

## Could auto-correct change our future alphabet?

“Hey son! How was your day in school?” I inquire as my oldest son, Gaven, answers the phone during our routine five o’clock phone call. “It’s good. Nothing happened” he replied.

If you want your patience tested (*see* my previous blog entry), try to get a pre-pubescent boy to talk on the phone. It takes some effort, much like trying different search words in Google, to find that **one thing** you want but *can’t* remember the name of.

“...so I got your email earlier today. I gotta ask- why is your spelling so bad? I know your school cancelled ‘Spelling Bees’ because we live in the ‘every kid gets a trophy’ era, but...”

He abruptly cut me off- “Daddy, I have auto-correct. I don’t use it in our emails because, well, you’re my Daddy, but I use it for schoolwork.”

“...but you still remember how to spell the words, right?” I blurt out of desperation- as this could be one more vehicle to destroy my beloved language and grammar rules. It is bad enough that state bar examiners are required to instruct law school graduates (taking the bar exam) that ‘text’ lingo is unacceptable (this is true), but now the younger generation doesn’t bother to correctly spell words? Are they taught that *close* enough is *good* enough?

I realized that this could be a possibility in the future. In the future, could spelling and grammar be taught with fewer letters? We have 26 letters in our alphabet. What if some of the letters were useless, in the future, because auto-correct will ‘automatically’ correct the word? For example: Instead of spelling **tomorrow** with the vowels, could tomorrow be spelled **tmrrw** in future elementary class rooms?

Word processing programs have auto-correct. This goes back years before we had cell phones. Yet it wasn’t until we started carrying devices with us, and communicating through them regularly, that we saw the impatience of typing on devices spill over to using a word processing program on a computer.

This all started when text messaging gained traction some years ago. I had a Motorola Razor phone. Remember these? They were the first ‘thin’ flip-phone. There were no QWERTY keyboards back then. You had to spell words using the letters on each of the 9 number keys. I thought it was ridiculous to spend so much time and effort to text a short message. Predictive texting was then invented. I never understood it; when friends tried to explain it to me, it became more confusing.

...but I never could have predicted, back then, that my son would depend on predictive texting concepts during his school years.

Are we raising a generation of children that will not possess, nor desire to use, basic spelling skills in the future? My boys are 10 and 12 years old. My oldest son is in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade; when he started the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, he was issued an iPad. This is what he uses to access his class materials,

readings, and where he submits assignments. I am sure that this practice will continue until he graduates high school.

I avoid writing by hand at all possible costs. I learned how to type when I was 17. Lack of handwriting practice has rendered it incredibly difficult for me to do effectively. I avoid it at all costs. My oldest son has auto-correct. Will spelling become difficult for him in the future, as handwriting did for me? Will he avoid it 'at all costs'?

This blog might be a stretch, yet I believe it is plausible. It is going to be interesting watching how human beings and technology interact- and possibly merge- as we forge our path towards an unpredictable future.