

An Investigation Into the Impact of Shortened Texting on Muslim Learners' Correspondence Ability

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Abstract

High penetrability of wireless, mobile, portable, and handheld devices has resulted in education for all as the mobile's challenge coincides with an unprecedented growth in access to pedagogical materials technology, particularly in developing countries (UNESCO Mobile Learning Week Report, 2011). The present study set out to discover how Muslim learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) are encouraged to think about and learn the Islamic instructions—as an integral part of their native culture—in TL by incorporating communicative skills through the pedagogically mediated application of cell-phone. The user groups of interest were 218 Iranian second-year male and female students of translation studies at Payame Noor University, from age range of 21-24, homogenized as upper-intermediate through conducting Nelson English language proficiency test, level 400 A. They were spread randomly across 109 dyads to learn technology-enhanced materials in 36 nonformal sessions. To equip the Muslim learners with lifelong linguistic and social knowledge for constructing conversational bridges for full participation in civic life at international level, abbreviated letter writing notes were already adapted to the cell-phone screen to be accessed by the learners via the SMS application. The final application was given to the participants for actual use and evaluation for a period of 1 academic semester. After the students had finished learning didactic messages, interactive SMS quizzes were sent to evaluate their performance. The analysis suggested that significant gains occurred as a result of mobile-based representation of shortened Islamic contents in English which was congruent with the learners' favorable attitude towards embracing brevity for lifelong learning of TL contents via SMS.

Keywords: Abbreviated Didactic Notes; Lifelong Learning; Muslim Learners; SMS

1. Introduction

As wireless, mobile, portable, and handheld devices through employing technologies which are portable, personal, and ubiquitous are gradually finding their ways into every sector of education in both developed and developing countries (Traxler, 2007), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) as a nonformal SLA context, where the TL is used as a means of instruction and communication excited foreign language teachers and learners to embrace this effective novel route to contrive a better educational environment. Thus, mobile learning (m-learning) has the potential to be an important instrument for lifelong learning (Chen, Hesieh, & Kinshuk, 2008; Holzinger, Nischelwitzer, & Meisenberger, 2005).

It is often argued that mobile devices are particularly suited to supporting social contacts and collaborative learning. This is underlined by the communicational advantages of mobile devices, which are closely linked to conversational definition of learning, namely learning as the outcome of effective communication and as socio-culturally bound and contingent on factors such as co-learners, time, location, and resources (Pachler, Seipold, & Bachmair, 2011).

As educational systems seek to provide more interactive, and engaging learning, the number of people capable of producing MALL content is also on the rise, due largely to a combination of increased popularity, demand and the advent of content generation tools that simplify the programming process through the use of templates and macros (Wong, Boticki, Sun, & Looi, 2011). To interweave m-learning into the learners' personal knowledge, interests, and learning needs (Kukulkska-Hulme, Sharples, Milrad, Arnedillo-Sánchez, & Vavoula, 2009) MALL designers have begun to move away from merely copying the traditions of standard nonmobile language learning and are implementing techniques that maximize the benefits of these new devices.

Educators believe that mobile devices could enhance the outcomes if learning activities integrated with meaningful contexts. Alavi and Leidner (2001) suggest that new studies should leave behind the stimulus-response theory, into which most technology based educations have hitherto been grounded, and take up the integration of content with language-teaching aims or different needs of learners and teachers. Keeping aloof from developing of digital learning material as preorchestrated content, the new approach should combine the teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills. The students, thus, receive curricular information and do their academic tasks in the TL and, at the same time, acquire the TL in a very natural way (Madrid & Sánchez, 2001). In this vein, Widdowson (1979) believes that because meaning merges from context, pragmatic equivalence can only be established by considering what utterances count as in context.

After the introduction of the direct method into the English Language teaching, cultural elements began to be considered as an important aspect of learning the language, and in postmethod era, cultural background knowledge is accepted as an inseparable part of in teaching language.

Although in our postmodern context, the rise of the power and authority of the media has accompanied the seeming decline in the power and authority of religion in the local and wider culture (Morris, 2009), common culture and common language facilitate interaction between individuals. Communication between Muslims would be smoother if all terms were shared as members have incentives to learn the other languages and cultures so that they have a larger pool of potential interaction partners (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012).

In this regard, developing interaction among members of Islamic discourse community underline the need for reliable methods both to identify key terms or phrases characterizing texts and to link them with other texts and knowledge sources (Pazienza, 2003). Similarly, the successful implementation of integrating advanced technologies with any-time, any-place propagation of Islamic instructions with the aim of facilitating communication among members of Islamic societies needs the formation of coalitions and alliances among nonformal and formal modes of content representation around which the knowledge, skills and aptitudes of the citizens of Islamic world as a major factor in the changing world's innovation and productivity begin to develop.

