

Is SMSing making your child stupid?

SMS language or 'textspeak' is taking a lot of flack for the general misuse of the English language today - both in spelling and grammar. But is it all negative? Parents and teachers have been blaming cellphones and SMSes for a 'degradation in the English language' for years now, and they feel this technology is standing in the way of children learning proper English.

 By [Dr Pieter Streicher](#) 6 Oct 2010

What many parents and teachers don't take cognisance of, however, is that 'textspeak' serves a very definite purpose within the context where it is used and is rarely due to laziness, rebellion, or habit. The limited character space offered by a single SMS has brought about a need for acronyms and clever wordplay.

The aim of the language is to fit as much information as possible into the restricted space that a single SMS allows for. An SMS constitutes the use of symbolic expression which is forced by the limitations of technology.

SMS language is generally only used when communicating with someone that the sender is close to. This is confirmed by the fact that 65% of all abbreviations in 'textspeak' are used to identify people, such as 'u', 'b' and 'ppl'. A further 11% is used to identify possessive pronouns such as 'ur'. 10% is reserved for amusement or expressions, such as 'lol' and 'haha', further confirming that the context here is very obviously friendly, intimate and casual communication.

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