language. Learners in the Mankweng Circuit are taught in English in the classroom. Besides, they use English when they communicate with friends via cellular networks. This proposed study focused on Grades 8 to 12 learners of 2012 at selected high schools in the Mankweng Circuit.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Cellular phone text messaging is used in daily interaction to enable texters to send and receive messages faster than before. The main aim is to stay in touch yet save money and time. The problem arises when, in the use of language, texters delete vowels or substitute letters for numbers or symbols using the phonetic spelling system. For example:

(1) "*thanx*"

(Thanks)

In example (1), the letter 'x' is used to represent the letters 'k' and 's' in the word 'thanks'. Besides, the word '*thanx*' starts with a small letter instead of a capital letter as per the rules of grammar. According to spelling rules, a new sentence or word starts with a capital letter.

(2) "*i wnt 2 b a counsellor*".

(I want to be a counsellor)

In texting, people write words the way they are pronounced. Texting, as a way of writing, may affect sentences and the correct spelling of English words. Brown *et al.* (2003:6) hold that "students have trouble seeing the distinction between formal and informal writing". Consequently, they use informal Instant Messaging (IM) abbreviations and language in formal settings such as at schools and meetings.

Text messaging is mostly used by the young generation nowadays as they are exposed to technology. Technology enables them to communicate with each other whenever they want to express their views or share ideas with friends. Social Networks such as *Facebook*, *Myspace*, *Twitter* and *2go* are programmed in such a way that they are unable to correct spelling mistakes. As a result, there is confusion between correct and incorrect English grammar. Thus, text messaging can have a negative effect on the writing of an individual. Therefore, this issue is worth to be investigated.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to analyse the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at high schools.

1.4.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To determine the quality of English academic writing of high school learners;
- To determine the effects of the use of cellular phone language on academic writing and
- To assess the attitude of teachers and learners towards cellular phone language.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are as follows:

- How does cellular phone language affect the quality of English academic writing of high school learners?
- What are the effects of the use of cellular phone language on academic writing?
- What is the attitude of teachers and learners towards cellular phone language?

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study is important in the sense that it highlights the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will benefit both learners and teachers as sources of reference in their academic writing. Moreover, the study will significantly help learners to differentiate between academic writing and cellular phone language in their writing. The findings of this study will not only help learners but also English scholars, students, book writers and all professionals who are involved in the field of writing.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is an important tool of research as it consists of tools and techniques such as: research design, population, sampling, type of research, data collection and data analysis, upon which the entire research will be based (Babbie, 1992:89). In this section, the focus is on research design, methods, sampling, data collection and data analysis.

1.8.1 Research design

Research design is planning a strategy of conducting research (Abuja, 2001:120). The research focused on the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at high schools. The researcher personally went to schools to collect learners' composition scripts. The aim of collecting these scripts was to establish the facts on the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included the responses from teachers and learners. Secondary sources included learners' composition scripts. The research constituted a cross-sectional study. According to Babbie (1992:110), a cross-sectional study involves observation of a sample or cross section of a population which is made at one point in time. This means that the information was collected only once from the respective schools.

1.8.2 Method

This study aimed to explore the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing. In undertaking this type of research, the study used both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. The qualitative method assisted the researcher with data collection, as well as in the quantification of data or responses from the units of analysis namely, teachers and learners from the selected schools. The inductive approach, which falls within the qualitative method, also helped the researcher in the presentation, and subsequent discussion, analysis and interpretation of the linguistic data containing ambiguity from learners in Sepedi. These data involved mainly learners' composition scripts from their English workbooks.

1.8.3 Sampling

The research used the random sampling method to draw the units of analysis. All classes of English from Grades 8-12 were included in this study. The number of composition scripts examined was 25 in total. This included 14 teachers and 50 learners who were interviewed from each school with regard to their attitudes towards cellular phone language.

1.8.4 Data collection

The researcher was able to collect data from learners' composition scripts regarding the impact of cellular phone language. The data which had already been collected by other researchers were pivotal in this study. The data from books, articles, journals, dissertations as well as the Internet were used. Morse *et al.* (1996:76) state that "semi-structured interview is used when the researcher knows most of the questions to ask but cannot predict the answers". For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect information to determine the attitude of learners and teachers with respect to the use of cellular phone language.

1.8.5 Scope of the study

The scope of the study was limited to the analysis of the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at high schools. The study included learners' oral responses, teachers' oral responses and learners' composition scripts.

1.8.6 Data analysis

In this study, data were analysed to determine how teachers and learners have responded by categorizing similar answers according to their theme. Analysing data was pivotal to the study because it helped in understanding the results of the study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used with respect to the analysis of data collected by means of semi-structured interviews.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are rules stipulating expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subject (De Vos, 1998:24). It is important for the researcher not to overlook these rules since they are widely accepted in any professional field of research.

- **Voluntary participation**

This type of research was based on voluntary participation process. Since this research was a voluntary research, teachers and learners did not feel free to reveal particular information about them.

- **Anonymity**

Participation rights and wishes to remain anonymous were respected and taken into consideration. In this case, numbers instead of names identified the participants. This made the teachers and learners free to reveal the reasons that impact on academic writing of high school learners.

- **Confidentiality**

Participants' freedom of giving honest information was strictly confidential. A consent form was also distributed to the participants. No information was disclosed without the participants' permission. In this study, both learners' and teachers' oral responses were collected.

1.10 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One comprises general introduction which outlines the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, research methodology, ethical considerations, rationale of the study and significance of the study.

Chapter Two examines literature review on the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing. In this chapter works of different authors are reviewed.

Chapter Three presents and interprets the data that were gathered from five selected high schools.

Chapter Four analyses and discusses the data that were gathered from both learners' and teachers' oral responses and findings from learners' composition scripts.

Chapter Five presents the findings, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The nature of writing has changed after the emergence of new technological systems such as cellular phones. These new technological gadgets play an important role in the lives of people. They enable people to share and exchange information almost instantly. In terms of social networking, writing is probably the major means of communication. It seems that social networking has overtaken the use of pens and papers. Social networks have become the most common means of communication. The youth in particular seem to prefer communicating with one another using text messages.

This chapter reviews literature related to the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing. The review will focus on the analysis of a number of issues including formal and informal writing. The focus on the forms of writing is based on the understanding that high school learners are expected to know both types of writing in their academic activities. Secondly, the review will look at the usage of cellular language during texting. It will also be helpful to pay attention to this literature as it will be useful to the present research. According to Hofstee (2006:9), a good literature review is comprehensive, critical and contextualized. It is important to contextualize the literature through detailed discussions and the use of relevant examples.

2.2 LATISHA (2007)

Latisha (2007) argues that writing is the most central and important part of communication. Writing needs a lot of skill, patience and effort to follow the rules of grammar, unlike speaking where the language flows naturally. Being able to speak the language does not mean that the speaker can write it. It becomes apparent from Latisha's (2007) view that the ability to write cannot be acquired unless one has formal education. Therefore, formal education can be associated with writing. This information is useful because it means that without education learners will not be able to write.

Latisha (2007:10) also looks at three ways in which writing can be seen as an important tool:

First, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary we have been teaching our students. Second, when our students write, they also have a chance to be advantageous with the language, to go beyond what they have learned and take a risk. Third, when they write, they necessarily become involved with the new language.

Latisha (2007) states that writing reinforces students' construction of sentences. It upgrades their knowledge of idiomatic usage of language and expands their vocabulary. In the second place, writing ensures that learners venture into the world beyond language. In this way, the language is simply a vehicle into the outer larger world of knowledge. Writing also makes it possible for the learners to get themselves involved with the language in which they are writing. This means that they become more proficient with the new language. This research seeks to find out the types of vocabulary that is used in cellular phone language writing. It will be helpful to discover whether cellular phone language uses idiomatic language. With regard to the use of writing to venture into the world outside language, the question is to discover the topics that high school learners commonly use in their essays. Another question is how the learners get themselves involved in cellular phone language when writing school work.

2.3 VOSLOO (2009)

According to Vosloo (2009), the use of abbreviations during texting allows a conversation using cellular phone technology. For example, text users sometimes use letters, symbols and emoticons as in words to write sentences. Emoticons are small pictures which are sometimes displayed in the middle or at the end of a sentence. Sentences which consist of omitted symbols and initial vowels make sense to them. For example:

(3) *"I il cu 2moro 9t @ 9pm😊".*

(I will see you tomorrow night at 9pm)

The symbol "@" which means "at" in standard writing is normally used when writing an E-mail address of a particular person. But due to the development of writing, the symbol "@" is also included on the clause of a sentence to shorten the number of characters. The user used only one character instead of two characters. On the other hand, there is another character at the end of the sentence, the emoticon. To illustrate, this emoticon or a small picture has a meaning in the expression. It simply means that the sender of the message is happy or excited that he or she is going to meet with someone at night. The receiver will simply understand that his or her friend is happy about the message. This example is important because it indicates that texters may not enjoy texting without using symbols and small pictures to express themselves.

According to Vosloo (2009), text users write and read words which are written in the form of phonetic spelling system. For example [swi:p] and [sli:p]. These two examples form a meaningful unit in words like "sweep" and "sleep". This type of spelling system can be used in any kind of cellular phone. But emoticons, which are normally used at the end of a sentence, do not appear in every cellular phone. They appear on modernized cellular phones such as smart phones. Smart phones are phones which are advanced with connectivity such as internet access. With Smart phones, text users can download pictures and videos to share with one another during conversations.