In such an environment, the ability to manage different kinds of knowledge assumes an important role. Hence, there should be impetus for educators and instructional designers to consider the following critical success factors with all m-learning implementations: context, mobility, learning over time, informality, and ownership (Cobcroft, Towers, Smith, & Bruns, 2006) to provide answers to the growing and special needs of the lifelong learning era (Beller & Or, 1998).

Since the 1970s, the lifelong learning approach to education that grew from the institution of formal education has been articulated which neither embraces nor challenges institutional education, but is complementary to it. The approach has gained currency through attempts to harness it as a means of providing citizens with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a rapidly changing world (Pachler, Cook & Bachmair 2009; Sharples, 2000). Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) have paid a great attention to this issue and have concluded that "natural communication (in which people care about the ideas being discussed rather than whether they are being expressed correctly) triggers the subconscious acquisition of communication skills in that language (and ensuing lifelong learning)" (pp. 14-15).

The rising interest in lifelong learning stems from the fact that all major mobile tasks, including mapping, navigation, manipulation, target tracking, planning, and learning can be performed more accurately and more reliably when formulated and addressed as online learning problems (Moura, 2012). In other words, mobile technology may pave the way for diffusion of a social model where learning and knowledge are accessible to all, regardless of social and economic background, age, gender, religion, ethnicity or disability (The MOTILL Project, 2010).

As one principal means of lifelong study, continuing education with such prominent features brings up novelty and tremendous progress, and gains on educational concept, process, forms, methods and management are becoming an important indicator of country's technological development and social progress (Long, Zhaohui, Gengsheng, & Xiaoqin, 2008).

Whereas studies that are related to content-based development usually focus on more formal contexts that are associated with learning courses rather than independent language learning, investigations in the area of design issues tend to refer to the nonformal nature of many manifestations of mobile learning (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008).

SMS has a natural affordance for verbal interaction as cell-phone subscribers primarily use phones to send and receive from. In educational environment like other sectors of society where m-learning integrates with the information systems of the academic institutions (Colazzo, Molinari, Ronchetti, & Trifonova, 2005), text messaging has turned into a take-for-granted channel of content delivery.

The abbreviation and SMS language as optimized representatives of mobile-mediated communication have become a part of the multilingual world in the recent past. Such application in English often involves the single letters replacing words (Doring, 2002). SMS language aims at creating communication by means of simple structures. Parallel with the advance in technology, cell-phones have increased limit for characters in one message. However, nowadays using abbreviations for texting has become more of a fashion trend to save time (Parwani, 2010).

SMS, multimedia messaging service (MMS), and other modern forms of communication are creating new writing practices that often undermine traditional, standard English in favor of faster, more effective communication. Whereas one might effectively argue that teaching standard English remains important for formal or business communication, it is also fair to say that English is becoming more complex than ever, and our students will need to be flexible and efficient users of a

vast array of discourses that isolated, drill-oriented grammar lessons simply will not teach (Alsup & Myers, 2007). Likewise, as the rapid change in information and technology has made print literacy culture more accessible, the era of emailing, texting, and other social networking brings us toward a print literacy culture that leaves us an indefinite standard of English, with the communicators having an ambivalent, virtual identity (Gunawan, 2009).

Some English authors believe that abbreviations and SMS pose a threat to the purity of the English language (Tabuashvili, 2012). In certain cases, communication is complicated by the fact, that some abbreviations can be understood differently by a reader. Text does not always follow or obey usual grammar and in addition the words used are not documented in standard English dictionaries or known by English language academies. Therefore, Establishing a corpus of replicated findings through investigating effects that have been found in a variety of contexts and with a variety of learners through well-designed and carefully executed researches seems indispensable (Mayer, 2003).

Through exploiting formality and nonformality features of text messaging for preparing the Iranian students for the range of academic demands they would have to face with, this study was aimed to explore the relationship between the Muslim students' learning of English letter writing skill for communicating Islamic instructions and content types, using cell-phone with a rich learning environment where the crucial features of technology such as video, abbreviated and nonabbreviated text, and music can be utilized for involving formal and nonformal modes of content-based development and designing issues in text based study materials. In other words, learners were exposed to abbreviated and nonabbreviated presentations of instructional contents and their recognition and recall were tested to see how brevity of contents representation can increasingly function as the exclusive language of virtual world's discourse communities and technology succeeded in consolidating Muslim learners' life-long communicative skills. To that end, a framework on the basis Sharples' (2000) model for learning in nonformal daily situation was identified. This model is employed whenever there is a break in the flow of routine daily performance and the learner reflects on the current situation, resolves to address a problem, to share an idea, or to gain an understanding.

