

# UPNG Students' Voices: On mobile phones

---

## Solomon N.:

Mobile phones first landed in Papua New Guinea in 2007, and our cultures have been changed, due to the big influence of mobile phones. ... Mobile phones have changed how Papua New Guineans talk and behave. Some people tend to become lazy people, meaning they spend most of their time on their mobile phones, rather than doing any other thing. For example, in the past, if people wanted to request or get something, they would walk, but today people feel lazy to walk a long distance – they will use their mobile phones to communicate with whoever they want to get the something from.

SMS has really changed the usage of words. In Tok Pisin, new words have been created; for example, the word *laikim* has changed and is written by most of the mobile phone users as *lykm*.

Mobile phones have also made life easy for Papua New Guineans. People get the latest updates and information, using their mobile phones. They access the Internet using their mobile phones and get the information on what is happening around the globe. In the past, when there were no mobile phones, they didn't know what was happening in other parts of the world.

Mobile phones have also changed the way people think – their thinking has become broader, in both good and bad ways. ... It damages the thinking of many young people in PNG, when they view explicit (pornographic) materials; this has caused many young people in many parts of PNG to commit criminal offences, because their thinking has been polluted.

As we all know, culture is what people think, what they do, and what they produce; the way people do things now has changed and is not like in the past.

## Sarah B.:

Mobile phones have changed the way people communicate with each other in Papua New Guinea. Our ancestors used to communicate with each other by the sound of kundu drums that would call people from long distances away, or they used to make fire, so the smoke would explain something to them. But the invention of mobile phones has changed everything. To communicate with people from another place, people just pick up the phone and call, instead of making fire or beating the kundu. Even face-to-face communication, in terms of politeness and manners, has decreased, because people use mobile phones a lot, e.g.: A student calls her teacher and says, "Ms Temple, I am not coming to your lectures today, because I am sick," and puts the phone off. In Papua New Guinea, we talk with manners, politeness is there, but mobile phones have changed the way we do things and say things.

The use of language has changed in the past 7 years. ... People shorten words when texting, and even use abbreviations. This led to the change of language, because people now use the shortened words for texting to communicate verbally... People tend to use these jargons rather than their own languages, which are slowly dying out, and, as language comes with culture, when language is dying out slowly, so is the culture. Eg: In a culture of a society, women might not be allowed to use certain words when communicating with the opposite sex. In Papua New Guinea, it is more offending to talk to the opposite sex anyhow, but the invention of mobile phone is changing everything.

Finally, the applications or programs provided by the mobile phone have changed the cultures of Papua New Guineans. Programs and apps, such as games, videos,, pictures, music, etc., have changed the way Papua New Guineans think and do things. To be honest, Papua New Guinean cultures are dying out.

Why? Because we don't practice them anymore. Cultural singing and dances and music are done once in a year, but foreign music and dance styles are always there in our daily lives, because these things are in the phones that we carry around every day. Mobile phones are very influential, addictive, and they

cause many bad habits ... We think and do things differently, and without noticing it, you are changing, and so the culture you were born with slowly dies out. The way we dress and act these days are mostly the influence of the outside world through the use of mobile phones.

### Donna K.:

Mobile phones are seen as the greatest human invention these days. ... PNG culture is to maintain peace, freedom, law and order, and unity, as the constitution of the country states. Communication is one of the biggest problems in PNG, due to too many cultures and languages. ... Most people have lived their lives in farming, fishing, hunting, gardening, and have found their true home to be their local villages, where language and communication is common. However, the introduction of mobile phones has caused a rapid change in the lifestyle of people of Papua New Guinea. People found access to information almost at hand, and that mobile phones have brought about both positive and negative effects in PNG culture. Mobile phones have helped people communicate easily with other members of the society. People tend to apply for jobs communicating through mobile phones, to get into schools and institutions through the use of mobile phones, a student can call his/her mother back in the village or hospital, to say 'hello' and so forth. Smart phones now give us access to the Internet with information worldwide. This includes facebook, google search for information, emails, and so forth. People have seen that mobile phones have made life much easier and better.

However, mobile phones have greatly affected the well-being of the PNG society and culture. Back in the 1980s and 1990s, people in the villages had found it comfortable to live in their rural communities. Nowadays, men have been influenced to leave their wives and children, thinking that they could find something interesting in the cities. Mobile phones have a major influence on this. In the cities, families are breaking apart, and violence is constant, due to phones providing access to adultery as either the husband or the wife cheats on the other. Teenage girls are getting pregnant due to constant communication on the phones. It has been literally sickening, when stories have been told of young women travelling to the city, because a phone friend had arranged her tickets or bus fare to where he was. These are some of the social effects that are affecting the society.