However, the new technology driven writing system, which consists of abbreviations seems not to follow the standard rules of grammar. Sometimes texters use common small letters or common capital letters at the beginning of a sentence. Instead of writing names of people, animals and places with capital letters, they use small letters and punctuation marks are sometimes not used.

From Vosloo's (2009) point of view, social networking is referred to as a "hot means of communication". Hot means of communication simply means that time and space is limited during discussions between texters. Texters can communicate with more than ten people at a time. Each texter does not have time to correct spelling mistakes during a conversation. The writer further remarks that teachers and parents seem to have doubts about text messaging because they say it will destroy the writing skills and abilities of learners. Learners would not know how to spell words correctly due to the development of new phonetic spelling system used on cellular phones. Text messaging becomes an important communication tool to the lives of youth in particular. Consequently, this type of language may interfere with their writing abilities in an academic situation. This is due to the fact that when users text each other, they follow how words are pronounced not how they are written. Vosloo's (2009) study highlights how texters misspell words to save time. Instead of writing the correct spelling, users go for symbols, letters and numbers. The use of Social Networks may be one of the reasons that cause poor writing skills of high school learners.

2.4 BRAUN (2007)

According to Braun (2007), text messaging refers to the sending of short based messages from one cellular phone to the next. But most cellular phones have a limited space of one hundred and sixty characters that a user is allowed to use in sending a message. In South Africa all service providers, including Vodacom, MTN, Cell C, 8.ta, Telkom and Virgin Mobile limit the number of characters that users have when they want to send a message. A user cannot write more than this number irrespective of

words that he or she uses. For this reason, texters resort to meaningless sentence constructions in order to cater for the limited number of characters that they have been given by the service providers. For example:

(4) "*My summer hols wrcwot*"

(My summer holidays were a complete waste of time)

The texter has used eighteen characters instead of forty characters. So the user of the cellular phone has succeeded in putting the message across through a minimum number of characters. Braun's (2007) argument is helpful because it indicates the importance of using as few words as possible. Rather than spending time constructing grammatically correct sentences that take a lot of characters, users simply go for the simple way. Sometimes, they do this by mixing letters and numbers.

2.5 BAZERMAN (2009)

Bazerman (2009:23-24) states that "users of chat rooms and text messaging on cellular phones have also developed abbreviations and phonetic spellings". Generally, writing a text message involves the use of numbers and letters when communicating with friends via cellular phones. Cellular phones are programmed in such a way that one cannot correct the spelling mistakes. Therefore, it is advantageous for users to develop their own shorthanded spellings. Sometimes users may even use two or more numbers to create words or phrases of their own. The main aim of using abbreviated words or sentences is to accommodate the space provided by service providers of social networks namely, *Facebook*, *Mxit*, *2go*, *Twitter*, *Mobi fun* and *Myspace*. Moreover, it can be assumed that there is a difference between written and spoken language. In this regard, Bazerman (2009:24) believes that "texters use abbreviations easily to replace the standard way of writing full words". The writer further points out that chat rooms ruin the effectiveness of learners in academic writing. As a result, this form of writing

may, in the near future, unable learners to write better essays or job application letters. Texting may be perceived as non-standard form of writing. For example:

(5) “88”

(Bye bye)

It is apparent from the above example that the word “88” does not exist in written English. This word is in most cases used in Mandarin Chinese text messages which simply mean “bye bye” in English. In addition, the word “88” also comes from the Afrikaans word, namely “uit” which means “out” in written English (www.telegraph.co.uk). Because of the availability of the same pronunciation, users tend to mix letters and numbers to write words. Cellular phone language tends to have general words that lack specific meaning to non-users of the language. This means that non-users of cellular phone language may encounter problems in understanding the correct meaning of words used by texters.

2.6 STERNBERG *et al.* (2007)

Sternberg *et al.* (2007) raise a number of issues about the access of new technologies such as cellular phones by young students. Most young South Africans have access to cellular phones at an early age. Cellular phones, the web and other modern technologies such as computers change how one writes a language. In some cases, texters use acronyms such as “lol” (laughing out loud) and “wuuuz” which simply means what are you up to? as main characters on cellular language. In this case, words or sentences tend to be misunderstood by teachers at school. This is simply because texters use characters which are shorthanded and meaningless in academic writing.

In most rural and urban South African schools, learners get supplied with good facilities such as computers to be used for learning purposes. Therefore, they may be at risk of becoming involved with the electronic system such as E-mails and Google talks at

school. These factors may contribute to low performance on academic writing. It is further stated by Sternberg *et al.* (2007) that students realize their spelling mistakes after teachers have corrected them in their writing. Sternberg's *et al.* (2007) study highlights the negativity of using a text language. The study addresses the impact of the usage of electronic systems such as E-mails and Google talks are technological services on the writing performance of learners.

2.7 CURTIS (2008)

Curtis (2008) supports the idea that the internet is acceptable and highly valued as another tool for learning. Also, the internet is connected to today's cellular phones to improve the lives of people. It may be assumed that most of the internet users cannot afford to buy computers. But some cellular phones have access to internet for communication purposes. It is cheaper to access the internet. But users need to recharge their cellular phones to access the internet on a daily basis. Also, some service providers such as Vodacom and MTN offer customers free internet to chat online. Internet enables users to register with different communication services such as *Facebook*, *Mxit*, *2go* and *Twitter* to be used for communication activities. These services enable users to text messages for discussions, chats, Social Networking and blogs. Through the use of the internet on cellular phones, users can improve their writing skills by texting one another. Curtis (2008) further states that in countries such as United States of America, Social Networking is also accepted as another tool for learning. It is used as another way of developing one's thoughts and understanding.

It is evident from Curtis' (2008) argument that technology and learning are related. The researcher's study considers the use of internet as a positive trend towards learning. The view is that through the use of the internet on cellular phones, learners can develop their research skills and writing abilities. Curtis (2008) further argues that writing on Social Networks can increase the exposure of learners to the written language. This

argument is important in the sense that it will help the present research to further the investigation in the context of South Africa.

2.8 DANSIEH (2011)

Dansieh (2011) discusses the impact that text messaging has on English grammar. In Dansieh's (2011:222) view, "text messaging has a negative impact on students writing". The system of writing a language is thrown away by the use of text messages. Text users use pictures and videos to communicate rather than write text messages. As far as writing is concerned, the use of grammar, syntax and punctuation become the back of the air on text messaging. The back of the air simply means that users of text messages do not follow the spelling rules when writing a language. They misspell words by replacing them in the form of pictograms, logograms and alphanumeric combination. Pictograms are the same as emoticons or pictures. These pictograms are put at the end of the sentence for facial expression. For example, ☺- indicates a smile or happiness; ☹- indicates sadness or frown. Pictograms and logograms are pictures that are usually displayed after the user has written a word or a sentence.

The interlocutors use pictograms and logograms to indicate their expressions of the messages that they send to each other. They indicate whether the sender or receiver is happy, sad, sick, cold, excited, stressed or is winking. After the message has been sent or received, he or she will respond at that time. Secondly, alphanumeric combination means that alphabets and numbers are combined to form a word or a sentence during a conversation. For example, in texting "to date" is written as "2d8", "for you" can be written as "4U", before "B4" and "to whom it may concern" could be written as "twimc".

It is clear that the written form of cellular phone language interferes with English grammar. In the above example, "twimc", which has been written in place of "to whom it may concern" in text messaging, is considered as a full sentence. But in English grammar, it does not have a meaning unless one can explain what it means. The text

user uses only five characters to write a full sentence, whereas in formal English grammar, the sentence consists of eighteen characters. The user uses only the first letters of each character to represent them as words.

According to Dansieh (2011), text language is preferred by most people simply because it saves time. It is also a cheaper means of communication. On the other hand, cellular phone language can be used to send videos, images and sounds across distances. Through the use of Vodacom network, users have the advantage of recording Short Voice Service (SVS) and text messages at the same time. Money can also be transferred with the use of Vodacom *M-Pesa* via SMS. Today, cellular phones are used for texting than for phone calls. With the use of text messaging it is also possible to deliver speeches, send assignments or documents. And it is cheaper than voice calls.

2.9 PAULA (2007)

As Paula (2007:166) puts it, "text messaging is the abbreviated form of language used in electronic communication, particularly via mobile phones and the internet". Paula (2007) explains how text messaging can be used on cellular phone and the internet using electronic communication. In terms of Paula's (2007) view, text messaging is an abbreviated form of a language used on cellular phones or internet chat rooms. This type of language has spread the interest of writing among the youth. This is the most preferred means of electronic communication by youth nowadays worldwide. Text messaging has succeeded in terms of spreading shorthand language amongst the youth. It enables users to share features such as pictures and videos with their friends. It is the fastest and simplest means of communication.

Paula (2007:167) discusses text messaging as another form of writing as follows:

SMS is “text talk”; in other words, it is a form of asynchronous conversation which still depends on the medium of writing. Texting has some features in common with the language used in internet chats and thus with other modalities of CMC (computer-mediated communication) such as conferences, BBSs (bulletin board systems) and MUDs (multi-user dungeons). They are both fast like speech or writing.

