

Communication Strategies adopted Online by the L2 Users of English

4.0 Introduction to Web Mediated Communication

Web-mediated communication, which is defined as a ‘unique hybrid between speaking and writing’ (Beauvois, 1997; Rost, 2002; Smith, Alvarez-Torres and Zhao, 2003) is a post-1990 communication phenomenon that uses devices and appropriated portals, compatible with Web 2.0 framework to initiate face to face, text-based, one to one, one to many modes of communication using word or text-based or video interfaces. Web-mediated communication primarily falls under two categories, namely, Synchronous Web Mediated Communication (s-WMC), and Asynchronous Web Mediated Communication (a-WMC). Synchronous Web Mediated Communication involves the real-time exchange of communication between the sender and the receiver and vice versa in the form of text messages, image-based messages and video calling or chatting. Asynchronous Web Mediated Communication, on the other hand, implies a *deferment* in the process of exchange of communication between the sender and the receiver and vice versa. The users of both the categories use appropriate communication strategies (CSs) to make the communication exchange meaningful and to minimize the gaps between the intended message and the conveyed message and to enhance self-expression and comprehension (Bou-Franch, 1994).

4.1 Interaction Hypothesis and Language use

The central argument of the present study, i.e., the surveyed group apply communication strategies which are unique and masks their lack of grammatical knowledge of English is based on the framework of Interaction Hypothesis, which is a modification of Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1982, 1985). Krashen’s Input Hypothesis emphasizes comprehensible input which results in making communication meaningful between the sender and the receiver. However, according to Krashen, for meaningful language acquisition, the users have to go beyond their current state of linguistic ability

(1982) which he presents as $i+1$. Thus, according to Krashen, L2 acquisition takes place when a user is capable of comprehending $i+1$ input. However, Long (1983, 1996) while modifying the scope of Krashen's Input Hypothesis, has developed Interaction Hypothesis which provides ample scope for language acquisition through interaction and discourse restructuring (Gibson, 2004) involving repetitions, questioning, reconfirmation, reframing, etc. (Long, 1996). Such discourse restructurings or modified comprehensible input help in minimizing the gaps between the intended and conveyed messages.

The Interaction Hypothesis works both for language learning and interpersonal communication where the interpretation of meaning takes place (Ellis, 1999). The Web Mediated Communication being open and lax provides rich input for interpreting interaction among the users. As the tendency among the users is more inclined towards instantaneity, the encoders of the message *perceive* that the intended recipients or the decoders of the message are *aligned* with the purpose of the encoders with which the message has been encoded, and this results in a Preferred Reading (Hall, 1980) of the message and thus, the gap between encoding and decoding a message gets minimized or non-existent. For such preferred reading, the *alignment* is not only restricted to the intention and purpose of encoding a message, but also on the use of language in the medium. Considering the fact that the surveyed users have their *notions* of grammatical and stylistic correctness in the use of language, it has been found that if the exchange of communication takes place between two mutually *non-aligned* users, despite modified discourse restructuring, clarifications and re-questioning, a generally Oppositional Reading (Hall, 1980) takes place. On the other hand, it has been found that a Negotiated Reading (Hall, 1980) among the users take place when the decoder is well versed with the stated rules of the language as well as the encoder's *notion* of grammatical and stylistic correctness with which a message gets encoded.

4.2 Communication Strategies: An Overview

The strategies adopted by the people to make the communication successful in the form of minimal gaps between the intended and expressed idea, and generating the preferred feedback are broadly referred to as communication strategies. These have been defined as “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual present itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal” (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). According to Mitchell and Myles (1998), communication strategies play a major role on the face of shortcomings and failure in the learning and application of the rules of L2 in the process of oral and written modes of communication. Expanding the scope of Faerch and Kasper’s Model of Communication Strategies, Mitchell and Myles (1998) define the same as “[conscious] tactics used by the non-fluent learner during the L2 interaction, to overcome specific communicative problems.’ The communication strategies are resorted to by the users to decode meaning, minimize incomprehensibility and provide feedback in the process of communication between a native and non-native user of a language or among non-native users of the said language. Corder (1977), on the other hand, views the use of the CSs by the L2 learners as the result of their inability to express comprehensibly owing to inadequate learning of the same during the formative years. CSs help in negotiating the problems arising out of both incomprehensible expression and insufficient learning.

The initial studies on CSs, which were conducted mainly between the 1970s and 1990s, (Bialystok, 1990; Corder, 1977; Tarone, 1977, 1980, 1983) pertain to the application of the same to Face to Face (F2F) communication. This was because of the non-existence of the Web Mediated Communication (WMC) medium. Thus, CSs as a cognitive, rather than an interactive interpersonal process used for language reception and production (Smith, 2003), gained primacy. The CSs were thus, considered as ‘*a systematic attempt by the learner to express or decode meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed*’ (Tarone, 1977). The definition considers CSs as a tool for encoding or decoding of meaning in a context arising out of a learner’s lack of knowledge of rules

of the target language. However, Tarone modified the definition to include the interactionist approach by terming CSs as a ‘*mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared*’ (Tarone, 1980), where *mutuality of interaction* helps in the negotiation of meaning and getting the desired feedback.

However, it was Chun (1994) who first conducted detailed research on the CSs as an interactional tool on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) medium by drawing similarities between the spoken and the written modes of the English language with the nature of communication held online. Smith (2003) expanded the scope of CSs online vis-à-vis F2F by grouping and analyzing the discourse from different paralinguistic parameters as tone, non-verbal cues, framing, and re-formulating/re-questioning. The similarity of the strategies used in CMC/WMC and F2F as well as written modes of discourse are also found in the present study. However, while the previous studies show the similarities drawn from the F2F and written modes of communication being carried over to the CMC/WMC and textese, in the current study, it shows the strategies and approaches to communicate adopted online finds presence in F2F and written modes of communication.

Another vital area in CSs deals with the negotiation and interpretation of meaning in an *intended* manner which helps in minimizing message incomprehensibility and providing the desired feedback. The process involves coding the idea, the use of a medium, the decoding by the recipient and providing the feedback. Any instance of *deviation* from the intended meaning requires re-framing (of the context) and re-questioning/re-formulating (the statement/question) and in many instances, code-switching from L2 (assuming it to be the dominant language of communication) to L1 (the mother tongue). Negotiation of meaning is closely related with Problematicity or ‘problem orientedness’ which implies the ‘use of strategies by a speaker in the event of a problem that may interrupt communication’ (Bialystok, 1990). The strategies of using an exclamation mark, ellipsis, question marks, asterisks, emoticons, emojis, meeps and

pusheens which are unique to chat environments further help in the negotiation and interpretation of meaning appropriate to a context.

Gass (1997), with regards to the use of CSs, has posited that the number of strategies for communication used by non-native users of a language tends to outscore the number of strategies used for communication by the native speakers of the same language. This, according to Gass, is the result of the non-native speakers' relative freedom in expressing their incomprehensibility of L2 compared to that of the native speakers of the same language. In this regard, she says: 'great status differences may inhibit negotiation, especially in those instances in which the NS is of a higher status than the NNS (e.g., a professor and a student)' (Gass, 1997). It is the level of comfortability that impacts the users' use of CS and the resultant comprehensibility of communication. In the present study, it has been found that the students' use of English language for WMC and their attempts to validate the same by using it in more formal modes of discourse is because of the *hierarchy* that exists between the interlocutors and *status inequality* in terms of linguistic competence that prevails between the teacher and the learner. Bialystok and Frolich (1980), in their study, has made a categorization between CSs based on L1 and CSs based on the users' L2. While the use of the CSs is based on the users' level of proficiency in a particular language, yet according to Liskin-Gasparro (1996), the tendency to use L1 based CSs is more for the non-native speakers of L2. However, in the present study, it has been found that the preference for L2 based CSs, i.e., English, is more than that of L1 despite the competency limitation of L2 among the users. This is due to the following factors:

(i) *Uniformity in the medium of instruction:*

One of the major reasons for opting English as a medium of communication online by the respondents is due to a lack of script in the vernacular languages. As such, the medium of instruction in the feeder levels remains English, although there is a significant switching of the code to Hindi as well. This has been a significant factor

among the respondents in preferring English for both reading and written modes of communication.

(ii) Lack of proper script and literature in the local languages spoken in the region.

Unlike Assamese, Bengali and Hindi, the dialects of Arunachal Pradesh don't have a script of their own. The recent attempts at literalizing the prevalent myths and folklore have been done using the Devanagari or Roman scripts. Even in those languages which have scripts, like that of the Bodos of Assam, electronic transcription of the sounds and letters are still in a state of infancy, and hence, English is preferred over other languages as the language for electronic communication.

(iii) Lack of a homogeneous language for communication

Lack of a homogeneous language for communication among different communities is another reason for adopting English. As different tribes have their distinctive cultural and linguistic identities, the inter-tribe oral communication in the state of Arunachal Pradesh is done using a creolized form of Hindi and in NEFAmese. In the case of the surveyed respondents, both the inter-tribe as well as the intra-tribe communication is done predominantly in Hindi, followed by English. 29% of the surveyed respondents (87 students) have admitted that even in their family and friend circles, they use Hindi because of their inability to communicate in their respective L1s.

(iv) Community and dialect dynamics

Community and dialect dynamics play a major role in the Arunachalee society in general. Demographically, almost every district of the state has a dominating presence of a single-tribe where the members of the other communities have a marginal presence. This has created obstacles in the formulation of concrete language policy for the state of Arunachal Pradesh so far. Each community aims at giving more emphasis on promoting their dialects, customs, myths, and traditions, largely within the

geographical dominance of their tribe. The absence of a common *Arunachalee* language has contributed significantly for preferring English over any other language.

(v) *Interface familiarity of the devices and the portals*

Unlike Chinese, Indonesian, Korean, Malay or other Southeast Asian languages, the devices and portals do not support the languages spoken in the Northeast. While the language software for the languages mentioned above are generally pre-built within a system making it easier for the users to toggle from one language to the other while typing, but in case of the languages spoken in the northeast, no such pre-built mechanism is available in the devices and portals. The only available option for the users should they be inclined to type in the native languages is to use a third-party application installed on their devices. However, so far, this is restricted to Assamese and Bengali only. Some of the portals, like Facebook, has only recently allowed posting updates in these languages. Lack of technical support in developing dialect/language-friendly portals and interfaces compels the users to communicate in English or using the Roman script for transmission of the messages in their native languages.

(vi) *The notion of social acceptability and greater visibility*

Socially, anyone speaking or writing English is treated with respect and accepted as *educated and refined*. The knowledge of English is also attached to the notion of having a voice, and it is widely believed and followed that anyone communicating in English has greater visibility and acceptability. This social behaviour has been the most important reason among the surveyed respondents for adopting English, particularly as a medium to communicate online. This has created a symbiotic relationship between the two. More they update, comment or post in English, higher the chances of their posts being visible. More of their posts are visible, the higher the chances of getting 'likes' on Facebook and Instagram. More the likes they have, more the number of friends and followers they generate giving a tremendous boost to their online presence

and screen life. Hence, the desire is to communicate more in English than any other language.

4.3 Social Networking Sites

Human beings, from the time when they started living in communities, had formed social networks when they started meeting in “*institutions such as public and private clubs, lodges and churches*” (Vallor, 2016). Such ‘structured affiliations’ (Vallor, 2016) helped in socio-cultural interaction and promoted F2F communication. However, it is at the beginning of the 21st century, and with the advent of Web 2.0 standards, that social network media has attracted public attention and gained momentum in the dissemination of information and creating new ventures of ‘connectedness’ which is more integrative. In the 1970s, the US Army’s ARPANET along with the development of the internet newsgroups, MUDs and Bulletin boards in the subsequent years have contributed in designing the social network and new media platforms we have today. While the pre-Web 2.0 architecture largely relied on the use of ‘social, organizational and institutional software’ (Vallor 2016) for social networking purposes with the freedom to control and customize being limited, the same has changed and evolved over the years to incorporate ‘user-generated and shared internet content’ (Vallor, 2016) with a greater degree of control and freedom to personalize.

While popular literature and media tend to synonymize the internet and the World Wide Web (www), there exists a significant technological distinction between the two. Tim Berners-Lee, while defining the two, states:

“The internet is a network of networks...basically it is made from computers and cables...the internet delivers...packets-anywhere in the world...The Web is an abstract (imaginary) space of information” (Berners-Lee, 2011).

Thus, www is a ‘boundless information world in which all items have a reference by which all items can be retrieved’ (Berners-Lee *et al.* 2003). Thurlow *et al.* too has de-synonymized the two by terming the web as “technology within a technology” and it

being just “one part of the internet which also hosts the transfer of other types of documents and files” (Thurlow *et al.*, 2004). Such attempts at making distinctions and de-synonymizing terminologies have helped in creating meta-categories within the body of internet studies with its varying impact on culture, identity, and communication.

One such term that has become a buzzword in the recent times is the ‘new media’ which has been defined as a habitat that converges “*websites, virtual worlds, virtual reality (VR), multimedia, computer games, interactive installations, computer animation, digital video, cinema, and human-computer interfaces*” (Manovich, 2001) that helps in ‘contextualizing and seeking to offer the problematized findings’ (Silver, 2000) in the process of transmission of communication. The *newness* of the new media doesn’t exclude the tenets of the old, rather it overlaps, converges and creates a space for interdependence and integration through constant ‘adaptation, reinvention and recombination’ (Lievrouw, 2004). As in the architecture of the platform on which the whole gamut of communication operates, the same too has undergone tremendous ‘adaptation, reinvention and recombination’ within a particular cultural or linguistic context. The constant experimentation with the orthography, grammar, style, and punctuation in the English language (and another portal/device compatible languages as well) can be attributed to such dynamism of the medium itself. The flip side of it, however, lies in the lack of proper knowledge regarding rules and understanding of the context for an appropriate (and correct) use of a particular language. A result is often a reductionist approach adopted towards the process of communication relying wholly on the literal comprehensibility of a message, irrespective of the cultural nuances and grammatical and contextual correctness.

One of the major components of the new media is the social networking sites which are continually reshaping the nature of relationships and getting connected with the existing social networks offline. Some of the major websites that used Web 2.0 standards exclusively for social networking include Orkut (discontinued in the year 2015),

Facebook, Google+, Friendster, Bebo, the academic networking site academia.edu, the professional networking site LinkedIn, which have been subsequently expanded with the launching of multimedia sharing site YouTube, the Photobucket sites like Instagram and Flickr, the microblogging sites like Twitter and Weibo, the interest-based networking site Pinterest, and the location-based networking sites like Google Latitude, Foursquare, etc. In the recent times, the launching of multimedia cum text-based networking sites like WhatsApp, Viber, Skype, etc. have been instrumental in converging the functionalities of many of these sites and hence, becoming more popular than the traditional SNSs. The ‘always on’ mode of internet connectivity and the trend of ‘remaining connected’ 24x7 have been responsible for making the SNSs becoming ubiquitous and integral to our lives.

The first detailed definition of the Social Networking Sites was given by Wellman when he termed the SNSs as:

‘...when a computer network connects people, it is a social network. Just as a computer network is a set of machines connected by a set of cables, a social network is a set of people (organizations or other social entities) connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships.’ (Wellman, 1997)

Wellman, thus, situates the existing structure of electronic community network as a social network with the addition of the CMC playing a significant role in constructing ‘socially meaningful relationships.’ The role of CMC is significant in making these networks a meaningful extension of the offline social networks. A similar view is echoed by Androutsopolos who also posits the presence of the social networks which received a tremendous boost post Web 2.0 and the resultant communication practices as it helped in fulfilling the four functions of the social networking sites, viz., organization, interaction, self-presentation, and spectacle (Androutsopolos, 2010). Boyd and Ellison further expand the scope of the definition of the social networking sites by incorporating the similarities and differences that go into making new *networks* online along with the existing ones.

They have defined social networking sites as such websites which:

‘...support the maintenance of the pre-existing social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities. Some sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on a common language or shared racial, sexual, religious or nationality-based identities.’ (Boyd and Ellison, 2008).

Further, these websites allow the users to

‘...(i) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (ii) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (iii) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2008).

Thus, despite having various reasons for being in the social network, it is the desire to re-present online primarily for public consumption by creating a profile that is generally acceptable has been the most potent one. The desire to be seen, heard, ‘liked’ and followed helps in validating one’s online identity and it is also interpreted as a wider acceptance of their behavior including the language they use online. The desire to create a profile by parameters given above along with the ability to follow the networks formed by others online (depending on mutual accessibility) also plays a significant role in innovating or *playing with* the existing rules of language deliberately or adopting newer strategies for communicating altogether.