This study was prompted by the fact that writing letter notes with and without abbreviation delivered through mobile technology can affect the quality of achievement differently. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted to identify whether brevity motivate or hinder the Muslim students in the process of language learning in a content-based m-learning module, namely, to discover how content types come into interaction with the abilities of learners in

learning of foreign language letter writing. As a result, the following questions can be raised:

1. Does content-based instruction mode of teaching involving representation of English letter writing notes glossed with abbreviated contents and guidelines through cell-phone culminate into Muslim learners' life-long learning?
2. Does Muslim learners' attitude towards application of abbreviation in instructional contents for delivery through the medium of mobile technology have any significant impact on their performance?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Parallel with successful modernization of the world's countries some researchers have acknowledged the challenges of intercultural communication in an increasingly globalised world (Hopkins, 2002; Nault, 2006; Sifakis & Sougari, 2003), this study was conducted among 218 out of 223 sophomore Iranian male ($n = 84$) and female ($n = 134$) students of translation studies, aging 21-24 spread randomly across 109 dyads at Payame Noor University to learn the Islamic instructions in TL by integrating English letter writing skill and through the cell-phone enhanced materials in 18 nonformal virtual sessions. The course was compulsory by the Iranian ministry of science, research, and technology (MSRT). Also, they were homogenized as upper-intermediate through conducting Nelson English language proficiency test (Coe & Fowler, 1976) *400 A* which seemed suitable for confirming the learners' upper intermediary level of language proficiency. This process led to omission of five participants with low language proficiency level. Nelson English language test is a battery consisting of 40 separate tests for each of ten levels from beginners to advanced. Each test consists of 50 items. The tests are designed for a 30 (60%) pass mark. Its reliability was calculated through KR-21 in the pilot study, and it was .84. The validity was also confirmed by three competent experts in this field. Details about the participants are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participants' Characteristics*

Gender	Age Range	Number
Male	23.85	84
Female	22.41	134

2.2 Materials

Questionnaire: First part of the questionnaire (section A) asked learners to provide information about whether or not they are interested in employing abbreviated form of texting in mobile-enhanced mode of language pedagogy; in addition in this section the students were asked to answer a question on whether or not they are interested in attending more English language training courses to

improve their proficiency in the English language on a Likert scale ranging from 'Not at all' through to 'For all tasks', followed by open questions (section B) to let the learners express their interest in learning English written formal and nonformal correspondence notes through mobile devices, in here cell-phone. The purpose was to remove those who were given a choice to opt out of taking part in such a study. Section C which included questions to identify students' attitudes towards culture and collaborative learning of English. In addition, the questionnaire let the learners express their interest in learning TL through mobile devices, in here cell-phone for the purpose of removing those who were given a choice to opt out of taking part in such a study. Furthermore, the questions were useful in determining which aspects of mobile technology were important for the learners. The questionnaires were distributed and collected via short texting. Its reliability was calculated through the Cronbach alpha and it was 0.83. Its validity was confirmed by five experts in TEFL and sociology. It was anonymous (see Appendix A).

Software Package: In order to be able to process logical pieces of content according to the application scenario, namely, the capability of offering real opportunities to Muslim learners to learn and maintain communicative skills and to help ensure that the put in place to meet the standards is rich in information and problem-solving intelligent software package for mobile device platforms was designed. Openness towards applications was the prominent feature of the software, that is, there being no difference between the phone's core applications. The software and applications are connected through the medium of connection gateway (Internet & global system for mobile [GSM]). Also, in this context, where Iranian Muslim learners all owned a cell-phone a server was set up, the applications are built to have equal access to the data bank. Major text messaging connections in this study was enabled by GSM. In addition, each learner's performance was recorded in server. Furthermore, in this didactic module learners were able to schedule a tutoring session with a tutor who provided them guided tutoring through each didactic points and exercises. The diagram of the module is shown in Figure 1.

The theoretical framework of this software package embraced constructivist-based account and was grounded on Gass and Mackay's (2007) Interaction Framework; which incorporates not only the comprehensible input hypothesis but also the comprehensible output hypothesis (Swain, 2005) that producing comprehensible output is essential to acquisition. As well as placing importance on the availability of comprehensible input and the generation of comprehensible output, the Interaction Framework focuses on learner interaction, negotiation over meaning and various types of feedback as the key mechanisms for language learning.