Paula (2007) discusses ways of communicating using text language and other modern means of electronic communication. Text writing has to do with informal writing due to the limited space of hundred and eighty characters provided on the wall of a cellular phone. Texters seem to replace words with numbers and letters. The results of shortening words developed new form of writing acronyms, for example, “*TTFN*” (“ta-ta for now”), “*LOL*” (“lots of love”) and *JIC* (“just in case”). The above examples are used in daily conversations by users. Capital letters are used to replace word spacing. Text messaging helps users to express ideas that they would be afraid to say through face to face conversation. Text writing helps the texter to save his or her data on cellular phone because he or she uses shorthand written message. In addition, text writing helps writers to be creative and come up with their own rules of writing words. The study conducted by Paula (2007) is of benefit to the current research.

2.10 BARLOW (2008)

According to Barlow (2008:14), “there is little time for editing in text messaging where the response can come instantly, even requiring a quick reply for continuation of the conversation”. Barlow (2008:14) further discusses how mobile phone and text messaging impact on the standard way of writing English language. The emergence of the mobile phone and the rise of text messaging as a popular means of communication would appear to have impacted on standards of writing as evidenced in the responses

of candidates taking the exam. Expertise in text messaging and email is affecting spelling and punctuation in particular. Text messaging with its use of phonetic spelling and little or no punctuation seems to pose a threat to traditional conventions of writing.

Barlow (2008) states that the use of mobile phone and text messaging may impact on the way learners write their academic work. Texting changes the correct way of writing sentences. In this case, the development of text messaging behaviour has quickly changed its own set of conventions. Text messaging also enables learners to engage themselves with informal writing in the classrooms. They tend to use punctuation with common capital letters to write sentences.

2.11 KAVOORI *et al.* (2007)

Kavoori *et al.* (2007:115) posit that “the use of SMS constituted a completely new way of using a language”. The new way of using a language has been established by new technologies such as cellular phones and internet communications. This new way of using a language has been there before the SMS was established. Before the emergence of SMS, people used telegram to make short sentences. On the other hand, the use of SMS language is seen to be similar to word puzzles, word games and literature. The development of an SMS language has been influenced by the limitation of time and space provided on the cellular’s wall. The use of SMS language started as a playful game by writers to convey a meaningful purpose. Meaningful purpose simply means that users wanted to cover every detail by omitting the initial letters of words and make sure that the transmitted text has a meaning. For example:

(6) “*We hv sm xprience*”

(We have some/same experience)

In example (6) the word “*sm*” may have two meanings namely, same or some. It is up to users to follow the conversation to understand what the word “*sm*” means. As a result, the sentence has a case of ambiguity. According to Daft (2011:187), ambiguity means that “the goals to be achieved or the problem to be solved is unclear, alternatives are difficult to define and information is unavailable”. If the user does not follow the conversation then he or she will be out of context. Experience is written as “*xperience*”. The initial part “*expe-*” has been left out.

Kavoori *et al.* (2007) discuss how Internet based translations services can help in translating these messages into a standard language. SMS language is based on the use of acronyms. The use of acronyms has made SMS language to be more popular than before. The use of similar writing makes a text to be easily written. For example:

(7) “PLZ 4GV ME G2G TM 2 PUKS CUB L8R”

(Please forgive me, I’ve got to go, it’s time to pick up kids, I will call you back later)

In the example above the user has used capital letters to construct his or her message. The message consists of numbers and abbreviated capital letters. As a result, the texter has succeeded in constructing the message. The sentence above is complicated. The person who has never used SMS language may not understand what the sentence is all about unless it is translated. In Kavoori’s *et al.* (2007) view, the electronic translation services are available to convert SMS messages into formal writing. Kavoori’s *et al.*’s (2007) argument is useful in this study in the sense that it highlights the importance of SMS language.

2.12 HAMILL (2005)

In Hamill’s (2005:111) view, “texting also appeared to alter the way texters expressed themselves”. But in the past texters and talkers used face to face conversation as the main means of communication. Today, technology enables people to use internet

communication namely, E-mails, SMS, *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Myspace* to express themselves. Moreover, voice calls seem not to be preferred by cellular phone users than before. Hamill (2005:111) contends that “texters seem more able to express their real selves through text messaging”. Text users feel more comfortable when using text messages than face to face interaction. Text messaging also gives users a chance to say whatever they want to say to their friends and families without any fear. In addition to this, some cellular phone services offer a free amount of messages to be used on a daily basis. Therefore, users who do not have enough cash to recharge their accounts can still succeed in communicating with their friends without spending a single cent.

Hamill (2005:111) continues to explain how the affordability of text messaging improves the lives of texters:

The distinctive affordances of texting that attract texters appear to create a special kind of “text world” with its own social ecology and structure. They also engage themselves more frequently in extended “text conversations”, sending nearly twice as many messages in these conversations as talkers. Some people prefer texting to talking, suggesting that they get something out of texting that they cannot from talking. Texters also develop relationships with the persons that they text the most compared to talkers.

People use texting messaging in everyday activity. They also send and receive text messages. Therefore, it is evident that text messaging is advocated as a simple means of communication by its users. Some text users also learn from their friends through text messaging such as exchanging of notes or homework discussion. Through texting, people can build friendships with people whom they had not met before. But know each other by usernames and profile pictures. It is also possible for users to share problems that they have with the use of text messaging. But most of the people use text messages when they are lazy to speak.

2.13 CONCLUSION

Literature shows that cellular phone language is indeed an important tool of communication among young people. Cellular phones give young people an opportunity to communicate with their friends across distances. Different scholars have also indicated that cellular phones are not only used for voice calls but also for text messaging. In addition, it is apparent from the literature that cellular phone language has a negative impact on learners' academic writing skills. As they become more and more innovative and creative in electronic communication, their academic writing skills become less and less proficient. Clearly, it is important to find out exactly what the impact of the mastery of cellular phone language is on academic writing.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents and interprets the data collected from schools. From learners' oral responses the researcher seeks to find out how learners use cellular language on academic writing. Also, the researcher will discuss different uses of pictures, abbreviations, numbers, letters, letter-number combination and symbols. From teachers' oral responses the researcher aims to find out their perspectives about the use of cellular phone language on academic writing. Lastly, the researcher will present the findings from learners' composition scripts.

Data were gathered from five high schools located in deep rural areas outside Mankweng. The names of the high schools are: Nkoshilo, Mamabudusha, Marobathota, Hwiti and Mphetsebe. Hwiti high school is situated in a semi-urban area within Mankweng Township.

The data suggests that all learner respondents have access to cellular phones. In one of the high schools learners are not allowed to get into the school yard with their cellular phones. They are encouraged to drop them at the security gate or leave them at home. The main reason is that in the previous years, learners showed tendencies of chatting with their cellular phones in class. It was believed that the use of cellular phones during lessons led to their low performance in terms of writing and reading of books. In the other four participating schools, learners go to their respective schools with their cellular phones. But they are not allowed to use them during lessons.

From the selected Further Education and Training (FET) schools, learners from Grade 10 to Grade 12 are grouped according to their streams. These are mathematics and physical science stream, commercial stream and social sciences stream. Learners in the General Education and Training band (GET) from Grade 8 and Grade 9 are not streamed because they do the same learning areas (subjects).

The overall number of teachers and learners from the selected schools is 6052 divided into 186 English First Additional Language teachers and 5866 learners. Fourteen teachers and fifty learners between the ages of 14 and 20 years participated in the research study.

Since the researcher assumed that learners do not have adequate knowledge of English, they were interviewed in Sepedi their mother tongue. English teachers were interviewed in English which is the medium of instruction in education. The recorded audio voices collected were anonymised, captured and transcribed by the researcher. Hornby (2010:51) defines anonymity as the state of remaining unknown to most other people. In this study, the researcher designed a number of questions to be answered by respondents. Below follows a sample of these questions:

Box 1: Sample of semi-structured interview questions

Sample of questions

1. *Do you succeed in using cellular phone language?*
2. *How then do you know that you succeed, and if not why do you think you do not succeed? What are the language problems that hinder your success?*
3. *Can you describe this language? How is it written? Give examples.*
4. *Does cellular phone language interfere with your academic writing? If so, how? Do teachers comment about your academic writing? Do they complain?*
5. *Do social networks interfere with your writing skills?*
 - 5.1. *If so, how?*
6. *Do you think cellular phone language has an impact on your academic writing in general? If so, what is this impact, and is there anything that can be done to solve the problem? What can be done?*

Box 2: Sample of answers by respondents

Sample of answers

1. Yes
2. *I use cellular phone language to shorten words, when I chat with my friends and they respond back to me.*
3. *When I write "how are you doing" I write "hud", and "what are you doing" I write "wud".*
4. *Sometimes it does, if I am out of time in class I start to write using cellular phone language and my English teacher always complains about the way I write my essays.*
5. Yes
- 5.1 *I am addicted to cellular phone language; I always use abbreviations when I write.*
6. *Yes, I fail my essays because I sometimes forget that I am writing for academic and I end up using letters instead of full words.*

The challenges that the researcher experienced during data collection was that some learners were not willing to sign consent forms prior to the interview. On the other hand, some of the learners did not prefer to be recorded with the cellular phone recorder. In addition, in some schools most teachers were reluctant to participate in the study and hid themselves in their offices. Submission of composition scripts was one of the challenges that the researcher experienced in the data gathering because in some schools some teachers did not want to give out learners' composition scripts. As a result, the researcher requested 25 composition scripts from all the selected schools and only 10 composition scripts were used in this study.

