E-Communication & Text Speak: 
Supporting Students' Literacy Development

By

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Abstract

Previous literature addresses the relationship between e-communication, text speak, and students’ academic performance. The goal of the current study was to further investigate to what extent current literacy instruction reflects newer forms of e-communication, including text speak. The researcher identified what teachers see as the main benefits and challenges associated with e-communication and text speak, and gains an understanding of how teachers are making use of e-communication and text speak to support their literacy instruction. To collect this data, the researcher completed an in-depth literature review and conducted semi-structured interviews with junior teachers who incorporate social media/technology in their classrooms. The qualitative data collected from these interviews were analyzed and the following themes emerged: 1) The benefits of text speak and e-communication for students include increased engagement and more motivated writers; 2) E-communication devices allow for instant and ongoing communication and feedback, which can create student accountability and responsibility; 3) Text speak creates a problem for student literacy in terms of students demonstrating poor punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure in their writing; 4) The challenges of e-communication and text speak for teachers include students' distractions with technology and parents' concerns; and 5) Teachers make use of e-communication devices to support their students' literacy instruction in a variety of ways including: a) increased organization and structure in the classroom; b) improved reading skills; and c) development of vital writing skills. This research study is timely and important because of the growing use of technology in students’ lives and how e-communication and text speak can be addressed in the classroom.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

Cell phone use worldwide has become an increasingly popular phenomenon. Seventy-four percent of the Canadian population possess a cell phone, and this number is only increasing (Industry Canada, 2010). This is due to the highly valued function of the device. For many Canadians, having a cell phone has become their sole means of communication (Industry Canada, 2010). It is how they connect with their family, friends, and other people of importance. Initially, cell phones were predominantly used to make voice calls. Their purpose was much like a land-line phone, yet allowed consumers to connect with others as they were mobile. Today, the use of text messaging is on the rise and is rapidly replacing the voice call method of communication (Industry Canada, 2010).

“Texting” (the common term for text messaging) is especially favoured by adolescents and young adults between the ages of 12-25” (Drouin & Davis, 2009, p. 49). Instead of communicating orally, these young adults type and send short message service (SMS) messages. “As the use of text messaging became increasingly widespread over the last decade, a new written vocabulary, “text speak” emerged,” (Drouin & Davis, 2009, p. 49). Text speak involves the use of abbreviations, acronyms, substitutions, and slang throughout written messages. Many students today embrace in this form of written communication with their peers through cell phones, social network pages, emails, and instant messaging online. Previous researchers termed these forms of technology (text messages, emails, social network posts) as electronic communication (e-communication).
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to tackle the debate about the relationship among e-communication, text speak, and students' academic performance, specifically their literacy development. The goal of the study is to identify to what extent current literacy instruction reflects newer forms of e-communication. The prevalence of e-communication and text speak poses many challenges and benefits for teachers, particularly related to students' literacy development (Drouin & Davis, 2009). The researcher is trying to identify what teachers see as the main benefits and challenges associated with e-communication and text speak when it comes to students' literacy. The researcher also wants to better understand how teachers are making use of e-communication to support their literacy instruction. Acquiring this knowledge will help all teachers create and adapt lessons that focus on the development of proper language and format. By structuring their teaching to center on the problem, teachers can ensure student success in the future.

Research questions

The researcher is investigating how teachers are using their knowledge about the prevalence of e-communication and text speak to better their assessment and literacy instruction. The researcher also wants to examine the benefits and challenges these pose for teachers.

The main research question of this study is:

To what extent does current literacy instruction reflect newer forms of e-communication such as text speak?
The sub questions include:

1. What are the benefits associated with e-communication and text speak when it comes to students' literacy?
2. What are the challenges associated with e-communication and text speak when it comes to students' literacy?
3. How are teachers making use of e-communication to support their literacy instruction?

**Background of the Researcher**

Growing up as a 21st century child, I understand the 'need' and 'desire' to use technology, specifically e-communication devices. I am constantly glued to my cell phone, computer, and television screen. I live in an online world where Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter consume a large portion of my day. I am perpetually instant messaging, sending emails, reading blogs, newspaper articles, and/or catching up on the latest information from my favourite websites. I understand that we live in a world where technology is only becoming more advanced (and more addictive). The development of technology and its impact on society intrigues me as much as it worries me. How is the prevalence of these devices impacting the way the 21st century child functions in school? How will the development of further technologies impact the way teachers plan and carry out instruction?

This project is of high importance to me, as the researcher of this study, because it is a timely issue that is extremely current in today's society. All around North America children, teens, young adults, and adults participate in text speak conversations via e-
communication devices. I even admit to engaging in text speak myself, in order to save character space and time, and out of sheer laziness. For example, when I am texting a message to a friend, I might write, “How r u? R u ok?”. The difference is that I recognize and understand that what I am writing is short form and slang and should only be used to communicate with peers. From my experience, however, I see that many students do not separate text speak from their formal writing. It can become problematic that some children do not realize that their written messages to friends via e-communication need to be different from their written work in the classroom, and this can interfere with their formal writing.

As a young adult entering the teaching profession, it is imperative to understand the issues surrounding students' academic achievement. By exploring this concern in the area of e-communication, I hope to gain knowledge that will deepen my understanding of the topic. Since this information influences the way I plan and structure my lessons, as well as the way I use and teach about technology, it will also reflect the choices I make in the classroom in an attempt to improve my students’ literacy development and academic achievement. I believe this study will also benefit other teachers who will read my paper as it may help them better identify the challenges of text speak and how to support their students' literacy development in their own classrooms.

**Overview**

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as how the researcher came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature on the prevalence and the effects of text
speak and e-communication, as well as information regarding how teachers are using this information to support their students' academic performance, specifically their literacy development. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedure that was used in this study, including information about the criteria for the participants, data collection instruments, and data analysis. Chapter 4 consists of the findings, which include a description of the participants and the themes that emerged from the data analysis after conducting two interviews with exemplary teachers and an extensive literature review. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the study for teaching as well as ideas for future research. References and a list of appendixes follow at the end.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The prevalence of e-communication and text speak poses many challenges and benefits for teachers, particularly related to students' literacy development (Drouin & Davis, 2009). The current study investigates this relationship among e-communication, text speak and students' academic performance. The goal is to understand how students' technology use is affecting their academic achievement, so that as teachers we can plan and alter instruction accordingly. The topics examined in this literature review will address the definition of e-communication and text speak, the prevalence of e-communication and text speak in today's society, the effects of e-communication and text speak, and lastly how teachers are using this knowledge to support their instruction.

Definition of E-communication and Text Speak

In order for teachers to plan and create lessons that incorporate newer forms of media in the classroom, they must first have a solid understanding of the terms text speak and e-communication.