Learning Content: This course structure consisted of 90 notes on English letter writing and for each note there were textual and test correspondence. The learners sent his answers via a text message and at last the system verified the results and sent the students a new SMS containing the test results.

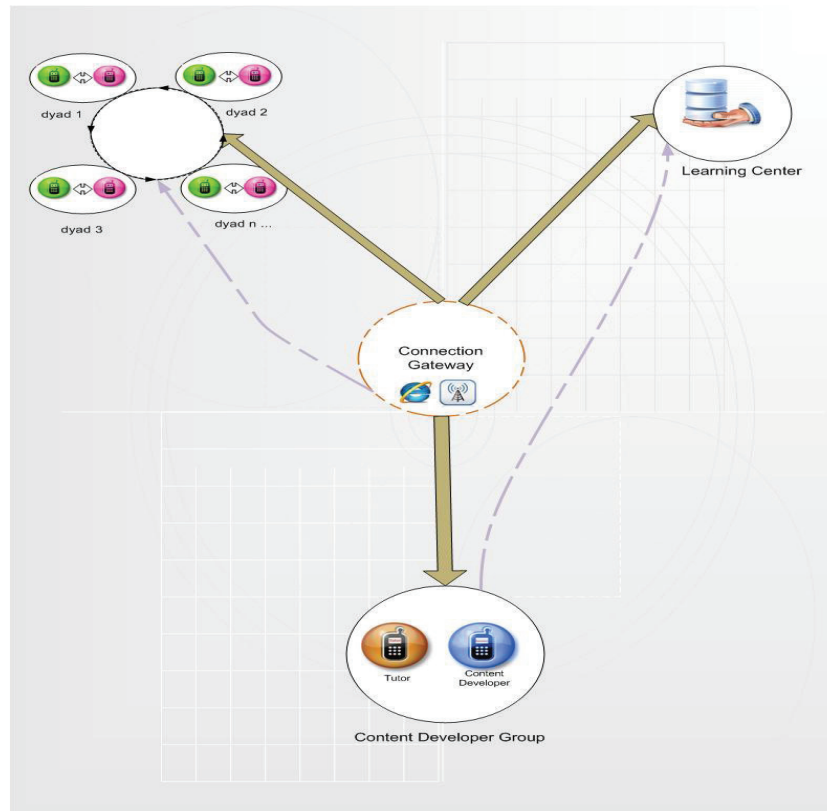


Figure 1. The Diagram of the Module

With the aim of maintaining a simpler interface for the mobile, each slide was limited to 18-30 items (abbreviated and nonabbreviated) so that the user was able to scroll easily. Applying the Qur'ānic criteria of contracts, convention, and customs two types of materials from Islamic contents were designed to be displayed on learners' cell-phone through the medium of short texting as follows:

Type I: Nonabbreviated representation of letter writing notes; Type II: abbreviated representation of letter writing notes. Samples of abbreviated and

nonabbreviated letter writing notes on how to write English letter for making appointment are displayed in Figure 2:



Figure 2. Samples of Abbreviated and Nonabbreviated Letter Writing Note on Making Appointment

As the focus of the study to identify how and why learners did or did not employ shortened texting for letter English correspondence learning when they had alternative forms of completing the activities, a 2×2 Latin Square (LS) design was undertaken for conducting the major phase of this study which counterbalanced the effect of the order of representations. According to Montgomery (1991), one of the frequent uses of LS is to counterbalance the various sequences in which the level of an independent variable might take place. In LS, each of the two digits or letters (1, & 2 or A, & B) would appear just once in each row and column. Figure 3 shows a 2×2 LS.

A	B
B	A

Figure 3. 2×2 LS

In this research project, the first 30 letter writing notes were delivered to first participant in dyads in abbreviated form and the last 30 notes in nonabbreviated forms. At the same time, the second participant received the first 30 letter writing notes in nonabbreviated format, and the last 30 notes in abbreviated texting.

Mobile-Assisted Language Skills Assessment Battery (MALSAB): "Navigating any type of educational change is a complicated process, and the move to online assessments brings with it great opportunities and unique challenges," Slover (2012, p. 2) said. Although learners' correspondence in two formats of shortened and nonshortened texting throughout the virtual course formed the major part of assessment, a test battery comprised of 70 multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank question items on vocabulary retention and recall, namely tests of English vocabulary recognition and recall (EVR) was designed, too. Also, it contained three specified topics that students were required to write three letters to their Muslim counterparts through wireless channel of communication. They provided some information regarding learners' ability in spelling, grammatical points, letter writing mechanics, and vocabulary learning alongside the widespread information learners' correspondence during the course provided.