Students' IQ is starting to drop, as they spend more time and depend more on mobile phones than on their brains. Laziness has increased, as people spend more time on their phones than on their businesses and work. FB and Internet have corrupted the brains of children, young people and elderly people through vast information and watching of pornographies. Women in PNG culture are supposed to respect men; however, this is lacking when a woman gets hold of a phone. She feels she is just like anyone else and can do whatever she wants. These type of changes are malnourishing the culture.

### Mathew J.:

Because of advances in technologies, today's Tok Ples languages of Papua New Guinea are assimilating all kinds of new words – they've become really different from the past. The invention of the Internet has made people come up with all sorts of new words, and influenced people's ways of learning, speaking and living. During our research, we found out that there are hundreds of words that have been created because of Internet. These words are learned by students and people from different language

communities. They try to speak these words using their tokples language – it's like they have many new words formed in their own language. And it became part of the society in which we live.

However, in the Enga language, research has found out, when students or other people, when they want to communicate using mobile phones, they try to shorten these words/ use acronyms, when texting their friends. The words that they learn from the Internet, they use them in their tokples language every day. Even the little village kids know what google or face book is.

In line with this, when you travel around the city, you will notice that kids will sit in pairs and discuss what they see on FB or Google in their vernacular language. FB and Google are really becoming part of every day's life of people. When they go to FB or Google and find anything new or interesting, they will talk about it in their tokples, and will try to use these new words with their fellow students or mates. And also, they will go around, telling everybody that they have discovered something on FB or Google, using the names of these new things, and they become new words to that person. After a time, people start using that word in their tokples, and it goes on and on.

This is not good; we have to stand firm with our own language, for the betterment of this nation.

### Stanis I.:

Since mobile phones have been introduced, they changed the culture of many people. First, they have had a big influence on the language of the people. Strange new words have emerged. Some words are dual, part-English, part-Motuna (my vernacular). And people are using short forms of words when texting, i.e., the Tok Pisin word 'husat' is now written 'ust' when texting. Some of these new words have become common, and everyone is using them now.

The big problem is, many students now make many mistakes when writing in English. When they write things, they sometimes use the terms which they use when texting. So mobile phone is playing a very big role in changing our culture. Mobile phone has changed the way we communicate. In the past, people used traditional communication methods, like passing on a message from one person to another, or place to place. This takes time, and the sender must wait for a long time, before he receives a feedback. Sometimes, wrong message will be delivered, because of too many message carriers. When mobile phones were first introduced, they replaced the traditional way, because phones made it easier to communicate, the right information was being delivered, and both communicators understand each other in a short period of time.

Also, people now socialize, using the Internet and FB. They make new strange friends and know more about the world.

### Wayne O.:

In the past eight years, mobile phones have changed the culture of Papua New Guinea. Communication with relatives who live a long distance away has been made easy. The introduction of smart phones with Internet access has given us access to social networks on the Internet, and it has had a huge impact on the culture of Papua New Guinea.

Before 2007, a Papua New Guinean teenager would have been confused, if you said the word 'LOL'; nowadays, we use new words that never existed in the past. Even numbers have their own meaning now – 43, when sent as a text message, means, the person loves you. Mobile phones have changed our language and, as we all know, language is part of our culture.

Another way mobile phones affected our culture is by helping us share our experiences more effectively through social networks. Our culture is made up of past shared experiences, and it is easier to share these experiences with other Papua New Guinean teenagers through social networks. Sharing experiences more effectively has definitely affected our culture – as I said before, even our language has changed.

Also, the Internet dating sites have made it easier for single men and women to get together, because in a country such as Papua New Guinea, there are a lot of customs and traditions. For example, the people of Aroma, located in the Central Province, have a tradition that if two young people of opposite sex are caught together involved in a relationship, then the whole community will see them as husband and wife. Such are the strict rules of some societies in Papua New Guinea, but the introduction of mobile phones has broken down most of these barriers.

There is no doubt the mobile phones have changed the cultures of Papua New Guinea – but are these changes good or bad? Will they benefit our country? Either way, the culture of our country is changing, and it is up to all individual Papua New Guineans to take the advantages and to leave out the disadvantages (of these changes). For example, the disadvantage of mobile phones is that they give our teenagers access to explicit materials/pornography, which affects the minds of our young people, and our people are our culture.

Therefore, mobile phones have changed our culture both for good and for bad. It is we, the people, who have the choice to use the power mobile phones have given us in a good way.

### Prisca N.:

Mobile phones were introduced to Papua New Guinea in the year 2000. Since then, there have been many changes in the lives of the people in the country. On the one hand, the use of mobile phones was very helpful to the people. On the other hand, they have had bad effects, or, in other words, people have been abusing the use of mobile phones.