_E-communication_ (electronic communication) is defined as written communication through social network pages, emails, instant messages online, and through fast-paced thumb choreography on cell phones (Lenhart, Arafah, Smith & Macgill, 2008). E-communication devices allow students to connect and communicate, and are responsible for the new age written language known as text speak. In Crystal’s (2006) research, he talks about text speak as resembling the Standard English language, but he maintains that it consists of important structural differences.

_Text speak_ is characterized by acronyms, emoticons (symbols representing
emotions), and the deletion of unnecessary words, vowels, punctuation, and capitalization (Carrington, 2004). Words are frequently coded in simple phonetic form, such as: ‘thx’ instead of ‘thanks’, and ‘u’ instead of ‘you’.

Prevalence of E-communication and Text Speak

“Today's youth are leading the transition to a fully wired and mobile nation,” (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005, p. 1). Electronic communication devices are now frequently used by teens as a means of communication. Lenhart, et al. (2005) noted that approximately 11 million adolescents go online daily, compared to about seven million in 2000. It was also noted that almost half of these teens (45%) had their own cell phone and one third communicated via text messaging. Similarly, Lenhart, et al. (2008) concluded that 85% of teens ages 12-17 engage daily in some form of electronic personal communication, which includes text messaging, sending email or instant messages, or posting comments on social networking sites. Reid and Reid (2004) found that roughly half of the young people who used text messaging actually preferred texting their friends to talking to them. These findings include teenagers, young adults, and younger children as well. Parents often give their children mobile telephones to keep in touch with them (Plester, Wood & Bell, 2008). “The Guardian (2004) estimated that the number of seven to ten year olds owning a mobile telephone had almost doubled in the previous three years from 13% in 2001 to 25% in 2004,” (as cited in Plester, et al., 2008, p. 137).

E-communication devices have lost their novelty and have become the norm in the North American culture. “Text messaging is one of the fastest growing modes of communication, with 135 billion text messages sent worldwide during the first three
months of 2004,” (Plester, et al., 2008, p. 137). This growing phenomenon has led to the emergence of a new written vocabulary, called “text speak”. This abbreviated vocabulary has surfaced in many forms of e-communication devices including short service (SMS) messages, instant messages (IM), e-mails, and on social networking pages such as Facebook (Drouin & Davis, 2009). “Text speak has become so popular that there are standard text speak dictionaries posted on the Internet, and a Google search for “text speak dictionary” returns more than one million hits” (Drouin & Davis, 2009, p. 50).

It is extremely important for teachers to understand the growing prevalence of text speak and e-communication devices. Teachers can use this knowledge to support their literacy programs, and create engaging lessons that focus on what is current in the lives of their students (Bataineh & Brooks, 2003).

**Positive Effects of E-communication and Text Speak**

**Phonological awareness.**

While some evidence suggests that text speak and e-communication devices negatively influence literacy development, much research suggests quite the opposite. Plester, Wood and Joshi (2009) suggest that e-communication devices provide children with yet another resource for learning about and experimenting with language and letter-sound correspondences, specifically reading and decoding text. They argue that in order to produce and read abbreviations, students must acquire a level of phonological awareness, and that even though spelled incorrectly, text speak is a phonologically acceptable form of written English (Plester, et al., 2009). Similarly, Crystal (2008) believes that,
Sending frequent texts can actually help children learn to read and write because of the abbreviations used. People have always used abbreviations. They do not actually use that many in texts, but when they do they are using them in new, playful and imaginative ways that benefit literacy. (As cited in Vosloo, 2009, p. 2)

Such findings demonstrate a positive association between different forms of phonological awareness and reading attainment. Years of research provide a positive outlook of text speak and e-communication on literacy development, and must be considered when planning instruction and assessment.

**Teaching about audience.**

Teaching about audience is an expectation that teachers need to address in their literacy programs for all ages and grades (Ontario Ministry of Education, http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/language18currb.pdf, 2006); therefore, noticing text speak in student writing provides teachers with a good opportunity to teach about writing for an audience. Vosloo’s (2009) research findings suggest that many adolescents are not able to differentiate when it is and when it is not appropriate to use text speak; therefore, students need to understand that depending on for whom one is writing affects the way in which one writes. He contends that it is a teacher’s role to educate his/her students about context-appropriate behaviour, and when text speak appears in formal assignments, it provides an opportunity to have a conversation with students about context. Also, if you address this issue with your students, it is more likely that they will use the correct form for the correct audience. Using the prevalence of text speak and e-communication devices to create teachable moments about the concept of audience will help increase students’ level of achievement.
Ongoing feedback and communication.

Feedback and communication are two of the most vital components in ensuring student success, (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Students’ interest in learning and their belief that they can learn are critical to their success. As cited in the Ontario Ministry of Education *GrowingSuccess* document (2010),

After reviewing the impact of testing on students’ motivation to learn, Harlen and Deakin Crick recommended the use of assessment for learning and as learning – including strategies such as sharing learning goals and success criteria, providing feedback in relation to goals, and developing students’ ability to self-assess – as a way of increasing students’ engagement in and commitment to learning. (p. 203)

Teachers need to give specific and timely descriptive feedback to students about their learning. This constant feedback and communication should also be shared with parents, and third parties relating to the student, (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). From this feedback, the student and teacher should co-create a set of goals and discuss areas for improvement. This helps establish student accountability and responsibility for their learning, and ensures the student is motivated and on track, (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

Negative Effects of E-communication and Text Speak

Formal written communication.

Although text speak and e-communication devices contain many positive features, there is an abundance of research suggesting they hold many negative properties as well. Media sources suggest that this new written language has begun to surface in students' formal written communication. Lee (2002) noted that students' ability to separate formal and informal English has declined since the rise of instant messages. Barker (2007)
claims that secondary school teachers are seeing text abbreviations ("textisms") in school assignments. “Teachers say that papers are being written with shortened words, improper capitalization and punctuation, and characters such as &, $ and @” (Lee, 2002, p. 4).

As teachers it is important to recognize the severity of the issue so we can tackle it. Teachers must understand this new written language so we can identify and correct students’ formal writing. It is important for students to recognize when it is appropriate to use text speak. It is equally as important for teachers to correct these mistakes before they become habits in writing (Lee, 2002).

**Impaired literacy development.**

“In addition to the concern expressed regarding students’ use of text speak in formal written communication, one of the main concerns expressed relates to the potential detrimental effects of the use of text speak on literacy” (Drouin & Davis, 2009, p. 51). Thurlow (2006) found that “many national and international media sources represented this new communicative discourse in a pessimistic light, citing specifically the pervasive nature of the discourse and the potential degeneration of the English language” (p. 51). The widespread use of text speak could be considered a step down in the spelling phase models (Lee, 2002).

