

# **“It depends on what spelling mistake it is” – adolescents’ attitudes towards misspellings in new media**

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This article investigates Danish adolescents’ overt and covert attitudes towards seven selected types of misspellings on Facebook and in SMS texts. The investigation is based on two studies, 1) a questionnaire and a matched guise test completed by 352 students aged 15-22, and 2) interviews with ten 15-17 year old students. We find that the adolescents judge people who misspell certain (types of) words to be less competent, that is less effective, confident and in particular less intelligent, than people who follow the conventions given by the Danish Language Council. The informants find that misspellings of words with silent letters are the most severe of the selected error types. Some misspellings, however, do not seem to affect the informants’ judgment, namely incorrect compounding of words, including the absence of compounding. There are no signs in our data that people who misspell are judged more positively than people who spell correctly, no matter the type of spelling error.

There is no incongruence between our informants’ covert and overt attitudes to misspellings, and there are no crucial differences in the informants’ attitudes in the two studies. We find that intelligibility of the text and the authors’ perceived competence are dominating factors as to how critical the students find the misspellings. We also find that attitudes towards misspellings are, to some extent, context dependent.