2.3 Procedure

The MALL project in this study focused on learners viewing letter writing points through the medium of text messaging to communicate with their counterparts via proper application of notes by the same channel. Because lifelong learning is primarily collaborative rather than competitive, development of certain social platforms in which multiple learners were able to participate and share their input and thoughts over Islamic instructions seemed unavoidable. Thus, to conduct the major phase of the study participants were randomly divided into 109 dyads.

Introductory Phase (Section A): An orientation was held in the introductory session to show learners how to configure personal attitudes. Time was also spent on ensuring that learners understood how to complete the actual activities themselves.

Section B: The learners were required to complete the attitude questionnaire.

Phase II (Content Delivery): Pedagogically, as Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) argue, activities that capitalize on mobility and portability—the very rationale for using mobile technologies—are not as commonplace as one might hope, and although the "anywhere" factor is often not an issue, the 'anytime' part is, where learners are sent messages by SMS at either fixed times, or times that suit the teacher, a tendency which seems to defeat the purpose of using mobile technologies at all. Hence, hybrid mode composed of pull mode of operation in which a student can order specific information based on a menu of all listed content on a Web page or paper handout and the one-way, unsolicited message from teachers to the learners or push model, as Mellow (2005) defines, was formed for deploying texting. To those ends learners' preferences concerning the time and the frequency of SMS texts were taken into consideration in designing the curriculum (see Appendix B).

Class meetings were scheduled based on an 18-session syllabus, that is, at the frequency of four letter writing notes each session. Getting the students' cell-phone numbers, the researchers sent 109 dyads of Iranian sophomore an average frequency of four notes per day in the form of SMS, including LS-based delivery of both abbreviated and nonabbreviated items.

Moreover, during conducting the major phase of study, students reported that when they met their peers in dyads they found that they had no difficulty in understanding their fixed partners. Frequent contacts have enabled them to tune in to their partners' pattern. On the other hand, due to their constant exposure, peers develop special skills as interlocutors, but these skills make them atypical interlocutors and therefore unsuitable as writer or addressee at least on some occasions. Accordingly, constant change of members along dyads was undertaken as an ideal way for avoiding an abnormal amount of exposure with an identified partner.

To develop the materials task-based and involve the learners in the practical use of the language there was a daily exercise among dyads based on the didactic notes represented on learners' cell-phone. They were required to write letters around the specified topics via texting throughout the semester which provided information on the number of attempts on abbreviated forms, along with the overall accuracy measures of the writing mechanics. Writing task of this type helped them prepare for subsequent correspondence with members of Islamic communities. For this purpose, conducting major phase of the study software system was programmed for one-on-one communication between the trainer and learners and between learners. The data bank logs kept records of the platform the learners used to complete a task.

Phase III (Testing): After the third phase (i.e., content delivery), the learners took in MALSAB which included a letter writing tests and EVRR tests. All the users received 70 test question items randomly selected from the test item bank. Also, the server logged dyads' correspondence during the implementation of second phase of the course which served as formative assessment of learners' performance that increased the data available to teachers, who analyzed that data (Devaney, 2013). Immediate feedback was provided on each test. The frequent correspondence in L2 among dyads during the virtual course and conducting MALSAB with ending of the semester caused the two summative and 18 formative components to be included in the assessment design. In other words, the results of learners performance in battery were analyzed in conjunction with other information gathered during the course in this respect, namely, writing letters in dyads.

2.4 Interview

The feedback from participants provides the greatest indication of the benefits of mobile-assisted distance education (Pouezevara & Khan, 2007). This

type of feedback on mobile-enhanced setting provides material developers with proper opportunity to learn how to appropriately engage or disengage learners to the communication process in virtual world. Therefore, after all phases were completed, a focus group interview was conducted, for which 35 participants were selected to gauge the satisfaction of learning language through the high-tech media. To effectively evaluate the assumptions, the interview questions revolved around the aims for conducting the study. It was composed of modified open-ended questions that were originally proposed by Al-Seghayer (2001) and Chen et al. (2008). It asked questions regarding whether or not they felt any differences between the cell-phone and the conventional platform, and to describe their views regarding their experience with prominent novelty of texting via cell-phone, namely succinctness feature of SMS. The major questions were as follows:

1. Does it make a difference? Learning L2 letter writing via mobile and conventional mode.
2. What are the good features in this kind of m-learning environment that help you, as a language learner, to effectively learn English correspondence?

Feedback from the participants revealed that m-learning enables learner-centered education, particularly in comparison to conventional manner of education. Regarding increased interaction, they attested the convenience of greater ubiquity that m-learning affords. They asserted that one of the assets among the kaleidoscopic ones that m-learning can offer is the collaborative leaning activities that use succinct instant messaging. Instant messaging can prove to help new type of virtual interaction where instructor and learners can communicate with each other and resolve any kind of inquiries, problems that the learners might be facing.