This debate between students' literacy development and their use of electronic devices has been ongoing since the rise of computer-mediated technology (Drouin & Davis, 2009). Drouin & Davis explored the usage of text speak among college students and tested whether the use of text speak had a significant negative relationship on literacy performance. Their findings support the media’s assertion that a widespread introduction of this vocabulary into communication environments has indeed occurred, at least within
the college population (Drouin & Davis, 2009). Their findings suggest that the results are not straightforward regarding the growing concern surrounding the influence of text speak on literacy. They suggest that it is not likely that a decline in performance will be seen immediately, and that further research on the topic needs to be investigated (Drouin & Davis, 2009). Similarly, Wood, Plester and Bowyer (2008) found in their study that the impact of children’s use of “textisms” on their reading and writing development is not well understood largely due to a lack of empirical research (Lee, 2002, p. 4).

In contrast, Humphrys (2007) suggests that due to text speak, “our written language may end up as a series of ridiculous emoticons and ever-changing abbreviations” (p. 1). He argues that the use of text speak is damaging students' literacy development by “pillaging their punctuation, savaging their sentences, and destroying their vocabulary” (p. 1).

The researchers cited in this literature review contend that, as teachers, we must understand that text speak and e-communication devices may be hindering our students’ literacy development. We must keep this in mind when planning and assessing our instruction in order to support the needs of our students (Drouin & Davis, 2009; Humphrys, 2007; Lenhart, 2005; Plester, 2008; Thurlow, 2006; Vosloo, 2009).

**Planning Instruction**

Having knowledge on the prevalence and the effects of text speak and e-communication allows teachers to plan instruction and assessment that support students' literacy development. Research suggests that incorporating the “quick, free-flowing writing style of texting” sparks the thinking processes of learners (Vosloo, 2009, p. 2).
Lee (2002) interviewed teachers to learn how they were incorporating the use of text speak and electronic communication devices into their classrooms. Trisha Fogarty, a sixth-grade teacher interviewed by Lee stated, “When my children are writing first drafts, I don't care how they spell anything, as long as they are writing. If this lingo gets their thoughts and ideas onto paper quicker, the more power to them” (p. 4). Fogarty does expect her learners to switch to Standard English during editing and revising, but gives them their freedom of speech when initially putting their thoughts onto paper.

Another example, explained by Helderman (2003), is demonstrated by Robyn Jackson, a high school English teacher, who has organized an online chat room where some students meet once a week to discuss literature and writing. “The students are allowed to use Internet speak in the chat room that would never be allowed in formal writing, but the online conversations are vigorous and intelligent” (Vosloo, 2009, p. 5). These examples emphasize how easy and beneficial it is to use texting to educate students about writing, and increase the amount of writing learners do.

**Conclusion**

Previous literature supports the fact that there is a relationship between students’ formal written communication and their time spent using e-communication devices. E-communication devices have become increasingly prevalent in the North American culture, which has resulted in the formation of a new written language, text speak. The literature suggests that text speak is having an effect on students’ literacy development, both positive and negative. The current study is trying to identify to what extent current literacy instruction reflects newer forms of e-communication. The researcher is trying to
identify what teachers see as the main benefits and challenges associated with e-
communication and text speak when it comes to students' literacy. The researcher also
wants to better understand how teachers are making use of e-communication in the
classroom to support their literacy instruction.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative research study, the researcher conducted an in-depth literature review about the topic of e-communication and text speak, and two face-to-face teacher interviews in order to gain information on how teachers are using their knowledge of the prevalence of e-communication and text speak to improve their teaching instruction. Two exemplary teachers, who are using text speak and e-communication often with their students, were selected. The interview process, participants, data collection instruments, data and analysis process, ethical review procedures, and limitations are discussed.

Procedure

Subjects were carefully chosen by the researcher for each interview session. The researcher selected two exemplary teachers to take part in the study, based on a set of criteria which was developed for the purposes of this study (See the section about “Participants” later in this chapter for the specific selection criteria used).

On the actual date of each interview session, the subject walked into the designated room arranged in advance at the interviewee’s convenience. As mentioned by Wellington (2000), an important feature to qualitative research is ensuring that data is collected in a real-life, natural setting. The researcher wanted the participants to feel comfortable and secure, to help ensure the data collected was rich, descriptive and extensive (Wellington, 2000). Upon their arrival, they were then handed a letter of information and consent. After reading it, each participant signed and returned it to the researcher. (See Appendix B for this letter of informed consent).

Before beginning each face-to-face interview, participants were encouraged to ask for clarification about the content of questions if necessary, and were told they had the
right to pass a question at any point in the interview. Each interviewee was then asked a series of questions. The interview questions were aimed at identifying important and crucial information relating to e-communication, text speak, and students' literacy development. (See Appendix A for a list of the interview questions). Both participants were asked the same questions in the same strategic order. The researcher recorded the interview and later transcribed each one for the purpose of the study. This process was repeated with both participants. The researcher used the data collected from each interview to write a final report.

**Instruments of Data Collection**

The qualitative data collected for this study was gathered through an informal, semi-structured interview. The researcher sat down with each participant and conducted a one-on-one discussion about the topic of research. The research questions were developed prior to the interview to ensure accuracy of results, and to ensure they provided an open-ended approach to the subject matter. “The open-ended approach allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow up,” (Turner, 2010, p. 756). The questions are organized by category. The interviewer began by asking general questions about the interviewee's background in teaching, such as “What grade do you teach?” and “How long have you been teaching this grade?” As the interview continued, the researcher moved on to more specific questions relating to the project. The specific questions are organized by the following categories: Prevalence and Impact of E-Communication and Text Speak, Benefits and Challenges, and Instruction. All research
questions can be found in Appendix A.

Participants

The two participants were carefully selected based on a list of criteria developed by the researcher. The criteria directly related to the purpose of the study, which is to identify to what extent current literacy instruction reflects newer forms of e-communication. The selection criteria were as follows:

a) Subjects must be a junior or intermediate teacher.

b) Subjects must frequently incorporate social media/technology in their classrooms.

c) Subjects must be aware of the prevalence of e-communication and text speak in students' current lives.

I wanted to identify what teachers see as the main benefits and challenges associated with e-communication and text speak when it comes to students' literacy. I also wanted to better understand how teachers are making use of e-communication and text speak to support their literacy instruction. The participants chosen met the previous criteria, and enabled me as the researcher to gain knowledge that was used to complete this project.

Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim for the purpose of analysis, and were kept private on my personal computer. Before beginning to analyze the responses of my participants, I took a step back and really thought about what information I wanted to
gain from these interviews. Siedel (1998) compares this process to that of solving a puzzle. With this in mind, I began to read and analyze my data to try and configure, code, and develop themes.

