
RESEARCH ARTICLE

HU U?: The Impact of Texting Language on the Academic Writing Proficiency of Second Language Learners

Hilda A. Manzolim, PhD¹ ✉ and Michelle Dela Cruz²

^{1,2}College of Arts and Sciences, Isabela State University Echague, Isabela

Corresponding Author: Hilda A. Manzolim, **E-mail:** hildamanzolim88@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined the common language used for texting between first- and second-year English language studies majors at a state university in the northern Philippines, as well as their writing skills. The methodology of total enumeration sampling was utilized to ascertain the study participants. The findings demonstrated that "Shortenings and Abbreviations" is the most often used texting language among the seven commonly used texting languages among the respondents. The results also revealed that the respondents' written performance had a relatively low level of writing competence, "Developing," which can be linked to their usage of acronyms and shorthands. These imply that the idea that textese, or texting language, is destroying language and influencing the language performance of the students has been proven and confirmed.

KEYWORDS

Textese, texting, shortenings, abbreviations, slang, rebus, phonetic styles, code-switching

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1. Introduction

Over the years, people have kept advancing technology and have produced various inventions that have improved their quality of life. The invention of computers, smartphones, the internet, and social networking sites are just a few of the technological inventions that dramatically changed the lives of people. It has improved the communication of people all throughout the world. Aside from communication, these inventions have also resulted in changes in language, which resulted in a new variety called texting language.

Texting language is the use of language in written form through text, social networking sites, and the internet. Also, with technological advancement, the quality of education improved and changed. Teachers and students nowadays incorporate smartphones, laptops, computers, and the internet as a tools for learning.

Texting Language is a new language variety that has made itself popular with people ever since text messaging arrived. In an article, Crystal (2008) said that the popularity of this new language variety is condemned as "textese", "slanguage", and "digital virus." This is due to the rallying hate for texting language. According to Humphrys (2007), the "texters, the SMS (Short Message Service) vandals who are doing to our language what Genghis Khan did to his neighbours eight hundred years ago." Humphrys (2007) emphasized his hate of text language in his article "I h8 txt msgs: How texting is wrecking our language," and emphasized that written language may end up in a series of ridiculous emoticons and ever-changing abbreviations if the time comes that it will dominate because its nature is attractive for young people.

More than ten years after Humphry wrote his article, it is true that texting has become popular, especially among young people. Not only series of ridiculous emoticons and ever-changing abbreviations, but also other forms of texting language have sprung up over the course of years. In a research conducted by Chaka, Mphahlele, and Mann (2015), they grouped the forwarded messages

of the students based on its features and made thirteen features of SMS Language: (1) Initialism/Alphabetism; (2) Phonetic approximations; (3) Misspellings/Typos; (4) Accent stylisations/Respellings; (5) Shortenings/Abbreviations; (6) Rebus, letter/number or number/letter homophones; (7) Combining two words; (8) Upper/Lower cases; (9) Contractions; (10) Aphaeresis; (11) Logograms/Emoticons; (12) G-clippings; and (13) Apostrophe omissions.

With its prevalence among young people, the use of texting language has effects to the academic performance and writing styles of students. Despite the rallying hate towards texting language, most research shows positive effects of texting language on the academe. According to Javed and Mahmood (2016), texting language is gaining popularity in today's time, but there is still a distinguishing line between formal English and text language. Another positive effect of texting language is that it may not only improve children's abilities in written language but may also enhance their grammar abilities in spoken language (van Dijk, van Witteloostuijn, Vasić, Avrutin, & Blom, 2016).

In an article, Warsi, M. (2017) stated that texting promotes the use of ungrammatical and poorer writing skills because people may be too comfortable shortening words or incorrectly writing sentences that are not acceptable in actual papers. According to Shafie, Darus, and Osman (2010), among weak students, the existence of SMS language in their examination script was detected by using Orthographic forms. This only means that students may be mixing texting language in their academe.

Although numerous studies have been conducted related to texting language and its influences on students' performances, studies with regard to the effects of texting language on the writing proficiency of students have been lacking. Also, studies with regard to texting language among students have only been conducted a few times in the Philippines. As the country that holds the title of being the "texting capital of the world" and the country that has the most active social media users (Lopez, 2021), this study aims to find the common texting language used within the locale and its effect to the level of writing proficiency of the students.