Before the arrival of mobile phones, people were actively participating in social activities. After the arrival of mobile phones, people have isolated themselves from the majority and put their heads down on the phones. Even if you see people sitting in groups, you might think that they are communicating with each other through telling stories, but in fact they are busy with their phones in their hands, and floating around with mobile phones.

Couples or partners have lost their trust and faith towards each other. The husband will be suspecting his wife, if she is on the phone for a long time. And this is when fights break out, because the husband does not want his wife to talk on the phone, because she might be talking to the wrong person, or she might cheat on him.

The introduction of mobile phones has also made students of Papua New Guinea become lazy. When teachers give them research assignments, they just switch on to data and google the assignment. And, to make it worse, they just copy everything from the Internet. They plagiarize and hand in their assignment, they don't want to paraphrase. Students spend more time on facebook and never attend to the important tasks given to them by teachers and lecturers. That is why they they just use the Internet to do their assignments, because it is easy and fast. Library is too much work. You have to look for books and do research.

Kids are being influenced by mobile phones, too. Even kids under 18 yo are getting married. Mobile phones have made it easier to contact friends and loved ones. Even when parents do not allow them to involve in romantic relationships, they ignore their parents, because mobile phones have made it easier for them to contact each other. In consequence of it, the girl becomes pregnant.

Before the arrival of mobile phones, people contacted each other through letters. They would go to the post office and post their letter; however, it would take a week or a month for your letter to be delivered. Now, mobile phones have made it easy – just a click of the button, and everything is done.

Mobile phones have changed Papua New Guinean culture. They have made life easier and also more difficult to handle. What was hard before has now become easy, and what was good before has now become worse.

### Jacob P.:

Modern technology, which seems to be increasing rapidly in this modern world of technology, the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices has made an impact on Papua New Guinean cultures. Many Papua New Guineans are now beginning to adapt to westernized ways of life. Young people today are much more into the cultures of the westernized world. In fact, you will hardly see many young people speaking or doing things in their own culture, they tend to love doing things in westernized ways.

In the last 8 to 9 years, mobile phones have changed a lot of cultures in PNG. In the past, when people wanted to send a message, they used to beat the *garamut* (traditional drum) or light a fire, using the smoke as a signal. But not to say today, because today is different. Today, with a simple click of the button, you can just send a message or speak to many people.

Mobile phones have made life in PNG much easier; but with that also come some disadvantages. For example, today you would hardly see young people communicating in their own language through the use of mobile phones – they tend to use English most of the time and, as a result, they tend to forget their own languages and cultures.

... Most of all, mobile phones have changed the thinking capacity of people. Before the introduction of mobile phones, most Papua New Guineans used to see things and think narrowly, in a much more cultural way. And when mobile phones came to this place, people started thinking more broadly. This is because mobile phones have enabled them to have access to the Internet and other sources of information.

## Helen I.:

Mobile phones have changed the way people behave. Back in our ancestral times, our ancestors, great grandparents and great-great grandparents had no access to mobile phones. Back then, the culture was so strong and was maintained very well. Compared to this day and generation, technology has increased and, therefore, mobile phones are widely used. Many people using phones now have gadgets like music players and internet browsers installed. This gives them access to what is happening in and around the world. This encourages them to behave like the other people. They also see what life is like in other places and try to imitate the way people there behave. This eradicates the cultural behavior of the community or society, and replaces it with the outside world's behavior, thus contributing to the changes in our cultures.

The change in PNG's cultures is also seen through the way people of this generation think, compared to the past in the society. Now, you would hardly see a 10 yo child walking around naked. In the past, children never had the mentality of feeling shy and usually walked around half naked in the community. Nowadays, everybody feels shy when they are half naked and, therefore, they wear clothes when they go for traditional singsings. For example, in the past, Motu women and girls usually wore grass skirts, their traditional dress, as well as traditional tattooing, without a cloth covering their breasts. Now, in any Motuan traditional dances, you will hardly see a young female without a red laplap tied around her breasts. This has been caused by the Western influence on how people think that has been adopted through the use of mobile phones.

Mobile phones have also changed the way people communicate within the society for common understanding. In the past, a society used a common language (their mother tongue) that helped the society to live and do things in one accord and peace. After the introduction of mobile phones, many people started using them for their purpose – they communicate through phone calls, text messages, and social media, like FB and Twitter. Nowadays, people use shortcuts to communicate, like 'da' for 'the' or 'POM' for 'Port Moresby.' The way people speak has also changed; for example, in Tok Pisin 'narapela' has now been replaced with 'nadla.' This has caused misunderstandings in societies, where conflicts arise because of the changes in the way people speak/communicate.

That is why I strongly believe that mobile phones have changed our culture.