Further, there is a notion of ‘power’ at play as far as granting access to a user’s profile, groups or community pages are concerned. The power stems from an increased number of followers and friends on a person’s profile is an indicator of his offline popularity, greater online visibility of his posts, updates and videos, a wider reach of his views. This gives him/her with a cushion and substantive liberty to experiment with the rules and styles of language that bear the propensity to go viral on the net and adds up positively to his image. Having a semi-public or a private profile with full access to it is given to a chosen few based on analogous positions (that may be both offline as well

as online, such as, an author or a sportsperson being ‘friends’ with a fellow author or a sportsperson), shared views, ideologies, and interests, and by being exclusive also contributes to the notion of power. The desire on the part of other users to be equally powerful by becoming visible propels them to use different strategies for communicating online.

Social network profiles are ‘sewn together into a large web’ (Boyd, 2007) which gets expanded with the addition of friends and followers. With connected profiles, space is created where the users ‘gather publically through mediated technology’ (Boyd, 2007). Terming these spaces as ‘mediating publics,’ Boyd describes these as ‘another social space’ where a user ‘make sense of the social norms that regulate society, let people learn to express themselves and learn from the reactions of others, and let people make certain acts or expressions “real” by having witnesses acknowledge them’ (Boyd 2007). Thus, according to Boyd and others like Arendt, social networking sites are an extension of the social networks offline. Like the offline social networks, a user by being on the social networking sites perform the same functions as s/he would otherwise do in case of the former, which include forming groups, aligning to communities, sharing ideas, posting comments and show his/her social life by uploading memories of a particular occasion or an event. Similarly, as in the case of the offline networks, language plays a vital role in the process of communication online where a user adopts different strategies according to the context of his operation to make himself comprehensible to the intended receiver.

Social networking sites started gaining ground from the early part of the 2000s with Orkut and Facebook leading the way. Facebook, which started from the Harvard University dorm in 2004 was initially intended to be a networking site exclusively for the Harvard University students or those having a harvard.edu email domain. Subsequently, it was released for the other institutions, and later, anyone with a valid email ID can create a profile, connect with others and start building a network. With the introduction of the mobile app and mobile number based login, it has been

successful in creating a massive subscriber base that has crossed one billionth mark globally.

4.3.1 Facebook

One of the major reasons for Facebook to garner massive popularity is its simple interface, both for the desktop and mobile modes, coupled with the seamless integration of multiple services within its fold. Starting from updating statuses to posting comments and uploading videos and photographs, Facebook, over the years has combined the social networking site with everyday needs of computing to a large extent by facilitating service like file upload and transfer (using messenger), making video calls, instant messaging, photo sharing (using Moments), creating events and inviting others to join, providing location-based points of interest (PoI, that works in tandem with integrated Google Maps), creating communities and pages for businesses, institutions and organizations, advertising, knowledge sharing, providing curated news, targeted and customized promotion of products, etc. Facebook's recent acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp messenger has further helped in making it a one-stop portal for catering to diverse interests like photo sharing to IM in a way that has made Short Messaging Service relatively redundant. With its free video calling messenger service, voice and video call is no longer restricted to having mobile handsets powered by the services of a commercial telephony and data service provider; instead, anyone with a decent internet coverage, a headset, and a mobile or PC web camera can make a call using the messenger app or WhatsApp.

These basic services apart, Facebook, is constantly attempting to be more like a human companion and has been nearly successful in being integral to our daily lives by technomimicking some of the basic functions which are usually expected from a fellow human being. To start with, Facebook started by reminding the user about the birthdays of the connected friends on a user's timeline. Gradually, they have introduced an online payment system using which a person can be gifted on his birthday without the user having to move out of his base. Similarly, during natural calamities, it is a general tendency on the part of the users to know about the status and well-being of their

friends. The ‘marked safe’ notification has reduced the dependency on mobile or wire-based telephony as the user instantly gets to know the desired information about others during such incidents. Human beings generally love to regale their happy memories and relive moments from the past. Facebook’s random retrieval of photographs and posts from the past helps in triggering such emotions in a user. This, in turn, makes him upload more photographs and videos to albums so that the same can be cherished in leisure. Likewise, the timeline wishes a user at different times during the day, during festivals, birthdays, anniversaries and other memorable events imparting it with a sense of life and making it social in the truest sense. However, the biggest reason on the part of the user for preferring Facebook is its customizability which makes a user ‘edit [his/her] past’ (Vallor, 2016) and the present to make it appealing and acceptable to the others. Thus, it provides an easy platform where a user can merge his ‘real identity’ with the ‘aspirational one’ (Vallor, 2016).

4.3.2 Twitter

Facebook started with an architecture that allowed a user to post a detailed update to the timeline poser, ‘what’s on your mind?’ as shown in the image below:

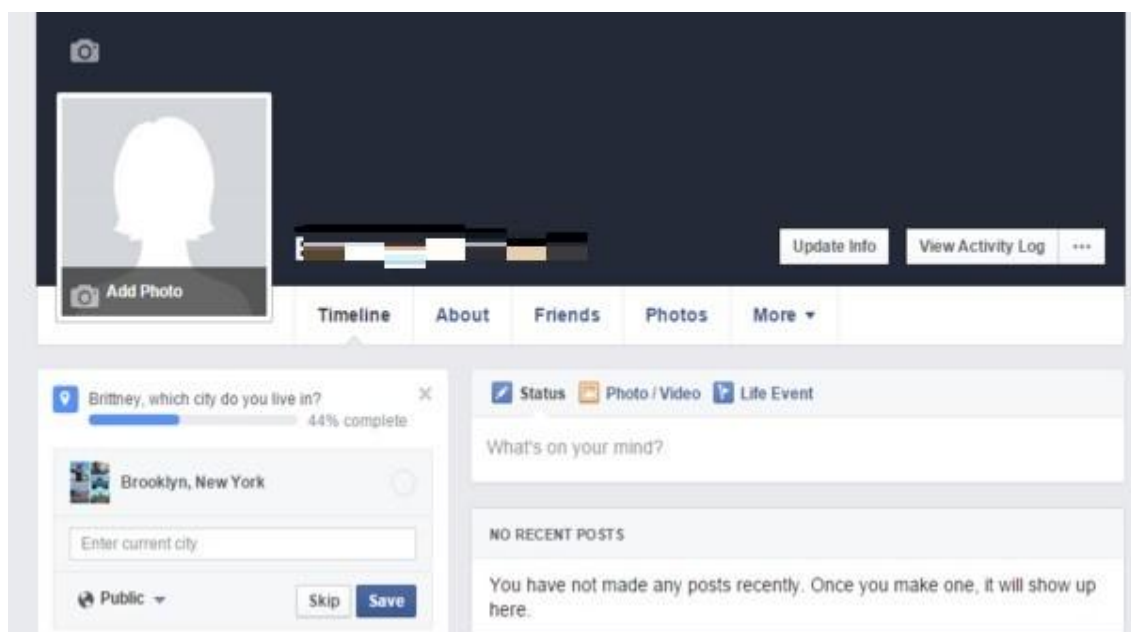


Fig. 4.1: Timeline prompt on Facebook
(Source: www.facebook.com)

The user has the freedom to dwell on his thoughts, compose it, and then post the same in a way that makes the reader of the post a part of the experience that is shared. In case of errors, the user has the option to edit and re-post the same along with the provisions to make the same public, or grant access to all the friends on his list or a chosen few, or keep the same visible only to him/her. Twitter, which started in the year 2006, on the other hand, believes in the succinctness and brevity of the message delivered within the limitation of 140 characters. By fusing the properties of IM and SMS, Twitter with a simple interface made machine communication lighter, more human, conversational, and precise.

Twitter's initial header clearly defined its purpose, i.e., to initiate conversation with the known people and strangers at regular intervals:

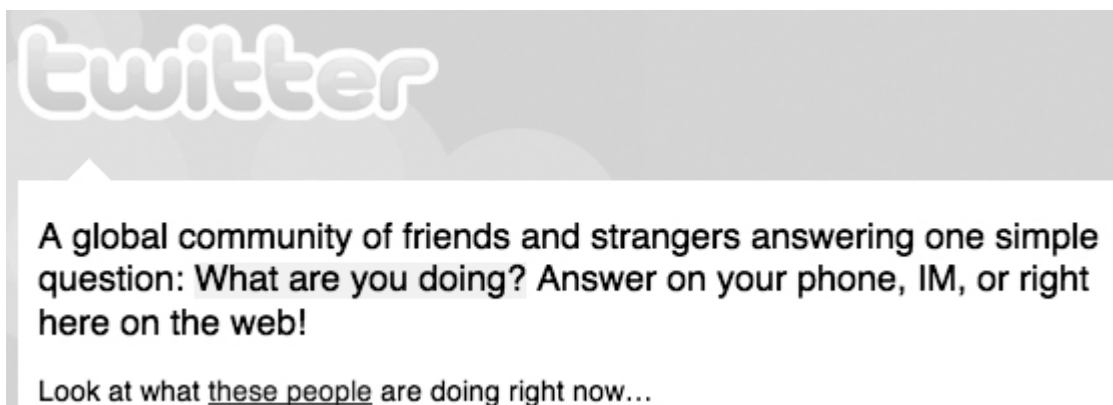


Fig: 4.2: Twitter's Initial Header

(Source: www.twitter.com (July 2007)).

One of the major advantages of Twitter over Facebook is the freedom of access it offers to the users across various portals and third-party applications to tweet directly to followers or engage in a conversation with someone particular or post to Twitter's public timeline which gets updated continuously showing updates from the user's network. The poser, 'what are you doing' is innocuous enough to invite an immediate and spontaneous response from the user, but it requires skill and knowledge to communicate the same in a comprehensible manner within the character limitation of 140, thereby ruling out the option of 'concatenated texting' of the SMSese in which

any character that spills over the set limitation of 160 automatically becomes the second text.

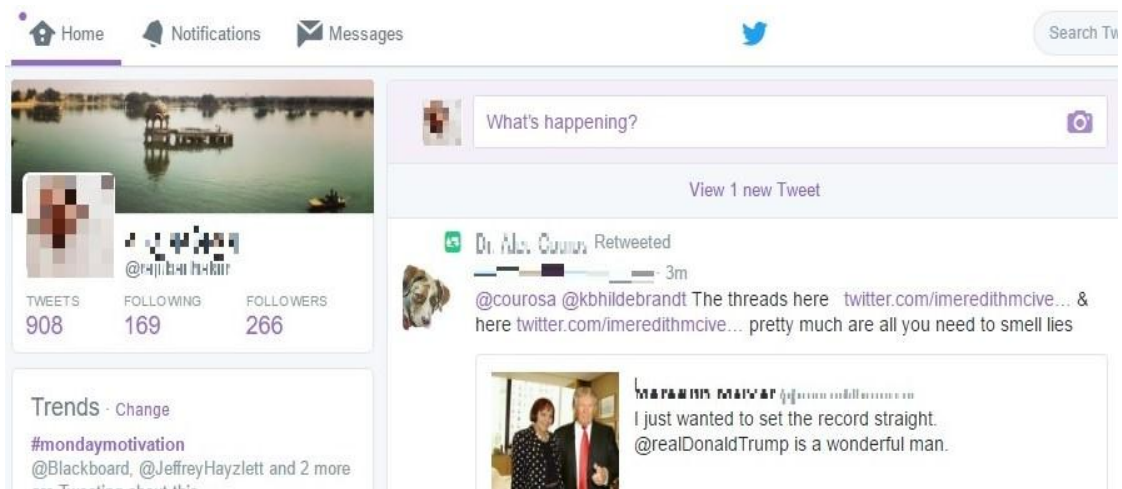


Fig. 4.3: Twitter's current prompt (Source:www.twitter.com)

It compels the tweeter to ponder within and over his/her ongoing nature of activity before tweeting. Of late, however, Twitter has changed its poser to 'what's happening' which allows the user to look around, situate himself in the context and post the tweet. Thus, poser itself with its change in phrasing implies a changeover from something personal to public, from looking within to looking around. Unlike Facebook, as is evident from the screenshot given below, Twitter's timeline is inherently democratic in that it presents the tweet stream as a multitude of voices which may not bear direct relevance to the shared values and ideals of a user.

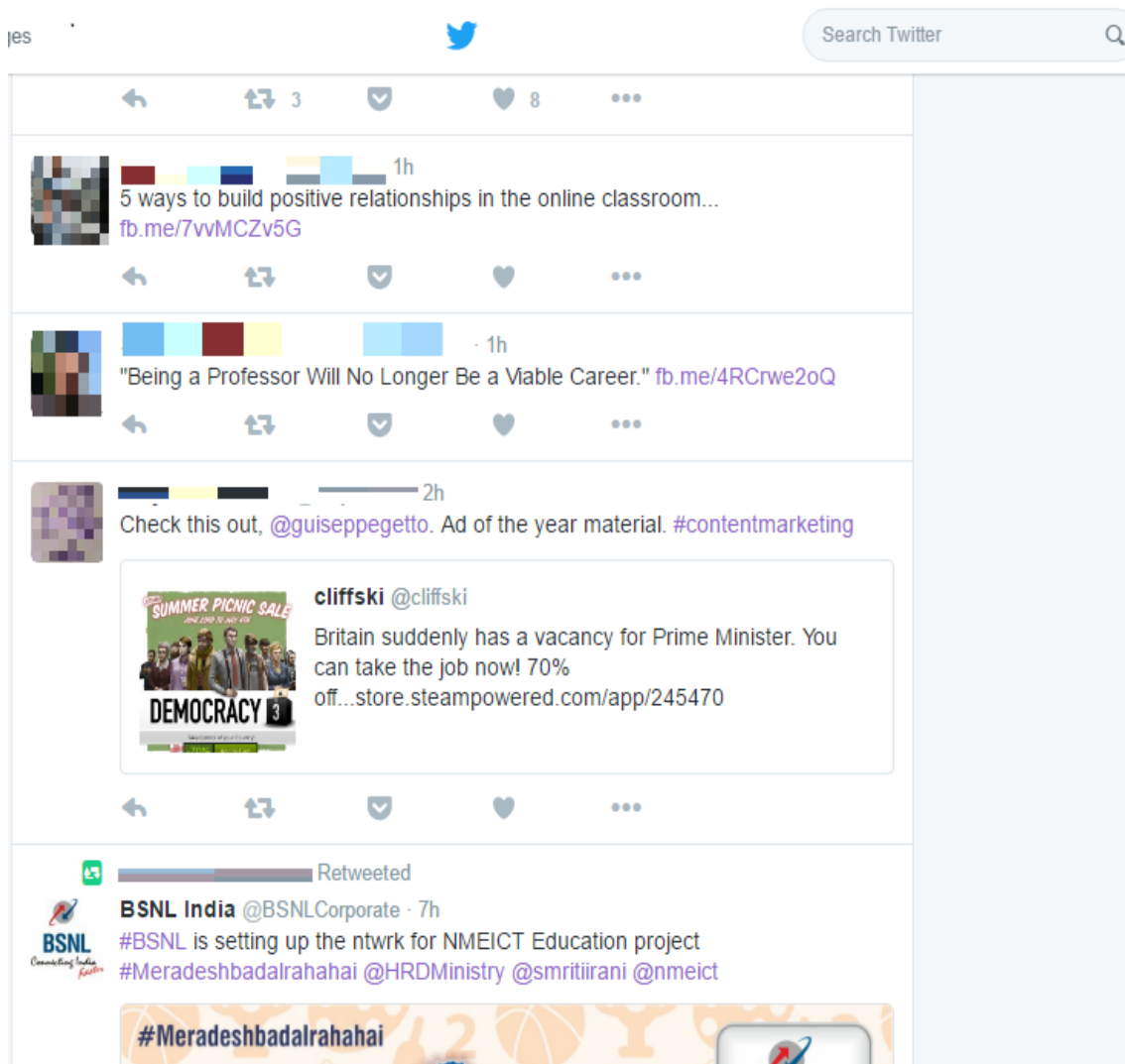


Fig. 4.4: Image of the Twitter feed (Source: <https://twitter.com>)

Because of such eclectic voices getting streamed every minute creating a 'noisy environment' (Honeycutt and Herring, 2009), meaning making on Twitter is problematic as the reading is more of an oppositional manner than a preferred one.

However, as composing tweets within the character limitation of 140 requires some skills to innovate the language, it is perceived by the respondents in the current study that Twitter helps only those who possess a better command over English vocabulary and grammatical rules. That is why only 16.7% of the respondents (50 students) have active Twitter handles. All the 50 students have linked their Twitter handles with Facebook so that each public tweet gets cross-posted on Facebook and vice versa. Given the perception of having a better command over language skills helps to be active

on Twitter, it has been found that the respondents resort to Twitter to validate their *notions of the correctness* of the language and orthography and the resultant cross-posting helps in making the same popular through re-tweets, likes and shares.