2. Review of Literature

Texting, chatting, or messaging is a form of communication with the help of technology. According to Lyddy, Farina, Hanney, Farrell, and Kelly O'Neill (2013), texting is a form of communication that has been continuously gaining popularity among younger generations. This popularity is due to the efficient, personal, cheap, and non-intrusive means of communicating (Ling & Pederson, 2005).

One characteristic of texting is that, in one text message that a sender could send, there is only a certain number of characters that he or she could use in order to express himself or herself. This 160-character limit in SMS may intuitively allow users to send brief responses (Walsh & Brinker, 2016). With this limit, it cannot be avoided that users maximize the use of the character in order to send as many words as possible and still be understood by the ones receiving the message. Texting, then, is a form of communicating where the non-standard or non-conventional use of language is enforced. This feature of writing is called 'Textisms.'

Textism refers to the unconventional use of language. According to Vosloo (2009), it is the use of abbreviations and other texting techniques in text messaging. Texting language is the use of language to communicate through text messaging on different platforms. Over the years, the use of texting has become a way to communicate not just across the country but all over the world. It is one way for people to get in touch with each other.

Texting language, textspeak, textese, Textslang, and SMS Language are just a few of the coined names of the language used in texting. According to Harris (2016), shorthand language has been used by many, especially those who use mobile phones, social media, and messaging applications and platforms. This language has made it popular for its short and efficient way of using the language and reminding of the proper use of grammar, correct spelling, and correct punctuation marks. According to Crystal (2001), texting is one of the most innovative phenomena of modern times. The users are allowed to use emoticons through punctuation marks and produce the meaning of words in shorthand language.

Today, the form of communicating through technology has evolved. According to Giacomini (2021), the journey of text messaging began in the 1990s. Texting, during this time, slowly became the regular form of communication. Nowadays, texting has also become chatting, emailing, posting, and tweeting. With its efficiency and fast-paced features, the use of informal language also evolved. According to Theses and Drum (2015), people have used textism on various media platforms. They have used informal language as it is incorporated into their daily communication, which can be seen in social media posts, chats, emails, comment sections, and tweets.

The use of informal language is popular among younger people, especially students. According to Crystal (2008), the existence of this language is condemned as a digital virus. This is due to the increasing hate towards the use of texting language, which is popular among kids and younger people. In contrast, Humphry (2007) expressed his hate towards the use of this language and put emphasis on how it will ruin the language.

In a study conducted by Dijk, Witteloostuijn, Vasić, Avrutin, and Blom (2016), it has been shown that textese or textism showed a positive effect on the writing performance of the children, refuting the suggestion of language deterioration.

Similarly, the study conducted by Dalisay. (2020) have shown that the English writing proficiency of the Grade Six Level pupils' frequency in texting has not affected their writing performance.

According to Dupa (2018), although the respondents were fond of using texting language abbreviations and shortcuts, they were still aware of the differences between informal and formal language. In terms of the grammar proficiency of the respondents, it has been shown that there is no significant correlation between the grammar proficiency and the texting practices of the respondents.

However, although there is research showing the positive effects of texting language on the writing performance of the respondents, some researches show otherwise.

The popularity of the texting language has grown through the younger generation, especially students, up to this day. Teachers become concerned about their students' language use, which may cause the language to deteriorate. According to Dupa (2018), text messaging among students has become a major mode of communication due to its convenience, which is why the existence of this language in their written outputs is seen. The use of language shortcuts and abbreviations became evident in their outputs through the errors in spelling and grammar (Dupa, 2018).

In 2017, Ne'matullah conducted a study among TESL students on their common use of WhatsApp language. It has been seen that students used acronyms and abbreviations in their WhatsApp applications. This use of acronyms and abbreviations was seen in the students' formal writings. According to Ne'matullah (2017), although the number of the existence of acronyms and abbreviations in the formal writing of ESL students is small, it still has given light that this use of language exists in a formal language and must be paid attention to.

