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WHO Collaborating Centre for Prevention of Deafness and Hearing Loss

WRITTEN LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION SHORTHAND: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

An article format research project in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree BA: Speech-Language Pathology
Module: KMP481

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PROF S GEERTSEMA

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2025

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8 October 2025
Examiner/s: KMP481

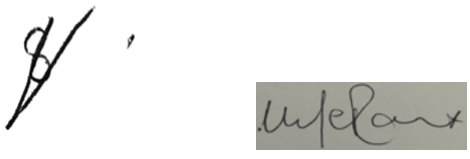
Adapted format of article submission KMP481

Dear External Examiner

As supervisors, we have instructed our KMP 481 groups to slightly adapt their KMP 481 article submissions to suit the journals to which they are submitting. *Please note that we did not follow the APA 7th format as indicated in the study guide, but rather the Harvard format (and subsequent in-house styles of Harvard for the respective journals).* The students provided a summary of the journals' author guidelines, immediately preceding the embedded article (page 5), as well as proof of submission (please see addendum). In-house style of numbering, indentation, length, and the separate keeping of results and discussion sections are examples of styles which may differ apart from the Harvard referencing itself. As we have submitted the articles to these journals (please refer to the submission details), we apologise if this causes any inconvenience. We discussed this change with Prof. De Wet Swanepoel, the module coordinator.

Thank you for understanding and acknowledging this instructed adaptation.

Kind regards



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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY / PLAGIARISM

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

Full name: Khanyisa Ziqubu and Philisile Madikologa

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Degree/Qualification: BA Speech Language Pathology

Title of thesis/ dissertation/ mini dissertation: Written Language in Social Media and Digital Communication Shorthand: A comparative study

I declare that this **thesis**/ dissertation/ mini dissertation is my own original work. Where secondary material is used and has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

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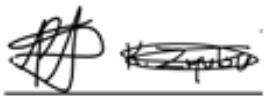

10/10/2025

Signature **Date**

ABBREVIATIONS

Digital Communication Shorthand: DCS

English First Additional Language: EFAL

English Foreign Language: EFL

English Home Language: EHL

Global System of Mobile Communications: GSMC

Graphic Interchange Formats: GIFS

Short message systems: SMS

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION: AUTHOR GUIDELINES

Referencing style:	Harvard
Arial font:	size 12
Line spacing:	1.5
Margins:	2.54cm
Total pages (excluding addendum):	up to 17 (+-6000 words).
Title:	should not exceed 15 words
Title page:	author names and affiliations
Abstract:	up to 190 words
Keywords:	up to 10 keywords, presented alphabetically
Sections:	unnumbered, subsections italicised.
Figures:	clear, black-and-white, no grayscale.

Date of submission to journal: *2025-10-07 (Appendix G for proof of submission)*

Title page with author information

Written language in social media and digital communication shorthand: a comparative study

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Abstract:

The emergence of Short Message Systems (SMS) dates to the 1980s. In recent years, technological advancements have played a significant role in the development of new language forms, now commonly known as digital communication shorthand (DCS). This mixed-method longitudinal study explored the perspectives of Grade 7 to 12 English First Additional – and English Home Language educators on the possible influence of DCS language forms on their learners' formal written language skills. Data was collected via an online Qualtrics questionnaire from educators across South Africa. The results indicated a perceived negative influence of DCS language forms on the learner's formal written language skills. Furthermore, educators acknowledged their role in supporting the learners who display written language difficulties attributed to using DCS in their formal written language tasks. Extended research should explore ways educators can help these learners' written language skills.

Keywords:

Digital Communication Shorthand; educators; emoji; English First Additional Language; English Home Language; GIFs; high school learners; impact; perspectives; social media

Introduction and background

The development of short message systems (SMS), also initially termed text messaging, dates back to the 1980s. The Global System of Mobile Communications (GSMC) developed the system for second-generation mobile networks (Acker, 2014:559). SMS has evolved significantly since their inception and has led to the development of a new form of language (Javed & Mahmood, 2016:78). The following terms are commonly used to describe this new form: SMS language, internet language, and digital language. These terms are now generally used by patent holders, such as Patel (2021), as an umbrella term for digital communication shorthand (DCS) forms (Javed & Mahmood, 2016:78). This new language configuration primarily comprises acronyms, abbreviations, and other shorthand notations (Anjaneyulu, 2013:141).

Initially, these characteristics arose due to limitations on the number of characters allowed for use in earlier digital communication (Emama, 2023, p. 129). Subsequently, the development of information communication technology has reduced the influence of character limitations on the formulation of text messages (Lubis et al., 2019:687). However, these characteristics have remained and are still used in digital communication today, despite the reduced influence of limitations on word count and character count (Emama, 2023:129). However, this new, evolving form of language did not develop solely due to the earlier second-generation mobile networks. The continuous development of the internet, digital communication, and cell phones has also led to increasingly rapid growth in digital communication systems (Javed & Mahmood, 2016:79). These systems have progressed and become multimodal, leading to swift development in the mentioned digital language types. As such, present textual expressions are no longer limited to standard written language (Han, 2024:210). These expressions now include contractions, emoticons, and kaomojis (since the 2000s) (Han, 2024:210). Emojis and Graphic Interchange Formats (GIFs) also joined the escalating evolution in digital communication as a new language form (Henthorn, 2023:12).

Firstly, contractions are abbreviated words or phrases created by omitting certain letters, such as replacing them with apostrophes. In digital communication, contractions may refer to broader linguistic shortcuts used to save time and space or convey a casual and conversational tone. Examples include abbreviations such as "u" for "you," "r" for "are," and "thx" for "thanks." Acronyms may also be used, for example, "lol" for "laugh out loud," "brb" for "be right back", and number homophones such as "b4" for "before," "gr8" for "great." *Secondly*, emoticons are textual portrayals of the mood or facial expressions of the communicator using various keyboard characters such as letters, numbers, and punctuation marks. Developed by Professor Scott Fahlman in 1982, these characters aim to convey emotional context in digital format, where non-verbal cues such as tone of voice and facial expressions are absent (McCulloch, 2019:173,181; Sergeant, 2019:45). Examples comprise: :) Representing a smiley face which indicates happiness or friendliness; :(embodying a frowny face which represents sadness or disappointment, and ;) signifying a winking face, mainly to convey humour or mischievousness. Emoticons can be simple, using just a few characters, or more complex, using a combination of symbols to create elaborate expressions. *Thirdly*, the kaomoji refers to a Japanese type of emoticon that makes use of Japanese characters, Latin letters, and punctuation to indicate emotion (Zhang & Cassany, 2023:2). The use of these elements has become increasingly common in communication that takes place over digital media and instant messaging (Han, 2024:210; Logi & Zappavigna, 2021:3223). These colons, hyphens, and brackets were a precursor to emojis, which are graphical representations of emoticons (also coined *graphicons*) and other symbols (Thurlow & Pff, 2013:176; Crystal, 2011:23). *Finally*, the development of digital communication systems also includes elements like emojis and GIFs in their uniquely evolving language forms. The earliest emojis were created in Japan in the late 1990s (Evans, 2017:19). Emojis are pictograms embedded in text and used as visual representations of emotions, objects, symbols, and ideas. These pictograms add extra meaning and attractiveness to the message (Cramer et al., 2016). GIFs were developed during the late 1980s by Steve Wilhite as a visual representation of feelings and actions (Miltner & Highfield, 2017:3). GIFs act as a novel form for demonstration, meaning they are used to reproduce what would typically occur in face-to-face conversation (Tolins & Samermit, 2016:77), and their repetitive use may assist in the expression of different messages. In the social media context, for example,

it offers action without demonstration (Holtgraves, 2023:85). However, in written text, these features are difficult to depict, such as vocal prosody, facial expressions, and gestures. GIFs are said to increase memory and retention (Ash, 2015:9). Some learners even report that GIFs help them organise their thoughts (Henthorn, 2023:13).