4.3.3 WhatsApp/Textese

Short Messaging Service (SMS), also known as text-based messaging and Web-based messaging services like WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, Video Calling apps like Skype and Viber have been instrumental in making communication faster, instantaneous and economical regarding expression. The keyboards and the keypads of the devices are designed to facilitate this mode of instant communication. While linguists like David Crystal attributes the emergence and popularity of textese to the emphasis on ‘the notion of [contextual] appropriateness’ (Crystal, 2010) over grammatical correctness and states that the users who possess better orthographic skills and a sound knowledge of grammatical rules are usually the best texters (Crystal, 2010). On the other hand, Mphahlele and Mashamite (2005) have shown negative effects of textese on acquiring language proficiency particularly in the case of English as L2. Given the non-standard style of language that is used in these mediums, along with logograms, emoticons, emojis, meeps, pusheens and abbreviations, it has been found that the respondents tend to use the same for the formal modes of oral and written modes of communication as well. Given the lack of proper knowledge of grammar and style, it has been found in the current study that the respondents cannot make a distinction between the formal and informal modes of communication and hence, they invariably resort to the informal medium for communicating in either mode.

Goldstuck (2006) argues that text and instant messaging are the outcomes of the online chat rooms which were made handy by making those downloadable to the devices and facilitating the users to communicate using the appropriate keys, resulting in the development of a ‘new, dynamic English slang’ (Goldstuck, 2006). The problem with the surveyed students as found in the research is that while they are extremely fluent in the use of the new slang in both oral and on/off-screen writings, their use of the same in the more formal modes of discourse indicates their lack of judgment in making a

distinction between the formal and informal modes of communication. Further, it has been found that this medium has come handy for them to mask their lack of knowledge of rules of grammar and orthography. Thurlow and Brown (2003) classify this non-standard typography and orthography into the following categories:

- (a) G clippings (deleting the end *_g* in a word) like *'selectin,' 'goin,' 'doin nuthin,'* etc.
- (b) Shortenings like *'ext'* (extra), *'aft'* (after), *'vocabs'* (vocabulary), *'imp'* (important), *'max'* (maximum), etc.
- (c) Contractions (deletions of middle letters) like *'nxt'* (next), *'cnnct'* (connect), *'commn.'* (communication), *'info'* (information), etc.
- (d) Acronyms and Initialisms (formed from the initial letters of various words) like LOL, ROFL, ASAP, DIY, PFA, etc.
- (e) Number homophones like *'b4'* (before), *'gr8'* (great), *'CUL8R'* (See you later), etc.
- (f) Letter Homophones like *'U'* for You, *'M'* for am, *'C'* for see, etc.
- (g) Non-conventional or Invented spellings like *'nites/nytes'* for Nights, *'thru'* for through, *'iz'* for is, etc.

Research findings on textese and literacy abilities of the users have been divided with one school of thought finding the impact positive, while the other school finds it has a detrimental effect on the use of language. The research conducted on finding the relationship between textese and literacy broadly falls under three different strands, viz., the frequency of text messaging and its impact on developing literacy abilities, the changes to the structure of the message with the increase in the frequency of text messaging, and analyzing the structural changes and their subsequent impact on literacy abilities. The same parameters of research could be equally applied to the other forms of electronic messaging, which in the recent times, has managed to dominate the messaging space globally. The relationship between frequency and literacy has been found to be a mixed one with researchers like Plester et al. (2008) terming it as negative

and Drouin (2011) and Rosen et al. (2010) finding it positive. On the other hand, researchers like Kemp (2010), finds both as independent and completely unrelated. Such differences in findings can be attributed to the differences in sampling sizes, the composition of the respondents, their linguistic and cultural background, and several other factors.

To study the structural changes and text messaging, two seminal studies stand out. Ling and Baron (2007), Thurlow and Brown (2003) conducted a study of the structural features of text messages and their impact on literacy by analyzing 544 actual text messages of the undergraduate respondents of the United Kingdom whose L1 is English. According to their research, only 19% of the textism occurred in their formal written discourse, with accent stylizations being used frequently, and emoticons and letter homophones are extremely rare. Moreover, because of the respondents' knowledge of the rules of grammar of English language, it has been found in the said research that they can make a distinction between the formal and informal mediums of the English language and hence, can use it in an appropriate context manner. Another study was conducted by Ling and Baron (2007) in the United States in which they analyzed around 200 text messages among the native users of English language and found the rare overlap of the textisms on the formal modes of oral and written discourse.

The research conducted on children and young adults to determine the relationship between textese and literacy abilities have shown extremely positive in case of children and moderate to negative in the case of young adults (Coe and Oakhill, 2011; Kemp and Bushnell, 2011; Plester et al, 2008, 2009; Wood et al 2011). The most problematic areas were found to be the use of non-standard spellings, missing capitalizations other punctuational errors. On the use of predictive texting, the researchers have found a positive co-relationship between texting and literacy. This argument supports Crystal's view that the frequent texters subsequently develop better orthographic skills.

4.4 Reasons for being on the Social Networking Sites

(i) Greater visibility and popularity

The most cited reasons for the users for being on the social networking sites are visibility and popularity. 73% of the surveyed respondents (219 students) have stated these two as the primary reasons for having a profile on the social network. Visibility comes from the likes and the shares their updates receive which depends on the number of friends and followers they have. This group of users remains in the ‘always on’ mode, i.e., they keep logged in to the SNSs 24x7 and seamlessly transfer from one device to another. Further, it has been found that all the users who are on the SNSs for the sake of greater visibility and popularity, use the mobile app for these sites which help them in posting updates in the real-time and with the help of the predictive text feature, they commit minimum spelling errors.

(ii) Sharing and gathering information

While a majority of the respondents post their updates, share links and upload photographs so that it generates maximum likes and invite more friends and followers to his/her profile, some users use social networking sites for sharing and gathering information. The nature of the information ranges from something mundane to serious. 6% of the total respondents (18 students) have stated that their presence in the social networking sites is primarily to gather and share information which is generally instant and often related to their daily activities, starting from sharing class notes and informing others about the examination schedules, assignments, etc. The most preferred site for these students is Facebook, or they are more active in WhatsApp group activities. Upon analysing their Facebook profiles, it has been found that instead of their timeline, they are more active on the respective pages created for a particular class, branch or hostel and they use the platform more as a bulletin or information board rather than posting updates which are personal or individual. Their activity on the social networking sites is that of an observer rather than an active communicator. None of these respondents have Twitter handles.

(iii) Learning and knowledge sharing

A few of the respondents (11% =33 students) use Facebook and Twitter exclusively for learning and knowledge sharing. With the Facebook's introduction of the trending news feature, the users find it convenient to read the latest news and share the same. Further, this category of users has been found to subscribe pages that offer content on science and technology, English language, travel blogs, and culture blogs. Some of the prominent pages subscribed by the users include:

- (a) VOA Learning English (<https://www.facebook.com/voalearningenglish/>)
- (b) BBC Learning English
(<https://www.facebook.com/bbclearningenglish.multimedia/?fref=ts>)
- (c) MIT Technology Review (<https://www.facebook.com/technologyreview/>)
- (d) BBC News Science (<https://www.facebook.com/BBCScienceNews/?fref=ts>)
- (e) Open Culture (<https://www.facebook.com/openculture/?fref=ts>)
- (f) The Apple Labs (<https://www.facebook.com/theapplelabs/>)
- (g) Teaching English-British Council
(<https://www.facebook.com/TeachingEnglish.BritishCouncil/>)
- (h) Discovery Education (<https://www.facebook.com/discovereded/>)
- (i) Technology and Beyond (<https://www.facebook.com/technologicallyYours/>)

The users share the content by resorting to cross-posting the links on Twitter and Facebook simultaneously. Similarly, the non-personal photographs which are uploaded on Instagram are cross-posted on Facebook and Twitter simultaneously. The reason for using the social networking sites for learning and knowledge sharing is because of the curated content and availability of the diverse material on a single portal. However, it has been found from studying their timelines that the users primarily resort to direct and instant sharing of the content on their timelines instead of adding their observations or comments about the content. The reasons for the same is due to their inability in

articulating their understanding or posers in structured and grammatically correct English.

(iv) Promoting ideas and networking

As all the respondents are students of engineering, there is a natural tendency in them to dabble and design apps, software, robots, and engineering models. While some such ventures become successful commercially, the others remain developing only. 6% of the respondents (18 students) are found to be actively using Facebook and Twitter to promote ideas and business ventures, to network with fellow developers and collaborators, and market their creation for investments and technical support. For example, a music app, Cisum (<https://www.facebook.com/cisum.in/?fref=ts>) has been indigenously developed and extensively promoted through Facebook and Twitter. YouTube is extensively used for promoting engineering designs and robots developed by the users with the URLs cross-posted over the social networking sites and electronic messaging apps like WhatsApp, etc.

(v) Other reasons

Other reasons for being on the social network sites include chatting and sharing AV files, to follow the events happening in their friends' lives, scheduling events, extending invitations, using it as a birthday or anniversary calendar, and creating closed groups.

4.5 Analysis of Online presence and behaviour of the respondents

To analyze the web access pattern and usage behaviour, a Social media and Text Proficiency questionnaire with 21 questions was prepared using Google docs and distributed to the respondents over Twitter and respective Facebook pages. The questionnaire was prepared taking into account the indicative behaviour of the respondents and their presence and range of activities in the social network media.

The permission to use data from the social network media profiles of the respondents has been categorically sought. In case of granting the access, it has been declared that

the identity of the respondent would be kept confidential and any image or information that may bear the possibility of compromising on this factor would be pixelated before being used. A descriptive analysis of the responses has been done.

(i) *How do you access the internet?*

The most commonly used device for accessing the internet are cell phones and tablets with 73.1% of the respondents (219 students) opting for these and 26.9% (81 students) using either a laptop or a desktop. The primary reason for a large number of the respondents opting for cellphones or phablets is the ease of access to the internet and getting connected while on the move.

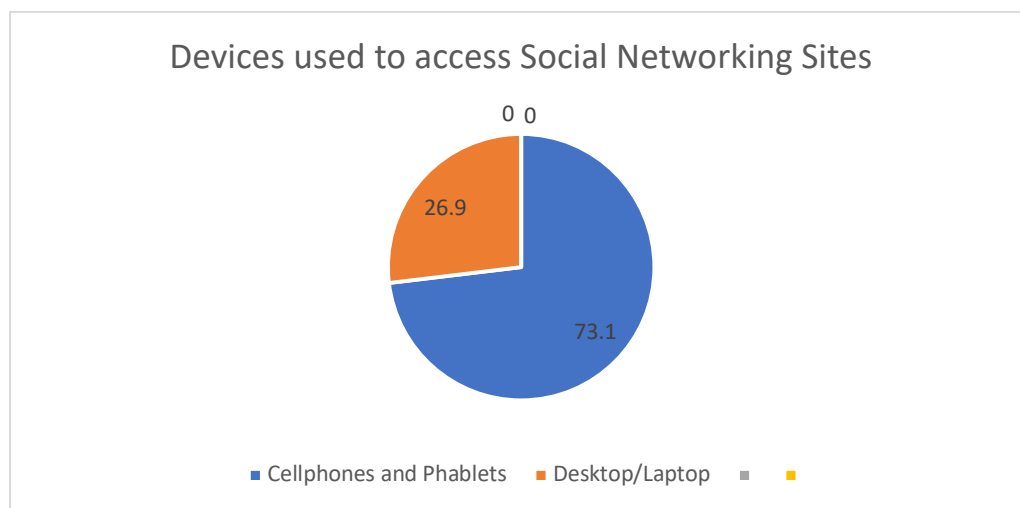


Fig. 4.5: Devices used for accessing the internet

(ii) *Since how long have you been using the internet actively?*

38.5% of the respondents (116 students) have been using the internet actively for 1-3 years. 29.5% of the respondents (88 students) have been active users for over five years, 25.6% (77 students) have been active users for 3-5 years, and only 6.4% (19 students) have been using it for less than a year. The respondents who have to access the internet actively for over five years are categorized as fluent users of the keypad, those with 3-5 years as moderately fluent, those with 1-3 years as less fluent and those have less than a year are categorized as novices with the keypad use.

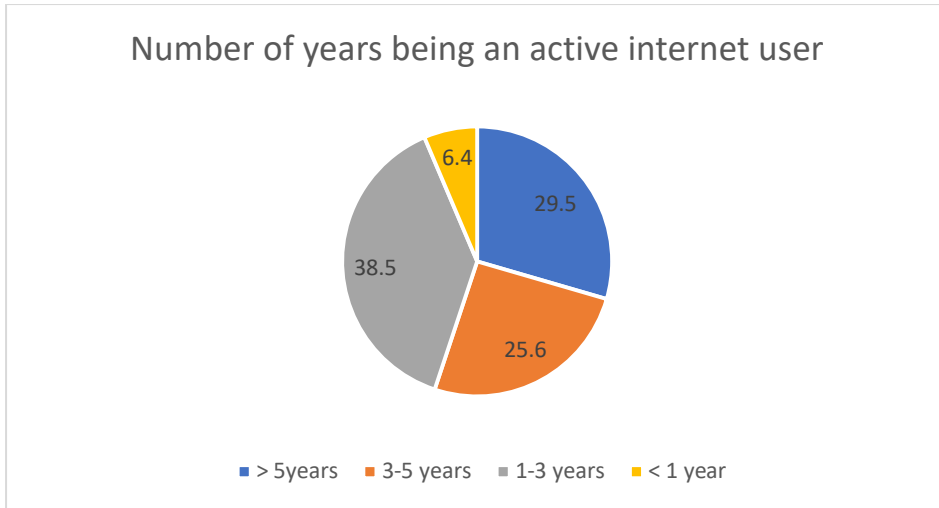


Fig.4.6: Number of years being an Active Internet User

(iii) *Since how long have you been using the Social Networking Sites?*

42.3% of the respondents (127 students) have been using the social networking sites for 3-5 years, 34.6% (104 students) for 1-3 years, 15.4% (46 students) for almost a year and 7.7% (23 students) for more than five years. It has been found that the students who are active in the SNS for 3-5 years have better portal navigation skills compared to those having used the same for more than five years. Even though the latter group of respondents logged in more hours into these sites, yet it is the former who have been found to be most active in generating the data and communicating with their friends in these portals in both synchronous and asynchronous modes. The respondents belonging to this group are also adept at using multiple portals for communication at the same time as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter with comfortable ease.

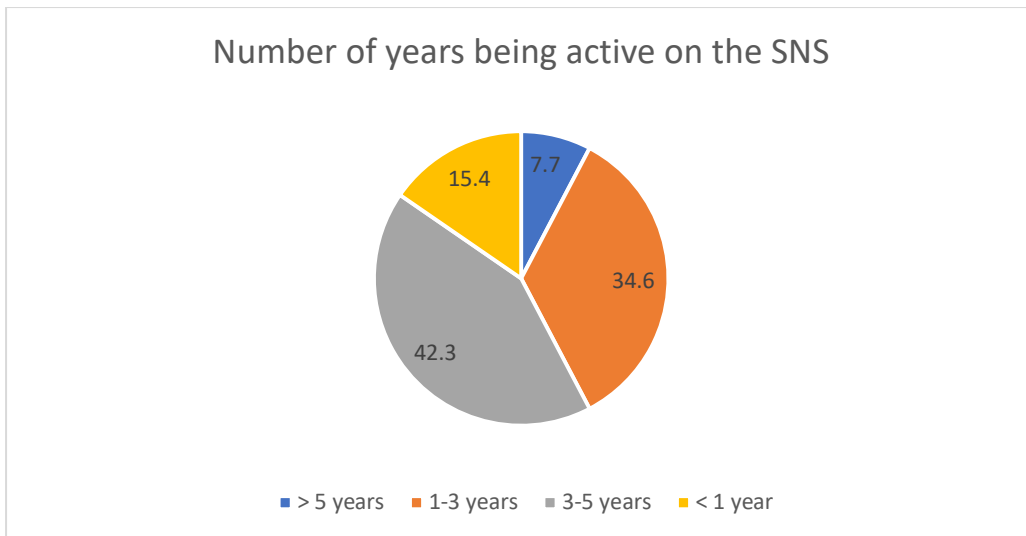


Fig. 4.7. Number of years of being active on the Social Networking Sites

(iv) Which of the following networking sites do you use most frequently? (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Others, All of these)

Of the surveyed respondents, 41.3% (124 students) have active Facebook accounts, 16.7% (50 students) have Twitter handles, 13.9% (42 students) are on Google+, 19.4% (58 students) are on other networking sites as Instagram, Pinterest, FourSquare, MySpace, etc. and 8.7% of the respondents (26 students) have accounts on all of these.