Texting language has become popular, especially among young users of technology, such as cellular phones, smartphones, and personal computers. With the highest number of sent and received texts per day in the 2000s, the Philippines has set a new record in 2021 to have the greatest number of active social media users in the world. There was the texting language, "Jejemon," which is unique and popular among Filipino youth. Although "Jejemon" is nearly reaching its end, there are still texting language features that are present in Filipino texting. It is now fair to think that with these records, youth, mostly students, have now immersed themselves in the use of texting language. This type of language, which students are mostly exposed to, is far from the language that is taught in the academe. Within the two years of the pandemic, students' learning modality is online and remote, having less time to be immersed in academic writing. Hence, this paper will focus on determining the common texting language and the writing proficiency of students.

2.1 Statement of the Problem

This research study has identified the common texting language and the writing proficiency of the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies enrolled in a State University in Northern Philippines

Specifically, this answered the questions:

1. What is the common texting language of the respondents?
2. What is the level of writing proficiency of the respondents?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the common texting language and the respondents' level of writing proficiency?

3. Methodology

This research study employed a descriptive-correlation research design to determine the common texting language and the level of writing proficiency of the respondents. The respondents of this study were first- and second-year Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies students who are enrolled during the Academic Year 2022-2023 in a State University in Northern Philippines. They were selected since they are students who specialize in English Language Studies and have taken 2 years in remote and online learning.

The researcher used a research instrument that was divided into four parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of a letter ensuring the respondents' confidentiality in their participation in this study. The second part was the section where the profile of the respondents was collected. The third part made the students rewrite or transform a given phrase or sentence on a certain topic. From here, the researcher identified the common texting language used by the students. The fourth part of the questionnaire was an essay whose topic was about the learning experiences of the respondents during the pandemic. The level of writing proficiency of the respondents was determined using this essay.

After collecting the data needed from the respondents, the researcher analyzed the transformed text done by the respondents and identified seven common texting languages.

Table 1
Data Interpretation of the Common Texting Language of the Respondents

Scale	Mean Range	Descriptive Equivalent
7	7.0	R or Rebus
6	6.0-6.99	C or Contractions
5	5.00-5.99	UL or Uppercases and Lowercases
4	4.0-4.99	CW or Code-Switching
3	3.0-3.99	SA or Shortenings and Abbreviations
2	2.0-2.99	S or Slang
1	1.0-1.99	P or Phonetic Style

The table above shows the data interpretation used in interpreting the data collected on the common texting of the language. It shows the mean score and its equivalent descriptive rating. Mean score ranging from 1.0-1.99 have a descriptive interpretation of 'P' or 'Phonetic Style.' Items with a mean score of 2.00-2.99, 3.00-3.99, 4.00-4.99, 5.00-5.99, 6.00-6.99 and 7.00 have an equivalent description of 'S' or 'Slang,' 'SA' or 'Shortenings and Abbreviations,' 'CW' or 'Code-Switching,' 'UL' or 'Uppercases and Lowercases,' 'C' or 'Contractions' and 'R' or 'Rebus,' respectively.

The essay part of the questionnaire was analyzed and checked by Mr. Jefferson Pedida, MAEd, a faculty member of the Department of Languages and Literature, who served as an inter-rater to avoid bias and personal prejudice of the researcher. To check the essay, this research used a rubric crafted by Cupang National High School, Antipolo City in line with the standardized Rubric Assessment Tool for Performance Task in Essay Writing in the Secondary Level attached to Department of Education Order No. 31, s. 2020, given by the Department of Education, evaluates the writing outputs of secondary learners.

Table 2
Rubrics in Evaluating the Essay of the Respondents

Criteria	Excellent (8-10 points)	Good (6-7 points)	Fair (4-5 points)	Poor (0-3points)
Focus and Details	There is one specific, well-focused topic, Main Ideas are clear, and are well-supported by detailed and accurate information.	There is one clear, well-focused topic. Main ideas are clear but are not supported by detailed information or facts.	There is one topic, but main ideas are not especially clear.	The topics and main ideas are clear.
Organization	The introduction is inviting, states the main topic, and provides an overview of the argument. Information is relevant and presented in a logical order. The conclusion is strong.	The introduction states the main topic, and provides an overview of the paper. A conclusion included but does not strengthen the argument or position.	The introduction states the main topic. A conclusion is included, but is not especially relevant or supportive	There is no clear introduction, structure, or conclusion.
Voice	The author's purpose of writing is very clear and there is strong evidence of attention to audience. The author's knowledge of and/or	The author's purpose is somewhat clear and there is some evidence of attention to audience. The author's knowledge of and/or	The author's purpose is somewhat clear and there is some evidence of attention to audience. The author's experience	The author's purpose in writing is unclear.