Unsurprisingly, research is increasingly reporting on the impact of these and other types of textual expressions as a new language form across social media and SMS types of communication. Moreover, concerns are raised regarding the specific impact of this language form on learners' academic and written language skills, both locally and internationally. However, depending on diverse contexts, these concerns and possible influences may differ – or be similar. These include geographical location, cultural background, language factors, and even generational gaps (Han, 2024:212). The following sections will examine the most recent research and earlier findings to highlight the concepts developed in these contexts. More specifically, past and present perspectives from learners and educators will be perused to provide insights into both sides' views of the impact of text messaging on written language skills over the past decade.

Regarding contractions and text messaging in general, in a much earlier Canadian study by Tagliamonte and Denis (2008:27) found that educators reported learners using contractions of verb forms, such as "isn't" for "is not". These and other contractions have already infiltrated their academic writing assignments for over a decade. Geertsema et al. (2011:485) reported on the views of South African educators shortly after. Although these authors stood at what could be viewed as the beginning of a larger-scale impact, their findings already reflected a negative impact on written language skills due to the prevalence of general texting and contractions. More specifically, the influence was perceived as occurring in the high school learners' spelling, punctuation, and sentence length.

In 2020, an initial broader study by Dutch authors Verheijen et al. (p. 19) reported on the influence of social media on the written language skills of their school-aged learners in their mother tongue. A survey was conducted to gather information on the social media

habits and experiences of these participants. The learners were subsequently asked to complete a written essay task. The essays were analysed according to their lexical richness, syntax complexity, formality, and written productivity in terms of essay length. Results indicated passive participant interaction with SMS language and affirmed a significant reliance on cell phone reliance and consumption of messages sent over social media. All these factors were concluded to have a negative influence on their writing skills. Specifically, lexicon, complexity of syntax, and formality of writing were negatively impacted.

A follow-up, smaller, and more specific Dutch study by Verheijen and Spooren (2021:178) explored whether the use of WhatsApp had an impact on spelling and writing quality in a written narrative task, and whether the use of SMS language would have a direct impact on the literacy skills of school-aged learners. A group of participants completed the task 15 minutes after using WhatsApp, and the results were compared to those of a control group that abstained from accessing WhatsApp. The results revealed a relationship between SMS language and literacy skills. The participants were able to distinguish between the register they used when communicating online and when writing in an academic setting. The study also inferred that SMS language may improve metalinguistic skills and awareness of the written language system. The authors suggested that educators can use SMS language in their classes to teach concepts like differences in register and code-switching (Verheijen & Spooren, 2021:55-182). In Spain, Cremades et al. (2021) obtained the perspectives of current educators and university students studying towards an education degree on the impact of SMS language on children's linguistic skills. Both groups believe that SMS language has a negative influence on linguistic skills. They also concurred that, without a solid linguistic foundation, SMS language can have a negative impact on the development of communicative competence.

Additionally, these participants argued that SMS language fosters the habit of ignoring written language norms on an academic level, allowing learners to write more quickly and easily. However, the current teachers had a more pessimistic view regarding the impact of SMS language than the educator students. Moreover, the student teachers were open to instant messaging in the school environment to enhance the learners'

learning experience. These different perceptions may be due to the educators being of the same age generation as the learners concerned in the study (Cremades et al., 2021:14).

When examining emoticons specifically, an in-depth corpus-based analysis by Sadiq et al. (2022:198) noted that, according to English lecturers' in-depth investigations of the different categories, their use appears to be confined to social texting, primarily for time-saving purposes. Very few examples of these characters were observed in the academic English writing of the university students. Contrastingly, Algaraady and Mahyoob (2021:44) found that English Foreign Language (EFL) writers indeed displayed a negative impact in the form of spelling, structural errors, and weakness of expression due to emojis and emoticons – reiterating the much earlier study of Geertsema and colleagues on first language school-aged children.

Although less information is available regarding the use and impact of the kaomoji due to its language-specific preference of use, Zhang et al. (2023:6,7) also conducted a longitudinal corpus-based investigation. This study spanned 13 years and encompassed 941,020 comments on a popular social media platform. Unsurprisingly, results reflected an increase in graphicons – including the kaomoji – and a sentence-final particle decrease over this period. The correlation of the graphicon use was significant and emphasises an increasingly negative impact on written language skills over time. Development of these so-called graphicons also increased rapidly over time. Lastly, emojis and GIFs will be discussed in relation to the present study.

A 2020 Spanish study by Pallado-Collantres and Estrada-Chichron (pg. 2) concluded that emoji use is most identifiable with the Generation Z population (people born between 1997 – 2012) in their country. However, these learners viewed them as visual reinforcers of formal academic language, not a replacement for disrupting syntax. Furthermore, the authors reiterated that emojis can enhance oral and written communicative competency in English as a second language. Still, some Spanish language learners thought stickers and GIFs, as collated by Parrado and Estrada-Chichon (2021), were slowly replacing emojis. Recently, Aragon and Santos

(2024:296,297) conducted a study in the Philippines where 80 junior high school learners in grades 7 to 10. This study investigated the learners' perspectives on the impact emojis have on their communication and language. Most learners strongly agreed that emojis make communication more enjoyable and play a significant role in online interactions.

Additionally, the learners concurred that emojis enhanced their comprehension of emotional meanings and the words and phrases associated with those emotions. However, it is essential to consider that many learners held the perspective that the comprehension of these words and phrases varied depending on the situation. Furthermore, the learners agreed that using emojis in their writing stimulates thinking and allows them to consider different ways of expressing themselves, which they perceive as aiding vocabulary expansion. In addition, many of the learners expressed the perspective that emojis are more suited for expressing their emotions in informal than formal communication settings (Aragon & Santos, 2024:296, 297). These findings, therefore, suggest that some high school-aged groups perceive emojis as beneficial to both online and informal communication settings.

Authors such as Ford and Lott (2011) highlighted how technology has enhanced constructivist pedagogy, fostering effective collaboration between teachers and learners within shared social contexts. Doiron (2016:3) even suggested incorporating emojis in grading posts to offer feedback, necessitating educators to include a lexicon in the syllabus. Emojis can enhance remote teaching by making it more visual, accessible, and interactive, facilitating the explanation of activities and session objectives (Na et al., 2019:8). During the recent COVID-19 pandemic, educators have increasingly relied on the use of emojis and GIFs in virtual and distance learning. Li and Yang (2018:8,9) found that educators frequently used the thumbs-up emoji in distance education to convey positivity, agreement, support, motivation, liking, and assurance. However, their study showed educators' reluctance to use emojis and GIFs in virtual classrooms stems from a desire to maintain a formal communication style with students.

From the foregoing discussions, it is noticeable that there is no specific consensus across different countries, contexts, points of view (e.g., educator versus learner or student), or even different generations regarding the explicit impact of still-developing SMS

language on the formal written language of a particular group. What is clear is that this type of written communication is here to stay and is developing rapidly. The impact of DCS (formerly coined SMS) language on the written language skills of school-aged learners (13-18 years) is the primary aim of this longitudinal study on educator perspectives, following the initial survey by Geertsema et al. in 2011. As such, educators' perspectives on the present Generation Alpha were obtained. We conclude the final section of our literature background with the conceptual framework to synthesise the introduction into a model, defining and summarising the key constructs and highlighting the coherence and rigour of the present study.

