A STUDY ON TEXTING BEHAVIOUR OF MIZO YOUTH

Andrew Lalchhandama

Asst. News Editor
Regional News Unit, Doordarshan,
Aizawl Kendra, Aizawl, India.

Abstract: The study of the texting behaviour of Mizo youth is an important subject because the society ought to understand the behaviour of its youth and young children to make society safe and secure for they are the next adults of society. Especially, when the new technology has been emerged from every nook and corner, the youth are so influential that they would easily turn away with the new technology (mobile phones & text messages). To understand the possible effects that mobile phone texting brought to the youth and to make our society resistant to the bad effects of mobile phone texting is the scope of this paper.

***IndexTerms* – Mizo teenage, Mobile phones, texting message.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Though Mobile phone is introduced only in 2003, cell phones have become a craze in the small hill state of Mizoram, with more than half the population using the device. Among these, the number of youth outnumbered the rest of mobile phone users. More than half of them are youth and mobile phones play an important part to their lifestyle also.

Technology is a great leveller as it helps bridge gaps between people; it is evident from the fact that expanding telecommunications network in the region has brought Mizoram closer to the rest of the nation. Mizoram is now well connected with rest of the nation through cell phones as most of the service providers have set up their stops here.

Cell phones were introduced in Mizoram in 2003 and since then gained huge popularity over time. Middle-aged ladies carrying baskets full of firewood and packets of vegetables talking animatedly into the device or daily wage earners sending text messages between shifts are a common sight on the winding hilly roads.

The influences and effects have caused to the teenage tremendously. Specifically, among the Mizos the adolescence stage enjoyed and suffered the most in the society. Whenever new technology or device is invented the affects have always been focused on the youth. The results can be seen in a windfall outcome. This study is an attempt to draw the in-depth meaning of mobile phone texting to Mizo teenagers; how it shaped the lifestyle of the youth and the effects it caused through text messages.

The study of the texting behaviour of Mizo youth is an important subject because the society ought to understand the behaviour of its youth and young children to make society safe and secure for they are the next generations of society. Especially, when the new technology has been emerged from every nook and corner and the youth are so influential that they would easily turn away with the new technology (mobile phones & text messages). To understand, the possible effects that mobile phone texting brought to the youth and to make the Mizo society resistant to the bad effects of mobile phone texting is the scope of this paper.

Text message at the beginning:

The history of texting can be traced back to the year 1933, when the RCA Communication, New York introduced the first 'telex' service. The first messages over RCA transatlantic circuits were sent between New York and London. More than seven million words transmitted the first year.

In 1971, University of Hawaii began to use radio for sending digital information through ALOHAnet. The Concept of the SMS was started by Friedhelm Hillebrand of Deutsche Telekom and Bernard Ghillebaert of France Telecom, by developing a proposal for the GMS (Global System for Mobile) group meeting which was held in February 1985 in Oslo.

Messaging was first used in the year 1992, when Neil Papworth, a 22 year-old test engineer for Sema Group in the UK used a personal computer to send the text message "Merry Christmas" via the Vodafone network to the phone of Richard Jarvis who was at a party in Newbury, Birkshire which had been organised to celebrate the event.

However, in India, mobile telephony has been set up only for almost two decades though it ranked second most mobile phone users across the world. There are 886.3 million mobile phone users

India telecom industry underwent a high pace of market liberalisation and growth since the 1990s and now has become the world's most competitive and one of the fastest growing telecom markets. It has grown over twenty times in just ten years, from under 37 million subscribers in the year 2001 to over 846 million subscribers in the year 2011. India has the world's second largest mobile phone users based on with over 929.37 million users as of May 2012. It has the world's third largest Internet user-base with over 137 million as of June 2012. In 1995, the first mobile telephone service started on non-commercial basis on 15 August in Delhi.

After 1995, the government set up TRAI (telecom regulatory Authority of India) which reduced the interference of Government in deciding tariffs and policy making. The DoT opposed this. The political powers changed in 1999 and the new government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee was more pro-reforms and introduced better liberalization policies. They split DoT in two-one policy maker and the other service provider (DTS) which was later renamed as BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited).

Mizoram:

The existence of Mobile phone in Mizoram can be traced back to the year 2003, when the BSNL started the cellular phone for the first time in Mizoram. Within a short period of time, mobile phones users in Mizoram are numerously huge in numbers, with comparison to the other states of India.

In the early years of the introduction of mobile phones in Mizoram, no one could have ever imagined the possibilities of its popularity it has earned today. As mobile phones in those days, were considered to be used only by people like Journalists, Government officials and business men as the owners at first are few in numbers (Lengzem, 2003, November). It was only a few years later, that mobile phones reached its zenith in Mizoram. Today, mobile phones are seen to be almost in every one's hand.

