

is txtng bd 4 yr splng?

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This presentation will present the findings from a study, now in progress, which explores whether users of Short Message Service (often called “texting” or SMS) have more difficulty spelling common English words than those who do not. The use of SMS is now widespread in many parts of the world, but because it is recent, its effect on English spelling has not been empirically researched. A number of educators cite anecdotal evidence that habitual use of SMS technology causes a deterioration of standard spelling (Ross, 2007; Johnston, 2003) because its users grow accustomed to nonstandard and abbreviated spellings, e.g. ‘laf’ for ‘laugh,’ ‘u’ for ‘you’. A few linguists, on the other hand, argue that texting is an entirely different genre from edited English prose, and that users have no difficulty at all distinguishing between the two. (Crystal, 2008; Goldstein & Gardner, 2005). Their evidence is anecdotal, as well.

The objective of our empirical study is to determine if persons who routinely use text messaging (SMS) have significantly poorer spelling than those who do not. The study includes traditional college students at East Tennessee State University as well as individuals from the surrounding community in Johnson City, Tennessee. All participants have completed high school at a minimum. Subjects, who range in age from 18-75 are asked to complete a brief questionnaire detailing their demographics, cell phone use, and texting practices. Based on the questionnaire, the subject is designated as a ‘texter’ or a ‘nontexter.’ We administer a spelling test consisting of common English words, that users of English would be expected to know, but might have some difficulty spelling.

An analysis of variance will be performed to determine any associations between the use of SMS and spelling difficulty. Results, which will be ready sometime this summer, will be presented at the conference.

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