do i know its wrong: children’s and adults’ use of unconventional grammar in text messaging

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## Sample

Participants came from several schools and one university in the West Midlands of
England. The primary school group comprised 89 children (42 boys) aged 8–10 years. The
secondary school group comprised 84 children (52 boys) aged 11–15 years. There were 70 university students (19 men) aged 18–30 years.

# Abstract

There is concern that the violations of conventional grammar (both
accidental and deliberate) often seen in text messages (e.g., hi how is ya?!!) could
lead to difficulty in learning or remembering formal grammatical conventions. We
examined whether the grammatical violations made by 244 British children, adolescents and young adults in their text messages was related to poorer performance on
tasks of grammatical knowledge, including translating grammatically unconventional
text messages into standard English. We found that variance in the production of
grammatical violations in naturalistic messages was inconsistently predicted by
grammatical task performance. Specifically, primary school children who made
poorer grammar-based spelling choices were more likely to make more grammatical
violations in their everyday messages, and university students who failed to correct
more grammatical errors in a given set of messages were also more likely to make such
errors in their own messages. There were no significant relationships for secondary
school students. We conclude that using unconventional grammar when texting is not
a consistent sign of poor grammatical abilities, although there may be links betw

# Outcome

"The current
results showed that the use of text messaging increased with age, but confirmed the
importance of text-messaging for all age groups, with even primary school children
reporting that they preferred to text than ring friends, and spent longer on texting
than many other everyday academic and leisure activities... Young adults, teenagers, and children all
showed multiple examples of missing or unconventional punctuation, missing
capitals, and errors in word-level grammar. Combined, these errors occurred at a
ratio of about one for every two words for the two child groups, and one for every
four words for the adults. For children, the most common error was to omit
conventional punctuation (e.g., hi how are you), followed by omitting words
(pronouns, verbs, and function words, e.g., you want come out?); for adults, these
two types of violations were also the most common... We found that children, teenagers, and young adults all
significantly reduced the proportion of grammatical errors they had made on all or
nearly all of the four main textism categories. However, the corrections were not
made uniformly, as some grammatical transgressions remained uncorrected, even
for the adults, although the overall rate of errors was reduced by about half....children who found it
harder to choose the correct grammar-based spelling for nonwords, and adults who
found it harder to correct grammatical errors in others’ messages, were more likely
to include grammatical violations in their own text messages. Although no causal
conclusions can be drawn from this cross-sectional study, it could be that children
and adults who violate conventional written grammar when writing text messages
might have a poorer grasp of some grammar-based spelling rules than their peers.
However, this negative relationship is not a general one, as it occurred for only one
of the three tasks for two of the age groups.
There was no significant relationship between grammatical task scores and
naturalistic grammatical violations for the secondary school students." (Kemp et al, 2014: 1598-99).