

TML (Text Message Language); A Novel Discourse

D. M. Wijesundara

*Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya,
Peradeniya 20400, Sri Lanka
manshawijesundara@gmail.com*

The fluidity of language is enhanced by constant encounters it makes with various inventions of time and society. Technology has given birth to a variety of communication modes and has influenced language norms to a great extent. Digital platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber, G+, and twitter have enabled novelty in language use. These messaging applications have become the space in which the widespread and widely accepted Text Message Language (TML) has been born. TML has in its ever-changing word stock a range of words that have been shortened into acronyms or devised to make sense with minimal use of characters. It also involves extremely creative use of characters that bring out meaning within a limited time and space. As Language in general is becoming more and more democratized, the activity or the practice of “texting” has produced its own rendition of a language. It conforms to rules of its own, mostly governed by the space and time criterion, and has its own government of language. TML, draws from language; lexical items, figures of speech, letters and punctuation marks etc., to build its own repertoire which ends up constructing a mixture of traditional and non-conventional language norms. This hybridity makes TML parasitic for irreclaimable reasons but makes it an original linguistic form at the same time. Previous studies on the subject have shed light on the harmful implications of TML on “proper” language use. However, studies have also been made on increased language skills and performance of “texters” bringing about an idea of wider acceptance of this nuanced, complex and creative use of language by the ordinary user. This study focuses on TML, with an in-depth analysis of its use, its user experience and the connotations of relationship, power and even resistance that TML brings into popular discourse. The basis of the study is on select “textspeak” items of the English language and their larger connotations, power dynamics, extra-linguistic indications and their implications on the existing linguistic hierarchy. This qualitative discourse study uses “texters” of four age groups for analysis.

Key words: Technology, Innovative-language, Text-speak, Dehegemonizing, Language-norms