Conceptual framework

Geertsema et al. (2011:485) determined educators' perspectives on various factors of note at the early stage of SMS language use among Generation Z participants in their study. The impact of these factors on written language skills was investigated and concluded to be negative, resulting in poorer grades and a diminished understanding of standard English in first-language speakers. Specific outcomes were that the educators generally had high expectations regarding their learners' spelling, punctuation, and sentence length in written tasks. However, despite these high expectations, they still encountered shorter, simpler sentences and incorrect use of full stops, commas, and exclamation marks in their written work. Non-conventional spellings were also highly encountered. Most educators agreed that poor grades in the English Home Language (EHL) subject were attributed to the use of SMS language in the learners' written language. Marks were generally deducted for spelling errors. However, fewer marks were deducted for SMS language use errors than for standard spelling errors. The authors concluded that the influence of SMS language on written language may, in the long run, lead to a shift in the course of formal written language toward a more informal one. Intrinsically, the research questions of this longitudinal study are:

A) What are educators' understandings and interpretations of the most recent types of DCS forms?

B) Have educators' perspectives regarding the impact of DCS on written language skills in 13-15-year-old teenagers in the 2011 study (Generation Z) changed in comparison to the present 13-18-year-old group (Generation Alpha)?
C) If so, to what extent did the changes occur compared to the initial study, and what are the perspectives on the impact of further developing DCS forms presently?

Method

Aims of the study

The *main aim* of this study was to explore the perspectives of Grade 7 to 12 educators in South Africa regarding the current potential impact of DCS on a new generation of learners' English written language skills, and the educators' own understanding and interpretation of the most recent types of these DCS forms.

Objectives were to determine the following:

- *Grade 7 to 12 educators* had exposure levels to DCS based on their individual use, interpretation, and understanding of the present DCS forms.
- Educator perspectives regarding the *type and extent of the DCS forms' influence:*
    - Educators' views of a possible DCS *influence* on written language forms of EHL and EFAL.
    - Educator *perceptions and expectations* regarding sentence length, punctuation, and spelling.
- Educators' *perceived roles in supporting learners* experiencing written language difficulties.

Research design

A quantitative, non-experimental, comparative longitudinal panel survey research approach (Christensen et al., 2018) was employed in this study. The data of the study comprises the retrospective perspectives of a group of EHL educators in South Africa on the influence of SMS (past label) language forms on the written language skills of Grade 7 to 9 learners (Geertsema et al., 2011), and DCS (present label) influence on similar language skills, but across a larger age group (Grade 7 to 12 learners, EHL and EFAL),

and beyond a broader range of additional subjects (e.g., Life Orientation) taught by the educators. Data were initially obtained from participants using a survey-based questionnaire at several private schools in Gauteng, South Africa, in 2011. The second extended set of data points in this study (14 years later) is based on the base study's recommendations. This adheres to the minimum requirement of two data points collected from the same type of individuals and the same convenience sampling recruitment methods across a broad range of participant ages (Babbie, 2020:106-108). Additionally, a higher return rate and generalisability were ensured (Babbie, 2020:307,489) by the expanded area, number, and types of schools across South Africa in the present study.

Present data collection procedure

The questionnaires were disseminated to different teachers who met the inclusion criteria of currently teaching Gr 7 to 12 learners at a high school in South Africa. An infographic with an embedded link inviting these respondents to participate was posted on open teacher social media groups, which do not necessitate the permission of the groups' administrators. The groups comprised Facebook's "*Onderwysers! Teachers!*", "*Onderwysposte en hulpbronne*", "*RSA Onderwysers*", "*Afrikaans Huistaal en EAT*", "*Viva Taalonderwysersforum*", and "*Teacha! HELPLINE for South African Teachers*". The self-administered questionnaires (adapted from Geertsema et al. (2011), were completed electronically by the respondents without the assistance of the researchers. Clicking on the link of the informational electronic advertisement opened the electronic survey via Qualtrics. An introductory sentence restated their consent to participate, and the respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any stage, after which their answers would be discarded. Their personal and identifying information was not requested apart from the work environment in which they are. All answers are, therefore, anonymous, and the data sets were allocated alphanumerical codes for analysis.

Ethics

Ethical clearance was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria and the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee via this Departmental Committee (SLPA 2025/04).

Data processing and analysis procedures

During this survey research, the respondents were asked a collection of questions. The responses were summarised with percentages and/or coded numbers, specific statistical procedures were applied, and conclusions were drawn from the responses of this particular population. The statistical results of questions that were not answered – or for which the answers were not applicable – were not included in the results.

A mixed-method results analysis was used in this study. For the closed-ended questions containing the quantitative data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS; version 29) was used for all statistical analyses. Frequencies and percentages were determined to describe the response distribution for each question. Measures of central tendency were calculated to give a mean or median of the typical answer provided, along with measures of spread such as standard deviation or interquartile range. Chi-square tests were conducted to assess for possible statistically significant differences or associations between categorical responses. For the open-ended questions that provided the qualitative data, content analyses were performed through descriptive thematic analysis to identify specific patterns and categories regarding the use of the current DCS. Finally, during the last phase of this research study, comparative analyses were conducted between initial answers in the 2011 study and the present data from 2025.

Participants

Sampling approach

Purposive sampling was used to select individuals for this research study, as was done in the historic 2011 study (Babbie, 2020). Specific selection criteria were employed to ensure that the selected respondents had sufficient experience and academic training in teaching EHL or EFAL, enabling them to effectively answer the adapted questionnaire from Geertsema et al. (2011).

Participant selection criteria

The following *inclusion criteria* were used in the selection of participants for the present leg of the longitudinal view study:

- Selected educators were required to teach at least EHL or EFAL to learners in Grades 7 to 12 at the time of the study, as their perspectives were being investigated. Additional subjects contributed to broader perspectives.
- To ensure that the educator has observed learners' English skills throughout the grade, at least one year of experience teaching EHL and/or EFAL to learners in grades 7-12 was required.

The following *exclusion criteria* were applied:

- Educators who do not use text messages, WhatsApp, or social media to communicate using any DCS.
- Educators who do not send or receive messages that contain DCS language forms.

Apparatus and material

Questionnaire

The original questionnaire was organised into categories that aligned with the sub-aims of the research study. The present adapted questionnaire also utilised open-ended questions, where educators were required to use their own words to answer the given questions, as well as closed-ended questions and factual and opinion questions that necessitated educators to provide objective information and their views on the matter, respectively (Hyman & Sierra, 2016:2-4). Meticulous attention was taken to ensure that the questions did not confuse the participants or produce confounding results, using a pilot study in the initial and present studies. This study presented the questionnaire as an informal pilot phase to an experienced EHL and EFAL educator, who assured the researchers that the questions were understandable. This educator did not take part in the study to avoid bias.

Results

Results are presented in the order of the objectives of the study. Thirty valid responses were recorded, which can be reported as a large sample according to statistical standards (Faizi & Alvi, 2023). The results are summarised in table formats. A short elaboration on the content follows. Table 1 comprises the initial objective of determining educator levels of DCS exposure.