	experience with the topic is evident.	experience with the topic is evident.	with the topic seems limited.	
Word Choice	The author uses vivid words and phrases. The choices of words seems accurate natural and appropriate.	The author uses vivid words and phrases. The choice of and placement of words is inaccurate at times and/or seems overdone or inappropriate for the subject matter.	The author uses words that communicate clearly, but the writing lacks variety and seems inappropriate to the subject matter.	The writer uses a limited vocabulary. Jargons and clichés are not used properly and detract from the meaning.
Sentence Structure, Grammar, Mechanics, and Spelling	All sentences are well-constructed and have varied structure and length. The author makes a very few errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling.	Most sentences are well-constructed and have varied structure and length. The author makes a very few errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling, but these mistakes do not interfere with understanding.	Most sentences are well-constructed, but they have a similar structure and/or length. The author makes several errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling.	Sentences sound awkward, are distractingly repetitive, or are difficult to understand. The author makes numerous errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfere with understanding.

Table 3
Level of Writing Proficiency

SCORE	DESCRIPTIVE RATING
45-50	Advanced
40-44	Proficient
35-39	Approaching Proficiency
24-34	Developing
23 and below	Beginning

The table above shows the range score and its descriptive rating that was used to identify the writing proficiency of the respondents. With a score ranging from 45 to 50, the proficiency level is equivalent to Advanced. Scores ranging from 40 to 44 have a level of writing proficiency of Proficient. Scores ranging from 35 to 39, 24 to 34 and 23 and below have a proficiency of Approaching Proficiency, Developing and Beginning, respectively.

As for the statistical treatment of data, frequency, mean, standard deviation and percentage were used to analyze the research questionnaires statistically. Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to study the significant relationship between the common texting language and respondents' level of writing proficiency. Furthermore, Krushkal Wallis H. Test (K.W. H. Test) was used to determine if there is a significant difference between the common texting language and the respondents' profile.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 4
Common Texting Language of the Respondents

Phrases/Statements	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. "Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover/Date"	2.78	S
2. "Hello."	1.89	P
3. "I do not know."	2.99	S
4. "My one and only love"	3.59	SA

5. "I like using Slang."	3.35	SA
6. "I will be back in a few minutes."	3.31	SA
7. "Let's talk later."	3.59	SA
8. "It is easier to communicate using shorten words."	4.62	CW
9. "Slang is a living language that evolves with time."	4.75	CW
10. "Oh my God!"	2.88	S
11. "But slang can be a barrier to communication."	4.86	CW
12. "You are so funny, you're making me laugh!"	4.28	CW
13. "It is easier to type slang words."	3.15	SA
14. "My friends and I get each other when we use slangs in our conversation."	5.46	C
15. "I am taking a picture of myself."	2.72	S
Grand Mean	3.52	SA

The table shows the descriptive summary of the respondents' common texting language. With a Grand Mean of 3.52, 'SA' or 'Shortenings and Abbreviations' appeared to be the most common texting language of the respondents. Items 4, 5, 6, 7, and 13, have mean scores of 3.59, 3.35, 3.31, 3.59, and 3.15 or the 'SA' or 'Shortenings and Abbreviation.' With the most occurrence in the different statements, 'SA' or 'Shortenings and Abbreviations' is the most common texting language used by the respondents. 'S' or 'Slang' and 'CW' or 'Code-Switching' both occurred four times in the statements, which implies that the respondents also frequently use these texting languages. 'P' or 'Phonetic Style' and 'C' or 'Contractions' occurred once in the statements, which meant that the respondents also used these languages as their common texting language.

While it's true that the respondents specialized in the English language, they often use shortenings and abbreviations because they have already established a relationship with the person they are communicating with. With these, the language used by both the sender and the recipient of the messages or texts is very common for them, and they can already understand their codes, symbols, and abbreviations without using complete spellings or wordings of their thoughts. Likewise, since they are already exposed to an environment where they often use shortenings, abbreviations, slang, and conde-switching, and no one among the interlocutors questioned nor stopped them from doing so, they just adapted it and used it as their texting style.

