

Texting versus txtng: Reading and writing text messages, and links with other linguistic skills

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The media buzzes with assertions that the popular use of text-message abbreviations, or textisms (such as r for are) is masking or even causing literacy problems. This study examined the use and understanding of textisms, and links with more traditional language skills, in young adults. Sixty-one Australian university students read and wrote text messages in conventional English and in textisms. Textism messages were faster to write than those in conventional English, but took nearly twice as long to read, and caused more reading errors. **Contrary to media concerns, higher scores on linguistic tasks were neutrally or positively correlated with faster and more accurate reading and writing of both message types.** The types of textisms produced, and those least well understood by participants, are also discussed.