When examining the responses of my interviewees for the first time, I made key points under each question. These key points helped identify the most valuable part of each response. After conducting this process once with both of my interviews, I decided to do it again. Wellington (2000) suggests that “reflecting” or “standing back” from the data is necessary in order to identify the most vital information (p. 135). Wellington (2000) also proposes that large amounts of data cannot be processed unless all material that belongs together topically is assembled conceptually and physically in one place. Therefore, I as the researcher placed the key points of my participants into a table to ensure organization and clarity. “The business of locating and relating your data to other people’s research is an important part of reflecting upon it and making sense of it,” (Wellington, 2000, p. 139). I looked for commonalities between participant responses, as well as themes that overlapped with the interview data and the literature. I highlighted these similarities accordingly, and was then able to take these highlights and develop five themes that best related to my project and also related to my main and sub-questions. The specific themes and implications derived from the interviews are discussed in further chapters of the paper.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

For this research study, I followed the ethical review procedures as set out by the Master of Teaching program and OISE, University of Toronto’s Ethical Review process.
Prior to the interview date, I provided the participants with information about the research process. Subjects were encouraged to email any questions or concerns they had about the project, and were told that the researcher would address them immediately.

On the day of the respective interview, I handed the research participants two letters of informed consent. One letter was to be kept by the participant, and I kept the other one. The subject was required to thoroughly read and sign the form before continuing with the interview process (See Appendix A for a copy of the Letter of Consent). Upon signing the form, I ensured that the participant clearly understood the research process, my goals for the study, and the specific topic of research on hand. The participant was informed that they could stop the researcher at any point in time if they were uncertain about what I was asking, if they needed clarification, or if they simply did not want to answer a particular question. They were also advised that they could refrain from participating in the project entirely throughout any part of the interview.

Subjects were told that all of their responses would be kept confidential, and if used would be generalized in the writing to conceal their identity. Each interview was recorded using a digital recording device. The interviews were later transcribed and stored securely on my computer. Subjects were notified upon completion of the final project, and were encouraged to request a copy of the report if they desired.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to the current study that were related to issues of a) limited time; b) sample size and generalizability; and c) the data collection method. Given the time allotted to this research study, findings may not be as detailed and in-
depth as possible. Due to this known time constraint, the interview participants and interview questions were carefully selected to provide maximal data.

Another limitation to the study relates to the small sample size of two participants, but these are appropriate and meet the expectations for the Master of Teaching program requirements. The participants do not represent a large cross-section of the field; therefore, the findings are not generalizable to the larger public. Despite the small sample size, I carefully chose participants employing exemplary practice directly related to the area of research. The information gathered created a well-developed understanding of the research issue.

Lastly, with the constraints of the data collection method of this study, which was based on the Master of Teaching Ethical Review approval, did not cover student interviews; therefore, the student voice about their own experiences with e-communication, text speak, and other forms of social media were not incorporated into this research study. For the purposes of this study, the strategies and methods used in the classroom provided by the teacher participants were extremely useful since all participants are exemplary teachers with a strong awareness of the prevalence of e-communication and text speak in today's society.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to tackle the debate about the relationship among e-communication, text speak, and students' academic performance, specifically their literacy development. The goal of the study is to identify to what extent current literacy instruction reflects newer forms of e-communication. I as the researcher chose exemplary teachers to participate in face-to-face interviews (see criteria used to select teachers in Chapter 3). The questions designed for the interviews were aimed at identifying important and crucial information on how teachers are using their knowledge of the prevalence of e-communication and text speak to improve their literacy instruction.

Participants

Two research participants were interviewed for the project. Both participants are teachers currently working in schools within Ontario, and have had at least two full years of experience teaching grade five. A typical school day for both candidates consists of a variation of individual seat work, group work, and whole class instruction. Each mode of instruction incorporates some form of technology, whether it be Ipad, LCD projector, Iphones, laptops, tablets, computers or the students' own devices. Both teacher participants, Stan and Ricky (pseudonyms), believe that incorporating technology in their classrooms is necessary and beneficial for students' academic performance, and more specifically for their literacy development.

The statements made by my participants were analyzed, and examined for how they relate to the major themes of the study. Each theme was analyzed as a separate entity, and the participants’ comments were quoted and referenced throughout the
analysis. The following five themes were derived from the interviews and are addressed in this chapter:

1) The benefits of text speak and e-communication for students include increased engagement and more motivated writers;

2) E-communication devices allow for instant and ongoing communication and feedback, which can create student accountability and responsibility;

3) Text speak creates a problem for student literacy in terms of students demonstrating poor punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure in their writing;

4) The challenges of e-communication and text speak for teachers include students' distractions with technology and parents' concerns.

5) Teachers make use of e-communication devices to support their students' literacy instruction in a variety of ways including: a) increased organization and structure in the classroom; b) improved reading skills; and c) development of vital writing skills.

Theme 1) The benefits of text speak and e-communication for students include increased engagement and more motivated writers.

Both teacher participants, Stan and Ricky, confirm that e-communication devices have a big impact on their students' focus, attention span, engagement, and motivation. This directly correlates to Prensky (2006) who stated that the use of technology has been proven to enhance many classroom activities and provide increased motivation and engagement in learners. Stan explained that as soon as he introduces an assignment and the students know they are going to be using the iPads, laptops, computers, or their own
devices that they bring into the classroom, they are much happier and more willing to write. He mentioned that his class is currently working on book talks, and described his class as being “super excited” about the project, because they are using multiple sources of technology. The students are currently creating Google presentations, and will later be developing Imovie trailers to help introduce these presentations. Stan stated,

There’s a ton of technology where students are able to take the ideas they hear and read about, and then go online and get images that represent these characters and/or books. Students are able to share all the ideas that are in their heads without having to sit with a pencil and paper and write them down. So there is a lot of engagement.

Similar to Stan, Ricky believes that e-communication and text speak “influence everything... especially student engagement.” An environment where technology is used in innovative ways leads to improved learning and teaching (Wishart & Blease, 1999). Ricky described his class as “less reluctant writers” when technology is involved in creative ways. He said that they “are more willing, more excited, and can work independently for longer periods of time”. He found that his students are not only more motivated to complete their work during instructional time, but are even motivated to complete their work during their own time as well. Ricky mentioned that he had one student who went away on vacation for a month to another country, but was still interested in completing his group project with his classmates. Ricky organized and set up all the students for success.

They worked together on the same project that was due. They each had their own pages of a presentation on a device called Google Presentation. One person did one slide; the other person did another, etc. When the boy returned the two students were able to present their project to the class with great detail and ease.

By utilizing the tool of technology and e-communication appropriately, both teachers
believe that they have created a motivating classroom environment where students are engaged in learning!