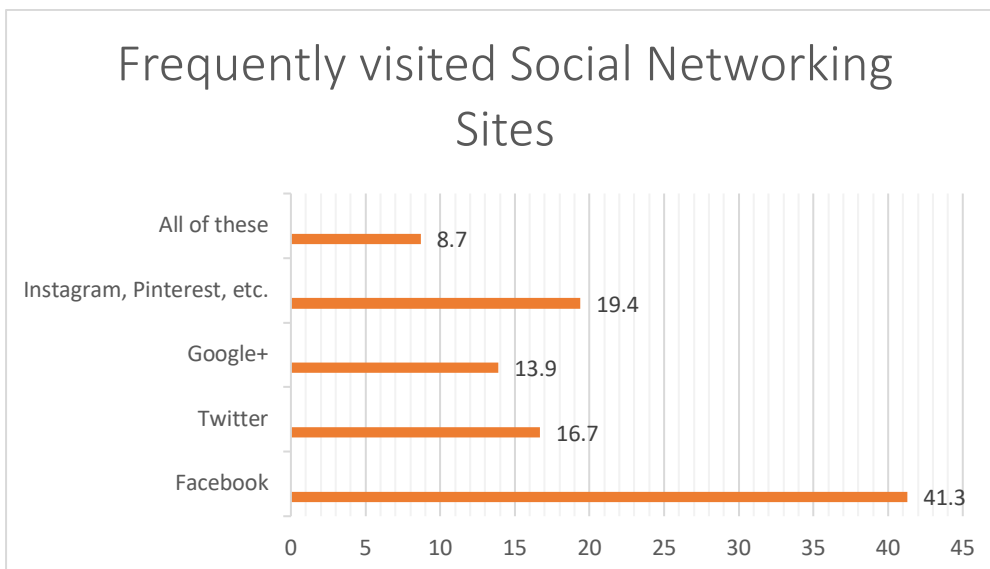


Fig. 4.8: Frequently visited Social Networking Sites

(v) *What is your frequency of using the SNSs listed above?*

64.1% respondents (192 students) use the social networking sites daily, 34.6% (104 students) use it twice or thrice a week, and only 1.3% respondents (4 students) rarely log in to these sites.

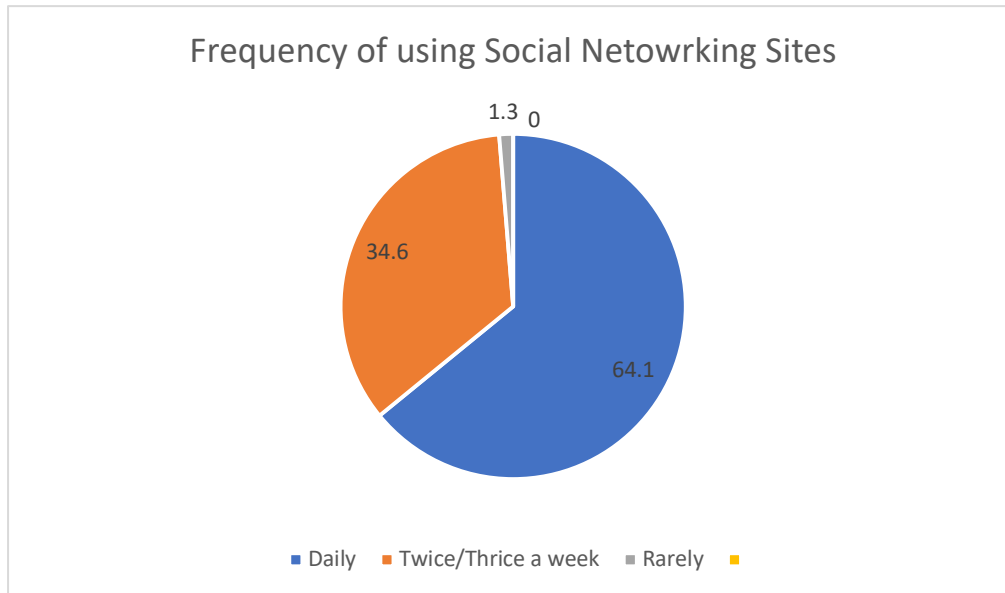


Fig. 4.9: Frequency of using Social Networking Sites

(vi) *What is the average time you spend on SNS every day?*

It has been found that 51.2% respondents (154 students) spend between 1-3 hours on social networking sites, 39.3% respondents (118 students) spend less than 1 hour per day, 7.7% of respondents (23 students) spend any time between 3-5 hours and 1.8% (5 students) spend more than 5 hours per day on the social networking sites. The respondents are found to remain in the 'always on' mode as far as logging on to the SNSs are concerned, but the hours stated here are the periods of their active engagement with such sites.

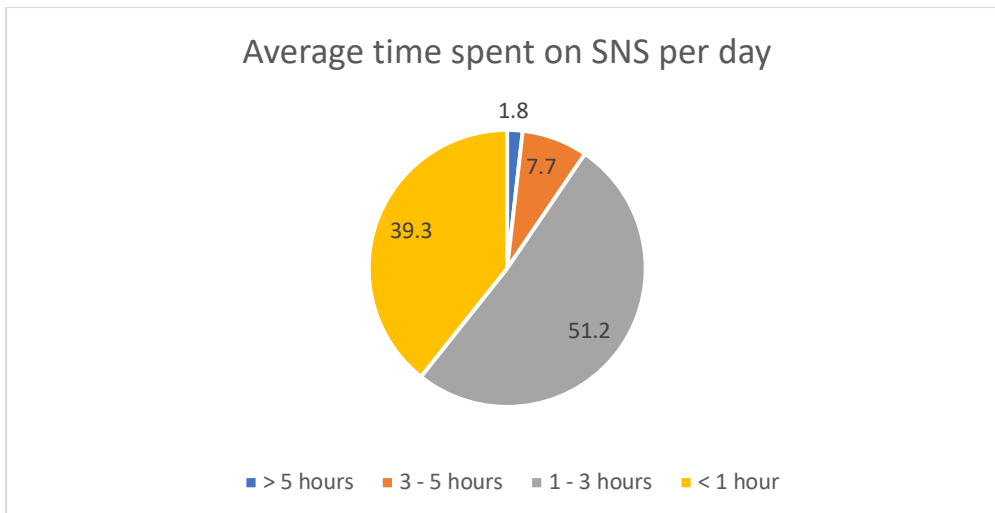


Fig. 4.10: Average time spent on SNS per day

(vii) *What is the nature of your participation in the social media sites?*

There are three major forms of participation in the social media sites. These are:

- (a) posting or commenting on updates, photos, and links and chatting in both synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication
- (b) sharing of links, posts, and tweets updated by others
- (c) playing games and using applications.

Of the surveyed respondents, 20.5% (62 students) share links, posts, pictures and tweets posted by others, 73.1% (219 students) post updates, comments and tweets along with pictures and URLs, and 6.4% (19 students) restrict themselves to playing games and using applications.

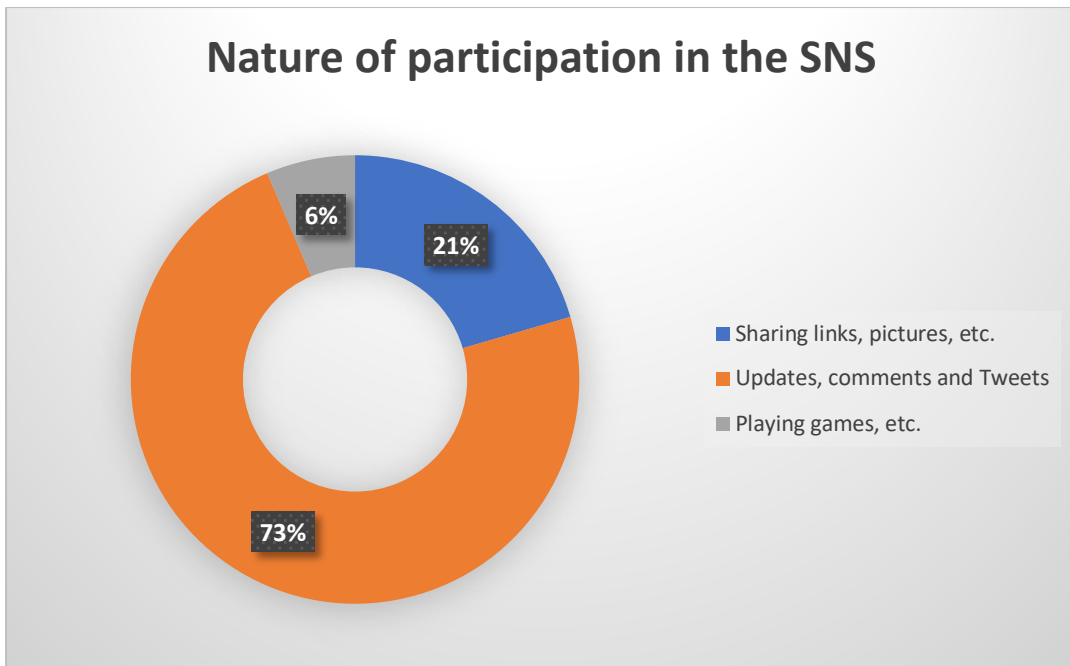


Fig. 4.11: Nature of participation in the Social Networking Sites

(viii) *How often do you post/update/tweet on your page?*

66.2% of the respondents (199 students) maintained that they post updates daily, 23.6% (70 students) have stated that they do the same twice or thrice a week. 6% of the respondents (18 students) update their posts once a month and 4.2% (13 students) rarely post anything on the social networking sites.

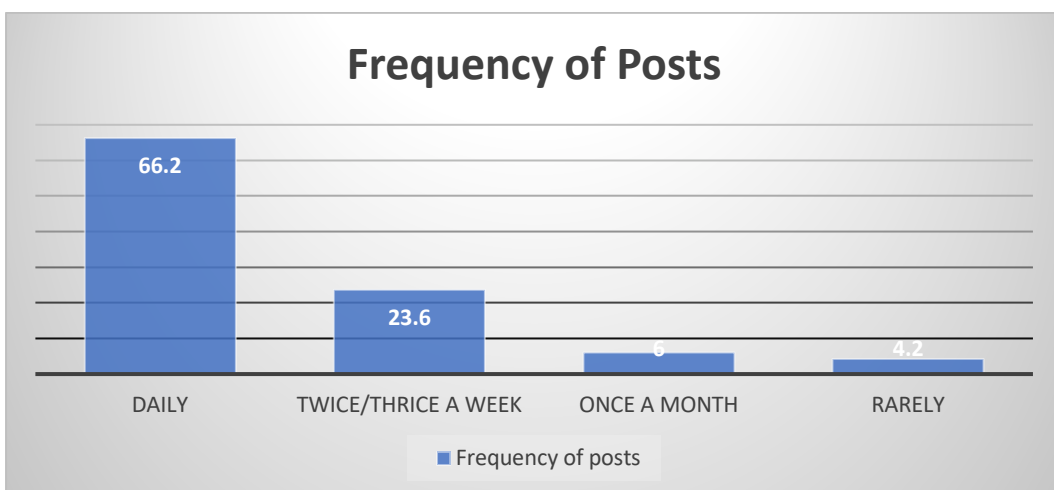


Fig.4.12: Frequency of updates in the Social Networking Sites

(ix) *What is the frequency of your online chat using Facebook, Gtalk or Hangout platforms?*

40% of the respondents (120 students) chat every day using these platforms, particularly Facebook and Gtalk. 39.4% (118 students), on the other hand, use the same twice or thrice a week. 6.5% (20 students) use the same once a month and 14.1% (42 students) have been most infrequent in using these platforms as they are found to prefer WhatsApp, Viber, and Skype over Facebook and Hangouts.

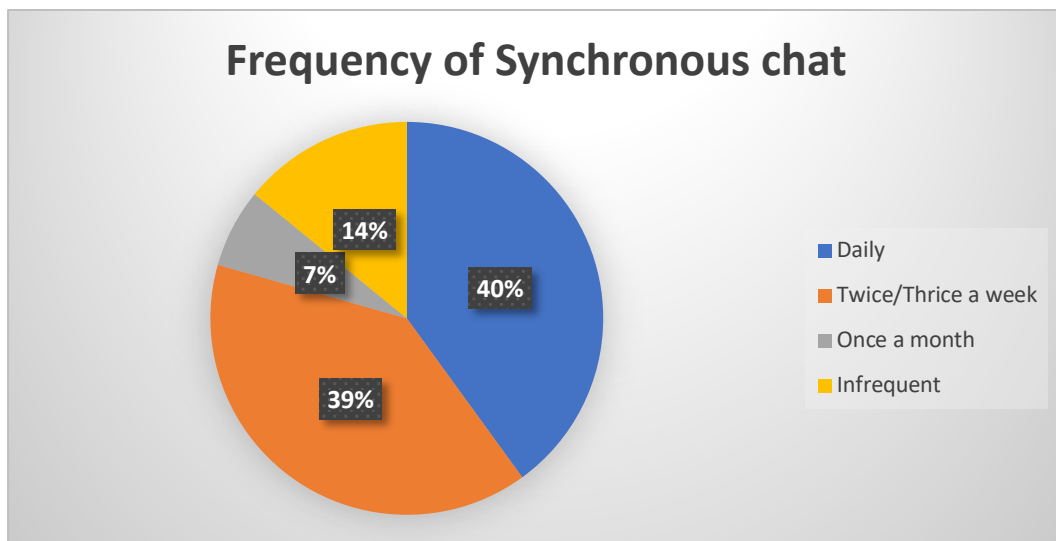


Fig.4.13: Frequency of synchronous chats

(x) *What is your preferred language for posting updates, comments, tweets, and online chats?*

While English is the primary language for communication in the social networking sites, but mother tongue and mixed codes of English, Hindi and the respective mother tongues of the students are also used with varying proportions. Of the surveyed respondents, 64.6% (194 students) prefer English, 14.9% (44 students) prefer their respective mother tongues, and 20.5% (62 students) have expressed their preference for the mixed codes of English, Hindi and their respective mother tongues for communication.

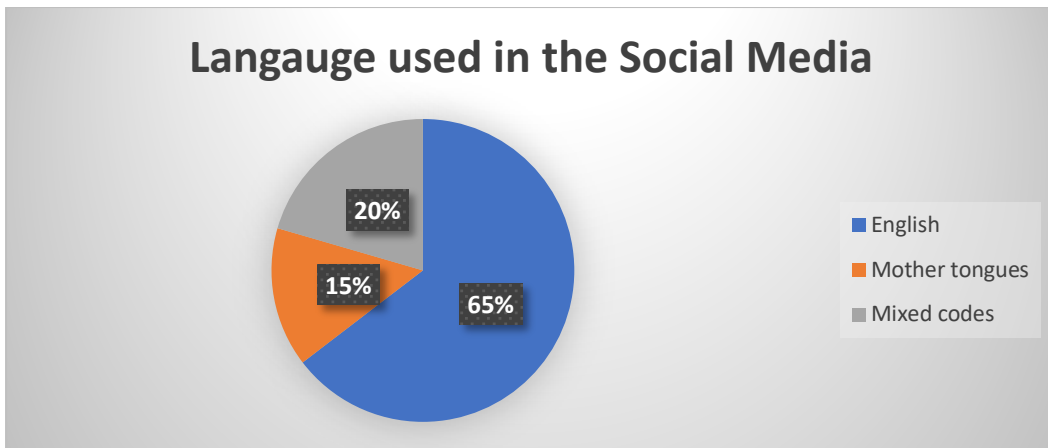


Fig. 4.14: Primary language used for communication in the SNS

(xi) *How often do you change and mix different language codes while posting updates, tweets, comments and during chats?*

Even though English is the predominant language used by the respondents, it has been found during the survey that the students are quite liberal in mixing different codes of language and have been found to do so quite frequently while communicating online, depending on their levels of comfortability with the respective codes. 75.6% of the respondents (227 students) mix codes of different languages while communicating online as against 24.4% (73 students) who have cited their preference for English or at times, their respective mother tongues.