The deputy General Manager, BSNL Mizoram, Mr. Lalhmachhuana said, that Mizoram is one of the largest number of mobile phone users as per the State population. It is like 10.5% of the population owned a mobile phone (2008). He stated that there are 48,335 BSNL phone connections in Mizoram, and there are 42,935 mobile phone connections which are both pre- paid and post paid connections. The latest economic survey reveals that out of a population of around 10 lakh, 5, 61,917 people carry mobile phones, is quite remarkable since, it was not an easy task for the people as their economy is heavily dependent on the service sector for sustenance.

Mobile phone and youth:

The new generations have therefore, not contributed much towards forming a "critical mass", but to significantly broadening the mobile telephone's dissemination base. However, their entry into the field has subsequently particularised international reading of the mobile, since they have done so as like an instrument of virtual fraternity. The mobile has particularly turned into a very useful instrument for adolescents to autonomously form their intimate circle of friends and of relations with school companions and/or enjoy sport, free time, etc., beyond parental control, With their way of acting in access, purchase and use, individuals also determine the manner of relationship they seek to maintain with technology.

According to the Eurescom (2001) study, young people/adolescents in Europe between 15 to 25 age and young adults from 25 to 34 years of age have the highest rate of introduction in the mobile phone (77.2% and 75.8%) (Eurescom, 2001: 14). Eurescom at the end of the year 2000 in nine European countries (Great Britain, Norway, Denmark, Holland, France, Spain, Italy, Germany and the Czech Republic)

Over 93% of Australian youth, between 15 to 24 years, owned a mobile phone (Galaxy Research, 2004). Some users engage in low level or minimal use, whilst others engaged in high level or excessive use (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005; Walsh & White, 2006).

In recent literature, examining mobile phone use, an emerging theme has been that of Mobile phone addiction. For instance, items measuring addiction symptoms were included in a problematic mobile phone use scale (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005) and addictive patterns of consumption have been noted amongst some users (James & Drennan, 2005; Wilska,(Brown, 1997). Australian youth have grown up with mobile technology and have incorporated mobile phone use into their daily lives; thus, they are arguably the most likely cohort to be demonstrating symptoms of addictive behaviour.

Mobile phones and Linguistic:

The mobile phone SMS service has developed rapidly since its introduction. It is very popular throughout the world, especially amongst young urbanites as it allows for voiceless communication, useful in noisy environments (bars and restaurants). Because of the limited message length and tiny user interface of mobile phones, SMS users commonly make extensive use of numbers for words (For example "4" in place of the word "for"), and the omission of vowels as in the phrase "Txt msg" which actually stands for "text message". Also, the syntactic structure of SMS texts is, for the most part, highly disjointed and incoherent. It is observed that texters have sacrificed form for content. Much attention is placed on what is to be communicated than on how it is communicated.

The effect has already been seen by the beginning of mobile phones in Mizoram. This happened not only inside Mizoram, but also among the Mizo students outside the state of Mizoram have learned to use mobile phones and short message service texting early in the millennium. The editor of Lengzem, Vanneihtluanga wrote in Lengzem that the Mizo students in New Delhi used to send messages in a short cut words.

Linguists such as Ling (2001) have all sought to analyse the effects of the ever-growing modern technology on language. As pointed out in Guth (1980), modern science and technology constantly need new words and expressions to cover their concepts and ideologies. Therefore, new inventions bring with them new vocabularies, expressions and attitudes. With the development of New Information and Communication Technology (henceforth NICT) and especially with the advent of the cell phone and its services, new words, expressions and syntactic structures have infiltrated into the linguistic continuum of Cameroonian and Nigerian texters.

Psychological aspects of Texting:

McKenna's recent work on the way the Internet can help some people develop relationships is drawn upon and taken a step further by exploring the differences between those who prefer texting ('Texters') and those who prefer talking on their mobiles ('Talkers'). A large sample of 982 respondents completed the questionnaire. Results showed there was a clear distinction between Texters and Talkers in the way they used their mobiles and their underlying motivations. The key finding to emerge in the preliminary analyses was that Texters seemed to form close knit 'text circles' with their own social ecology, interconnecting with a close group of friends in perpetual text contact. Compared to Talkers, Texters were found to be more lonier and socially anxious, and more likely to disclose their 'real-self' through text than via face-to face or voice call exchanges. Structural equation modeling produced a model showing that where respondents located their real-self and whether they were a Texter or a Talker mediated between the loneliness and social anxiety measures and the impact of these on relational outcomes, in line with McKenna's theoretical framework. Thus it appears that there is something special about texting that allows some people to translate their

loneliness and/or social anxiety into productive relationships whilst for others the mobile does not afford the same effect. The participants are active users of mobile phones, so the time they spent on mobile phone is a large sum of time from their daily routine.

Most of the participants said that they would always text all day if it is not school time. Even though schools do not allow mobile phones in school, some of them said that they carry phones in school most of the time. The girls told me that they spend most of their time for texting, while they spent less time for studies and for sleeping. They all have lost sleeping time because of text messaging, it caused to lack of sleeping due to texting as they used to stay alert even at a very late night.