These results further imply that students preferred to use shortened versions of words and phrases and to use abbreviations to communicate through texting. Their preference for using a simple and easy way to communicate is due to the fact that the use of this language is efficient and fast. According to Chong (2021), this is a typical phenomenon nowadays because abbreviations are a modern trend online.

This conforms to the result of the study of Tayebenik and Puteh (2012), which states that abbreviations are common in conversations among the Net Generation. The use of this language is to communicate with their peers in the easiest way possible and be part of the trend.

In the study conducted by Ne'matullah (2017) it has shown that there is an existence of the acronyms and abbreviations in the formal writing of the students. Although the number of occurrences is small, it still has shown that students' use of this language in their formal writing is a matter to be concerned.

Table 5.
Respondents' Level of Writing Proficiency

Level of Writing Proficiency	Frequency	Percentage
45-50 (Advanced)	1	1.20
40-44 (Proficient)	8	9.64
35-39 (Approaching Proficiency)	11	13.25
24-34 (Developing)	40	48.19
23 and below (Beginning)	23	27.71

The Table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the scores of the respondents in their essays in order to determine the level of writing proficiency. Respondents who got a score 23 and below have a frequency of 23, which is 27.71 percent of the total number. These respondents have a 'Beginning' proficiency level. Respondents who got scores ranging from 24 to 34 have a frequency of 40 and are 48.19 percent of the population. Their scores mean that their proficiency in writing is 'Developing.' There are 11 (13.25%) respondents who got a score ranging from 35-39, which means that these respondents have an 'Approaching Proficiency' level in writing. 8 respondents, which are 9.64 percent of the population, have scores ranging from 40 to 44, which means that they are 'Proficient' in their level of writing. Only 1 respondent was able to get a score from 45 to 50, which is the 'Advanced' level of writing proficiency.

The results suggest that the students' performance in writing is at the level of development. As an English Language Major, this level of writing proficiency is not to be expected as they should be the ones showing great skills in writing. Although most students obtained a low level of writing proficiency, there are still few who have shown great writing skills, obtaining a higher level of writing proficiency. This could mean that these students have practiced and developed their writing skills as English Language Studies students.

The outcomes showed a relatively low level of writing proficiency for an English Language Major. According to the Department of Education, SEAMO, and UNICEF (2021), a study conducted in 2019 showed that only 1 percent of the Filipino learners have developed the proficiency in writing. As a country whose official second language is English, writing must be something that Filipinos developed. Although the 2022 EPI still shows that the Philippines has a High Proficiency level in the English Language (EF EPI, 2022), the country still slipped 4 down to 22nd rank among 111 countries. It is visible that there is a deterioration on the proficiency of the Filipinos in the English Language.

Table 6
Relationship between the common texting language and the respondents' level of writing proficiency

STATEMENTS	Mean	Desc	Corr.	Sig.
1. "Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover/Date"	2.78	S	0.14 ^{ns}	0.18
2. "Hello."	1.89	P	0.13 ^{ns}	0.24
3. "I do not know."	2.99	S	-0.19*	0.05
4. "My one and only love"	3.59	SA	-0.00 ^{ns}	0.95
5. "I like using Slang."	3.35	SA	0.10 ^{ns}	0.35
6. "I will be back in a few minutes."	3.31	SA	-0.07 ^{ns}	0.50
7. "Let's talk later."	3.59	SA	0.20*	0.05
8. "It is easier to communicate using shorten words."	4.62	CW	-0.01 ^{ns}	0.89
9. "Slang is a living language that evolves with time."	4.75	CW	0.07 ^{ns}	0.50
10. "Oh my God!"	2.88	S	-0.24*	0.02
11. "But slang can be a barrier to communication."	4.86	CW	0.14 ^{ns}	0.19
12. "You are so funny, you're making me laugh!"	4.28	CW	0.07 ^{ns}	0.48
13. "It is easier to type slang words."	3.15	SA	-0.02 ^{ns}	0.81

14. "My friends and I get each other when we use slangs in our conversation."	5.46	C	0.13 ^{ns}	0.22
15. "I am taking a picture of myself."	2.72	S	-0.00 ^{ns}	0.97