Table 1: Overall DCS knowledge score of the educators

			Statistic
Overall knowledge score (sum the 12 Q9 items [1 = correct, 0 = incorrect per Q9 item] divided by 12 multiplied by 100 to get a %)	Mean		56.0345
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	44.3910
		Upper Bound	67.6780
	5% Trimmed Mean		56.7050
	Median		58.3333
	Variance		936.987
	Std. Deviation		30.61024
	Minimum		0.00
	Maximum		100.00
	Range		100.00
	Interquartile Range		29.17
	Skewness		-0.609
	Kurtosis		-0.389

The overall knowledge score, based on educators' personal use, interpretation, and understanding of the current DCS language forms, is 56.03%. The findings specifically denoted that millennials were the generation of educators with the most knowledge of DCS (40.0%).

Tables 2.1 to 2.5 represent the second objective: educators' views on the type of DCS language forms and the extent of encounters in their learners' written language tasks. Further delineation about the educators' perceptions and expectations regarding sentence length, punctuation, and spelling is also established.

Table 2.1 indicates that the most frequently materialised DCS language forms were *number acronyms (more recently referred to as homophonic or phonetic numeronyms)* (e.g., '4 u'; gr8), followed by *contractions (more recently termed disemvoweling or consonant-skeleton spelling)* (e.g., 'kwl'; dunno).

Table 2.1: The types of DCS language encountered by educators in the learner's written language tasks

Q18_2_6: Which of the following types of DCS language have you encountered in the written tasks of your learners? - Examples - Number of homophones examples: "B4" (Before)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		18	60.0	60.0	60.0
	'4 U' (For you)	1	3.3	3.3	63.3
	2day	3	10.0	10.0	73.3
	4, 2, gr8	1	3.3	3.3	76.7
	8teen	1	3.3	3.3	80.0
	Me2 (me too)	1	3.3	3.3	83.3
	Mostly on WhatsApp communication not necessarily tasks	1	3.3	3.3	86.7
	no	1	3.3	3.3	90.0
	Not in written tasks	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
	Tomorrow (2moro)	1	3.3	3.3	96.7
	WhatsApp group communications	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		18	60.0	60.0	60.0
	'2' (To)	1	3.3	3.3	63.3
	'Tnx' = thanks	1	3.3	3.3	66.7
	Ate (8)	1	3.3	3.3	70.0
	Bi!	1	3.3	3.3	73.3
	Dunno (don't know)	1	3.3	3.3	76.7
	gonna	1	3.3	3.3	80.0
	Kwl/cool	1	3.3	3.3	83.3
	Not in written tasks	1	3.3	3.3	86.7
	OK(okay)	1	3.3	3.3	90.0
	S'tru	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
	tbh	1	3.3	3.3	96.7
	Tx	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.2: The incorrect use of punctuation (exclamation marks) encountered by the educators in the learners' written language tasks

Q22_1_3: Your opinion regarding the learner's use of punctuation marks in written tasks: - Exclamation mark (!) - If it is used incorrectly, explain further in which manner

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	!!!	1	3.3	3.3	53.3
	!!!!!!	1	3.3	3.3	56.7
	Almost every sentence ends with an exclamation; double exclamation mark	1	3.3	3.3	60.0
	more than one added at the end of a sentence to convey emotion	1	3.3	3.3	63.3
	Often overused	1	3.3	3.3	66.7
	Sometimes after an interjection without starting new sentence with capital	1	3.3	3.3	70.0
	They combine the exclamation mark and question mark together to show strong emotion (?!)	1	3.3	3.3	73.3
	They don't understand where to use it	1	3.3	3.3	76.7
	They forget to use it.	1	3.3	3.3	80.0
	They put it anywhere	1	3.3	3.3	83.3
	Too many	1	3.3	3.3	86.7
	Too many at once	1	3.3	3.3	90.0
	use it more than once (!!)	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
	Used where it is supposed to be a question mark	1	3.3	3.3	96.7
	With a question mark	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.2's results are influenced by learners' incorrect use of *exclamation marks* in their formal written tasks. Distinctively, many educators reported on the *overuse* of this, manifesting as multiple exclamation marks used consecutively at the end of a sentence. One educator indicated the incorrect use of an exclamation, where learners had replaced it with a question mark.

Table 2.3: The incorrect use of punctuation (question marks) encountered by the educators in the learners' written language tasks

Q22_2_3: Your opinion regarding the learner's use of punctuation marks in written tasks: - Question mark (?) - If it is used incorrectly, explain further in which manner

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		18	60.0	60.0	60.0
	A number of ????	1	3.3	3.3	63.3
	It is left out	1	3.3	3.3	66.7
	mostly not adding the question mark after the question	1	3.3	3.3	70.0
	Omitted or uses twice or more times	1	3.3	3.3	73.3
	Overuse: ?????	1	3.3	3.3	76.7
	sometimes forgotten	1	3.3	3.3	80.0
	Sometimes used to express emotion, not grammatical question.	1	3.3	3.3	83.3
	They combine the exclamation mark and question mark together to show strong emotion (?!)	1	3.3	3.3	86.7
	They tend to forget to use it.	1	3.3	3.3	90.0
	Too many at once	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
	use it with a question mark (?!)	1	3.3	3.3	96.7
	When asking questions	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.3 portrays the incorrect use of *question marks* in formal language written tasks, as perceived by 60% of the respondents (n = 18). They encountered the overuse of this punctuation mark consecutively in a sentence, the omission thereof, and erroneously using it in conjunction with an exclamation mark.

Table 2.4 reveals that all educators (n = 30) have observed a shortening of sentence length across various time frames. Additionally, the results contained a varying spread across various years, indicating a steady decrease in sentence length over the past few years.

Table 2.4: Duration of perceived sentence length shortening by the educators in the learner's written language tasks

Q21: If you answered yes to Q20, for how many years have you been noticing this shortening in sentence length?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	1 year	2	6.7	6.7	30.0
	10 years	1	3.3	3.3	33.3
	15 years	1	3.3	3.3	36.7
	2 years (while I was doing my practicals)	1	3.3	3.3	40.0
	3	1	3.3	3.3	43.3
	5	2	6.7	6.7	50.0
	About 5 years? Worse since Covid	1	3.3	3.3	53.3
	At least 3years	1	3.3	3.3	56.7
	For the last 4 years, teaching Grade 12s	1	3.3	3.3	60.0
	I have been teaching for a period of months and not years, but I have observed that learners are lazy to think nor write so they always go for shorter versions	1	3.3	3.3	63.3
	Last 10 years	1	3.3	3.3	66.7
	last 3 years	1	3.3	3.3	70.0
	n.a.	1	3.3	3.3	73.3
	Past 5 years	1	3.3	3.3	76.7
	Past 7	1	3.3	3.3	80.0
	Past 8 years	1	3.3	3.3	83.3
	Since I started teaching in 2014.	1	3.3	3.3	86.7
	Since I started teaching three years ago	1	3.3	3.3	90.0
	Students write longer sentences, overusing the comma	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
	The last five years	1	3.3	3.3	96.7
	The past 3	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.5: Expectations regarding correct spelling

Q26_EHL: Expect learners to spell correctly

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	up to 50% of the time	1	3.3	11.1	11.1
	up to 75% of the time	4	13.3	44.4	55.6
	up to 100% of the time	4	13.3	44.4	100.0
	Total	9	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	21	70.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Q26_EFAL: Expect learners to spell correctly

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0% of the time	1	3.3	5.6	5.6
	up to 50% of the time	3	10.0	16.7	22.2
	up to 75% of the time	10	33.3	55.6	77.8
	up to 100% of the time	4	13.3	22.2	100.0
	Total	18	60.0	100.0	
Missing	System	12	40.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Q27_EHL: Expect correct sentence length

