



ERIN
HARREL

of Cape Coral has a Ph.D. in education and is the mother of three children.

A whole new language

It's like **learning** Greek

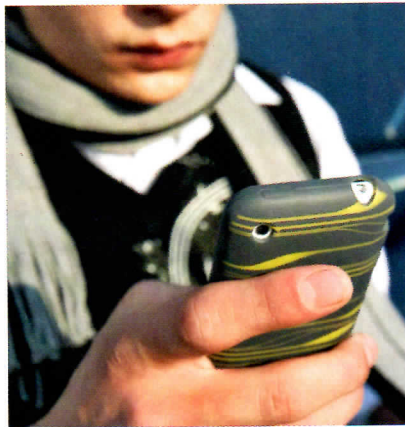
Some 2,300 years ago, Germanic tribes began conquering much of northwest Europe. As the tribes spread and conquered, so did their language. Much of the English language spoken today is a result of these nomadic tribes' broken language. Linguists refer to this phenomenon as the Germanic shift change. What we know now as standard American English, often called Standard English, or S.E., in linguistic circles has since morphed many times over.

One of the most significant challenges to Standard English in recent times came from Ann Arbor, Mich., where a judge ruled Black English (more formerly known as African American Vernacular English, or AAVE) was truly a language. The street form of the spoken language is known as Ebonics with roots stemming from the Haitian language Creole.

Another challenge occurred in the mountainous regions of the southern United States, where "y'all" and "comeonbacknow" (spoken in one long drawl) seems to be the norm. Yet the written version of both "Ebonics" and "southern slang" follows Standard English.

Few challenges to the written form of Standard English have won acclaim — until now. I fear that our dear little digital natives (a.k.a modern day children) may be changing our language forever.

If you have a pre-teen or teen with any type of technological capabilities, you are fully aware of the lan-



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guage I am referring to. It is a series of symbols, acronyms and quick retorts. I am not sure if the cause of the new language is convenience or parental encoding. As an educator and parent, I am studying the new language in hopes that I will not be left behind as the digital native tribes divide and try to conquer.

I recently attempted following my son, Jude, 12, on his Facebook page. It was quite a challenge! I could only follow every other comment. It was scary and a wake up call to try and figure this all out. The language of the digital languages sounds like Standard English, Ebonics, Southern Slang or any other cognate, but is written in mnemonics.

Attempting to follow the developing language brought me back to my college days when I tried to learn the Greek alphabet. Thankfully, my son has been a great tutor, and I am picking up this new digital language with a bit more ease.

For those of you unfamiliar, I have provided a cursory review of some of

THE LANGUAGE OF DIGITAL NATIVES

Here are a few text messaging acronyms I've learned recently:

- wuddup — What's up?
- idk — I don't know.
- ttfn — ta-ta for now
- ifydk — if you didn't know
- ik — I know
- wachadoin — What are you doing?
- omg — oh my god
- wth — What the heck!
- brb — Be right back.
- gtg — Got to go.
- sm — so mad
- tye — totally embarrassing
- kul — cool
- w.e. — whatever
- wut — what
- gnt — good night
- gmng — good morning
- afk — away from keyboard
- hbu — How about you?

You can add more to our own digital native vocabulary list at

momslike  .com
where Gulf Coast moms meet

the common words, acronyms or... (not sure what you call these nuances). I have high hopes that with dedicated study and a little guidance, I will be able to stay abreast of the new language. Keeping up with kids is tough these days, especially when it requires learning a whole new language! 