Evaluations revealed high level of satisfaction with the shortened type of content and effectiveness of the training program as simply keeping everyone in a group up to date on activities undertaken by members of Islamic society. In other words, emphasis on attending to abbreviated form of correspondence fosters interaction to facilitate the acquisition of a repertoire of Islamic instructions in TL. In fact, by recourse to abbreviations as they were used in daily application of SMS, in structuring content for pedagogical SMS not only are teachers able to solve this problem, they also reduce their distance between themselves and learners and mark parts of the teaching process affect-laden.

Although, the small screen and keypad were the major grounds for learners' complaint about application of m-learning, this was not to the extent that dissuades students from even attempting to use the mobile platform.

3. Results

The data were collected at three phases using mobile-assisted language skills assessment battery (MALSAB), oral interview and Likert-type questionnaire. The learners' performance and usage patterns were determined through analysis of

detailed server logs which contained learners' short texting correspondence throughout the course and comprised the raw data for evaluation of learners' spelling as well as their ability in proper application of grammatical and mechanic points. This study reports the analyses of 7,848 logs obtained from interaction of Iranian learners of English. Recognition scores limited to evaluation of learners' performance in final summative tests (EVRR, and writing letter on three specified topics) and it comprised of learners' score in correct application of new vocabulary items; however, recall tests composed of learners' scores on spelling and retention.

As for the participants of this study, the analysis showed a mean of 74.64 on recognition and 43.16 on recall test for nonabbreviated types of materials. In a somewhat salient manner, as Table 2 shows, the results of the two tests for the same participants rose to around a mean of 86.77 for shortened type of instructional contents. This showed that didactic materials of this kind have some bearing on the learners' tendency towards brevity in the present millennium.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics: Recognition, Recall, and Average Scores of the Participants*

Group	N	Age range	Recognition Score		Recall Score		Average Score	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	109	22.89	95.46	4.56	78.09	6.18	86.77	5.82
	109	23.05	74.64	12.21	43.16	14.82	58.9	12.82

The inferential statistics also revealed that the differences between abbreviated vs. nonabbreviated remained significant (*Sig.* .000, $p < .05$). Succinctness supported students as they move forward in application of SMS in communication through the medium of high-tech wireless media to focus on the gist to help inform their interlocutors (see Table 3):

Table 3. *Inferential Statistics: Comparison of the Learners' Performance*

Differentiation of Scores	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Recog ₂ -Recog ₁	4.16	0.000
Recall ₂ -Recall ₁	2.12	0.011
Ave ₂ -Ave ₁	3.36	0.000

Note. Recog, and Ave. mean recognition and average scores, respectively.

However, as Table 4 displays detailed analysis of learners' correspondence unfolded that accuracy of learners' spelling skill was closely related to broadness of experience with nonabbreviated forms of linguistic items; that is, employing shortened form of texting overshadow learners' spelling, and structural (grammatical + letter writing mechanics) proficiencies (means of 53.44 and 139.94 [mechanics of

writing with a mean of 69.08, and grammar with a mean of 70.86] for spelling and structural skills, respectively):

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics: Learners' Scores in Structure and Spelling Tests*

Group	Structure				Spelling	
	Writing Mechanics		Grammar		Mean	SD
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	69.08	14.16	70.86	11.87	53.44	10.26
2	74.22	6.72	83.07	6.12	64.67	4.95

Note. Std. deviation means standard deviation.

The higher the score of the learners' English vocabulary learning assessment through the logs and recognition, and their underperformance in correct spelling and proper application of letter writing grammar and mechanics at the time of employing abbreviated form of linguistic items were the important findings that the inferential analysis of the results revealed, too (see Table 5):

Table 5. *Inferential Statistics: Comparison of the Learners' Performance in Structure and Spelling*

Score Differentiation	Sig.	
Structure. ₂ -Structure. ₁	3.87	0.000
Spelling ₂ -Spelling ₁	2.43	0.006

The results revealed that the learners were affected by the change in shortened type of content because they needed to find harmony in the employing of such abbreviated content where mainstream communication was concerned. In other words, due to congruency between the learners' attitude and performance, it could be claimed that the learners positive attitude towards employing succinct type of texting in learning correspondence in TL with their counterparts in Islamic societies was reified into actual cell-phone use.