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0% of the time	1	3.3	10.0	10.0
	up to 75% of the time	5	16.7	50.0	60.0
	up to 100% of the time	4	13.3	40.0	100.0
	Total	10	33.3	100.0	
Missing	System	20	66.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Q27_EFAL: Expect correct sentence length

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	up to 25% of the time	1	3.3	5.3	5.3
	up to 50% of the time	2	6.7	10.5	15.8
	up to 75% of the time	12	40.0	63.2	78.9
	up to 100% of the time	4	13.3	21.1	100.0
	Total	19	63.3	100.0	
Missing	System	11	36.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Q28_EHL: Expect correct punctuation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	up to 75% of the time	5	16.7	62.5	62.5
	up to 100% of the time	3	10.0	37.5	100.0
	Total	8	26.7	100.0	
Missing	System	22	73.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Q28_EFAL: Expect correct punctuation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	up to 50% of the time	4	13.3	20.0	20.0
	up to 75% of the time	9	30.0	45.0	65.0
	up to 100% of the time	7	23.3	35.0	100.0
	Total	20	66.7	100.0	
Missing	System	10	33.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 2.5 indicates that educators expect learners to use correct spelling in their written language tasks 75% to 100% of the time for EHL. In EFAL, they expect this level

of precision 75% of the time. The table also indicates that learners achieve a 75% correct sentence length in their written language tasks in both subjects. Similarly, educators expect correct punctuation in the learners' written language tasks 75% of the time.

Table 2.6: Educators' expectations on the use of graphicons

Q9_8: DCS language or standard spelling errors? Emoticons e.g. ":)" (Smile)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	DCS Language	18	60,0	72,0	72,0
	Standard spelling error	5	16,7	20,0	92,0
	Both	1	3,3	4,0	96,0
	5	1	3,3	4,0	100,0
	Total	25	83,3	100,0	
Missing	System	5	16,7		
Total		30	100,0		

Q9_10: DCS language or standard spelling errors? Kaomoji (>~*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	DCS Language	17	56,7	77,3	77,3
	Standard spelling error	4	13,3	18,2	95,5
	Both	1	3,3	4,5	100,0
	Total	22	73,3	100,0	
Missing	System	8	26,7		
Total		30	100,0		

Q9_11: DCS language or standard spelling errors? Emoji's

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	DCS Language	20	66,7	87,0	87,0
	Standard spelling error	3	10,0	13,0	100,0
	Total	23	76,7	100,0	
Missing	System	7	23,3		
Total		30	100,0		

Q9_12: DCS language or standard spelling errors? Graphic Interchange Format (GIFS)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	DCS Language	19	63,3	90,5	90,5
	Standard spelling error	2	6,7	9,5	100,0
	Total	21	70,0	100,0	
Missing	System	9	30,0		
Total		30	100,0		

Table 2.6 indicated that most educators classified emoticons (60%), kaomoji (56.7%), emojis (66.7%), and GIFs (63.3%) as DCS language, as opposed to standard spelling errors.

Discussion

The primary objective of this comparative longitudinal research study was to determine whether DCS has influenced the written language skills of learners in Grades 7 to 12 in South Africa. It looked to investigate the levels of exposure the educators had to DCS language forms, their expectations regarding learners' written language skills,

their perspectives on the influence of DCS language on standard English written language forms, and their perceived roles in supporting learners with written language difficulties.

The study's findings indicated that educators had exposure to these digital communication language forms, with more than half reporting use of these forms in a personal capacity. The educators who had the most exposure to the DCS language forms were those from the millennial generation. This is supported by Nurjamin et al. (2023:158), who indicated that millennials had a better grasp of technology and innovations in social media. These generational results also aligned in terms of supportive attitudes towards addressing DCS with the prior findings of Geertsema et al. (2011:485) and Han (2024:210). The findings further indicated that both groups of educators who taught EHL and EFAL had moderately high expectations of their learners regarding correct spelling, punctuation, and sentence length in their formal written language tasks. This suggests that although educators may anticipate learners using these digital communication language forms, they are still more likely to mark them down for using them in their formal written language tasks, highlighting a consensus among educators in this regard (Aragon & Santos, 2024:296, 297; Geertsema et al., 2011:483; Han, 2024:210). Furthermore, educators indicated that these DCS language forms influence their learners' formal written language tasks, with the most common forms being the use of acronyms and contractions. This suggests a negative impact on the learner's formal written language task, as acronyms and contractions are not part of the standard English expected from learners in their academic written tasks.

Regarding graphicons, such as emoticons, kaomoji, emojis, and GIFs, their use was less frequent in the learners' formal written language tasks. Most of the educators, however, identified these graphicons as DCS language, not standard language errors. Therefore, from the responses, it can be inferred that the educators would also mark the learners down if graphicons were encountered in their formal written language tasks. Further research on these graphicons can explore the possible impact they may have on learners' descriptive writing skills, as their use in digital communication demands less descriptive word use, since a significant part of the intended message is embedded in the graphicon (Holtgraves, 2003:85).

Finally, from the role opinion question, it is notable that most educators who participated in the survey indicated that they believe they have a role in addressing DCS language forms when encountered in their learners' written language tasks. However, it is also worth noting that educators did not always address these forms when they were encountered in their learners' written tasks. This suggests that, although they acknowledge their role in supporting learners' written language, they are uncertain about how to help these learners beyond simply correcting the DCS language form when it is encountered. These findings align with the base study by Geertsema et al. (2011:485), indicating a positive and willing attitude among South African educators across generations to uphold pure and correct formal written English in educational settings, as well as a need for further training in support and referral options.

Conclusion

These findings provided insight into the possible impact of digital communication shorthand language forms on the formal written language skills of learners in Grades 7 to 12. Educators agreed that the use of these DCS language forms has a negative influence on the learners' formal written tasks. They further acknowledged their role in supporting these learners; however, more research can be conducted to investigate how educators can address these deviations from standard English in the learners' formal written tasks. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining this phenomenon, taking into account recent advancements in digital communication. As with the base study of Geertsema et al. (2011:485), present South African educators still agree that any non-formal form of English (such as SMS and DCS) negatively impacts learners' English written language skills. The earlier negative influences were primarily observed in spelling, punctuation, and sentence length. The present status quo also highlights these challenges, with additional specific details regarding acronyms and contractions, as well as the lesser-reported field of graphicons.

The study's limitations included a few responses that were deemed unreliable due to response bias, as some participants did not fully understand specific questions, despite a pilot review by a Generation X educator. These responses were labelled as missing values during statistical analysis. Therefore, although the sample is considered "large"

according to statistical standards (Faizi & Alvi, 2023), further research with a broader sample of educators nationwide would be valuable in contributing to the study on this fast-paced, developing phenomenon.

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ADDENDUM WITH APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Ethical clearance form

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Humanities 100. Since 1919

Department of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology

20 February 2025

Dear Researchers,

Project:	Written language in social media and digital communication shorthand: a comparative study
Researchers:	Philisile Madikologa (u22634062); Khanyisa Ziqubu (u22642732)
Supervisors:	Prof S Geertsema, Prof M le Roux
Department:	Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology
Reference Number:	SLPA 2025/04

Thank you for the application submitted to the Research Committee of the Department of Speech-Pathology and Audiology, Faculty of Humanities. We want to inform you that the above application was approved.