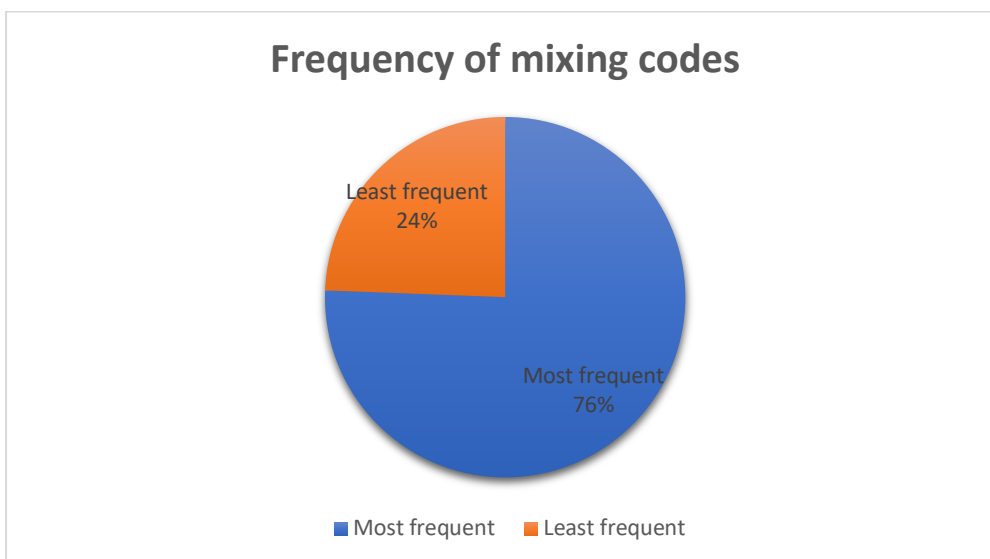


Fig.4.15: Frequency of mixing codes with English in the SNS

(xii) *How often do you use textese for updates, posts, comments, and tweets?*

While some portals like Twitter, etc. have character limitations (140 characters per tweet), other social networking sites like Facebook or Google+, etc. do not have any such limitation. Yet the respondents are found to be comfortable using textese for updates and tweets on the social networking sites. 73% of the respondents (219 students) use textese for their updates, posts, comments tweets and chats as against 27% (81 students) who prefer otherwise.

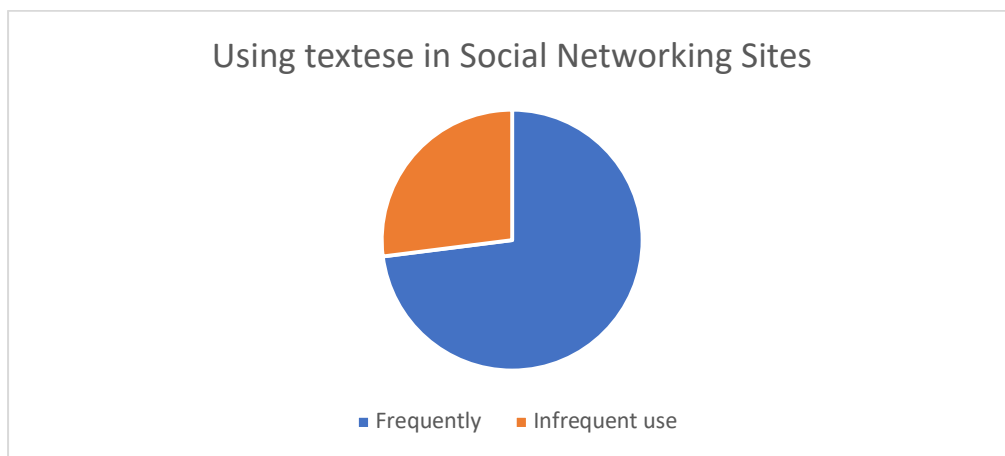


Fig.4.16: Frequency of using textese in the Social Networking Sites

(xiii) *How many text messages do you send through SMS, WhatsApp, or other application per day?*

Text messages using the inbuilt messaging service in the handsets and WhatsApp are found to be the most frequently used modes for sending text messages. Depending on connectivity and device compatibility, Skype and Viber too are used. However, with Facebook and WhatsApp adding video calling feature on their respective messaging apps, the respondents are found to be mainly favouring these two apps over Skype and Viber, especially in the mobile telephony. 73.6% of the respondents send more than 15 text messages per day.

(xiv) *Why do you send messages?*

79.5% of the respondents (239 students) use the messaging app for chatting with their friends and 16.4% (49 students) for seeking and providing information from their friends and others. 4.1% of respondents (12 students) have stated that they use the messaging app sparingly and usually when there is an emergency.

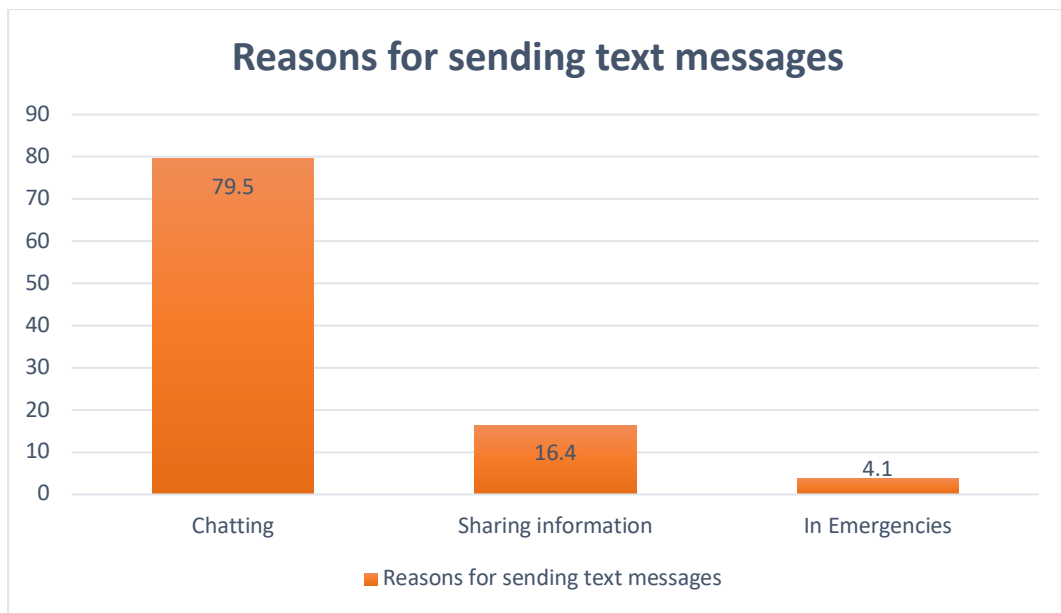


Fig.4.17: Reasons for sending text messages

(xv) *How often do you pay attention to grammar and style of the text messages?*

While 17.9% of the respondents (54 students) have stated that they always pay attention to the grammar and style of the text messages before hitting the send button, 30.8% of the respondents (92 students), on the other hand, have stated that they pay attention to grammar and style only when they chat or text with their seniors or teachers. 51.3% of the respondents (154 students) do not pay attention to any of these before hitting the send button of their respective devices.

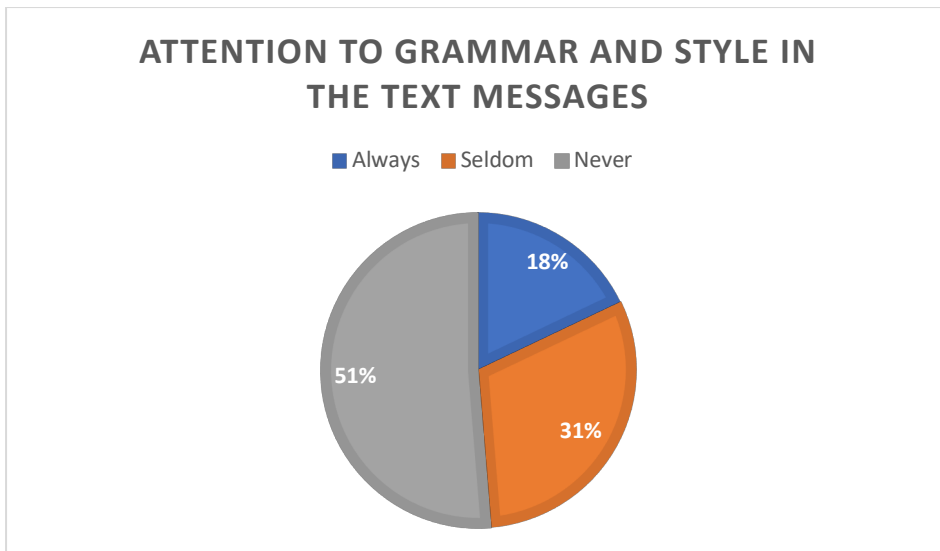


Fig. 4.18: Attention to grammar and style in text messages

(xvi) *How often do you use abbreviations and emoticons in the text messages?*

Emoticons, emojis, meeps, pusheens, and abbreviations are liberally used while communicating online or electronically. While 61.6% of the respondents (184 students) have admitted that emoticons, emojis, and abbreviations are an integral part of their online communication, 35.9% (108 students) use it selectively, and only 2.5% (8 students) have admitted of using these rarely.

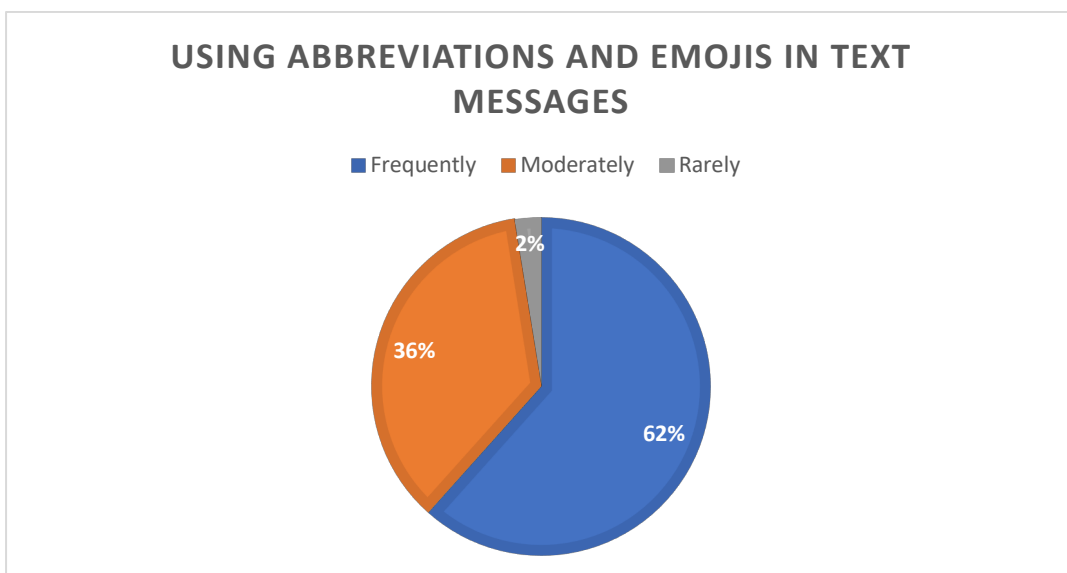


Fig.4.19: Use of emoticons and abbreviations in text messages

(xvii) *How often do you review the messages before hitting the send button?*

Reviewing the content before sending a text message is also done very selectively depending on the receiver. While 15.9% of the respondents (48 students) review the content before sending the message, 29.7% of the respondents (89 students) do it selectively. 54.4% (163 students), on the other hand, sends the message instantly.

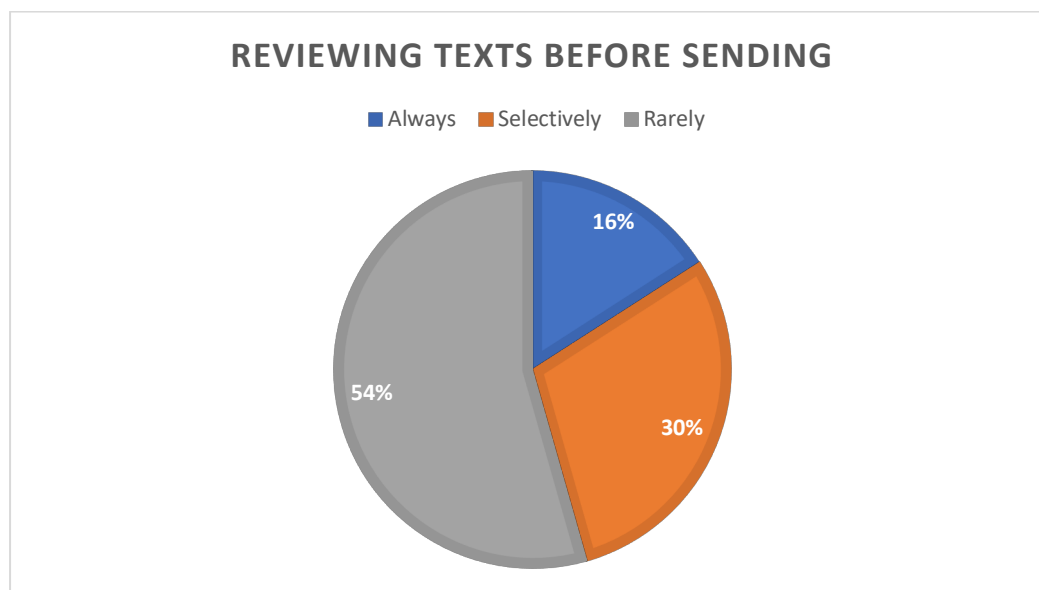


Fig.4.20: Reviewing the texts before sending

As stated in the previous chapter, due to the lack of academic intervention and improper learning of the language at the feeder levels, the students find the social networking sites as a medium to communicate in a way where their errors are ignored and instead gets validated through multiple likes and shares. These sites also help in masking their ignorance about the rules of grammar and usage of L2.

4.6 Findings

The three questionnaires used for the study has factual information, like email, name, and gender, through which a respondent can be identified, and the timelines or tweet feed and blog posts could be accessed to analyse the strategies adopted to communicate online. The generated data was further tallied with their samples of writing and oral presentation (which were videographed) to mark the similarities and differences in

communication between the formal and informal modes of writing and speaking. Following are the findings and observations of the analysis:

(i) 91% (273 students) find problems with correct use of the prepositions in English. The major issues are in the use of the preposition like *upon, in, of, for, on, from, about* and *at*. The students who have committed these errors are not confined to a particular age group or linguistic community but has been observed across all the respondents belonging to all the categories irrespective of their L1s and medium of instruction at the feeder levels. The same is found with the application of the rules about the use of articles in speaking and writing of English.

(ii) The orthographic errors of the students who are most active on the social networking sites and other online activities have reduced. This is because when they compose anything on the screen, software like MS Office or Web-based or browser-based extensions like Grammarly or Whitesmoke detects such errors and highlight the same with squiggles with different colour codes. The same is possible in the mobile mode of communication when the predictive text option remains active. Such extensions, software, and programs either auto-correct the errors or pops up options which are to be selected by the users. It has been found that the students generally opt for the first option that pops up *mechanically* without considering the structure or the rule. When asked about the reasons for such selections, there hasn't been any logic for such a choice, and they haven't been able to explain the cause of the error in the structure either.

(iii) 8% respondents (24 students) who have a better knowledge of the rules about grammar and style tinker with the same online, particularly in orthography and sentence construction. However, upon analysing their samples of academic writing in answer scripts and assignment papers, it has been found that such innovations in the informal mode are invariably used in the formal modes of communication as well. This is also

evident in their oral mode of communication during formal presentations. For instance, it is common for a student to compose a message or a post thus:

“Lyf mayn’t offr a choice btwngd n bad. @ tyms, we nd 2 gv up d ‘gud’ 4 gttng d very ‘best’...! heyall, choose wisely ☺[1]

Such expressions are acceptable in the informal mode of communication in the text messages or social networking sites, but the students are found to be using the same in the formal modes of writing as in examinations and assignments.

(iv) The use of punctuations is another problematic area which has been directly impacted by the communication patterns used online. The punctuation marks are replaced by winkeys, smileys, and hashtags, ellipses, and dots in the casual mode, but it has been found that the students are using the same interchangeably in both the formal and informal modes of writing. This is evident in the example given in [1] above or as in the sentence [2] below:

u shouldn’t hv dn ds 2 me ☹i din’t do wrong 2 u...stllifnd u funny. Lol ;-) [2]

(v) An easy structure of writing facilitated by the social networking sites or text messaging systems make the writing of the users *relaxed* regarding the rule. It has been found that the students deviate from the structure, both intentionally (those who are aware of the rules) and unintentionally (those who are not aware of any such rule) while composing a message online and the same gets reflected in their formal modes of speaking and writing as well. For example,

The boy (S) constructed (V) a strong wall (O). [3]

In the study, it has been observed that while composing online, the sentence has been structured in some ways such as

A strong wall the boy construct. [4] or

The strong wall construct/constructs boy. [5]

The prepositions are markedly absent in sentences [4] and [5] and the sentences are not composed in accordance with the grammatically acceptable SVO pattern for English.