**Theme 2) E-communication devices allow for instant and ongoing communication and feedback, which can create student accountability and responsibility.**

Incorporating e-communication devices in the classroom was seen by both teachers to have many positive effects, and both agreed that the most prominent benefit is that it allows for ongoing, instant feedback and communication. Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement and should be provided to students by the teacher, both in progress and at completion of a task (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Knowledge of results is a powerful motivator for students, as it helps keep them engaged and focused (Evertson & Poole, 2003).

Ricky stated that 90% of the writing completed in his classroom is done digitally. He contends that this has a huge impact in terms of communication, because he is able to give instant feedback on his students' writing from anywhere at any time. “They write a story or report, and I’m able to give them feedback on their digital document from wherever I am. I might be sitting in the dentist’s office reading one of their reports, giving them feedback.” In this case, communication is spontaneous, and learning is ongoing.

Stan described the same process. He said that the students in his class are constantly sharing documents with each other and with him. “They get electronic feedback on a daily basis. They’re able to share work and collaborate in groups electronically, and so they’re constantly using e-communication for every subject area.” This constant assessment and feedback provides students with a thorough understanding of how they can improve their writing.
E-communication devices provide students with the opportunity to work on or even hand in their assignments at any point in time. Stan said, “They can get their work done when they’re sick, or just catch up on things. There are no excuses.” He believes that students become accountable and responsible for their actions and work, because they have been provided with next steps for improvement, and have unlimited access to make these changes.

Ricky and Stan constantly use Google Drive in their classrooms. Google Drive is a file storage and synchronization service which enables user cloud storage, file sharing, and collaborative editing. User cloud storage holds data in virtualized pools of storage which can be accessed by multiple parties. Both Ricky and Stan’s students complete their written work on Google Drive, whether it be for science, literacy, health or even math. Throughout the writing process, the teachers use the review features of the program to make comments, corrections, and alterations to student work. This feedback is live and immediate. Students are able to respond back at any given time, which not only creates instant communication between the teacher and the student, but provides the teacher with a digital trail that creates a time-line and has time stamps. Ricky said,

We can say here is what's suggested, and here's how you can fix it. All of this is stored electronically and it's up to the student to go back and edit his/her work. It creates accountability on the student’s part because they can’t lose their work. There is no, ‘I wrote it on the paper; mom didn’t see it; we didn’t fix it; and why did we get this grade?’ I can say, ‘Here’s what you wrote, here’s what was suggested…did you fix it?’

Ricky agreed and stated, “The students have multiple references, all the stuff I’ve already mentioned: whatever happened in the classroom, the feedback, the ongoing process. It's all huge in creating accountability, responsibility, and better motivated writers.”
Theme 3) Text speak creates a problem for student literacy in terms of students demonstrating poor punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure in their writing.

Texting has provoked a very strong, negative response from teachers, parents and language experts (Vosloo, 2009). It has been described as the “continuing assault of technology on formal written English” (Lee, 2002, p. 4). It is said to be “pillaging our punctuation; savaging our sentences, and raping our vocabulary” (Humphrys, 2007, p. 1).

Similar to these findings, Ricky and Stan have witnessed text speak creep into their students' formal writing as well. Stan explained that many of his students do not use correct capitalization, punctuation, or sentence structure, and he attributes this to text speak. He said,

My biggest pet peeve in their writing is lower case ‘I’ for themselves. By Grade 5, an upper case ‘I’ should be the norm, but it’s not what we’re seeing in their written work. It’s actually lower case ‘i’ more frequently than upper case ‘I’. Every single day it’s a problem, and I feel that that's hugely due to text speak.

Stan continuously reviews proper capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure with his students. He stated,

Things that we once probably took for granted in Grade 5 and 6, things that years ago when I taught Grade 5, I wouldn’t need to focus on in terms of the conventions of writing, I now have to spend a lot of time on.

Stan then went on to explain how he continuously needs to review the conventions of writing with his students. He stated,

So I have a visual. I have a bulletin board in the classroom which talks about the Six Traits of Writing and every day when we do a lesson, we put a card up to represent what that lesson was about. I find I’m constantly, at the beginning of each writing period, going back and highlighting these cards that we’ve learned about many times before. I'm constantly reminding students to go back and put a period at the end of the sentence, or put a question mark at the end of an asking sentence. All these sorts of things that were learned in Primary, we’re re-teaching and reiterating daily. And it’s a struggle. It’s very difficult to get good
quality writing. These conventions of writing: grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, which should be common place by Grade 5, we're teaching all over again.

Even with this constant review, however, Stan explains that his students are still making errors.

Often there’s no punctuation or limited punctuation. Proper sentence structure is very difficult to achieve especially in a first draft of writing. They’re constantly being encouraged to reread their work out loud to see how it sounds because what they actually write and what they actually speak are two very different things.

Stan has his students read their writing out loud to see that it sounds correct as well as looks correct. He states that the way that it looks to them as text speak seems correct, but when they read it out loud, they start to clue in to what is missing.

Like Stan, Ricky has found that text speak impairs his students’ capitalization, punctuation and sentence structure. He went even further to express that he sees text speak as having a detrimental effect on his students’ spelling as well. He noted that struggling spellers especially have a difficult time differentiating between what is text speak and what is Standard English. “This 'new-language' makes it even more difficult for them,” said Ricky. He states,

Some of the poorer spellers haven’t quite developed the language yet. This gets in the way sometimes of them not understanding that that’s not the correct spelling. They may have seen 'thx' more often than having seen 'thanks', so they actually think that is the spelling of the word.

Vosloo’s (2009) research findings suggest that many adolescents are not able to differentiate when it is and when it is not appropriate to use text speak. Vosloo (2009) mentioned that students need to realize that depending on for whom one is writing affects the way in which one writes. Stan and Ricky agree with this finding, in that they believe
it is important for students to understand that text speak is not appropriate to use in their formal written work. They feel it is their role as teachers to educate their students about context-appropriate behaviour. When instances of text speak arise in their students’ written work, Ricky and Stan both use it as an opportunity to teach their students about audience. “It is something that we never had to really focus on when we were kids, but it is something that the 21st century child continues to struggle with” (Stan, 2013).

Theme 4) The challenges of e-communication and text speak for teachers include students' distractions with technology and parents' concerns.

Students' distractions with technology.

Even though the advantages of technologies in the classroom outweigh the disadvantages, there are still challenges that need to be understood (Bataineh & Brooks, 2003). Establishing a technology-integrated learning environment is not easy. Ricky and Stan understand that teachers need to take into account that technologies in the classroom are likely to act as a distraction for some students. They have seen students explore beyond the bounds and parameters of the task at hand and become distracted by other activities that they find on the computer/internet. Stan stated, “Some kids are so engaged on just being on the computer that they get side tracked. They’re busy playing and they’re not actually getting the work done.” Ricky mentioned,

I think the challenge lies in the fact that many students do not see the devices as a literacy tool. Students who are more immature see it as a game platform. We have a lot of rules in the classroom associated with the technologies. One being, they must use their devices as a tool in the classroom like they would use the pencil. And so that’s a huge challenge, is that the kids see a lot of iPads in the room for example, and they view that as a chance to play a game.