Ms Wendy Ramthatpuii said," she would sometimes stay all night to text her friends or boyfriend. But, it seldom happens, only when she feels like to talk with them." Ms Lalnuntluangi and Ms Cindy lalpekkimi also said that they could stay late at night to chat with friends through mobile phone texting. And many more others, such as Mr. William Chawngthansanga and Mr. Emmanual Lallawmkima have also said that, they still text even in church or in class. However, Mr. Ch. Lalrempuia is of the opinion that he should leave his mobile phone aside during study hours, for which he believed that it distracts him.

DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSIONS:

The text messaging of teenagers is an interesting research subject that is, in a constant state of flux. The mobile phone has various meanings in everyday life of children and teenagers. For teens and 'preteens' the mobile phone has become an important and natural part of everyday life and the mobile phone functions both as a device in organising their daily life as well as a means to build social networks and define one's own personal space in relation to others.

The Mizo teenagers, mostly of students are using mobile phones to build relations with others. In this way, texting is a crucial part to bond their friendship with each other as they can stay in touch through messages. This study finds out that these teenagers do not talk only to their closed and familiar friends, but also the friends whom they met through messages and social media who are unknown until they come across through messages. These youngsters are more interested to talk or to chat with new friends they have met in messages than to talk with their friends they have in real life.

The teenagers who are using text messages to chat with friends usually prefer to talk to their opposite sex, because they find more interesting experience and they have more enthusiastic feelings when they chat with their opposite sex other than to talk to their same sex friends.

The time spent on mobile phones for texting or chatting with friends massively damaged the young teens in their studies and daily basis. Most of the young teens have been disturbed by mobile phone texting; they would always keep their mobile phones near so that they could text their friends and mates almost every minutes of their time. Some of them bring their phones in school as well as to church, so that they can easily text when it is needed. Some teens used to keep their phones with them even during their study time. They would not be able to draw concentration in their studies when they do not have their phones with them. Time spent on mobile phone is of so much consuming time for a school kid that it later leads to long term cause, before they even realized gradually it dominates the lives of the young Mizo teens.

The medium of language mostly used by Mizo youth in texting is 'Mizo', because they are comfortable writing in Mizo. There are lots of English words used in texting by Mizo teens, the comments and responses are mostly done in Mizo. However, one or two English words would sometimes be included in texting conversations. On the other hand, long English messages are popularly disseminated in group or to individual through text messages and other social media.

Using short cut words and abbreviations has a reasonable meaning among teenagers, as to shorten the content of text in a narrow space available in mobile phones. In other words, the young teens use abbreviation mostly because they feel that it is time consuming to type all the letters in a definite space in texting. In this way, many new forms of words and abbreviation have emerged that the adult or people who are not using abbreviations could not understand. We cannot say that they have created a new form of communication which could be considered as a secret code. Instead, the teens are creating a new form of communications through texting by using abbreviations and composing a new letter, because of the unavailability of Mizo letter in Mobile phones, the fixed area in text messages to inscribe all of the words which are needed to type in one message. Beside the above reasons, there can be numerous reasons to draw, like the creativity of forming new abbreviations by the young users of text message to understand each other easily by using these abbreviations.

Among the participants, only one third of them assured that using abbreviations affect in their writing in paper or studies that they often missed some words and spelling when they write in paper. Most of them do not mix abbreviations with proper words when it comes to writing. This is one of the interesting findings that using abbreviations in text messages do not affect the way of writing in students' academic writing as much as we thought it would be. But, it is also important to note that even the lesser numbers of the youth are often missing out the correct words, the effect would be easily visible in the coming generation.

The main purpose of using mobile phones and text messages by the youth is to get what they need and to experience new things and to meet new friends. It will not be wrong to say that mobile phones act as gratification factory where they can obtain anything they want anytime or anywhere. For this reason, mobile phones occupy the deepest part of their lives. This is the new form of lifestyle among the teenagers to possess a mobile phone as a fashion and to do texting as a new means to talk with friends, and not only friends but also a new place to meet new friends and mates through texting and other kinds of social media.

When studying the behaviour of the youth towards texting and social media, it is important to note that the young generation of the Mizo teens are living in their own sub-community and this has emerged since the birth of mobile phones. In society, every individual finds his or her own group where he/she can fit in. As a result, common people form a sub-community within society. Likewise, the existing generation of the youth are now building a peer group in a technologised way where they can meet people who are sharing common characteristics with them. A remarkable note is that the youth of Mizo teenagers are living in technology era where they can find peace and satisfaction through new media, though they are still trying to create a community amongst them.

By understanding teen's relationship through mobile phone, it should be taken into account that youth are not little adults or younger teenagers, but have their own styles of communication, needs and ways of thinking particular to them. As the immediate environment of youth is being technologised, the need for information on the interaction between the youth and the surrounding technological world becomes increasingly important. Cultural beliefs subscribed to by many parents are not enough to describe the variety of meanings and roles technology has in the life-world of a child.

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