3.2 LEARNERS' ORAL RESPONSES

The main objective of the interview was to find out learners' perspectives about the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at their schools. Tools such as cellular phone recorder, a pen and a note pad were used for data collection.

Figure 3.1: Do you know about cellular phone language?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	49	98%
No	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Figure 3.1 above shows that 98% (49) of the learners know about cellular phone language. They are able to create words which have their own meaning to communicate with one another. One learner said: *"cellular phone language is not a bad language because it does not take the origins of English language"*. Learners also indicated that they understand each other better while they use cellular phone language because it does not take time to read. One learner said: *"I am used to cellular phone language when I chat with my friends they do understand what I am saying"*. Figure 3.1 also indicates that 2% (1) of the learners do not understand what their friends are saying in text messages. They indicated that they use voice calls frequently than cellular phone text messages.

Figure 3.2: Does cellular phone language interfere with your academic writing?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	28	56%
No	22	44%
Total	50	100%

Figure 3.2 above reveals that 56% (28) of the learners indicated that cellular phone language interferes with their academic writing in the classroom. Further, they indicated that cellular phone language did not help them in writing correctly because they forget that they are writing academic work. One learner said: *"I do not really like cellular phone language because it affects my performance in class and I commit a lot of spelling errors"*. The figure also shows that 44% (22) of the learners seemed not to have problems with academic writing. They indicated that they can write very well in the classroom. The data showed that they are able to correct their spelling mistakes before they submit the school work to their teachers. One learner said: *I am able to correct myself after writing, if I see that I wrote "u" I correct it immediately in class"*.

Figure 3.3: Do teachers complain about your academic writing?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	22	44%
No	28	56%
Total	50	100%

Figure 3.3 above reveals that 44% (22) of the learners indicated that their English teachers do complain on how they construct their sentences in class. They indicated that sometimes their teachers instruct them to engage themselves with library books. However, 56% (28) of learners stated that their English teachers never complained about their writing performance in the classroom.

Figure 3.4: Do social networks such as Facebook, Mxit and 2gointerfere with your writing skills?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	21	42%
No	29	58%
Total	50	100%

Figure 3.4 above shows that less than half of the participants or 42% (21) indicated that social networks interfere with their grammatical and writing skills. The data showed that some learners are distracted by Social Networks when they are constructing sentences. One learner said: *“I concentrate on cellular phone language and I forget to read more books”*. However, 58% (29) of learners showed that they have never been affected by social networks while writing. Some learners indicated that they read magazines, newspapers, novels and library books to improve their writing skills. One learner said: *“when I am watching television I look where they write words, maybe a word like il for will”*.

Figure 3.5: Do you think cellular phone language has an impact on your academic writing?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	50%
No	25	50%
Total	50	100%

Figure 3.5 above shows that 50% of the learners indicated that cellular phone language has an impact on their academic writing. Moreover, some learners showed that cellular phone language has affected their writing abilities. For example, one learner indicated that he normally uses “u” as an alphabet instead of “you” in full word. One learner said: *“I use abbreviated form of writing in cellular phone language such as b4 instead of*

before and it has affected my spelling also". Fifty percent of the learners indicated that cellular phone language does not have an impact on their academic writing. They also showed that cellular phone language improves their writing skills as they use it to write text messages every day. One learner said: *"cellular phone language is an advantage outside not in the classroom because it is a language that is used for communication and telephonically"*.

3.2.1 The use of pictures

Pictures can also be used as a form of language during cellular phone communication. In this study learners indicated that they make use of pictures and videos. Some of them send pictures to their friends or even strangers. But others indicated that they do not send pictures because they are afraid of being kidnapped by strangers. Learners further said that pictures can be used to show facial expressions of interlocutors. On the one hand, it was indicated that personal pictures make it easy to identify each other while exchanging texting messages. On the other hand, technological pictures are used to show facial expressions between interlocutors.

Figure 3.6: How often do you use pictures in your messages?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	16	32%
Sometimes	22	44%
Never	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Figure 3.6 above reveals that 32% (16) of the learners indicated that they always send pictures to their friends. It also suggests that 44% (22) of the learners mentioned that they sometimes send pictures. Further, 24% (12) of them indicated that they do not send pictures at all. One learner said: *"I do not send pictures because it is not safe*

especially to strangers". Another learner said: *"I display pictures of myself and I also download celebrity pictures from the internet and send them to my friends"*.

In addition, the respondents said that there are pictures which all social networks provide for them to be exchanged from one person to the other. Learners also indicated that they send one another pictures which can be downloaded from the internet. According to the participants, such internet pictures may be downloaded at a low cost. However, most pictures can be accessed free for the social network community. Borko (2010:349) states that "social network community is an online platform that provides services for a user to build a public profile and to explicitly declare the connection between his or her profile of the other users". Pictures can be shared between friends on *Facebook, Mxit, 2go* and *Twitter*.

The following are pictures used by learners and the different emotional messages that they communicate:

Picture 1: Showing sadness



The above picture is normally used when two interlocutors are arguing about a particular topic or a person. Then if one of them becomes angry about the argument he or she will send a picture of sadness at the end of the written text message. Sometimes the sender will send the picture alone. After the user has received a picture then he or she will know that the person he or she is receiving the picture from is sad. Then he or she may apologize back to the sender.

Picture 2: Showing happiness



Pictures of happiness are exchanged when texters are in a happy mood. Sometimes it is used to spice up the conversation between the texters. When the users are happy while exchanging text messages they simply display a picture which shows that they are both happy.

Picture 3: Crying



The above (picture 3) is normally used when someone is not in a happy mood. When one of the users is crying he or she will send the crying picture to his or her friends. They will start to text messages to comfort him or her at that moment. One learner who took part said: *"I display pictures to my friends and strangers only on Mxit"*. Another learner explained that *"I display pictures of myself to my friends and strangers on Mxit so that they can know me"*.

Picture 4: Laughing



Laughing pictures are displayed when two or more texters are sharing jokes. These types of pictures indicate that users are enjoying the discussion. Users can also use this picture as a profile picture to indicate that they have a good day during a text based conversation.

Picture 5: Shocked



The above (picture 5) is displayed when the user is sharing problems with his or her friends. Then two or more texters will start to share the shocked picture to indicate their shame to their friend. A picture like this may be used in situations where someone has failed a test or exam in class.

Picture 6: Showing coolness



Picture (6) shows that texters agree with each other on an issue. This picture is used when a person has used his or her friend's property such as a pen, money or airtime. After the two have reached agreement they will both display the cool picture. However, this kind of a picture can also be used to decorate profile pictures or written statements on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Mxit*, Electronic-mail such as *Google-mail* and *MySpace*.

Picture 7: Expressing fun



The above (picture 7) indicates a tongue. This picture is used by texters to express their feelings. Showing a tongue during a conversation simply means that one of the interlocutors has cracked a joke. Other users will respond by displaying the laughing picture to indicate that the joke is nice. But if the joke is not nice users will simply display a sad picture to indicate that they are bored. Normally, the tongue picture on social networks also indicates that the user has confusion or indicates that the person is busy with something. Therefore, the sender will be patient waiting for a response from the receiver at that moment.

Picture 8: Wink



A winking picture indicates that two or more people are in a friendly conversation. This kind of a picture is mostly used on *facebook* where a certain user may be in need of help or want to give his or her inputs on a discussion between the interlocutors. Normally, when users are winking they use the right eye not the left one.

Picture 9: Toothy Grin



Picture (9) shows toothy grin. Toothy grin indicates that the person is showing teeth. This means that he or she is smiling. Moreover, this picture can also indicate that two or more people are in a good friendship while texting one another on cellular phone text message communication.

Picture 10: Showing personal profile



Personal profile pictures are normally used on social networks such as *Mxit*, *Twitter*, *2go* and *Facebook* to indicate facial expressions. Usually, profile pictures help users to identify one another while exchanging text messages. In addition, profile pictures can be used to get attention from friends. They can also be posted on other people's walls to get more friends to chat with.

3.2.2 The use of abbreviations

Figure 3.7: Do you use abbreviations on text messages?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	22	44%
No	28	56%
Total	50	100%

Figure 3.7 above shows that 44% (22) of learners use abbreviations when writing text messages. Most learners explained that abbreviations help them to write fast. They said that abbreviations save airtime and space of hundred and six characters allocated to users by service providers. Levine *et al.* (2011:325) state that "abbreviations do appear in students written papers". One learner said: "*I use abbreviations every time when I write text messages, for example when I respond to my friends that I am watching television I just write "wtv".*"

Another learner said: “when I want to write who are you with I just write “*wuw*”. The text “*wuw*” is used when texters want to visit one another or to meet at a particular place. Fifty-six percent of the learners said that they do not use cellular phone abbreviations because they do not want to be addicted. They said they use full words when they write text messages. The following is a list of commonly used abbreviations:

Hud (How are you doing)

Wud (What are you doing)

Kgtsn (Sepedi for *kgotsong* meaning peace)

Wuw (Who are you with)

(8) *Hud*

The learners indicated that the text “*hud*” is used to greet one another before they can start a conversation. However, the word “*hud*” sounds like a word in cellular phone language, but in formal writing it is written as a full sentence. One respondent indicated that when she responds to the question of “*hud*” she just writes “*kwl*” which means “cool” in informal English.