The approval is subject to the candidates abiding by the principles and parameters set out in the application

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof Lidia Pottas Chair: Departmental Research Committee

Prof J van der Linde HEAD: DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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APPENDIX B: Digital Communication Shorthand study questionnaire

Initial and Adapted Study Questionnaire
WRITTEN LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION SHORTHAND (DCS): A COMPARATIVE STUDY

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THIS QUESTIONNAIRE SHOULD NOT TAKE LONGER THAN 15-20 MINUTES TO COMPLETE.

Instructions for completing the questionnaire:

1. Please complete the following questions by indicating your choice with a cross in the appropriate block(s) (X).
2. Where no block is provided, please answer the question in the space provided.
3. Blocks on the right-hand side of the page in the shaded area are for office use – please ignore these blocks.
4. Please complete **all** questions.
5. All information will be kept strictly confidential.
6. Please indicate the following:

   This questionnaire is completed for (MARK ALL APPLICABLE):

	Grade 8 learners
	Grade 9 learners
	Grade 8 and 9 learners

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND

1a) Where is the school where you are currently employed situated?

Eastern Cape	
Free State	
Gauteng	
Kwazulu-Natal	
Limpopo	
Mpumalanga	
Northern Cape	
North West Province	
Western Cape	

1b) In which suburb or town is the school?

_____

2) Which subjects do you currently teach? To which grade(s) are you teaching these subjects? What is the number of years of experience teaching these subjects?
Please indicate which subjects are the MAIN subjects that you teach with an “x.”

Subject	Main	Grade	Years experience

[For questions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7: Please indicate your response using a tick]

3) What is your highest qualification obtained?

Less than Grade 12	
Grade 12	
Tertiary: Undergraduate	
Tertiary: Postgraduate	

4) What is your preferred gender? (you may opt to leave this question open)

Male	
Female	
Non-binary	
Other	

5) Which language do you consider your mother tongue to be?

Afrikaans	
English	
IsiNdebele	
IsiXhosa	

IsiZulu	
SASL (Sign Language)	
Sepedi	
SeSotho	
SeTswana	
SiSwati	
TshiVenda	
TshiTsonga	
Other	

6) What is the language of teaching and learning at your school?

Afrikaans	
English	
IsiNdebele	
IsiXhosa	
IsiZulu	
SASL (Sign Language)	
Sepedi	
SeSotho	
SeTswana	
SiSwati	
TshiVenda	
TshiTsonga	
Other	

7) Under which generation do you fall:

7.1 Generation Z (Gen Z: 7 to 22 years old)	
7.2 Millennials (Gen Y: 23 to 38 years old)	
7.3 Generation X (Gen X: 39 to 54 years old)	

7.4 Baby Boomer (55 to 73 years old)	

** Please make sure that all questions on this page are answered before continuing to the next page **

SECTION A: KNOWLEDGE OF DCS, DIGITAL LANGUAGE

FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY, WE WILL USE DIGITAL COMMUNICATION SHORTHAND (DCS) TO ENCOMPASS THE DIFFERENT TYPES

8) What do you view the following as, as encountered in any written work by your learners:
DCS language or standard spelling errors? (You may leave the block open if you do not recognise or encounter the specific DCS)

a) **Shortenings** (deletion of end letters, excluding -g letters)
Example: “Tomor” (Tomorrow)
DCS Language Spelling error Both

b) **Contractions** (deletion of middle letters)
Example: “Sry” (Sorry)
DCS Language Spelling error Both

c) **G-clippings** (excluding end -g letters)
Example: “Goin” (Going)
DCS Language Spelling error Both

d) **Acronyms** (formed from initial letters of various words)
Example: “brb” (Be Right Back)
DCS Language Spelling error Both

e) Letter homophones
Examples: “U” (You), “R” (Are)
DCS Language Spelling error Both

f) Number of homophones
Example: “B4” (Before)
DCS Language Spelling error Both

g) Non-conventional spelling
Example: “L8r” (Later), “Tnx” (Thanks)

h) Emoticons
Example: “:-)” (Smile), “:-(“ (Frown)
DCS Language Spelling error Both

i) Expressive lengthening
Example: “Noooooooo” instead of “No”
DCS Language Spelling error Both

j) Kaomoji
Example: (¯◡¯)
DCS Language Spelling error Both

k) Emoji’s

Example:
DCS Language Spelling errors Both

l) Graphic Interchange Formats (GIFS)
Example:
DCS Language Spelling errors Both

9) Do you communicate via:

a) SMS messages?

Yes		No	

b) WhatsApp?

Yes		No	

c) Instagram direct messaging?

Yes		No	

d) Instagram commenting?

Yes		No	

e) Facebook direct messaging?

Yes		No	

f) Facebook commenting?

Yes		No	

g) X Thread commenting?

Yes		No	

h) Meta Thread commenting?

Yes		No	

i) Scholastic communicators?

Yes		No	

10) On average, how many communication opportunities do you encounter regarding the mentioned examples in nr 10 about (a) sending to (b) receiving messages per day?

(a) Messages sent

1-4	
5-9	
10-30	
more than 30	

(b) Messages received

1-4	
5-9	
10-30	
more than 30	

11) Do you use DCS language when sending messages?

Yes		No	

12) Do you encounter DCS language in the messages you receive from learners?

Yes		No	

13) Do you encounter DCS language in the messages you receive from colleagues?

Yes		No	

14) Do you encounter DCS Language in the messages you receive in formal communication from executive management?

Yes		No	

15) If you answered yes to the previous questions, please indicate from which generational group/s

You may choose more than one option.

Gen Z	
Gen Y(Millennials)	
Gen X	
Baby Boomers	

16) Do you find some of the generations in Q16 use the DCS language options incorrectly? Mark which group/s in your opinion and give examples of the types as stipulated in Q9 in this section.

Gen Z	
Gen Y(Millennials)	
Gen X	
Baby Boomers	

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION B: NATURE OF THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF DCS LANGUAGE

Please indicate which of the following types of DCS language you have encountered in the written tasks of your learners?

17) a) **Shortenings** (deletion of end letters, excluding -g letters)
example: “Tomor” (Tomorrow)

Yes		No	

If you indicated *yes,* please provide examples.

_____
_____
_____

b) **Contractions** (deletion of middle letters)
example: “Sry” (Sorry)

Yes		No	

If you indicated *yes,* please provide examples.

_____
_____
_____

c) **G-clippings** (excluding g letters)
Example: “Goin” (Going)

Yes		No	

If you indicated *yes,* please provide examples.

_____
_____
_____

d) **Acronyms** (Formed from initial letters of various words)
example: “BRB” (Be Right Back)

Yes		No	

If you indicated *yes,* please provide examples.

_____
_____
_____

e) **Letter homophones**
examples: “U” (You),” R” (are)

Yes		No	

If you indicated *yes,* please provide examples.

_____
_____
_____

f) **Number of homophones**
examples: “B4” (Before)

Yes		No	

If you indicated *yes,* please provide examples.

_____
_____
_____

g) **Non-conventional** spellings
examples: “L8r” (later), “Tnx” (Thanks)

Yes		No	

If you indicated *yes,* please provide examples.

_____
_____
_____

h) **Emoticons**
example: ":-)" (Smile) ":-("(Frown)

Yes		No	

If you indicated *yes,* please provide examples.

_____
_____
_____

Please make sure that all questions on this page are answered before continuing to the next page

Sentence structure is divided into simple, complex and compound sentences for the purpose of this study.

Example: Simple sentence with one clause: "They watched the parade on TV"

Example: Complex sentences with an embedded clause:
"The manager, who had been with the company for over 20 years, was retiring next month"

Example: Compound sentence bound by two or more clauses:
"Mom went to work, I went to school, and my sister stayed home"

What type of sentence structure (simple, complex or compound) do you primarily find in the written language tasks of learners?