The verb forms in both the sentences are incorrect as well. As there are no proper curation and checks for such erroneous communication in the online mode and coupled with their lack of knowledge which makes the students opt for the web suggestions, whatever they write is considered as *correct* by themselves and as a result, they are found to consider them as fluent in English as a language of communication. The moment their errors get flagged, they become anxious, and as a result, their performance gets impacted. Errors are also evident in the use of the plural forms of nouns and verbs.

(vi) 95% of the students (285 students) rely on Google or Bing tools for translation of languages. The translation ranges from words to sentences to whole paragraphs. The purpose of translation is to communicate in the online mode as well as for the assignments. At times, the students copy and paste entire sections in the online portals for checking the grammatical correctness as well and on the basis of the suggestions provided, they rewrite and submit the same for evaluation.

However, as the students use the results generated by these translation tools devoid of any understanding or knowledge of rules, they fail to make a distinction between the correct and incorrect modes of writing and language use. Further, as these translation tools do not have the option for translating the dialects spoken in the northeast (barring Assamese and Bengali) to English, the students input the statements or words in Hindi for getting the same translated into English. It is imperative that the input language has to be grammatically correct to generate a grammatically correct output in the target language. But Hindi used in northeast India is a creolized form of it and more of a colloquial nature than conforming to its grammatically correct form of it. As a result, the input language is usually incorrect resulting in an incorrect output in English, which because of the lack of their knowledge in English, gets accepted as the correct form and is used accordingly. Further, as it is not possible to identify the contextually appropriate meaning with the help of the translation tools and the students use the results the way it gets generated, the distinction between the formal and informal modes of

communication gets blurred with the latter overlapping the former in more ways than one. For instance, a sentence written in Hindi as:

Main wahaan khaunga [6]

which is grammatically correct gets translated into English as:

I will eat there. [7]

However, it has been found that the students generally input the data the way they speak and as a result, the translation that gets generated is usually wrong as is shown in examples [8] and [9] below:

Hum wahan par khayega. [8] (students' input)

In the sentence above, *Hum* is the Hindi equivalent of the English plural *We*, but it is used as singular colloquially in the sentence above, *par* is used as a postposition and *jayega* is used as a singular form of the verb. As the input structure is grammatically wrong, Google translator generates the result as given in example [9] below:

How are you doing? [9]

Thus, it is evident that the generated result is a deviation from the intended meaning of the user and using such results create gaps between the intended and the conveyed message. Similarly, when a sentence is used as:

Uska paas mera sara kitab hain. [10]

Instead of a grammatically acceptable one like:

Unke paas meri saari kitabein hain [11]

The following output gets generated:

Its got my whole book. [12] (Bing)

He is my whole book. [13] (Google)

The correct response for the input is

He has all my books. [14]

However, one of the major reasons for getting such faulty output is the input language in which the Roman script is generally used instead of the Devanagari script which is used in Hindi. For those who are fluent in Hindi, they use the Devanagari script for data

input and usually get the correct results. But the use of the same is restricted only to those students whose L1 is Hindi.

4.7 Communication Strategies adopted online

As stated above, it is the *problematicity* that makes a user to devise communication strategies to make communication successful. The onus is thus, on the individual to conceive appropriate plans keeping in mind the intended target audience and ‘deciding on a strategic plan for its solution’ (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). Considering the whole process as more of a well thought out nature, particularly in the case of the non-native speakers, the communication strategies are the ‘manifestations of the cognitive processes of analysis and control’ (Kellerman and Bialystok, 1997). According to Tarone (1980), the following conditions require formulation of communication strategies:

- (a) The speaker wants to communicate meaningfully with the target audience
- (b) The speaker understands the gap between the source and the target languages owing the lack of a proper linguistic mechanism to communicate
- (c) The speaker deliberately desists from communicating effectively
- (d) No alternative strategy gets formulated because of the presence of a common and understandable medium of communication.

The strategies for communication adopted by the respondents have been segmented and analysed according to Tarone’s (1977) taxonomy of Communication Strategies which consist of the following categories:

- (a) *The Strategy of Paraphrasing*

The Strategy of Paraphrasing includes approximation, circumlocution and coining new words. Word approximation implies the use of an alternative term for a word that explains the target word as closely as possible. Some of the reasons for the choice of word approximation in online (and at times, offline communication) by the respondents include:

- (1) Lack of knowledge of the exact word in English on the part of the sender.

The sender of a message finds himself/herself lacking in the knowledge of the exact word in English and hence, s/he uses a word which is proximate to the precise word and thus, the communication takes place.

(2) The disparity in the frames of reference of the sender and the receiver

The approximation is also resorted to when the frames of reference of the sender don't match with that of the receiver resulting in a faulty encoding of the message. The resultant decoding of the message on the part of the receiver too doesn't match with the intended outcome resulting in the failure or spikes in the process of communication. In the current research, it has been found that the frames of reference usually fail in the process of communication between a competent speaker of English and a native Hindi speaker.

(3) Attempts at explaining a word/term to the receiver/listener

If the sender of a message is unsure of the competence of the receiver, as in the case of a speaker with higher competence in English compared to an average or a speaker with a lower competency level in English, the former uses an approximation to explain the message or make it understandable.

(4) Lack of knowledge of the exact word in English on the part of the receiver.

The approximation is also used when the sender understands that the receiver of the message may not know the exact word.

In the present research, written assignments, oral presentations (which have been videographed), Facebook timeline, WhatsApp/text messages, synchronous and asynchronous chat archives of the surveyed respondents have been analysed. Some of the most approximated words and the frequency of their occurrence in oral, written and electronic medium are given below:

STANDARD WORD/ EXPRESSION	APPROXIMATE WORD/ EXPRESSION	ORAL COMMUNICATION*	WRITTEN COMMUNICATION*	ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION*
In addition to	Besides	214	175	568

Confirm	Stress	185	170	456
Intelligent	Awesome	360	339	768
Avoid	Resist	209	176	436
Mistake	Crime	198	211	312
Greetings	Say hi!	355	276	435
Formal	Serious	362	350	545
Dramatic	Exaggerate	143	256	532
Stylish	Informal	287	234	550
Strict	Aggressive	311	214	606
Enough	Full	208	167	586

* *Number of instances of occurrence taken cumulatively*

Table 4.1: List of approximate word or expressions

The analysis of oral communication is based on the videographed oral assignments of the respondents spread across a semester. The analysis of the written communication is based on the evaluation of 15 written assignments undertaken by the respondents during the semester, including the answer scripts of the mid-semester and end-semester examinations.

(b) *The Strategy of Avoidance*

The Strategy of Avoidance include Topic Avoidance and Message Abandonment Whenever a respondent encounters a situation where s/he finds himself/herself unable to articulate a response or feedback, s/he avoids the message by re-articulating the same with a different set of words and expressions. In some instances, where the topic avoidance fails, the respondents are found to abandon the message entirely by either remaining silent or initiating a new thread of communication altogether which doesn't have any similarity with the previous message. 82.6% of the respondents (248 students)

are found to employ the strategy of avoidance in all three modes of communication, viz., written, oral and electronic, with 26% of the same (64 students) opting for complete message abandonment, primarily in the oral and electronic modes of communication.

However, in the case of written communication, the strategy of direct avoidance or total message abandonment is minimally seen. This is because the respondents are generally required to answer the descriptive questions instead of the objective ones and hence, the scope for them to express themselves is more significant. From the analysis of the written scripts of the respondents, it has been found that 67% of the respondents (201 students) tend to digress from the central topic of writing and ends the topic in a rather forceful conclusion. This deliberate digression is a strategy of avoidance from answering a question accurately.

(c) *The Strategy of Conscious Transfer*

The Strategy of Conscious Transfer includes code-switching and literal translation. The application of these strategies is more prominent in the electronic medium of communication with its impact on the oral medium. 63% of the respondents (189 students) resort to deliberate code-switching from English to either Hindi or their respective mother tongues or any other language they are conversant with. The primary reason for adopting the Strategy of Code Switching is the inability of the students to express correctly in L2, i.e., English regarding appropriate vocabulary, correct orthography, and grammatical structure. Further, it has been found that the respondents adopt this strategy of code-switching to *mask* the errors they commit and to make their language '*pop and happening*.' This has an added advantage in that such a style of writing gets high visibility in the social media and depending on the number of the followers and friends, the same gets shared or retweeted multiple times. The prevalent belief is that more the time it gets shared or retweeted, more significant the chances of

the users resorting to it. Some of the frequent instances of code-switching on social media posts are given below:

ENGLISH EXPRESSION	CODE SWITCHED EXPRESSIONS/RESPONSES	LANGUAGES USED
Will revert soon	Will <i>jaldi</i> call you	English – Hindi
Text me the moment you arrive	Message <i>kardena</i> as soon as you land.	English – Hindi
A moment of glory for all of us.	Truly an awesome moment. <i>Badhai ho.</i>	English – Hindi
Where have you been? (Response to a picture update)	Was travelling. <i>Kashmir goisilu jua manh</i>	English – Assamese
भारत माता की जय (Status update on Independence Day)	Glory to Motherland!!	Hindi – English
At the gym to lose weight (Status update)	<i>Mota hoechis to bes</i>	English – Bengali
Thanks, everyone for making my day special. (Status update on birthday)	<i>Muk namatili</i>	English – Assamese
I mispronounce at times!(Status update)	So am I, but <i>tumhara toh mujhse achcha hain!</i>	English – Hindi
Badly need some coffee (Status update)	I am so sleepy, <i>upar se sab gyan hai.</i> ☹️☹️ much needed coffee	English – Hindi
स्वतंत्रता के मायने? हार्दिक शुभकामनाएँ!!! (Status update on Independence Day)	Wish you, sir and family, a very happy independence day!	Hindi – English

Table 4.2: List of code-switched expressions

Another sub-strategy of code-switching is the students' foreignizing and localizing or reverse foreignizing (considering English as L2, or an FL) of the words and expressions. For foreignizing words and expressions, the students resort to the web-based translation tools like Google Translate or Bing Translator. As stated above, while the translations provided by these tools are often *context-free*, unlike a native user's use of an *appropriate context bound* language, the students, for the most part, opt for

foreignizing random words and expressions of phatic communication than complete sentences or paragraphs. On the other hand, for localizing or reverse foreignizing, the native language is followed by complete threads of discussion taking place in the same. Such a strategy creates ‘exclusive zones’ of communication (Vallor, 2016) with the nature of interaction and feedback being restricted only to those who have the command over the language that is being used. S command over the language that is being used. Some of the frequent instances of foreignizing and localizing or reverse foreignizing on social media posts are given below:

ENGLISH WORD/EXPRESSION	FOREIGNIZED EXPRESSION	REVERSE FOREIGNIZED /LOCALIZED EXPRESSION
Happy Journey	Bon voyage! (English – French)	--
Good morning	--	<i>Xuprabhat</i> (English-Assamese)
At Shanghai Airport earlier today (Location update on Facebook)	hello sir, 欢迎光临上海 :P (hello sir, welcome to Shanghai) [English – Mandarin]	—
That was an awesome experience! (Status update on a cultural night)	—	That was a <i>fata fati</i> experience (English – Assamese/Bengali)
What a beautiful expression! (Comment on an updated picture)	—	What a <i>darun</i> picture! (English – Bengali)
Goodbye	Adios (English – Spanish)	--
Stop playing the outsider card (Comment on a status update)	—	Stop being a <i>hareng</i> . (Derog.) (English – Nyishi)
Don't cheat during the exams.	—	Don't use <i>puriya</i> in the exams. (English – Assamese slang/Bengali)
The unlikely twins! (Picture comment)	Completely doppelgangered! (English – German)	—
Thank you!	Gracias! (English – Spanish)	—

Table 4.3: List of foreignized and reverse foreignized expressions

The Strategy of Literal Translation is used by 34% of the respondents (102 students). The literal translation is defined as ‘translation that is similar to the word-for-word representation of the original’ (Schmidth, 2002) expression. The strategy is used primarily for three reasons:

- *The lack of enough exposure to the target language:* It has been found that the students whose medium of expression at the feeder level wasn’t English, they are the most prolific users of the literal translation strategy. Out of the 102 students (34%), 31 students have cited this as a major reason for a literal translation of words and expressions from their respective mother tongues to English. These set of students had their feeder levels of education with Hindi (16 students), Assamese (8 students), and Bengali (7 students) as mediums of instruction. Some of the common instances of literal translation are given below:

STANDARD EXPRESSION	SUBJECTS’ LITERAL TRANSLATION
Previous experience will be considered.	<i>Previously experience</i> will be counted.
The room is spacious enough.	The room is <i>very big for all people</i> .
He is very tall.	He is very <i>long</i> .
He seems to be anxious about the visit.	He looks like <i>tensioned</i> about the visit.
They coped well with the situation.	They <i>coped up</i> well by the situation.
The army has three divisions.	Army is <i>divided into three parts</i> .
They followed a carrot and stick policy.	They <i>used carrots and sticks</i> for policy.
She goes to a kindergarten school.	She goes to a <i>children garden</i> school.
Follow the health instructions provided.	Follow the <i>healthy instructions</i> given.
It gave a collapsing feel.	It gave a <i>falling/breaking</i> feel.

Table 4.4: List of Literal Translations

- *The deliberate use of the strategy to make the L2 “interesting”*: 40 students have opined that they deliberately resort to literal translation in their tweets, Facebook updates, WhatsApp and blogs in order to make their posts and updates more “interesting”, and it also helps in an instant sense of *connect* with the two sets of users, i.e., those who are fluent with L1 only and those who can use L1 and L2 with equal ease. However, upon analysing their videographed oral presentations and written samples, it has been found that 31 of the 40 students have problems with tense, number, prepositions and SVO in English. This implies that their attempts at making their posts and updates “interesting” only helps in *masking* the errors they commit in the target language. Further it has been found that the students who commit these errors are unaware of the same and lack the knowledge of rules of grammar of L2; instead, they have been found to make the errors repeatedly in written, oral and electronic modes of communication because they *felt* the same as correct.
- *The Use of Literal Translation for ‘popularizing’ their language and script*: The development of Unicode has facilitated the use of native scripts in web and electronic modes of communication. Facebook, with more than 1.70 billion worldwide subscribers (as on August 2016)¹ (<https://www.socialbakers.com/blog/1064-top-10-fastest-growing-facebook-languages>) is highly customizable regarding language and currently supports 70 languages (as on August 2016).² (<https://www.socialbakers.com/blog/1064-top-10-fastest-growing-facebook-languages>). While English continues to be the dominant language with English being used by 26.3% of the users globally (<http://www.statista.com/statistics/262946/share-of-the-most-common-languages-on-the-internet/>), the other languages like Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese and Japanese are equally popular. Similarly, Twitter has more than 320 million global users (as of March 2016)³ (<http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/heres-how-many-people->

[are-on-facebook-instagram-twitter-other-big-social-networks/637205](http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/heres-how-many-people-are-on-facebook-instagram-twitter-other-big-social-networks/637205)). While English continues to be the dominant language in Twitter, Korean, Thai, French, Turkish and Portuguese are vastly popular (<http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/heres-how-many-people-are-on-facebook-instagram-twitter-other-big-social-networks/637205>). This doesn't take into account the Chinese language, as Twitter is banned in China and Weibo is used there instead which has striking similarities with that of the former.

31 students are found to be using their native script and language while using the social networking sites and electronic communication. However, as this strategy is used in a conscious and controlled fashion, its usage is restricted only to the electronic medium, and no impact of the same has been found in their oral or written modes of communication. Some examples of exclusivizing communication are given below:



Fig. 4.21: Exclusivizing Communication - I

In the image above, it can be seen that the entire communication is in Assamese which restricts its access to those who are not fluent in the said language. The users mix the scripts and resorts to partial code-switching.



Fig. 4.22: Exclusivizing Communication – II

In the second image, a total exclusivization is being shown with the access further restricted to only those who have some knowledge about the Assamese script as well. Such strategies are used to facilitate communication in a native language and its popularization.

(d) *The Strategy of Seeking Assistance*

The Strategy of Seeking Assistance is applied particularly in L2 communication when the receiver of a message finds it difficult to comprehend a message *in toto* or parts of the content and seeks clarification or requests re-phrasing. Upon getting the assistance from the sender of the message, the receiver paraphrases the same and delivers the desired feedback. 45% of the respondents (135 students) are found to have sought assistance in the web and electronic modes of communication. 73% (219 students) sought assistance in the oral mode. The nature of assistance ranged from seeking clarification arising out of pronunciation, style, and manner of expression, and the content related queries. As far as the content related assistance is concerned, the queries pertain to either the technicalities of the content or to the framing of the same.