Note: *- significant ^{ns}-not significant

The Table shows the computed correlation between the respondents' common texting language and writing proficiency. Statements 3, 7, and 10 show that there is a significant relationship between the common texting language of the respondents and their writing proficiency, while the rest of the other statements show no significant difference between the common texting language of the respondents and their writing proficiency. Statement 3, with a mean score of 2.99, which has a descriptive rating of 'S' or 'Slang,' has a correlation to the writing proficiency of 0.19, showing a significance of 0.05. With a mean score of 3.59 and a 0.20 correlation, the common texting language 'SA' or 'Shortening and Abbreviation' statement 7 has shown 0.00 significant relationship in the level of writing proficiency of the respondents. In the 10th statement, the mean score is 2.88 and the correlation is -0.24 which resulted to 0.02 significance. This means that the common texting language, 'S' or 'Slang' among the students have a significant relationship on their level of writing proficiency. Although most common texting language have shown no significant relationship in the students' level of writing proficiency, 3 items showed significant relationship. The results mean that the students' common texting language has a significant relationship with their level of writing proficiency.

It can be implied that the low level of writing proficiency is affected by their use of texting language. This may be due to the fact that the respondents became comfortable using the informal language, textese, textism or texting language, which may have affected their writing proficiency. In texting, the unconventional use of language, grammar, incomplete sentences, punctuations and even the use of emoticons or emojis are highly favored by many as it is not bound to rules and are not required to be formal. With its prevalence among the younger generation, the use of this kind of language has been seen showing a negative relationship with the writing proficiency of the respondents.

These results conform to the result of the study by Osman (2020) that shows that text messaging has a negative impact on the writing skills of students. While Osman's study (2020) focused on the opinions of teachers, it also centered on the writing skills of the students themselves. In the research of Tayebenik and Puteh (2012), students' formal writing skills have been affected by the overuse of shortened words, and negatively affected their grammar skills. According to Ali, Khaliq & Hanan (2019), students are aware of the negative impacts of texting on their written outputs, but they are inclined to use it because it is convenient and an easy way to communicate with their peers.

However, in the study conducted by Dijk, Witteloostuijn, Vasić, Avrutin, and Blom (2016), they found that textism has no negative impact on the use of linguistic features of the children, indicating that if there is an effect found in their study, it is positive which implies that the children benefit from texting. In the study conducted by Aziz, Aziz, Avais, and Shamim (2013), they stated that the belief that the emergence and prevalence of texting language destroys Standard English has been demystified. Also, in the study of Buenviaje and Lopez (2017), they found that the texting habits of the students have no significant relationship with their writing skills, specifically in the structure of sentences.

5. Conclusion

Texting, chatting, or messaging is one way of communicating with the help of technology and has now become a huge part of the lives of people. It changed the way people communicate which has created new forms and uses of the language.

The result of this study adds to the existing body of knowledge about the effects of the texting language used by students on their writing proficiency. Although some studies have shown a great positive impact on the effects of texting on the writing skills of students, the findings of this study have suggested otherwise. The respondents' low level of writing proficiency can be related to their texting practices. Although the results of this study show a low number of correlations, the result must be taken into concern.

With these results, it can be drawn that with everything where receiving, sending, and doing is fast paced everywhere, people's preference for efficiency and ease is no doubt. Texting has made its way popular among people, especially students, for its features, which have become a major concern to many because of the informality of its use. In this study, the notion that textese, texting language or textspeak destroys the language and affects the writing proficiency level of the students has been mystified by the results. With the prevalence of informal use of language, it is recommended that students engage themselves less in using the language in shortened and abbreviated ways. Likewise, teachers should take a closer look at the proficiency of their students' writing skills. Activities and school requirements that require them to be engaged in writing are highly encouraged.

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Authors

HILDA A. MANZOLIM is a Professor VI of Isabela State University Echague Campus, Philippines. At present, she teaches Stylistics, Sociolinguistics, Research, Design Thinking and Purposive Communication. Her research interests include language and culture, speaking and writing proficiency, and trends and issues in English language studies.

MICHELLE ANGELI DELA CRUZ is a graduate of Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies at Isabela State University Echague Campus, Philippines. At present, she is a customer service representative at JQ Global Solutions, Incorporated. Her research interests include language learning and English language proficiency.