Simple sentences		
Complex Sentences		
Compound Sentences		

18) Since you have been an educator, have you observed that the learners use shorter sentences than in previous years?

Yes		No	

19) If you answered yes in question 18, for how many years have you noticed this shortening of sentence length?

+/- ☐

20) Please indicate your opinion regarding the learners' use of punctuation marks in written tasks:

a) Punctuation mark: Exclamation mark(!)

Are exclamation marks used?	Yes		No	

If yes, are exclamation marks used correctly or incorrectly?

Used correctly			Used Incorrectly		

If exclamation marks are used incorrectly, please explain in which manner:

_____

_____

_____

b) Punctuation mark: Question mark (?)

Are question marks used?	Yes		No	

If yes, are Question marks used correctly or incorrectly?

Used correctly			Used Incorrectly		

If Question marks are used incorrectly, please explain in which manner:

_____

_____

_____

a) Punctuation mark: Full stop (.)

Are full stops used?

Yes		No	

If yes, are full stops used correctly or incorrectly?

Used correctly		Used incorrectly	

If full stops are used incorrectly, please explain in which manner:

d) Punctuation mark: Comma (,)
Are commas used?

Yes		No	

If yes, are commas used correctly or incorrectly?

Used correctly			Used incorrectly	

If commas are used incorrectly, please explain in which manner:

SECTION C: DEGREE OF THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION SHORTHAND (DCS) ON THE LEARNER'S WRITTEN TASKS.

21) How often does the following occur in written tasks?

	Never	Seldom	Regularly	Always
Shortenings				
Contractions				
Clippings				
Acronyms				
Letter homophones				
Number homophones				
Non-conventional spelling				
Emoticons				

22) How often does the following occur in written tasks?

	Never	Seldom	Regularly	Always
Shortening of sentences				
Incorrect use of exclamation marks				
Incorrect use of question marks				
Incorrect use of full stops				
Incorrect use of commas				

23) Do you believe that the mentioned aspects in Q22 increased in occurrence in the learner's written tasks? If yes, in what year did you first notice the increase?

	Yes	No	+ Year
The use of shortenings			
The use of contractions			
The use of clippings			

The use of acronyms			
The use of letter homophones			
The use of number homophones			
The use of non-conventional spelling			
The use of emoticons			
Shortening of sentences			
Incorrect use of exclamation marks			
Incorrect use of question marks			
Incorrect use of full stops			
Incorrect use of commas			

SECTION D: EDUCATOR EXPECTATIONS IN THE LEARNER'S WRITTEN TASKS

In relation to Home or Additional Language instruction:

24) To what extent do you expect learners to spell correctly in written tasks? Please indicate one option applicable to your teaching load (if you teach both English Home Language (EHL) and English First Additional Language (EFAL), please complete both).

	EHL	EFAL
I do not expect correct spelling at all (0% of the time)		
I expect correct spelling in up to 25% of written work		
I expect correct spelling in up to 50% of written work		
I expect correct spelling in up to 75% of written work		
I expect correct spelling in nearly all written work (100% of the time)		

25) To what degree do you expect learners to use correct sentence length in written tasks? Please indicate one opinion (if you teach both EHL and EFAL, please complete both).

	EHL	EFAL
I do not expect correct sentence length at all (0% of the time)		
I expect correct sentence length in up to 25% of all written work		
I expect correct sentence length in up to 50% of all written work		
I expect correct sentence length in up to 75% of all written work		
I expect correct sentence length in nearly all written work (100% of the time)		

26) To what degree do you expect learners to use correct punctuation in written tasks? Please indicate one option (if you teach both EHL and EFAL, please complete both).

	EHL	EFAL
I do not expect correct punctuation at all (0% of the time)		
I expect correct punctuation in up to 25% of written work.		
I expect correct punctuation in up to 50% of written work.		
I expect correct punctuation in up to 75% of written work.		
I expect correct punctuation in up to 100% of written work.		

SECTION E: POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF DCS LANGUAGE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

27) To what extent would a learner be penalised for incorrect spelling in all the main subjects you teach? Please indicate the approximate percentage of marks that would be deducted:

Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____
Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____
Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____

28) To what extent is a learner penalised for the length of a written response (i.e too long or too short)?
Please indicate the approximate percentage of marks that would be deducted:

Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____
Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____
Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____

29) To what extent is a learner penalised for spelling / phonetic answers (without spelling concession) and/or incorrectly spelling or replacement of jargon with DSC language?
Please indicate the approximate percentage of marks that would be deducted:

Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____
Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____
Subject: _____ Percentage marks deducted: _____

30) Would marks be deducted due to *spelling errors* possibly attributed to specific *DCS* influences?

Yes		No	

31) Please provide a short explanation of your reasoning for deducting marks or not

32) Would marks be deducted due to *incorrect sentence length* possibly attributed to specific *DCS influences*?

Yes		No	

Please provide a short explanation:

33) Would marks be deducted due to *incorrect punctuation* that may be attributed to specific *DCS* influences?

Yes		No	

Please provide a short explanation:

34) Are you of the opinion that DCS positively influences learners' *written language skills*?

Yes		No	

Please provide a short explanation:

35) Are you of the opinion that DCS negatively influences the learner's *written language skills*?

Yes		No	

Please provide a short explanation:

36) To which extent do you agree with the following statements (complete with a number of 1-5 as per indicators below where applicable to you).

1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree

a)	The negative influence of DCS on written language skills causes learners to achieve poor grades in the subject English Home Language (EHL)	
b)	The negative influence of DCS on written language skills causes learners to achieve poor grades in the subject English First Additional Language (EFAL)	
c)	The negative influence of DCS on written language skills causes learners to have diminished knowledge of correct standard English language	

37) Please indicate your opinion on whether DCS is the main reason/ one of the many reasons/ not a reason for the following errors.

Please elaborate on your opinion - whether you chose DCS as the main reason, one of many reasons, or not a reason for the errors in written work.

Category	Reason			Other
	Main	One of many	Not a reason	Please elaborate on your opinion as to why you think it is the main, one of many, or not a reason.
Spelling errors				
Reduced sentence length				
Punctuation errors				

SECTION G: THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR AND THE SPEECH–LANGUAGE THERAPIST (SLT)

38) Are you of the opinion that it is an educator's role to address the use of DCS if it occurs?

Yes		No	

39) Do you address the errors if DCS occurs in learners' written language tasks?

Yes		No	

40) If you answered yes in question 32, how often do you address the errors?

Seldom	
Regularly	
Always	

41) To what extent do you believe each of the following written language tasks fall within the scope of a speech-language therapist?

Category	**To no extent**	**To a small extent**	**To some extent**	**To a large extent**
Assessing the use of incorrect spelling				
Addressing the use of incorrect spelling				
Assessing the use of reduced sentence length				
Addressing the use of reduced sentence length				
Assessing the use of incorrect punctuation				
Addressing the use of incorrect punctuation				

** Please make sure that all questions on this page are answered**

THANK YOU SO MUCH – WE APPRECIATE YOUR CONTRIBUTION!