Tarone also lists ‘Mime’ as one of the strategies employed in the process of communication. But as the current research focuses primarily on on-screen and device-enabled communication, this strategy hasn’t been considered as a part of this study.

Apart from Tarone’s taxonomy, the following strategies are found to be adopted by the respondents in their process of communication:

1. *The use of Ellipses*

One of the common strategy used by the respondents is the use of ellipsis in their written communication. 81% of the respondents (243 students) have admitted to using ellipses in their course of communicating online. Upon oral inquiry and analysis of their online statuses or posts and text or WhatsApp messages, it has been found that the students use ellipses primarily for the following reasons:

(a) Ellipses are used as space fillers as used in the oral mode of communication. As there are no word equivalents to such expressions which are used in the oral communication as *umm, like, ki* (Hindi post position), ellipses help in filling those gaps in writing. The students were given a random text to read aloud in the class which has been videographed. Following their oral presentation, they were asked to write the

same lines (without referring to the text) and post on social network sites. It has been found that the ellipses were used for pauses which have been used during the oral presentation of the exercise. In the image given below, the ellipses act as pauses in the sentence:

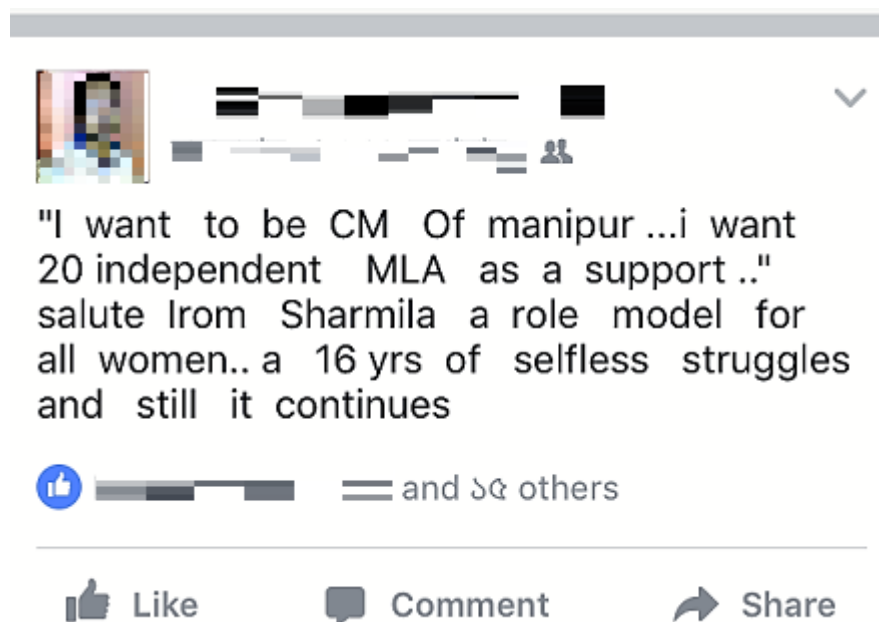


Fig. 4.23: Use of ellipses for pauses

In the second image, however, ellipses denote both a pause and a lack of appropriate word/expression to fill the gap:

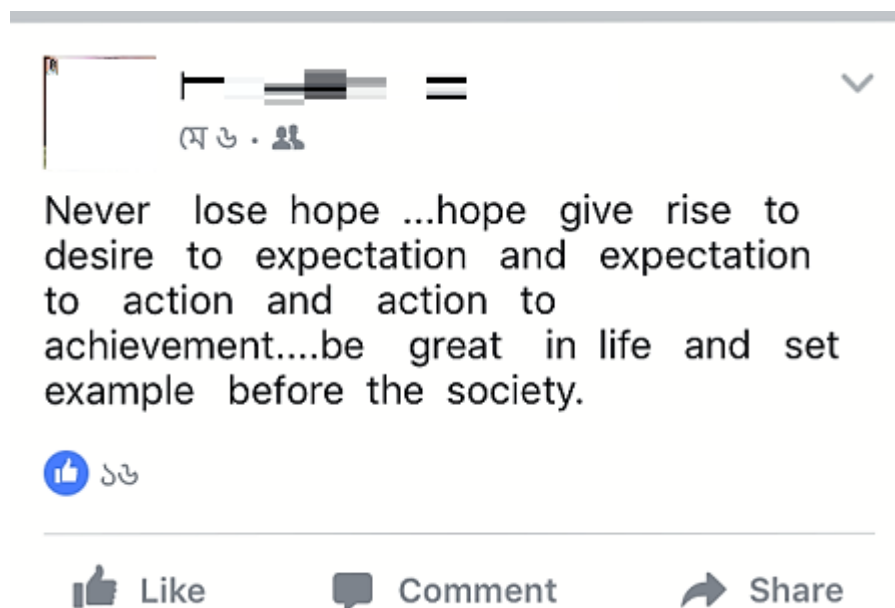


Fig. 4.24: Use of ellipses for the lack of appropriate vocabulary

The first ellipsis in the sentence corresponds to the pause taken by the student during the oral presentation of the same line, but the second pause denotes a lack of the precise word or a synonym which was used during the oral presentation.

(b) Ellipses are used to fill in for the lack of an appropriate word or phrase.

78% of the respondents (234 students) have stated that ellipsis help in filling up the blank for a misspelled or inappropriate word. It has been observed from the timelines and chats archives of the respondents that in the situation where the correct spelling of a word is not known, it is generally avoided and ellipsis is inserted in its place. It serves the dual purpose of keeping the sentence in the continuum, and also it masks the lack of knowledge on the part of the user. At times, ellipses are also used as a deliberate strategy to avoid using an uncomfortable phrase, cuss words or expressions which are deemed as sensitive. For instance, in the image given below, the user has resorted to ellipses to avoid expressing sensitive information:

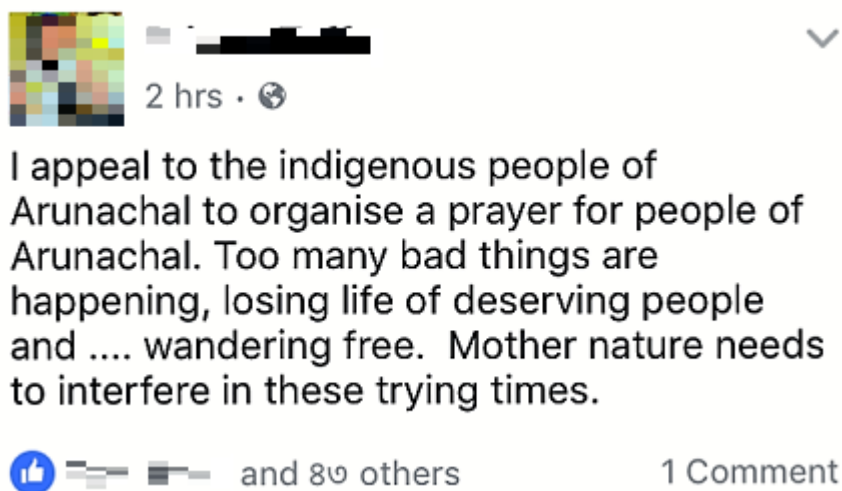


Fig. 4.25: Use of ellipses to hide sensitive information

On the other hand, in the image given below, it is evident that the ellipses have been used to cover the lack of appropriate word and hence, the sentence remains incomplete, along with faulty capitalizations and incorrect ellipses instead of full stops and commas:

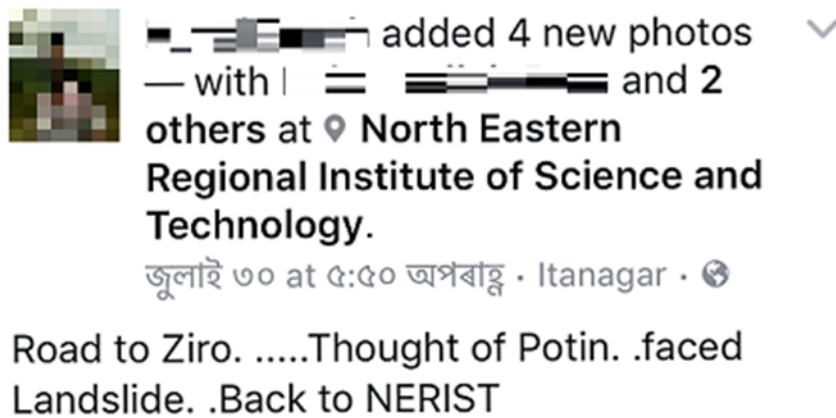


Fig. 4.26: Use of ellipses for the lack of structure

(c) Ellipses are used in place of the punctuation marks.

While all the students have been found to possess theoretical knowledge about the punctuation marks, yet they are found wanting in the usage of the same in English. Due to the lack of the knowledge and practice of correct use of the same in the written mode, the students use ellipses in place of punctuation marks as is evident from the image given below:



Fig. 4.27: Use of ellipses as punctuation marks – I

The sentence should have been written like:

Tit for tat rhymes like Kashmir for Balochistan. What a poke! #NaMo.

Instead, ellipses have replaced the full stop and the exclamation mark. The erroneous capitalization also hints at the lack of knowledge about the context-appropriate usage of the same. Similarly, in the image below,



Fig. 4.28: Use of ellipses as Punctuation Marks - II

the capitalizations are non-existent, and the full stops have been replaced by ellipses.

(e) Ellipses are used to denote a code change.

Another reason cited by the students for the use of ellipses include the marker for changing the code from one to the other as is evident from the image given below:



Fig.4.29: Use of ellipses for code change – I

The user has used the ellipsis twice in the statement above. Upon inquiry, it has been found that the first ellipsis denotes a *pause* (instead of a semi-colon, ellipsis has been used here), whereas the second ellipsis marks a change from one code to another, i.e., from English to Hindi.

On the other hand, in the image given below, the ellipses are functioning as the punctuation marks along with the marker for a code change. The ellipsis in response to the update denotes continuum:



Fig.4.30: Use of ellipses for code change – II

The punctuationally correct sentence would have been written as:

Make your life like a ship, not like a boat. Think big. Act big...

Instead of using commas and periods, the ellipses have been used in place of punctuation marks, and the last ellipsis denotes a change from L2 to L1, i.e., from English to Assamese. The comment too uses an ellipsis to denote a continuum that has remained incomplete.

(f) For denoting something in a continuum or to shorten a quote
Conforming to the rules of punctuation and style, ellipses are used by the students to denote a continuum of expression or to shorten it without changing the meaning.

(g) For no particular reason.

23% (69 students) have given no reason for using ellipses in their writing. Further, they have also stated that the use of the same could be attributed to all the reasons given above or may not have any reason at all. For instance, in the image captured below, the user has attributed no particular reason for using ellipses in the update posted:

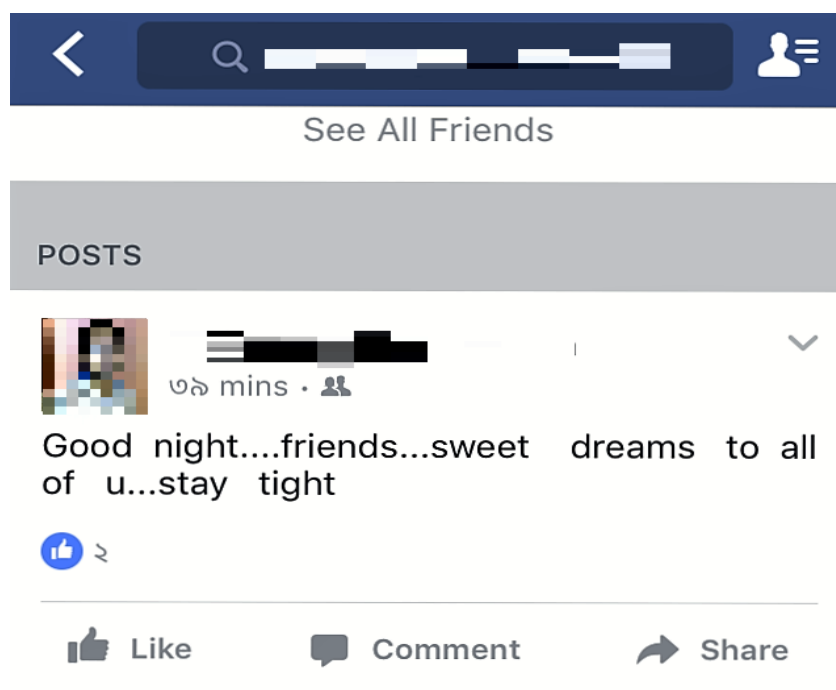


Fig.4.31: Use of ellipses for no specific reason - I.

Similarly, in the update given below, the user couldn't provide a reason for the use of ellipses between the words in the sentence:



Fig.4.32: Use of ellipses for no specific reason - II.

The users, while communicating online, mix and change codes frequently which can be attributed to their lack of appropriate vocabulary in the target language or the absence of such a word in their respective L1s. As a result, the sentences remain incomplete in both formal and informal modes of writing, which they fill up by using the ellipses.

2. *The use of Emoticons/emojis and hashtags*

Emojis or its previous avatar, the emoticons are used liberally by the users to express the mood accompanying a message or a post. As the name suggests, emoticons are iconified emotions which have in the recent times, become image-based and animated. The later versions are termed as emojis. The emoji keyboards, because of its device integration and easy customizability, has become instantly popular and finds extensive use in the electronic communication, particularly in place of the punctuation marks. Emojis fall under eight broad categories, viz., people, winkeys and smileys, animals and nature, food and drinks, travel, activity, objects, symbols, and flags. As it covers a

wide variety of activity, the users tend to communicate using the emojis, and it helps in overlooking the errors they tend to commit while writing regarding orthography and sentence construction. The most common emojis used by the students are given below. The number of instances is based on the analysis of the online data over a period of three months.












EMOJI	MEANING	NUMBER OF INSTANCES
	Being cheerful, happy	1,056
	Loud laughter, used along with the abbreviation LoL	1,235
	Wink, implying humour or sarcasm	965
	Shock and surprise	928
	Joke or flirt	1,298
	Denoting love, appreciation, or admiration	673
	Anger, miffed	876
	Disappointment, Frustrated	936
	Frown	1,021
	Thumbs up, approval and appreciation, agreement	1,231
	Sad, teary eyed	1,154

Table 4.5: Common emojis used in texting

These apart, with the introduction of interactive messaging on both Android and iOS platforms, the emojis are being increasingly used in the formal emails as well as post and updates thus, imparting the logogrammatic expressions with a whole new dimension, as shown below:

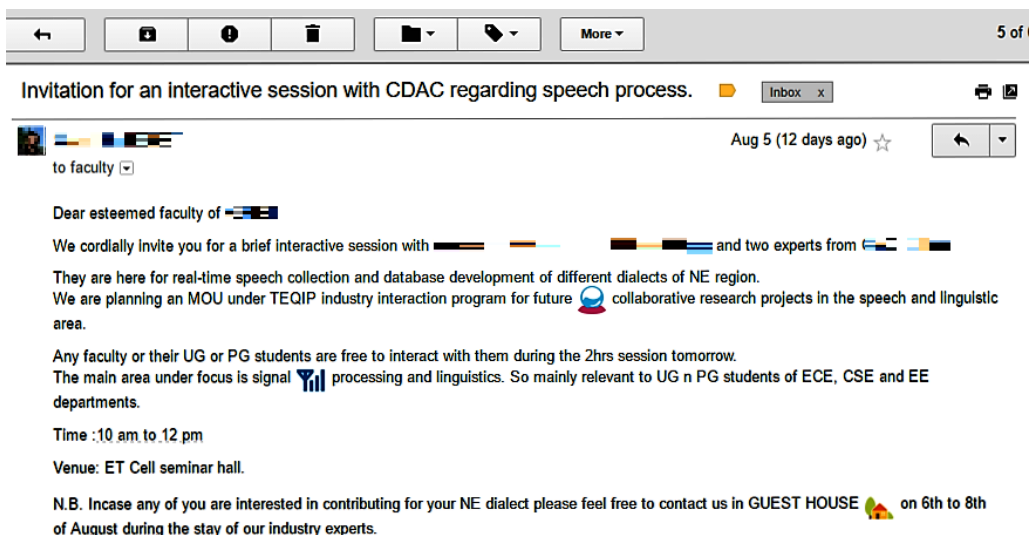
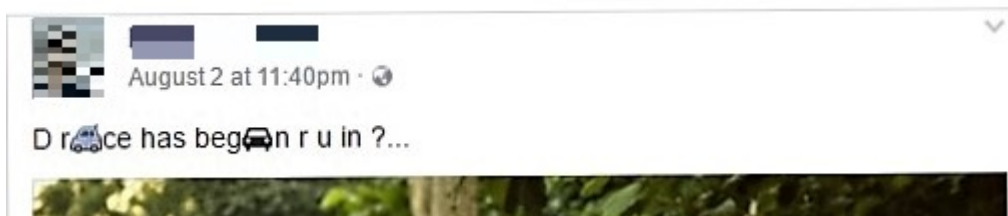


Fig. 4.33: Logogrammatic expression in an email

In the image above, the sender has sent a formal email in which the interactive emojis have been liberally used. In the image below, the user has updated his status in a logogrammatic manner using letters and interactive emojis to update the status ‘*The race has begun and are you in?...*’ thus:



On the other hand, in the image below, the user has used both the word and the interactive emoji to post ‘*Selfie in the car after influenza vaccine:*’



Fig. 4.34: The logogrammatic expression on Facebook

One of the sub-strategies used by the students is to include interactive emojis, words, emoticons, activity data, hashtags, location data and images in a single update as is evident from the image given below. In the image, the user, to update the post ‘*X airport CCD closed!! How to wait without an espresso [sic] and chocolate brownie! XX to*

arrive,' the user has captured the disapproving mood with frownies in the text, an activity (feeling sad) in the header, location data in the header, interactive emojis and hashtags in the text to capture the mood.



