

# Spoken stereotypes

Business



The spoken language has always been one of the most important things in a human's life.

Language is used to communicate effectively for all sorts of reasons, ranging from casual banter to serious talks. The English language in particular is a widely used form of communication that has opened conversational doors across the world. However, despite being an important part of many people's lives, the way that people see language has caused many stereotypes about the people who speak it to evolve and thrive. The modern perception of English has caused many foreigners to be mistreated and stereotyped. English is known as one of the hardest languages that non-native speakers can learn; the conjugations are highly irregular throughout various verbs, and the pronunciation of words is extremely difficult and has no set rules. Therefore, it is common for people who originally speak a different language to struggle with learning English.

In addition to this, non-native English speakers often have noticeable accents. Despite the clear disadvantage that foreigners face when learning this difficult language, they are still treated poorly because of their respectable attempts at English. In Amy Tan's essay, *Mother Tongue*, she discusses how her mother, who was originally from China, was disrespected and essentially ignored at a doctor's office because she spoke "broken" English. However, when Amy herself spoke to the doctor, she was given complete respect because she had learned a different, more commonly accepted form of English. Many foreigners or non-native English speakers are categorized together and stereotyped as lazy or stupid because of their lack of proper English skills.

This is due to the fact that language is taught as something that is black or white; people have learned that there is only one correct way to speak English. However, there are many understandable forms of English that are spoken by people of all different races and statuses as native-born Americans. Therefore, language is causing the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes that are negatively affecting certain people's lives. In addition to people who learn English as a second language, teenagers are discriminated against because of their use of language. Teens are constantly chastised by older generations for their use of acronyms and slang in their texts, emails, and their speech.

Within the past few decades, technology has evolved greatly, and with that, patterns of speech have grown as well. Linguist John McWhorter analyzed the way modern language has developed and the ways it is perceived in his speech, *Txting is killing language. JK!!!*. McWhorter states that due to the amount of button pressing required to text on early cell phones, words have been shortened, and sentences are simpler to make things easier on the person who is texting. Older generations criticize the abbreviations and are appalled at the fact that teenagers are using such informal and mindless language. However, McWhorter brings an important point to attention; younger people have always used shockingly stupid forms of language that have been insulted, and texting is just a new form of English to be critiqued.

Therefore, the almost silly way that teenagers talk and text is nothing new, and is not seriously detrimental to communication or language in general.

Teenagers are seen as ridiculous and lazy because of their habits, when in reality, they are communicating just as every other teenager from different

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generations did. Also, although teenagers' language is simpler and informal, it is still completely understandable to all who attempt to understand it. The criticisms about teens and their way of communication are unnecessary, and it causes the stereotype of teenagers who always take the easy way out to exist. The English language in the modern day is perceived and used in ways such that it perpetuates harmful stereotypes. People think that language can only be spoken in one form; they believe that any informalities are incorrect and invalid.

However, this idea does not make language any more formal or correct, it just chastises people who do not know English as well as others feel inferior. People who struggle with English, especially non-native speakers, are assigned damaging labels that place them at a lower level than the rest of people. Also, teenagers are criticized for their slang usage and their simplified texts. Older generations are shocked at how badly the younger generations are speaking, and think that there is something wrong with the people who speak in this way. However, the teenagers of today are only continuing a pattern that has existed throughout time; there is always a chunk of younger people who are next to illiterate and speak in innovative and sometimes ridiculous ways.

Language is a beneficial tool that has been used to communicate forever. Although it is a wonderful thing, language is causing many problems by stereotyping people who don't speak it well, and in order for language to reach its full potential, it must be used and perceived in a way that does not wrongly categorize all English faults to certain groups.