APPENDIX C: Digital Communication Shorthand Study Infographic

APPENDIX D: Examples of Digital Communication Shorthand

Emojis

□ – whatever you say; *😃* – speechlessness; *👉👈* – feeling shy; *🎧*– fishing for compliments; *😭*– very funny; *🏏* – you did really well on something; *🧢*– someone is lying; *🌽*– something is corny; *🤠 – confusion/clownery; *✨"✨*– putting emphasis on something; *□* – someone has said or done something questionable or embarrassing; *🥶* -cold *🤷‍♀️* -I don't know; *🥂 * -cheers; *💔* – heartbroken; *🕊️*– fly high; *😂* crying with laughter; *□*stop/ hold on; *😫* tired; *□* teary eyed /touched;*🥳* happy birthday; *😇* angel;🤥* liar; *💀* laughing hysterically; 🌚 – moon face implying a sarcastic reaction; *✋🏿* – dismissing somebody; * 📍 * – your current location , *😶* – represents dissatisfaction; *😀* – Grinning face; *😂* – Face with tears of joy; *😍* – Smiling face with heart-eyes; *😭* – Loudly crying face; *😊* – Smiling face with smiling eyes; *😎* – Smiling face with sunglasses; *😒* – Unamused face; *😬* – Grimacing face; *👍* – Thumbs up; *👎* – Thumbs down; *🔥* – Fire used to denote something that's hot or trendy; *💯* – 100 score used to express perfection or agreement; *👏* – Clapping hands used to show appreciation or congratulations; *💔* – Broken heart; *🙏* – Folded hands used for please or thank you in Japanese culture, or as a prayer gesture; *🍑* – Peach sometimes used to represent a butt; *🤔* – Thinking face.

Acronyms

Ngl – not going to lie

Bfr – be for real

Thx – thanks

u – you

Ur -your

Tmr – tomorrow

2night – tonight

Gr8 – great

Wdum – what do you mean?

Sbwl – sabaweli

Idk – I don't know. Wud – what are you doing?

Brb – be right back

Ppl – people

Omg - oh my goodness

Gwad - god

Ilsm – I love you so much

Lemme – let me

VN – voice note

Tbh – to be honest

Rn– right now

Iykyk – if you know you know

Tho – though

Delululu – delusional

Np – no problem

Idc – I don't care

Smh – shaking my head

Ty – thank you

Ig – I guess

Imo – in my opinion

Wya – where you at?

Grwm – get ready with me

Atp – at this point

Ily – I love you

Loml – love of my life

Mb – my bad

Ttyl– talk to you later

Iccl – I couldn't care less

Idm – I don't mind

MI – my love

Fs – for sure

Tntl – trying not to laugh

Contractions

I'm – I am

You're – You are

He's – He is

She's – She is

It's – It is

We're – We are

They're – They are

Can't – Cannot

Don't – Do not

Won't – Will not

Isn't – Is not

Aren't – Are not

Haven't – Have not

Hasn't – Has not

Didn't – Did not

Couldn't – Could not

Wouldn't – Would not

Shouldn't – Should not

Mightn't – Might not

Mustn't – Must not

There’s – there is

They’d – they had

They’ll – they will

I'm – I am

you're – you are

it's – it is

I'll – I will

you'll – you will

it'll – it will

couldn't – could not

didn't – did not

doesn't – does not

there's – there is

they would – they'd

they'll – they will

they're – they are

don't – do not

hadn't – had not

hasn't – has not

haven't – have not

we've – we have

weren't – were not

he'd – he had

he'll – he will

APPENDIX E: Memorandum of Agreement

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Memorandum of Agreement

for Academic Supervision of Postgraduate Students

This document should be read in conjunction with the following University of Pretoria policy documents:

the ***University of Pretoria General Regulations*** *applicable to postgraduate study (G.16 to G.61),*

the ***University Code of Ethics for Research****, the*

University Plagiarism Policy,

the ***Policy for the Preservation and Retention of Research Data****, the*

Intellectual Property Policy*,*

the ***Guidelines for Postgraduate Supervision*** *and the*

Declaration of Originality form*.*

These documents are all available by clicking on the hyperlink for each document.

Clear mediation mechanisms are available to deal with any grievances, personal problems or disagreements that may arise between a postgraduate candidate and the supervisor. (Refer to the General Regulations and Information of the University of Pretoria pertaining to the ***Student Communication Channel****, Section B.15).*

Names of students: Philisile Juliet Madikologa and Khanyisa Neo Ziqubu

Student numbers: u22634062 and u2264732

Degree: BA Speech Language Pathology

Department: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

School: The University of Pretoria

Faculty: The Faculty of Humanities

Memorandum of Agreement between Postgraduate Student and Supervisor

THE STUDENT

accepts and undertakes the following roles and responsibilities:

1. Abiding by the relevant rules and regulations of the University.
2. Working independently under the guidance of the supervisor, and ensuring that she or he stays abreast of the latest developments in the field of study.
3. Agreeing with the supervisor, and abiding by, a time schedule which outlines the expected completion dates of various stages of the research work (See Supervisor section, #4 below).
4. Attending pre-scheduled meetings with the supervisor, and being adequately prepared for these consultation sessions (See Supervisor section, #5 below).
5. Submitting written work at times agreed upon by the student and the supervisor.
6. Taking account of the feedback provided by the supervisor before subsequent submission of written work.
7. Undertaking to submit the dissertation or thesis within the prescribed time for the completion of the degree unless exceptional circumstances arise, and to plan accordingly.
8. Accepting responsibility for the overall coherent structure of the final dissertation or thesis and, as far as possible, submitting written work that is free of spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and incorrect punctuation.
9. Undertaking to submit draft papers for publication, taking into account advice provided by the supervisor.
10. Informing the supervisor of any absence or circumstances that may affect the research progress and time line.

THE SUPERVISOR

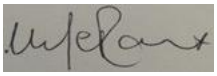
accepts and undertakes the following roles and responsibilities:

1. Abiding by the relevant rules and regulations of the University.
2. Assisting the student in building knowledge and research skills in the specific area of postgraduate study and relevant to the level of the degree.

1. Ensuring that the proposed research project is feasible, of an appropriate level for the degree under consideration, and that the necessary resources and facilities will be available to enable the student to complete the research timeously.
2. Providing information on the conditions to be met in order to achieve satisfactory progress/performance and assisting with the construction of a written time schedule which outlines the expected completion dates of various stages of the research work.
3. Being accessible to the student by attending meetings in line with a schedule agreed upon in advance by the supervisor and the student, and being prepared for the meetings.
4. Implementing an arrangement for student supervision in cases where the supervisor is away from the University e.g. sick leave, sabbatical leave, or leaves the employ of the University, and communicating these arrangements to the student timeously.
5. Accepting submission of written work at intervals agreed on by the student and supervisor, providing constructive comment and criticism within a time frame jointly agreed on at the start of the research, and informing the student, in writing, of any inadequacy relating to progress or work, in relation to the expectations previously agreed on by the student and supervisor.
6. Assisting the student with the production of the dissertation or thesis, providing guidance on technical aspects of writing including discipline-specific requirements.
7. Assisting with the publication of research articles as appropriate and agreeing the ownership of research results in accordance with the University's policy on intellectual property.
8. Contributing to the student's academic development by introducing her or him to relevant academic and professional networks through conferences, seminars and other events where possible.

THE STUDENT and THE SUPERVISOR:

1. confirm that we have read and understood this Memorandum of Agreement and agree to accept its content for the duration of the period of study in respect of the degree as specified below.



APPENDIX F: Turnitin similarity report

KMP481_FINAL_8 October.docx

by PJ (Philisile) Madikologa

Submission date: 08-Oct-2025 02:56PM (UTC+0200)
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APPENDIX G:

PROOF OF ARTICLE SUBMISSION TO THE *SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION*

SA Journal of Education

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