Fig.4.35: Emoji-based update on Facebook

Such deliberate strategies, when used frequently and commented upon or liked by the friends and followers tend to get *validated* by repeated use and impacts the formal modes of writing as well as is evident from the image of the email capture given above.

Similarly, hashtagging is done extensively to promote or make a post or a picture trend in the social media as in the example given below:

“Wn I lukout..itzol black n white.#hazy#hazy# but stl I pause 2 smile cz dt mks lyf wrthwhile”

Due to the lack of a proper check and meaningful intervention, it has been found that the hashtags are also used in academic writing.

3. *Strategy of exclusion*

The Strategy of Exclusion is deliberately attempted by the users in the domain of electronic and web-mediated communication to limit the access to the threads of communication to a select few. 73% of the respondents (219 students) have admitted having resorted to the strategy of exclusion during online communication. The strategy of exclusion includes:

(a) Using an L2 script to communicate in L1:

The users tend to use either Roman or Devanagari script to start a thread of communication. While the post remains visible to the friends and the followers (if

the visibility is set to ‘Public’), yet only those who have the competence in the target language can understand the content.

(b) Using the native L1 script to communicate:

The users limit the communication to only those who are competent in the target language including the knowledge of script. For instance, a post updated using either the Devanagari or Assamese or Bengali script would make sense only to those who are conversant with these tongues while the others get excluded from the process of communication.

(c) Customizing access to a select few:

To restrict access to a pre-decided set of friends, the user customizes the access of communication to a select set of people, and the post becomes visible only to them.

(d) Creating pages which are controlled by administrators:

The users create closed access pages, the content and members of which are managed by the page administrator(s).

The strategy of exclusion is adopted when the users disagree with a particular point of view or when they get exposed to their errors and mistakes. The strategy helps them to avoid admitting the lack of knowledge on a particular issue or getting involved in an unpleasant exchange of communication. It also facilitates the exchange of information among a select group of people without involving the rest on their respective timelines.

4.8 Communication Strategies adopted in Texting

Textese retains the deeper meanings of the text, but the same is presented with certain structural or surface differences, primarily in the use of abbreviations, emoticons and emojis, shortenings, deletion of vowels and unnecessary words, and notably lax punctuation and grammar (Thurlow and Brown, 2003). Further studies have included stylization, non-standard or lexically non-validated orthography, homophones, g-clippings, and intentional omission of letters within

words. Studies have also been conducted to find the relationship between textese and literacy. These researches have been conducted to examine the relationship between the frequency of texting to literacy, the frequency of texting with the structural innovation and changes in the way a text is composed, and finally, the relationship between the structural changes and literacy. Each line of inquiry has, however, delivered mixed results with Plester et al. (2008) showing it as negatively related, Kemp (2010), finding it completely unrelated and researchers like Drouin (2011), and Rosen et al. (2010) finding it positively related to literacy. Further, the studies have also shown that the positive impact of textese and literacy is evident in the case of teens compared to the adults. However, the majority of these studies have focused on British, American, Canadian and Australian respondents whose L1 is English. However, no comprehensive study has been conducted so far on the impact of textese on English as an L2 in the northeast Indian context.

The study of the text corpus of the respondents has resulted in identifying the following distinctive trends of texting, viz., (a) word-level innovations and non-standard spellings (b) sentence-based innovations (c) Typographical innovations (d) Knowledge of grammatical rules (e) communication through emojis/emoticons.

The corpus includes text messages including those sent over WhatsApp of 300 respondents with ten texts/WhatsApp messages from each respondent.

(a) *Word level innovations and use of non-standard spellings:*

The innovations at the word level and use of non-standard spellings and incorporation of shortenings, abbreviations, acronyms, are the most common features in texting. The respondents were asked to create a list of word-level innovations and non-standard spellings in their texts, following which the frequency of their use has been calculated. Some of the common formations and the frequency of its use by the respondents are given in the table below:

TARGET EXPRESSIONS	INNOVATED FORMS	FREQUENCY (among 300 respondents)
Because	Coz/cuz/cz	2234
At	@/8	1253
Too	2	654
To	2	789
As soon as possible	ASAP/asap	1176
Message	Msg	675
Please Find Attached	PFA	467
About	Abt	1989
Something	Sth	2021
Someone	Sm1	1154
Before	B4	1675
Cute	Qt	564
Ate	8	553
Please	Plz/pls	1987
Alright	Alrite	654
Brother	Bro	1434
Leaving	Leavn	1178
Thank you	TY	764
Want to	Wanna	1253
Don't know	Dunno	718

Table 4.6: List of innovative expressions

The shortenings and other innovations as seen in the texts of the respondents follow the phonetic-based innovations and spelling based innovations. The phonetic based innovations are categorized by letter homophones and number homophones, where either a letter or a number is homophonic to the target word, or similar to the pronunciation, or approximants to the target word. A third strategy is the combination of the letter and the number homophone as is evident from the examples like ‘B4’ and ‘Sm1’ in the table above.

The spelling based innovations, on the other hand, involves omitting the vowels and creating the acronym of the sounds.

(b) *Sentence level innovations*: Sentence level innovations include a deliberate omission of the grammatical structures in the process of communication. These omissions are particularly seen in the level of pronoun, verb phrase, and articles.

For instance in the sentence,

‘c u soon.gttn rdy😊’

Which is “ I will see you soon. I am getting ready.” In the sentence, the personal pronoun ‘I’ has been omitted twice and instead of a proper punctuation mark, the sentence ends with a smiley. Similarly, in the sentence,

“Wanna go out for tea or sth🙄”

which is, “You want to go out for tea or something?.” In the sentence, “you” has been omitted and the question mark in the sentence has been replaced with an emoji denoting a query.

The modal verbs and auxiliaries in a sentence too are frequently omitted. For instance, in the sentence,

“U single🙄”

denotes “Are you single?” The idea is expressed by omitting the copula verb and ending it with an emoji. Instances of omission of the pronoun and auxiliary verb within a single sentence too are evident from the messages, as in the example given below:

“Can’t cm out working☹”

which is, “I cannot come out. I am working.” In the sentence, the personal pronoun ‘I’ and the auxiliary ‘I am’ are intentionally omitted to leave the reader/receiver to decode the message taking into account the context and send the feedback.

Articles in a sentence are completely overlooked in the text/WhatsApp messages. It has been found in the research that the omission of the articles is not deliberate, but it is primarily due to the lack of knowledge about the same. For instance, for stating,

“The car is in the workshop,” the students generally use

“car is in wrkshp” thereby omitting the articles ‘the.’ Similarly, to thank someone for having a great time, the students have been found to compose the text thus:

“thnx. We hd gr8 tym:D” instead of keying in

“Thank you. We had a great time.”

(c) *Typographical innovations:* ‘Minimal use of capitalization, punctuation, and hyphenation’ (Thurlow, 2014) are the most common features of the text messages. In case of electronic communication, the use of running capitalizations is perceived as negative netiquette and is generally seen as an equivalent to shouting in verbal communication. However, it has been found in the study that the students use capitalizations in the text or WhatsApp messages to emphasize a point or to highlight the importance of an information. 87% of the respondents (261 students) have stated that they use capital letters only to emphasize a point or to highlight the urgency of the information conveyed. 5% of the respondents (15 students) have stated that they use the capital letters for both the purposes and it depends on the situation and context of sending the message. 8% of the respondents (24 students) never use capitalizations as they find it ‘difficult and cumbersome’ to toggle between the upper and lower cases on the keypad.

For instance, to convey the information regarding the final deadline for the submission of a course assignment, the following formats of texting was seen:

'sbmt d PH1201 assgnmnt TOM. It's FNL.CrsCo z angry' [1]

'ph1201 last da8 tomrrw.plzsbmt. cc's angry.' [2]

The sentence [1] reads as “Submit the assignment for PH1201 tomorrow. It’s the final deadline. The Course Co-ordinator is angry.” The capitalization in the sentence [1] is used by the student to imply the finality of the deadline and the seriousness of the issue. The user of the sentence [2], on the other hand, while conveys the urgency of the issue but stops short of using the capitalizations.

In the sentence [3] below,

'sorry 4 bthrng u, bti won't b tkng sch crap anymr. U BTTR BHV' [3]

which reads, “I am sorry for bothering you, but I won’t be taking such nonsense anymore. You better behave,” the capitalizations denote anger and frustration on the part of the user. In the sentence [4] below,

“wanna my notes by TOM. ENOUGH” [4]

Which reads, “I want my notes by tomorrow. I have had enough,” the user has used capital letters for emphasis as well as to ‘shout’ at the receiver.

These apart, it has been found in the study that while the students are aware of the general rules of capitalization, they tend to ignore the use of it deliberately in the course of the text messages. This is seen in case of longer messages usually sent over WhatsApp where the capitalizations are completely ignored, and other punctuation marks are liberally used as is evident from the text passage given below:

“if u wanna ma career 2 gt scrwd dn itz fyn. lt it b. if ma styng physclly clse 2 u is d only mng f spprt dn b t.i won't go period ☹,” which reads,

“If you want my career to get screwed, then it is fine. Let it be. If my staying physically close to you is the only meaning of support, then [so] be it. I won’t go. Period!” In the text above, it is evident that the capitalization are non-existent and there is a lax use of the other punctuation marks as well. The mood of the message conveys anger and desperation, but the ‘shouting’ part is completely avoided.

(d) *Grammatical awareness*: 54.4% of the respondents (163 students) never edit or review the text messages before sending it to the intended receiver. 15% of the respondents (45 students) do a selective reviewing which depends on the position of the receiver of the text (for example, sending texts to a teacher or a senior student). The avoidance of reviewing results in creating grammatical errors in the composition of the message. Out of the 163 students who do not review the messages before hitting the send button, it has been found that 147 of them have no clear knowledge of the grammatical rules of English language and that is one of the primary reasons for not reviewing the content of the messages. Most of the errors in this category fall under incorrect verb forms, mistakes in spellings and usage of words, and prepositions.

For instance, in the sentence below:

‘whr r u.waitin 4 u2 cm. we hvn’t eat lunch. cm soon’ [5]

which reads “Where are you? We are waiting for you to come. We have not eaten lunch. Please come soon,’ apart from the omissions and shortenings, the past participle (eat = eaten) hasn’t been used.

On the other hand, in the sentences [6] and [7] below, there are errors in the SVO agreement,

‘i wants that book by monday’ (want) [6]

‘des pprs needs urgent revision’ (need) [7].

It has been found in the study that one of the major problematic areas for the students is the use of prepositions. It has been observed that the students cram the rules of a preposition, but fails to use the same correctly in both the written and oral modes of

communication. One of the major reasons for the same that in some L1s as used by the respondents prepositions are non-existent (for instance, Assamese, Bengali, and Hindi have postpositions instead of prepositions) and in the quest for literal translation, the prepositions of L2, i.e., English, gets affected, as is evident from the sentences [8] and [9] below:

'i lft d bk on the table' [8]

for 'I left the book on the table' and,

'talk about it around urself.'[9]

for, 'Talk about it among yourself.'

(e) *Use of emoticons*: An emoticon is 'a representation of a facial expression formed by a short sequence of keyboard characters [shortcuts]...used in electronic mail, etc., to convey the senders feeling or the intended tone' (Oxford English Dictionary). Emoticons have been termed as '*emoticonomy*' by Bodomo and Lee by stating that these are used in the field of 'CMC which involves the analysis and practices of employing smileys [and frownies and winkeys as well]...for conveying emotions and other linguistic and kenesic features intended by the author' (Bodomo and Lee, 2002). The emoticons (and its later versions, the emojis) have largely replaced the punctuations in the text messages. One of the major benefits of using emoticons is its ability to minimize gaps and ambiguities in the process of communication. The most commonly used emoticons involve the smileys and the sad faces. An indicative list of the emoticons observed in the corpus and their frequency of usage is given in the table below:

EMOTICON	TARGET EXPRESSION	FREQUENCY*
:-) / :)	Smile/Happy face	205
:-D / :D	Laugh	113
:-(/ :(Sadness	124

;-) /;))	Happy with a wink	135
:’-(/ :’(Sadness with tears	89
@-@/ z_z	Sleepy	55
8-)	Happy with glasses	46
:)*	Happy with a peck or kiss	44
>-<	Angry face	79
:-P/ :-p	In a joking/naughty mood	201
^_^	Happy and smiling	35
8)---	Hungry	42

**Based on one text per user with a total of 300 users.*

Table 4.7: List of emoticons and target expressions

However, with the maximum reach of the smartphones with its inbuilt interactive emoji keyboards, the use of emoticons has declined. Its impact is most visible in the written modes of communication only.

4.9 Anxiety and online communication

Foreign Language Anxiety can be studied from the perspectives of cognition, curriculum and culture. The cognitive aspect of FLA is attributed to ‘worry and emotionality’ (Eysenck, 1979) about performance and subsequent evaluation in the class, and its impact on the self-esteem of the student. As a result, the students are generally found to be passive and quiet in the English language class. Anxiety also stems from the students’ lack of knowledge of grammar, spelling, pronunciation and contextually appropriate modes of speaking and writing in L2. The anxiety hampers

the process of learning, and because of the lack of participation in the classroom-based activities, the anxiety remains and increases with time.

With no intervention from the curriculum to mitigate the language anxiety in the students, coupled with the emphasis on the communication-oriented teaching and learning, the language anxiety in a student tends to increase with time. This is further aggravated by the language teachers' strategy of instant correction of the errors, which compels a student to opt for silence than the voice in a classroom.

Cultural factors also contribute towards accentuating anxiety levels in students. According to Oxford (1999), "behaviors vary across cultures, and what might seem like anxious behavior in one culture might be normal behavior in another culture." Horwitz (2001), on the other hand, also emphasizes on being sensitive towards the cultural issues while using L2 in the class, rather than a uniform stereotyping of the students. Gardner (1985, 2001) has stressed on giving due consideration on situating a student in a different cultural and academic ambience and the process of teaching and learning L2. For instance, it has been found that the students who join the Base Module (immediately after passing Class X examinations) suddenly find themselves overwhelmed in the college in the company of new students pooled in from different states of the region. Coupled with the residual anxiety for L2, the classroom ambience and curriculum demand stressing more on performance without anxiety mitigating strategies impacts the performance of the students.

Against this backdrop, it has been found that the students who have major levels of L2 anxiety become device dependent for communication. The use of predictive text, for example, in the mobile phones is used for texting and composing messages over email and WhatsApp or updating statuses on the social media portals as this feature takes care of the spelling errors. On the other hand, the red squiggle on MS Word or in the desktop applications of the social media sites and the inbuilt grammatical suggestions are blindly followed by the students while communicating online instead of understanding

the rules or contextually appropriate usage of words and expressions. The use of third party applications like Grammarly and Whitesmoke with their browser integration features further help in dealing with the errors in grammar and style. As a result, the students are found wanting in the understanding and usage of rules of grammar and style. The whole process of communication is thus, controlled more by the devices in hand rather than an application of logic and an understanding of the context in which the language operates.

Similarly, for translation, the online translation tools like Google Translate and Bing Translator are used. While using these translators, it has been found that the input language (like Hindi, etc.) is erroneously fed, resulting in a faulty output. This is because students tend to write/compose the way they speak and hence, the number of errors of keep increasing.

In the absence of a proper classroom intervention and management towards the use of these tools, the students consider the results given by these apps to be the correct ones without realizing the error in the input methods. The use of these output on written and oral modes of communication followed by approving likes and shares on the social media contributes in forming their *notions* of correctness in the use of English.