(9) *Wud*

Another abbreviated word that most learners seemed to prefer when writing text messages is “*wud*”. The text “*wud*” in formal English simply means “what are you doing?” Most learners indicated that the text “*wud*” is used when they ask their friends as to whether they are busy or not. If the user is not busy he or she will simply write “*JC*” which means “just chilling”. Learners also stated that the word “*wud*” is also used when the two texters want to meet one another at a particular place.

(10) *KGTSN*

During the interview one learner mentioned the word “*kgotsong*” (peace). The word “*kgotsong*” can also be abbreviated as “*KGTSN*”. A learner indicated that in some cases she deletes letters such as “-o-” and “-g”. The word “*kgotsong*” is a well-known Zion

Christian Church (Z.C.C) term used to greet one another. In most cases when someone says “*kgotsong*” it shows respect to that particular person.

The researcher also observed that the participants do not use small letters when they write abbreviations. Instead, they use capital letters to write abbreviated words. Furthermore, the respondents told the researcher that when they ask questions using abbreviations they do not put a question mark at the end. They indicated that a question mark does not have a meaning and it consumes their time when writing text messages. The abbreviations that the respondents use are different from the abbreviations that are used in formal written English. For example: “*s/p*” instead of “sleep”.

3.2.3The use of numbers

According to Bodomo (2010:127), number homophone is the use of numbers to represent words. For example: “4” for “for”. Bodomo (2010) further argues that this number can either be a homophone to the target word or it can be similar to the pronunciation of that word. Learners indicated that they send and receive messages using numbers as words. They seem to prefer numbers that are close to the sounds of certain words. They also indicated that they use numbers to create meaningful words on text messages. For example:

(11) 2

(To/Too)

It was revealed that in most cases they use the number “2” as a word. The word “2” is pronounced the same way as the formal written words “to” and “too”. Respondents showed that the figure “2” can either be written as a number or as a word. On the other hand, some learners said that when they write in class they tend to forget and use numbers as words when writing sentences. A learner who took part in the study said that “*when I want to write “to” I write “2” as a number*”.

The data further indicated that there are numbers which learners use as words but do not sound the same as words. For example, “5” which means “do me a favor”, “511” means “this is too much information”. The learners indicated that they adopted these numbers from a street language called Tsotsi taal. In addition to this, they can exchange text messages using these numbers as words. Most of the learners explained that they understand one another better when they use numbers because it is safe and fast.

3.2.4 The use of letters

Approximately 42% (22) of the learners make use of letters as words when writing text messages on cellular phones. Most of the letters that learners use are “u” for “you”, “c” for “see” and “r” for “are”. They say that they are able to understand each other through the use of letters. One of the learners who participated in the study stated that “*When I chat I use letters and my friends understand what I am saying and text back to me*”. Another learner also stated that she has 5 years using letters on text messages. She noted: “*I always use letters when writing my essays and last year I did not obtain level six in English I failed*”.

The learners indicated that they use letters which are easy and simple such as “u” for “you”, “y” for “why”. They also explained that even names of people can be written using letters. For example: “jns” is equivalent to “Johannes”. The omitted letters are “-o-”, “-h-”, “-a-”, “-n-” and “-e-”. Letters “jns” cannot be pronounced but can be written as a word even when other letters have been replaced. Most of the respondents seem to prefer to use letters because they make writing to be simple and fast. Others indicated that letters save money.

Generally, respondents agreed that social networks such as *Mxit*, *2go* and *Whats Aap* have more space to talk to more than two or more people at the same time. Therefore, learners make use of letters to accommodate each and every one who is in the chatroom. Learners are aware of the use of letters as they are able to shorten

sentences into letters. For example, a learner indicated that if he wants to write “I want to meet with you” he simply writes “*iwtmwu*”. Letters which are written in the form of a word can form a meaningful sentence in formal writing. For example: “*iwntcunw*” means “I want to see you now”. The sentences that learners write on text messages do not have space. They consist of letters only.

3.2.5 The use of letter- number combination

The data collected showed that letter-number combination is used by 8% (4) of learners at the schools. According to Bodomo (2010:127), letters and numbers are used to represent words. They can also be used to replace the initial letters of a word to make meaningful units. During the interviews, 8% (4) of learners gave the following example:

(12) “*2M2H*”

(Too much to handle)

In formal English the word “*2M2H*” is equivalent to “*too much to handle*”. Firstly, learners indicated that the number “2-” is used to represent the word “too”. Secondly, the letter “-M-” is used to represent the word “much”. Lastly, the number “-2-” is for the word “to” and the letter “-H” stand for “handle”. The combination of the above numbers and letters form a meaningful sentence which is “too much to handle”. The second example that was given by the learners during the process of interviews is:

(13) “*2mrw*”

(Tomorrow)

In example (13) above, the word “*2mrw*” means “tomorrow”. Learners indicated that they omit letters in order to succeed in writing cellular phone language. The number “2-”

is for “to-” and “-mrw” is for “-morrow”. One learner said *“I am so addicted to cellular phone language when I write my essays I mix letters and numbers”*.

(14) “2transl8”

(To translate)

The third example of letter-number combination that learners mentioned during the interview was “2transl8” which means “to translate” in formal written English. The word “2transl8” consists of a number “2” in the beginning of a word and the number “8” at the end of a word. The number “8” replaces the letters “-ate” to form a meaningful word. In this case, learners said that they mix letters and numbers to spice up the conversation with their friends. Besides, they mix both letters and numbers for fun not for formal writing.

(15) “G4C”

(Going for coffee)

The fourth example was “G4C” which means “Going for coffee”. As far as the use of letters and numbers is concerned, learners seemed to prefer capital letters more often than small letters to construct sentences. In the above example two capital letters “G” and “C” have been used to form a word. Again, the number “4” has been used which means “for”. The letter “G-” is for the word “going”, the number “-4-” is used to represent the word “for” and the letter “C” coffee.

(16) “2pic”

(Topic)

During the discussion one learner mentioned the word “2pic” which in formal writing is “topic”. In this word “2pic” two letters “t-” and “-o-” have been avoided. It appears that learners feel comfortable when they mix letters and numbers because it is easier for them to create words on their own.

3.2.6 The use of symbols

Winfriend (1995:115) defines the word “symbol” as a sign with a referential function. From the data collected, 2% (1) of the learners prefer to write text messages using symbols and 98% (49) do not use symbols because they claim that symbols are complicated. The following is list of symbols used by learners to communicate:

@ (at)

& (and)

3> (love)

** (I do not see)

\$ (money)

(17) @

Two percent of learners said that they prefer the symbol “@” which stands for “at”. They said that they use this symbol especially when they write their names on Twitter. This type of symbol is normally used on *facebook* to point the name of a person. For example: @ Peter (at Peter).

(18) &

The data collected showed that a symbol such as “&” can be used to represent the conjunction “and”. This symbol can be used as a word to communicate with one another on text messages. The symbol can also be used as a form of reference on social networks such as *Facebook*, *Mxit* and *Twitter*. For example, “& the picture” for “see the picture”.

(19) 3>

The symbol “3>” is equivalent to “love” in formal writing. This symbol is used when texters send one another friendly messages which make both of them happy. They text each other using this symbol to indicate that they share good topics or ideas. The symbol of love has two characters. The first character is the number “3” and the second character “>” is used to indicate that someone is paying attention to the messages that he or she is receiving. Learners indicated that they combine the two characters to form one word which is “love”.

(20)**

The respondents said that they use stars as a means of communication in text messages. They indicated that when they receive the two stars from their friends while exchanging messages, it suggests that someone does not see the message. Sometimes it indicates that the messages that they received are not clear. But in some cases the star symbols suggests that the two people want to play games or escape from children.

(21) \$

The dollar symbol “\$” stand for money. The respondents indicated that this symbol is used when they text their friends asking for money. The symbol also stands for data bundles. Data bundles are used to get access to the internet. Therefore, when they want to ask bundles from their friends they just display this symbol.

3.3TEACHERS’ ORAL RESPONSES

Interviews with English First Additional teachers were meant to determine educators’ attitude towards cellular phone language. Questions that were asked covered how teachers deal with learners’ scripts and how they guide them to write well in class. The

study showed that 85, 7% of English teachers are aware of the use of cellular phone language on academic writing.

Figure 3.8: Do you have knowledge about cellular phone language?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	12	85.7%
No	2	14.3%
Total	14	100%

Figure 3.8 above reveals that 85.7% (12) of the teachers indicated that they have knowledge about cellular phone language while 14.3% (2) do not have such knowledge. One teacher said: *“cellular phone language is the language that youth and adults use to communicate with their friends, families and even to everyone that they know”*. Another teacher said: *“it is the language which is mostly used by learners and it is not accepted in English language”*. Moreover, the data showed that teachers have knowledge about cellular phone language while they were responding to the interview questions. As a result, some teachers reported that they use their cellular phones to make and receive calls only.