Ricky and Stan spend time making it known to their students that the technology is there
to increase their literacy development, and provide them with opportunities for better writing. Their students have a thorough understanding of what is acceptable behaviour when using the devices and what is not.

**Parents' concerns.**

Beyond classroom and student control lies the challenge of working positively and collaboratively with parents. Parents play a large role in the achievement and progress of students. Their involvement and motivation highly influence their children's willingness and productivity. With the increasing popularity of computer technology, it is essential for parents to support and encourage computer technology in our education systems (Gulley, 2003). E-communication devices are important in education because they force us to reconsider how people learn, how they are empowered, and what the nature of learning and useful information is (Gulley, 2003). Teachers can have a difficult time, however, ensuring all parents understand the importance and the potential of technologies in the classroom. Stan stated, “Parents actually are a huge challenge. There are quite a few parents who are not willing to move forward and are reluctant to have their children only using electronics for their writing.” Stan has found that these parents are reluctant because they want their students to have “perfect penmanship”. Stan explained that they want their children to know how to use cursive, which is something that is not even in the curriculum anymore.

Ricky experienced the same challenge in his classroom. He found that many parents were reluctant to move from paper and pencil to e-communication devices. Ricky explained, “Having the parents jump on board has been difficult. Many of the parents are used to signing an agenda as a way of communication between school and teacher and
my agenda is online.” Ricky's classroom is solely technology based.

Everything we do, the kids post to our instant calendar and it gets shared with all parents on their iPhones who are signed up to the calendar. So if I post an assignment, it’s on everybody’s phone, but if a parent doesn’t check it or isn’t part of that, they’re not part of that loop.

Ricky still provides the alternate communication style for those parents who require it. He believes the electronic version to be easier and more beneficial for students, parents and himself, but if some parents are not computer-literate, this can pose a problem.

“It’s still a challenge to get everybody over to any new system,” said Stan. Like Ricky, Stan found there to be a lot of parent resistance at the beginning of the year regarding how much technology was being used. In order to address this issue and provide parents with insights on the benefits of technology, he created a project with his grade partner and his students.

We did an entire presentation for Curriculum Night, not on our Grade 5 curriculum, but rather on how we use technology in the classroom. We wanted to invite parents to join us on the journey. We sent out an electronic calendar to parents to invite them to our presentation. On the night of, we gave a Google presentation, showing them exactly how we use the device; and showing them how us teachers are able to provide electronic feedback. While my grade partner was presenting the document to the parents, I was able to be in that document at the same time, in real time on the screen, providing feedback. The parents could see me from a different point in the room, giving feedback as he was presenting to the class of parents. They were able to see the value of the tool which really worked in our favour.

Stan was then able to set up most of the parents with the classroom calendar on their own devices/ phones. This creates a connection or “a loop” with the parents, allows them to track homework on their own phone, and not have to rely on their child to write down whatever the homework is. Stan stated, “The Curriculum Night was very eye opening for many of the parents and many parents were agreeable to getting on board with the
journey.”

Both Stan and Ricky set goals to involve parents in their extensive use of technology in the classroom. When communicating purposefully with the parents, they found it helped to positively improve the communication and involvement of parents in their programs, as well improve parent attitudes about the use of technology in their classrooms.

Theme 5) Teachers make use of e-communication devices to support their students' literacy instruction in a variety of ways including: a) increased organization and structure in the classroom; b) improved reading skills; and c) development of vital writing skills.

**Increased organization and structure in the classroom.**

Incorporating e-communication devices in the classroom has many potential benefits for students, teachers and parents (Bataineh & Brooks, 2003). Students who struggle with executive function tasks like organization frequently have difficulty remembering things, keeping track of time, and initiating tasks (Bataineh & Brooks, 2003). Often these students do not remember to place papers in their binders; they throw everything in, and easily lose school work. Technology seems to be an easy way to solve this problem. E-communication devices store information electronically so students do not have to worry about losing or misplacing work, and helps with students acting on teacher feedback in their work. Ricky explained,

I give them an assignment where I give feedback to them digitally, where they fix that feedback digitally, and where they hand it in digitally. This digital trail is just so much easier and more efficient for them and me.

Ricky also explained that e-communication devices have many other purposes than just for storing information. These devices also have alarm functions and reminders
so that students are focused and prompted about the task at hand. Ricky stated,

If they have to write in their agenda that ‘I want to study tonight’, and then again the next night, and then again the next night…they'll just forget about it. They won't pay attention to the words 'study, study, study'. If a reminder goes off that reads, 'study, study, study, study…test on Friday,' they will pay attention. It’s there, and it pops up, and it’s a reminder. It’s helping them keep organized, and it’s helping them keep focus.

The regularity of these reminders helps create positive habits, and the fun, high-tech nature of the device motivates action (Bataineh & Brooks, 2003). Stan has found his students have become more efficient and willing to write. They have become accustomed to a routine that enables them to stay structured and organized. He stated, “They know when they get to school that they must take out their devices and get ready for the day.” He has noticed that since he has created a technology-based classroom that the ideas and the organization of his students are at an all-time high!

**Improved reading skills.**

Technology has undoubtedly changed what people read, how they read, and when they read (Hertz, 2014). The internet provides a gateway to almost every type of information at any time and with immediate access. There are many technologies that work to enhance learning, and there have been several products released recently that work to specifically help students enhance reading abilities (Hertz, 2014). These technologies offer unique benefits and can easily find a fitting place in the classroom (Hertz, 2014).

Stan has found that his students love listening to books on their devices, but even more so love reading by themselves online. He stated, “They are more engaged and focused when they are able to search for reading material themselves.” Stan explains that his students are able to read for longer periods of time when they are using their own
devices. “I continuously observe to make sure they are on the right track, and generally find them on task working independently.”

Online text books hold an unimaginable potential for innovating education, (Stevens, 2010). Ricky's students read mainly on their devices. Even their text books can be accessed online. Ricky stated,

Math class would be the time where we get our paper and pencil out, but my students actually still have their own devices with their text books on them. This way they don’t have to carry their text books back and forth. The lessons and videos we watch are also available for them to go back and re-read later on.

Ricky has found that because everything can be accessed digitally, this not only enhances their organization, but also helps enhance their engagement and willingness to READ!