Responses from the Iranian sophomore learners as participants of this study regarding m-learning have for the most part been positive and feed into the succinct virtual world. They welcomed the fact that they were able to schedule a didactic session with a tutor and sharing contents with a limitless number of their counterparts in virtual environment who provided guided tutoring and collaboration through each learning points, and exercises.

The interesting point is that for major portion of L2 communication tasks, it is abbreviated (69/86% of all the cases) rather than full form of words and expressions that lent themselves to the whole process of implementing of the study which came into play and facilitated the flow of thought and consequently the intended language. It seemed highly probable that students' attitudes towards

abbreviated and nonabbreviated differences played an important part in their performance.

The pattern of abbreviation usage in the learners' correspondence revealed an ascending trend. In other words, learners employed abbreviation in wider range of interactions as they became more familiar with shortened forms of texting and when they were more integrated into the Islamic community. Almost 90% of learners had shortened texting as their dominant communication and used it regularly in the context of English correspondence with their Muslim counterparts (see Figure 4):

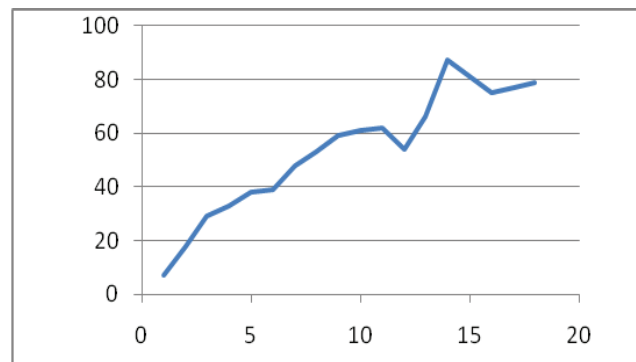


Figure 4. Ascending Trend in Learners' Tendency for Employing Abbreviated Type of Texting

4. Discussion and Conclusion

As the results of the present study indicate, cell-phones, if properly programmed, can help enhance the learning conditions to accrue lifelong learning. Of course this is not to say that other alternatives are not to yield the same results. In the present study, it was shown that the learners with their special environment are most likely to enjoy the related shortened contents on Islamic instructions. Overall, the results thus obtained seem to bear testimony to the claims that the context is very important for understanding SMS language (Kormos, 2006). Thus, new approaches to MALL should move beyond simple text drills (Joseph & Uther, 2009), that is, the crucial role played by the material generators, whether in designing Islamic English learning content or in bridging languages and cultures.

The important finding in the present study is that the learners could take advantage of the basic materials with abbreviation, the major function of which was clearly to express solidarity and to establish Muslim learners as members of Islamic community especially when the initiative matures. In fact, abbreviation as a jargon established a pedagogical environment for members of Islamic communities that foster communication, collaboration, sharing of instructional resources, and both

independent and group learning, and then support the didactic cycle. This surprising result has already been explained by advertisers as brevity component was combined in mobile-mediated communication to reinforce the message.

Another important finding in the present study was that about 7% made no attempt at all to use the cell-phone for completing the didactic activities. This surprising result has already been explained by Gay, Stefanone, Grace-Martin, and Hembrooke (2001) and Stockwell (2008) to this effect that simple ownership of a technology and having the skills to use it does not necessarily relate to whether or not learners will actually use it.

Although frequent use of abbreviated forms of word items and expression in text messaging can improve foreign language literacy among students by giving them extra exposure to word composition in nonclassroom setting, it can undermine learners' reading and writing. This claim sounds a bit counterproductive if evaluated against the report on the association between spelling and text messaging made by Paton (2011). This report upholds the idea of the highly phonetic nature of the abbreviations used by learners and the alphabetic awareness required for successfully decoding the words; thus, combining shortened form of texting increases the likelihood of learning. Moreover, the results reached in this study showed that full form representation of linguistic items culminated into outperformance of learners in flawless spelling of them. In this respect, didactic materials developers need to smooth the way to assess and compare abbreviated linguistic items to balance them by incorporating the nonabbreviated or complete forms as a fundamental basis.

On the whole, short texting as a prominent feature of cell-phone mediated communication is a compound rather than a coordinate facility. Whereas the aforementioned findings may cast some light over the issue of technology enhanced language learning, it is not possible to read too much into a research of the present scale. Overall, the results obtained in this study are to be taken as suggestive rather than definitive because a multitude of issues might work for or against any attempts made for illumination of the high-tech mediated language teaching method interrelationship. In fact, acceptance of new technologies takes time (Shudong & Higgins, 2006).

However, how to apply mobile technology to social education, especially in learning English communication for nonnative English speakers, is an area that requires further investigation. To renovate cultural issues so that it may keep pace with changing times seems indispensable.