Teachers indicated that some of the scripts that they mark have forms of abbreviations such “*u*” for “*you*”, “*pls*” for “*please*” and “*b4*” for “*before*”. As a result, teachers indicated that these forms of writing a language have an effect on learners’ performance in general. One teacher said: *“in my case learners use short cuts to write their sentences and they notice that after I gave them corrections”*.

Generally, some teachers indicated that they have the problem of reading learners’ composition scripts because they use abbreviations in their academic writing. In addition, teachers indicated that the use of cellular phone language in academic writing delays their process of marking scripts. One teacher said: *“I panelise my learners because I make it a point that they do not make use of cellular phone language and I also talk to them to indicate that they must separate between academic writing and informal writing”*.

However, the data showed that when teachers realize that two or more learners use cellular phone language in their writing, they drill them before they write. One teacher said: *"in my case before I give them the actual writing I start by writing words on the chalkboard and thereafter I give them dictation to improve their writing skills"*. In all the schools, teachers indicated that after every school their learners go to libraries to read books, newspapers and magazines to improve their academic writing.

3.4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS FROM LEARNERS' COMPOSITION SCRIPTS

From learners' scripts, three types of composition can be identified namely, essay type, longer transactional text and shorter text. Firstly, with essay type learners are expected to write 150 to 200 words. Secondly, learners are expected to write longer transactional texts which are divided into four sections namely, dialogue, formal letter, formal report and magazine article. The last section is called shorter text and is divided into three sections namely, advertisement, invitation and directions.

The aim of collecting the scripts was to observe whether learners use cellular phone language in their academic activities or not. It was easy to observe common errors in some of the scripts. For example, *"couse"* for "because" and *"u"* for "you". Some learners' composition scripts consisted of common errors in most of their writing. Generally, as indicated in this study, learners seem to use abbreviations, letters, numbers, symbols and pictures. It was difficult to understand some of the abbreviations used by the learners. For example: *"4"* for "police" and *"gnu"* for "good and you"

One learner wrote the following: *"teachers smoke at school that's not iyoba"*. The term *"iyoba"* comes from the word *"ayoba"* meaning "nice". The term *"ayoba"* is usually used on Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN) advertisements. It was difficult for English teachers to identify the meaning as they were correcting spelling mistakes. The data also showed that learners prefer to use letters and abbreviations in the section called

dialogue. But in most of the scripts, some learners are able to construct sentences that follow the rules of grammar in writing.

Geertsema *et al.* (2011:227) has the following to say about learners' academic writing:

Students need to know the difference between what is suitable in the written formal variety of the language and what is not. They need to know that the highly informal language of text messaging which incorporates a number of features of the spoken language has its place but that place is not in an easy.

The scripts collected showed that learners find it difficult to differentiate between academic writing and informal writing. Molepo (2008:42) argues that "the educators' role is to facilitate or guide rather than the giver of knowledge to the learner". In some learners' composition scripts, teachers circled their spelling mistakes with a red pen. For example, words such as "u" for "you", "2day" for "today" and "hw" for "how" were circled. Below follows a sample of a paragraph from a composition script with circled spelling mistakes.

Classwork 17 January 2013

Dialogue

Dialogue between me and my English teacher and
spelling mistakes in my composition / homework

Teacher: James why u fail to submit my work 2day morning
Jane: Sorry Master I come school late I failed to
submit
Teacher: How could u do that, why not submit it
anytime when u come at school
Jane: It was late I got my notes teacher in a
class.
Teacher: I E not a note for work are u saying that
means you didn't do my work at that time.
Jane: Me! I did do your work.

It was also observed that learners do not follow the standard rule of writing sentences. Learners tend to forget to construct words, phrases and sentences in full. The composition scripts reveal that sentences are not well constructed. Learners seemed to use more abbreviations in constructing their sentences. For example: "*whn I grow up I wnt to bcome a nurse*" (When I grow up I want to become a nurse).

Learners also tend to write a word or two words as full sentences. In this case, the sentences that learners write do not start with capital letters. They sometimes mix capital letters with small letters. For example, in one of the learners' composition scripts the researcher found the sentence written thus: "*learners Without buks are nothing cose Thy must read*" (Learners without books are nothing because they must read).

3.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, data were presented and interpreted. The study found that high school learners use cellular phone language as their primary means of writing and communication. This study also revealed that cellular phone language has a negative impact on high school learners' academic writing. The data will be analysed and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of data. The chapter is divided into three themes namely, the analysis of information from learners' oral responses, the analysis of information from teachers' oral responses and the analysis of findings from learners' composition scripts. According to Molepo (2008:49), analysis is the process of data processing and converting raw material into meaningful statements.

4.2 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF INFORMATION FROM LEARNERS' ORAL RESPONSES

It is apparent from learners' oral responses that learners perceive cellular phone language as their main language of communication on text messages. But the problem is that these days learners use cellular phone language not only for communication on text messages. They also use cellular phone language for writing their academic work at schools. Cellular phone language is also perceived as the language that is used by learners at schools to write their academic work. Therefore, it is important to analyse and discuss the information gathered from learners' oral responses.

From the results, it is evident that the use of cellular phones by high school learners is very high. First, almost 100% of learners have access to cellular phones. Secondly, the results reveal that 98% (49) of the learners in Mankweng Circuit succeed in using cellular phone language. The findings revealed that cellular phone is an effective tool in

informal communication across distances between young people. This means that learners admire the use of cellular phone language than formal writing.

It can therefore be concluded that learners use cellular language as their main tool to communicate with their friends, families and strangers across distances. It can be assumed that informal written communication among teenagers is useful as they can save money and time. In support, Ochonogor *et al.* (2012:2) found that “the commercial advent of the internet and cellular phones in the late 1990’s technologies such as Instant Messaging (IM) and Text Messaging have achieved increasing prevalence in our society”.

The implication is that learners create their own words by writing abbreviations, letters, numbers and letter-number combination. Hamill (2005:111) states that “texters appear to create a special kind of text world with its own social ecology and structure”. Such words have their own meaning which is understood among them. For example, “5” for favour. The text “5” cannot be understood by everyone unless a person is conversant with cellular phone language. As has been observed from the responses, the figure “5” is used as a full word. However, in formal writing the number cannot be regarded as a word. In standard writing, numbers are used for calculation or numbering of paragraphs. Therefore, it is evident that learners are creative in writing numbers which can form part of words.

For this reason, learners become more proficient in writing and understanding cellular phone language. However, the problem is that learners also use cellular phone language in the academic situation. Paula (2007:185) argues that “SMS language can help students to increase their knowledge of the culture of the second language (L2), since nowadays the great popularity of texting is largely responsible for its expansion to other domains”. This means that since learners are exposed to SMS language on a daily basis they become more proficient in constructing sentences, and this helps them to expand their vocabulary of the second language. Even though some of the sentences may contain shortcuts, SMS texting can help them to acquire the English language better.

The data indicated a low frequency of learners who do not succeed in using cellular phone language. It is only 2% (1) of the learners who are unable to shorten words on text messages. This implies that some learners do not bother themselves in using informal writing as they do not want to be overwhelmed by text message communication. But this does not mean that these learners do not send text messages on their cellular phones. They are aware that informal written communication might damage their ability to write good English language.

Approximately 56% (28) of the learners are aware that cellular phone language interferes with their academic writing. Some of these learners tend to write their school work using shortcuts. For example: “*p/z*” for “please” and “*bcoz*” for “because”. Sometimes learners use shortcuts because they believe that the duration given to them to write essays in class is not enough. The problem of using shortcuts in the classroom occurs also during tests and examinations. This form of writing may have negative effects on learners’ performance in general. Furthermore, some learners obtain lower marks due to the use of informal language on their academic writing. It seems difficult for learners to avoid using cellular phone language on their school work. The problem is that learners use communication technologies such as social networks on a daily basis. This implies that learners are always engaging themselves in writing text messages than writing formal English. This makes it increasingly difficult for them to write in formal English during academic activities as they are used to cellular language.

Cellular phone language has become a survival tool in the academic environment. It was evident from the results that sometimes learners do not edit their school work because they are used to cellular phone language which is actually an unedited writing. Consequently, they do not see the impact of this language on their academic work. Kristen (2009:60) argues that “students’ academic writing need not be seen as problematic”. Even if 56% (28) of learners are aware of the effects of cellular phone language, they still write their essays using cellular language to their English teachers.

The results further revealed that 44% (22) of the learners have the ability to write their school work in appropriate academic language. This means that only less than half of high school learners are able to write well in class. It can therefore be concluded that indeed the use of cellular phone language has a negative impact on the academic writing of learners. The majority of learners are aware that cellular phone language will never assist them to write well in the classroom. But they continue using this unacceptable language. Due to the low level of academic writing skills in high schools, teachers have started to complain about the terrible way in which learners write their school work. Learners are constantly instructed by their teachers in class to do corrections because they normally use informal language which is not acceptable in formal settings such as schools. Therefore, it is true that sometimes learners use cellular phone language in the classroom without being unaware of it.

Furthermore, 42% (21) of learners are aware that their writing skills have changed to worse. Even though the frequency on the influence of social networks is just above 40%, there is indication that some learners' writing skills are influenced by the use of social networks. This means that cellular phone language communication has a negative influence on the writing skills of learners. This implies that learners do not give themselves time to practise formal writing at home. They are only exposed to formal language when they are in the classroom.