**Development of vital writing skills.**

Plester, et al. (2009) suggest that, “children’s use of this technology provides them with an additional resource for learning about and experimenting with letter-sound correspondences and language, and for reading and decoding text” (p. 148). They argue that in order to produce and read abbreviations, students must acquire a level of phonological awareness, and that even though spelled incorrectly, text speak is a phonologically acceptable form of written English (Plester, et al., 2009).

Ricky and Stan both agree that e-communication devices may have its challenges, but that the advantages highly outweigh these disadvantages. Ricky stated,

If I can get every kid to have a device in their hand properly, I think the enhancement is great in terms of spelling, in terms of the structure of their writing, and in terms of having access to all sorts of information. Writing wise, literacy wise, research wise – it’s helping it all!

Stan holds the same belief. In terms of his students' formal writing, Stan finds the editing and revising process to be the most positively affected by e-communication
devices. He mentioned,

In terms of the effect on the formal writing, it is easier to go back with an electronic copy and fix it up, then go back to a hand-written copy and try to fix it up. My students know the meaning of the little squiggle lines that appear. They know their device will underline their spelling mistakes and catch their errors. They know they don’t have to check as carefully, or worry as much about spelling and grammar, because the computer is doing a lot of that for them.

Students are able to center on WHAT they are writing, and spend less time focusing on HOW to write properly. They are less reluctant and become better, more motivated writers. They are unafraid to make mistakes and more willing to take risks, which spurs creativity in their writing. Ricky stated, “Some say that writing programs on the computer make it too easy for students, but I think they are a gateway for student success!”

**Conclusion**

The data collected solidifies that e-communication and text speak are a large part of the 21st century child's daily life. Both exemplary teachers provided crucial information, tips and tools to help incorporate e-communication and other technologies in the classroom, specifically within their literacy programs. The current findings as discussed in Chapter 5 are used to address new theories, ideologies and strategies for improvement in the classroom.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this qualitative research study, the interviewer conducted an in-depth literature review and two face-to-face teacher interviews about the topic of e-communication, text speak and its possible relationship to students' academic performance, specifically their literacy development. The information gathered throughout the study has been informative, and has addressed new theories, ideologies, and strategies. The objective of this final chapter is to share the researcher's reflections based on the data collected, and the implications they have for the teaching profession. Strategies for improvement and classroom practice are also provided, as well as ideas for future research.

Reflection and Implications

From this study, I was able to gain many new insights, ideas and opinions about the topic on hand. I was fortunate to find two exemplary teachers who use technology regularly with their students in unique and effective ways. The data collected from the literature and the interviews have surprised me in some ways, as well as reaffirmed what I already believed and what is found in the literature.

Why integrate e-communication?

Both research participants hold the same view on the benefits and challenges of e-communication, text speak, and students' academic performance. They believe that e-communication devices in the classroom are extremely advantageous to their students’ literacy development. Throughout the interviews, both interviewees stressed their strengths, weaknesses, benefits and challenges in creating a technology-based classroom.
In many ways, their opinions, ideas, and strategies mirrored what I had learned and used as key arguments in the literature review, and have provided me with a new outlook on integrating e-communication devices in my own classroom.

Much like the research of Batanieh and Brooks (2003), Drouin and Davis (2009), Lenhart et al. (2005), Plester et al. (2008), and Thurow (2006), Stan and Ricky (2013) have found that there are many key ideas to think about when creating a tech-savvy classroom. Stan and Ricky discussed how integrating technology has enhanced their students' organization, structure, routine, independence, and willingness to learn. I was not surprised to hear that their students are more motivated, more engaged, and more inclined to participate in literacy activities when e-communication devices are involved. As well, they have found it has impacted their students’ spelling, punctuation, capitalization and sentence structure, not necessarily in a good way, but because of this impact, it has urged them to explicitly address these aspects of writing with their students during their literacy teaching.

As a teacher, I am more organized, structured and motivated when I am able to use my device for planning, assessing, and learning. Why would students be any different than us, as teachers? “More and more studies show that technology integration in the curriculum improves students' learning processes and outcomes,” (Hertz, 2014, p. 1). Teachers who recognize computers as problem-solving tools change the way they teach. They move from a behavioral approach to a more constructivist approach (Hertz, 2014). Technology and interactive multimedia are more conducive to project-based learning. Students are engaged in their learning using these powerful tools, and can become creators and critics instead of just consumers. The opportunities and potential for success
are endless making it an invaluable tool in the classroom!

**Pencil and paper versus computer technology.**

There is currently a big concern by educators in school boards that cursive writing is no longer being taught. This is seen in a recent debate by educators in the Toronto Catholic District School Board who are considering putting cursive writing back into the curriculum because of parent pressure and the belief that there is an abundance of evidence that students today are not able to write cursive, or understand cursive writing.

“Parents have told Trustee Ann Andrachuk that their children can’t sign their name.... or they have been handed a handwritten note and can’t read it,” (Rushowy, 2014, p. 1).

Teachers have expressed,

> It’s not a requirement as part of the (Ontario) curriculum, and the way it was put to Andrachuk by some teachers is that they would love to teach it, but there are so many things that have to be taught that it gets dropped. (Rushowy, 2014, p. 1)

Andrachuk has proposed a recent motion, unanimously approved, asking board staff to reintroduce cursive in all schools, and how early children should start learning it (Rushowy, 2014).

In light of this research study, this concern about cursive writing coming from parents and educators might be due to the expanding use of technology in the classroom.

Across Canada and the United States, concerns have been raised that cursive is becoming a lost art in an age where keyboards and keypads rule.... Lauren Ramey, spokesperson for Education Minister Liz Sandals, said writing is an important part of the elementary curriculum, but 'in a 21st century learning environment, students are also required to develop computer skills. (Rushowy, 2014, p. 1)

Teachers therefore need to find a balance between teaching computer skills and teaching handwriting skills so that students become equipped with all the tools they need for success in the future. This focus on cursive writing will certainly have an impact on
literacy teaching and the use of technology in the classroom.

**Recommended practices**

**Fostering a positive classroom climate.**

Before introducing technology practices in the classroom, it is first imperative that ALL students feel safe and secure. Providing a safe and rich environment that is conducive for learning enables children to be risk-takers, and allows students to feel comfortable to participate in all activities. One way to foster a positive classroom climate is to integrate TRIBES (Gibbs, 1994) in the classroom. Creating a TRIBES learning community ensures that students feel included and appreciated by their peers and teachers, that they are respected for their different abilities, cultures, gender, interests and dreams, that they are actively involved in their own learning, and that they have positive expectations from others that they will succeed (Gibbs, 1994).

When the four agreements (attentive listening, appreciation/no put downs, mutual respect, and right to pass) are understood and honoured by the teacher and students, the classroom becomes an open, inclusive, and welcoming environment for everyone (Gibbs, 1994). By establishing these agreements in the classroom, students should also understand what is expected of them when using their own technological devices, or the school's devices. As Ricky and Stan mentioned, some students in their classrooms see the devices as a toy or a game.