Learning English form of Islamic instructions can be considered a type of immersion program through which L2 learners by using the TL across the

curriculum in courses other than language will have real experiences with the language (Ellis, 2008).

Digital safety is still a topic most educational systems are struggling to teach. This requires adapting and improving open educational resources so they better meet the needs of virtual classes.

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Appendix A
**Questionnaire for Teaching English as a Foreign Language Through
 Mobile to Iranian Students**

Directions: This questionnaire investigates the role of mobile technology—as a prominent component of the new media field—in teaching English to Iranian learners. In order to prepare and develop educational content fit for this kind of technology, we examine the effects of culture, society, native language, gender, age and demography of Iranian learners. Questions in this regard will be sent to you via short texting. As soon as you get any question, send the answer via the same channel to the SMS system.

Level of education: Age: Gender: City you study in:	Number of family members: Email address (optional):
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Section A:

R		<i>I agree completely</i>	<i>I agree</i>	<i>No view on the matter</i>	<i>I disagree</i>	<i>I disagree completely</i>
1	Mobile communication allows me to always be available for my family.					
2	Having a cell phone allows me to stay informed about my family when I am not at home.					
3	I feel safe having a cell phone.					
4	Can the phone every time I'm in touch with my friends.					
5	At any time and any place, I can send jokes, set meetings, and interesting messages.					
6	If I can't talk face to face, I send it via SMS.					
7	I feel my family manage my daily affairs with mobile phones.					
8	I enjoy that I can use my phone to call, text messages, play games and take photos					
9	Having a cell phone is part of my social character.					
10	I find the benefits of nonformal education outside of the classroom very useful.					
11	Learning English through mobile communications can be an alternative to traditional education.					
12	The similarity between native culture and English culture helps in learning English as a foreign language.					
13	The similarity of the mother language to the English language helps in learning English.					

14	The age of learners learning English as a foreign language is important.					
15	Learners' gender in learning English as a foreign language is important.					
16	Teaching English as a foreign language through the mobile communication is effective for people having different linguistic levels.					
17	Teaching English as a foreign language through the mobile communication is effective in spreading and promoting Islam.					

Section B:

- 1) In your opinion, which English language skills can be taught through mobile communication technologies?

.....

- 2) Considering the availability of educational content at any time and any place, what kind of program for learning English through mobile communication do you find useful?

.....

Section C:

R		<i>Very much</i>	<i>a lot</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>a little</i>	<i>very little</i>
1	How much do you like to spend time with a crowd?					
2	When you learn something while with you are with friends how much better do you think you learn it?					
3	How much better do you learn when with friends?					
4	When you want to study for exams how inclined are you to do it with classmates?					

Appendix B

Proper time and text messaging were indicated in responses to questions relating to curriculum matters included in a questionnaire distributed to participants of the study.

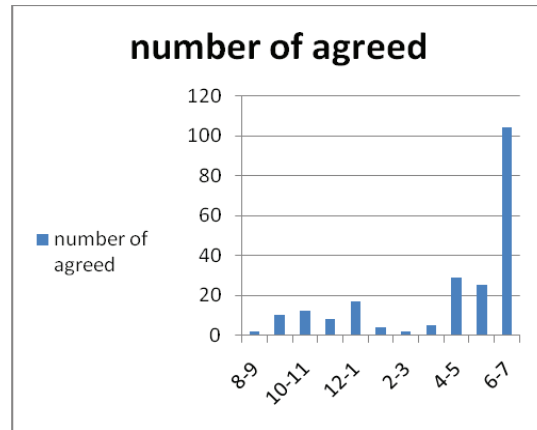


Figure 1. Students' Preferences for the Timing of Messages

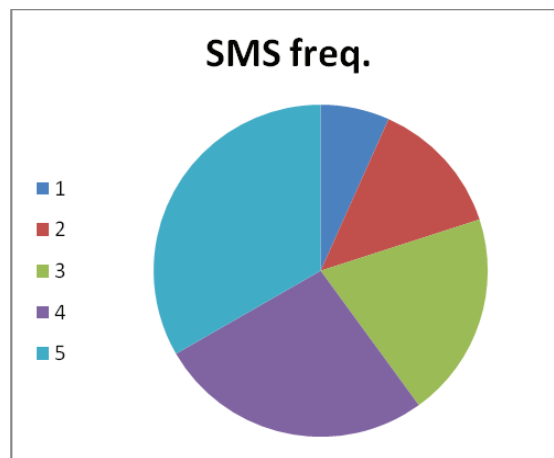


Figure 2. Students' Preferences for the Frequency of Messages (Five Short Messages Texting Each Virtual Session)