Latisha (2007:9) has the following to say about writing skills:

Writing is one of the productive skills in language learning besides reading and the other two receptive skills that are listening and speaking. All the four skills are required in order to become competent in English language. However, in certain situations, the emphasis might differ and depend entirely on individual's needs and preference.

The results showed a high frequency of 58% (29) of learners who can still write and spell words correctly. According to Owens (2004), spelling and writing are correlating processes and must coordinate in order to have an optional function. These learners state that they use resources such as magazines, newspapers and books in order to

improve their writing skills. In addition, radio and television are some of the tools that play a significant role in improving learners' writing skills.

Fifty percent of learners who participated in the study say that cellular phone language has a negative impact on their academic writing. Cellular phones seem not to assist them in learning how to write correctly as they are used to shortcuts. Thus cellular phone language has overtaken learners' attention when they are supposed to write in the classroom. They are used to go to chatrooms when they are busy writing school work. This confuses them because they will never know how to spell words correctly.

4.2.1 Analysis and discussion of the use of pictures

The results of the analysis show that the use of pictures by learners is not dominant in the Mankweng area. According to the results, 44% (22) of learners do not prefer to use pictures every time they send messages. This is because according to them, pictures such as personal pictures might get them in trouble. They fear that they might be kidnapped by strangers.

It is true that some learners have started to use pictures to simplify their communication on social networks. Instead of writing the sentence, they just display the picture as a way of responding to the sender or the receiver of the message. But 32% (16) of learners always enjoy using pictures after writing a word or a phrase. They use both personal pictures and internet pictures as part of communication among themselves. Personal pictures help users to identify one another easily during the communication process. They believe that pictures substitute words, phrases and sentences to represent their facial expressions during communication.

It seems that the use of pictures has become more powerful in the conveyance of information in cellular technology. Pictures are easy to understand than written words. For example, 😊- indicates happiness and ☹- indicates sadness. These pictures are the most popular pictures used among young people on text messages. Therefore, such

pictures can be used to represent sentences such as “I am happy” or “I am not happy”. Furthermore, 12% (6) of the learners never used pictures because their cellular phones do not have access to the internet. They use cellular phones for only voice calls and short voice service (SVS) to communicate with their friends.

Azuma *et al.* (2008:972) have the following to discuss about the use of mobile pictures:

All the major Japanese mobile phone providers are moving towards the standardization of the codes for graphic emoticons, and the use of graphic emoticons is now extremely common in mobile phone communication among young Japanese people. If the graphic emoticons continue to increase in popularity, and if the emoticons-like images or simple animation becomes more and more powerful and capable of conveying richer meaning, they may develop into a universal language in the near future.

In addition, some of these pictures might make the conversation to be difficult during the communication process. Some of the pictures might be ambiguous, i.e. they have two meanings at the same time. For example, a picture which displays a tongue may mean either that someone has cracked a joke or is confused. Thus, a person who has never used pictures on text based conversation will not understand the meaning of the tongue. Therefore, it will be difficult to some of the users to predict the meaning of the picture. As a result, the user will have to write what the picture means after sending it to make communication easy.

4.2.2 Analysis and discussion of the use of abbreviations

An analysis shows that abbreviations are used more frequently on learners’ written English language. Abbreviations are used by 44% (22) of the learners to communicate with one another on text messages. These learners use abbreviations to shorten words, phrases and sentences. The problem is that abbreviations may limit learners to express themselves in full sentences when they write essays in the classroom. Learners seem

to have challenges in writing correct words since they are used to abbreviations because they tend to confuse both informal and formal writing.

Learners attach meanings to abbreviations that they use in text messages. For example, “*LOL*” for “laughing out loud/lots of love/lots of luck”. The word “*LOL*” is the most popular term used in text messages. The text shows that the users have a good friendship in a text based conversation. Also, the word “*LOL*” may be used to comfort someone who has lost his or her friends or failed his test or examination. So it is ambiguous.

Unfortunately, the use of this type of abbreviations in writing is only allowed at informal settings not at school. More importantly, abbreviations such as “*LOL*” are not accepted in formal writing because they are not standard forms of writing. The results indicated that learners use abbreviations as if they are officially acceptable in their written essays. They mix formal language that they have been taught in class with informal language that they use in text message communication.

Mphahlele *et al.* (2005:164) discuss how learners adopt the use of abbreviations on television:

Learners frequently use the word “*LUV*” for “Love” which appears many times on the television screens especially during “phone-in” and “send your SMS” programmes, confuses learners to the extent that they may believe that both spellings are correct. This kind of language therefore hampers learners’ language proficiency, in particular, grammatical and spelling skills especially in English.

It is believed that the use of abbreviations among learners is widespread through the use of media such as television and bill boards. But 56% (28) of learners in Mankweng Circuit indicated that the use of abbreviations is a complete waste of time. In other words, the majority of learners do not use abbreviations when they write academic work. Thus, only less than half of the respondents use abbreviations in academic writing.

4.2.3 Analysis and discussion of the use of numbers

The data indicated that the use of numbers in text messages is used by the fewest number of learners. Only 2% (1) of learners are capable of writing numbers as words during texting. This means that numbers can be converted into words by few learners in Mankweng area. It seems that learners are aware that numbers cannot be used as words for academic writing. It is clear that learners use numbers in text messages as an advantage to off-set the costs of air time. Moreover, the study revealed that learners use numbers in order to save writing time during text messaging. They use numbers which have the same sound as words. For example, “2” for “to/too” and “4” for “for”. But in some cases, learners use numbers which do not sound as words. For example, “511” for “too much information”. The word “511” is semantically confusing because it will not have a clear meaning to someone who is not conversant with texting.

4.2.4 Analysis and discussion of the use of letters

The results of the present study showed that the use of letters as words in academic writing is done by Grade 10 and Grade 12 learners. Learners from Grade 8 and Grade 9 do not have many challenges in writing their school work as they are still fresh from primary level and they are still too young to fully understand cellular phone language. Approximately 42% (22) of the learners use letters as words to communicate with friends. The most common text words which have an effect on learners’ writing are “u” for “you”, “c” for “see” and “y” for “why”. Some learners prefer letters which are simple and easy to use. They do not prefer those letters which would consume much of their time during tests or examination. At the same time, learners do not perform very well in class because their English teachers claim that they are unable to understand the meaning of letters as words that learners use in their academic works.

4.2.5 Analysis and discussion of the use of letter-number combination

The study revealed that 8% (4) of the learners use letter-number combination as a means of communication among themselves. There is indication that learners are fluent in combining letters and numbers into one to form a meaningful word. For instance, “2pic” for “topic” and “g2g” for “go to go”. Such words are not appropriate in academic writing because academic writing is formal. Learners omit letters and instead use numbers. The word “to-” is replaced by the number “2”. Again, the letter “-o-” has been omitted in the first and the second “-g”. However, letter-number cellular phone language combination seems to have a negative effect on learners’ academic writing because they increasingly use letters and numbers than formal words in their academic works. Instead of writing in full words, phrases or sentences, they tend to mix both letters and numbers. As a result, some learners do not perform well academically.

In addition, learners like to embellish their sentences by combining letters and numbers in order to attract their friends. They do it in such a way that they do not consume the reader’s time. Besides, it seems that learners feel bound to use letter-number combination because they do not have time to write long sentences. In most cases, they do not communicate with one person in text messages. They find themselves in a situation where they have to chat with two or more people at the same time. Therefore, they try to pay attention to all their interlocutors by combining both letters and numbers.

4.2.6 Analysis and discussion of the use of symbols

Besides pictures, another icon that is mostly used on social networks such as *Mxit* and *Facebook* is symbols. In this study, only 2% (1) of learners use symbols on text messages. The data on symbols do not appear much on learners’ written work. This means that the use of symbols affect only few learners in the Mankweng area. It can be assumed that the rest of the learners might not like symbols because they do not have a

comprehensive meaning in their writing. Symbols consume time and learners may have to explain in detail the meaning of that particular symbol after they have used it. For example: “***” (I cannot see you). For this reason, some young people go for simple symbols such as “@” for “at” and “&” for “and”. However, such symbols might not have a negative effect towards the learning process of learners because in most cases such symbols are used in formal settings and even in academic books. These symbols appear in the referencing sections of books and not in sentences.

4.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF INFORMATION FROM TEACHERS’ ORAL RESPONSES

It is helpful to analyse and discuss data that the researcher gathered from teachers’ oral responses. These data pertain to teachers’ perceptions of the use of cellular phone language on academic writing by learners. In terms of the results, 85.7% (12) of teachers have knowledge about cellular phone language while 14.3% (2) of teachers do not have such knowledge. This means that most teachers become aware of the spellings that learners use on cellular phone language when they mark their composition scripts. According to the data, the most common cellular phone language that teachers come across in learners’ written scripts is: “u” for “you” and “iz” for “is”. Thus, Latisha (2007:13) is correct in stating that “the main concern among educators is the possibility that using text language will have negative effects on the traditional grammar of the user’s language”. Teachers expect their learners to write their school work using proper spelling of words.