It is recommended that teachers have the four agreements up in their classroom all year long, and should have multiple discussions as a class about what is appropriate and what respectful behaviour looks like, sounds like, and feels like when interacting with
others, but also when using e-communication. Employing this practice will not only make classroom management easier for the teacher, but will allow students to feel safer, as well as more motivated and eager to succeed in the classroom and in the online environment.

**Parent involvement.**

Parent engagement matters. “Study after study has shown us that student achievement improves when parents play an active role in their children’s education, and that good schools become even better schools when parents are involved,” (Ontario Ministry of Education, [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement), 2014). It is recognized that parent engagement is a key factor in the enhancement of student achievement and well-being. “Students are more likely to be motivated, to earn higher grades, to have better behaviour and social skills, and to continue their education to a higher level when their parents are actively engaged in supporting their success at school,” (Ontario Ministry of Education, [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement), 2014)

Parent acceptance of technology use in the classroom is extremely important. When parents support e-communication devices as teaching and learning tools, students are able to explore, take risks, and ultimately achieve more. These devices also allow students to communicate more frequently with the teacher, and the teacher to communicate more frequently with parents (Schwartz & Pollshuke, 2013). Like Ricky and Stan have done, teachers can create classroom websites updating parents on what the students are learning in the classroom. They can also create an online agenda, so parents are able to check in and see what the student has for homework, or what upcoming events are happening in the classroom and school. When parents support the teacher and their
practices, they are ultimately supporting their child – and everyone wins!

**Professional development.**

Unlike many other aspects of teaching, technology changes constantly. It is vital that educators stay current with new trends and developments in both pedagogy and new technologies. To do so, teachers should have a continuous professional development (PD) plan. This can be done alone, as part of the teacher's "grade team or division," or as part of the school or district's personal-growth plan. Teachers can seek out PD opportunities online and/or outside of their district or school to connect with other educators exploring similar challenges and information (Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2013).

Many schools and districts make the mistake of placing technology into classrooms without a comprehensive plan for training teachers. In cases such as these, it is important for teachers to seek help from colleagues, mentors, or professional leaning communities. Some schools have technology-integration specialists. These people can and should be used to their full advantage, as they are the front line for the technology tools available in the school. Teaching requires life-long learning, and it is important that educators remember to stay up to date with the latest and newest technologies, no matter what their comfort level is with it! With careful planning, some risk taking, and an open mind, teachers can successfully use technology to enhance their teaching and bring learning to life for their students.

**Areas of Further Study**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there are several limitations to the current study that were related to issues of a) limited time; b) sample size and generalizability; and c) the
data collection method. Given the time allotted to this research study, and due to the small sample size of two participants, which only examines the views of two exemplary teachers who employ technology/computer-based classroom, findings may not be as detailed and in-depth as possible. Further studies can conduct long-term observations of multiple teachers' classrooms to allow for a more detailed picture of the strategies and methods teachers use to further their instruction.

With the constraints of the data collection method of this study, which was based on the Master of Teaching Ethical Review approval, the researcher did not cover student interviews. Therefore, the student ‘voice’ about e-communication, text speak, and other forms of social media were not incorporated into this research study. Further studies could combine one-on-one interviews with students to gain even more information and perspectives on the topic.

Classroom observation would also help to see technology in action as students and teachers work together with different technologies in the classroom. Classroom observation might also involve observing and debriefing teachers' lessons where text speak and e-communication are addressed within the writing program.

Further studies can compare paper-based classrooms with computer-based classrooms in order to identify the benefits and challenges of both modes of instruction. Information about how teachers support the literacy development of their students in both settings can as well be examined and compared.
Conclusion

E-communication and text speak are a large part of the 21st century child's daily life, and have revolutionized the way we think, work, and play. There is a growing body of evidence that technology integration positively affects student achievement and academic performance, and I believe we as teachers should be using this knowledge to ensure student success in the classroom! Technology, when integrated into the curriculum, transforms the learning process. Students are more motivated to take responsibility for their learning outcomes, while teachers become guides and facilitators as well as learners along with their students. Teachers need to continue to plan and assess students in ways that will entice and motivate their students' learning. When used appropriately, technology can improve the school, the teacher, the classroom, the student, and maybe even the parents! Teachers have the ability to make a difference in a child's life, and by incorporating technologies in the classroom, we are allowing our students to obtain the skills they need now and in the future!
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions
Thank you for participating in my study on the impact of e-communication and text speak on students’ literacy development. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. You can stop me at any point in time if you are uncertain about what I am asking, if you need clarification, or if you simply do not want to answer a particular question. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and if used will be generalized in my writing to conceal your identity. Before we get started do you have any questions?

Background Information
1. a) What grade do you teach?
   b) How long have you been teaching this grade?
   c) Can you describe a typical day in your classroom (what you and your students tend to do on any given day)?

Prevalence & Impact of Text-Speak and E-communication:
2. Here is a definition of text speak, “the abbreviations and slang commonly used with mobile phone text messaging, email, and instant messaging.” It includes some examples of text speak that junior and intermediate students sometimes use such as ‘u’ instead of ‘you’, and ‘thx’ instead of ‘thanks’.
   a) How do you feel about this definition and what other kinds of examples might you have seen your students write?
   b) What impact – if any – do you notice text speak having on your students’ formal writing?

3. Here is a definition of e-communication, “the passing of information from one individual to another using computers, fax, or phones.”
   a) What impact – if any – do you notice e-communication (emailing, texting, blogging, instant messaging, etc.) having on your students’ formal writing?

Benefits and Challenges:
4. What do you see as the main benefits associated with e-communication and text speak when it comes to students’ literacy?
5. What do you see as the main challenges associated with e-communication and text speak when it comes to students’ literacy?

Instruction:
6. What role does social media tools/technology play in your literacy instruction, and, more specifically, what are some ways that you incorporate social media tools/technology in your classroom?
7. How does e-communication and text speak factor into your planning for literacy instruction?
8. How do you think incorporating social media tools/technology in your instruction may be impacting students’ academic performance?
9. What advice would you give to a new teacher who is planning to integrate social media tools/technology into their literacy instruction?
Appendix B: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ___________________
Dear ___________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying how teachers are using information about the prevalence of e-communication and text speak to support their literacy instruction for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Susan Schwartz. My research supervisor was originally Dr. Kim MacKinnon and then Dr. Susan Schwartz took over the project as my research supervisor. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Dayna Einhorn
Email: dayeinhorn@hotmail.com

Instructor’s Name: Dr. Susan Schwartz
Email: susan.schwartz@utoronto.ca
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Dayna Einhorn and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name (printed): ___________________________________

Date: ______________________