4.4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF INFORMATION FROM LEARNERS' COMPOSITION SCRIPTS

The purpose of analysing and discussing learners' composition scripts is to find out how cellular language influences the written English language on academic situations. The study revealed that the written English language of learners is influenced by the use of informal communication among themselves. Learners tend to use words which are not acceptable in their academic written composition scripts. For example, words like "hols" for "holidays" and "couse" for "because". This confirms that cellular phone language affects learners' performance at schools.

Based on the scripts which the researcher analysed, it can be concluded that cellular language affects learners' writing. Thus, they are unable to follow the rules of writing correct sentences in English. For example, "*m going 2 town with my friends 2mrw*". The sentence above consists of a letter, number and letter-number combination. In this case, the learner did not start a sentence with a capital letter. Therefore, such a sentence is not acceptable in formal settings such as at schools. A learner should have written a sentence as follows: "I am going to town with my friends tomorrow". Averianova (2011:18) points out that "young people do much more writing and reading with their cellular phones than ever before". In this regard, learners use cellular phones to write informal words than formal words. For example, learners like to use texts like "2" for "to/too" and "u" for "you" in their composition scripts. In addition to the above, such texts have a disadvantage towards learners' writing skills as they are unable to express themselves in full words or sentences.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher analysed and discussed the data collected from high schools. Data were analysed and discussed using learners' oral responses, teachers'

oral responses and learners' composition scripts. The results of this study were supported by literature written by other scholars. Chapter five presents the findings, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter learners' oral responses, teachers' oral responses and findings from learners' composition scripts were analyzed and discussed. This chapter presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

5.2 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Following the interviews and observations conducted in this study, a number of findings can be identified.

This study revealed that cellular phone language has an impact on academic writing of learners. It is also found that cellular phone language makes life of users easy, instant and cost effective. It is also found that cellular phone language is easy to learn and adopted by its users. This study further found that some teachers have knowledge of cellular phone language since they are exposed to this language in learners' composition scripts. Users create their own words and phrases as they want.

This study found that cellular phone language has a negative influence on learners' knowledge of grammatical rules and formal writing as learners end up using the language mistakenly in the formal essays. Through this study, we learn that learners make lots of errors and then corrections which make their school work untidy as a result of using cellular phone language which end up making learners not to progress

academically. Learners settle for cellular phone language because it is fast and convenient to them as they do not have to struggle with spelling. They do not think of grammatical errors.

Teachers are experiencing a challenge when they mark learners' composition scripts regarding the usage of cellular phone language in their academic work. Teachers try by all means to correct the use of cellular phone language, and they continuously guide learners to avoid the usage of the language by penalizing them. But this study shows that learners are already used to it because they are repeatedly using it. The usage of cellular phone language affects teachers' work negatively and it makes their job very difficult as they always have to rectify spelling and language errors.

There are, however, learners that do not seem to experience difficulties in separating cellular phone language and academic language. Some participants said that when they write for formal or academic purposes, they can wisely use correct language as opposed to language used in Social Networks.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Chapter one examined the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at high schools. It presented the general introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem and research methodology.

Chapter two reviewed literature on cellular phone language. A number of research works from different authors have been used to discuss several issues on the use of pictures, abbreviations, numbers, letters, letter-number combination and symbols on text messages.

Chapter three presented and interpreted the data collected from five high schools in Mankweng Circuit. The chapter interpreted that text messaging is a common practice

among learners who use Social Networks to communicate with their friends and families across distances.

Chapter four analysed and discussed the data gathered from both learners' and teachers' oral responses and from learners' composition scripts. The chapter highlighted that cellular phones and Social Networks are some of the most favourite media among learners in the Mankweng area.

Chapter five presented the conclusion of the study. It also presented the findings and recommendations of the study.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended in this study:

All Social Network providers should allow only users who are 18 years and above to use Social Networks services. Users can be required to provide the relevant identity numbers before logging into the account. In this way only responsible people will be allowed to use the networks. This will help Social Network providers to identify the age of account holders. Social Networks and cellular phone system developers together with Microsoft designers should install automatic dictionaries which reject misspelled words and incorrect grammar to avoid incorrect written language.

The Department of Basic Education should invent a new law or policies that oblige English teachers to take actions against learners who repeatedly use informal language in formal settings such as schools. Education experts should come up with ideas on how to differentiate between writing for fun and for academic purpose in English Home Language and English First Additional Language. The Department of Education should make it a norm to write a warning in all instructions in every English question paper whereby learners are reminded not to use Social Network or cellular phone languages.

This warning should be written visibly where learners will be able to see it. In this way, learners will avoid using incorrect language during examinations.

Learners should not be allowed to chat in the middle of lessons. They must learn to concentrate and to put all their attention on their studies during classroom hours. They must make effort to learn to use formal language when they are studying, including when they are taking notes. Parents should encourage their children to form study groups and study chats instead of wasting time on chat rooms. This will help them to familiarize themselves with formal writing and thus slowly reduce the use of informal writing.

Government should impose a total ban on the use of cellular phones, iPads and laptops during school hours and at school unless it is part of their lesson. Parents should work together with school governing bodies alongside school management in order to ensure that learners do not enter schools with their cellular phones. In addition, parents must avoid buying young children expensive cellular phones that have access to the internet and Social Networks such as *WhatsApp*, *Mxit*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *2go*, and many others.

Most users utilize informal language especially shortcuts and abbreviations because it is cheap to send less words than many. Learners need to know the difference between what is suitable in the written formal variety of the language and what is not. Learners need to know that the highly informal language of text messaging is not suitable for academic work.

Teachers must persevere with learners and not give up rectifying their incorrect use of language mistakes. They should also urge them to use grammar correctly in order to sustain quality education. Government intervention is important in the sense that programmes should be produced to assist teachers with knowledge about the use of Social Networks and its impact on writing.

Such programmes should also aim at educating learners to avoid using cellular phone language in academic writing. They should be taught to be responsible users of social media. Parents should monitor the use of Social Networks regularly by their children. If teachers can stop sympathizing with learners who use cellular language even if their answers are correct, the problem might be curbed because learners will start to be more careful.

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APPENDIX A: COVERING LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSLATION STUDIES AND LINGUISTICS

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

STUDY TITLE: THE IMPACT OF CELLULAR PHONE LANGUAGE ON ACADEMIC WRITING AT HIGH SCHOOLS- A CASE OF MANKWENG CIRCUIT

You are invited to participate in the above research. The aim of the study is to analyse the impact of cellular phone language on academic writing at high schools in the Mankweng Circuit. Thus I would like your input on the subject. The objectives of the study are:

- To determine the quality of English academic writing of high school learners;
- To determine the effects of the use of cellular phone language on academic writing;
- and
- To assess the attitudes of teachers and learners towards cellular phone language.

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary. You do not need to tell me your name during the process of the interview, this will ensure anonymity. Furthermore, confidentiality is assured because only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the signed consent form. Please answer the questions as honestly as you can. The

research is conducted by Mr Matlakala Kwetepe John who is a second year Translation studies and Linguistics masters student at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). The researcher can be contacted at 072 0966414 or kwetepe3@gmail.com for more information. If you agree to participate, please read and sign the consent form on the following page. You may also contact my supervisor Mrs. C.M Mayevu at mashangu.mayevu@ul.ac.za or co-supervisor Mr. S.J Kubayi joe.kubayi@ul.ac.za for more information.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to decline to answer all, or some of the questions that are asked.

Please indicate your consent or refusal to participate by ticking the appropriate options below.

Are you willing to take part in this interview?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

To enable me to capture all the views and ideas that you have, I would like to record the interviews on a cellular phone recorder. Once I have transcribed the interview, the recorded voice clips will be kept secure with me at the University of Limpopo (Turffloop campus) until the project is complete, after which the voice clips will be destroyed.

Are you willing to have this interview recorded?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

I may use quotations from some of the interviews to illustrate points. If I quote you, your name or department would not be revealed in such quotations.

Would you be willing for me to use your words as quotations without mentioning your name?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

Please sign below to indicate that you are willing to participate in this interview.

Signed:

Date:

.....

...../...../20.....

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO
TURFLOOP CAMPUS
Private Bag X1106
SOVENGA
0727
SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 015 268 3174/0822198060
Fax: 0152683174/3596



School of Social Sciences

22 October 2012

To whom it may concern

Permission to do research: Matlakala K J : 200803742

The above-mentioned student is doing research on: **The impact of cellular phone language on academic writing in high schools: The case of Mankweng Circuit** in the department of Translation Studies and Linguistics.

This letter serves to request your office to allow him to do the research which is part of his mini-dissertation towards the completion of an M.A degree.

Your cooperation in this regard is highly appreciated.

Signed:.....
Dr J R Rammala (HOD)



MANKWENG CIRCUIT

2012.10.30

Enq : Kekana M. J
Tel No: 015 267 5641

Mr. Matlakala K J
Private Bag x1106
SOVENGA
0727

REQUEST OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH MANKWENG CIRCUIT HIGH SCHOOLS

1. The above matter refers.
2. We acknowledged the receipt of your letter dated 22.10.2012 to conduct a research at Mankweng High Schools on "The Impact of cellular phone language on academic writing in High Schools"
3. Permission is granted to conduct the research. Wishing you good luck.


MAGAGANE M.D
(CIRCUIT MANAGER)

2012.10.30

DATE



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CAPRICORN DISTRICT

"We Belong, We Care, We Serve"