

# Embodiment in text-messages

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Text-messages, along with other text-only modes of communication, are often portrayed as bodiless, devoid of non-verbal clues and, as a result, offering limited communicative possibility. My research challenges this view and shows that, in their SMS-messages, texters discursively create *alterae personae* of themselves and/or the sender, i.e., embodied representations, which are located in a joint (virtual) communicative space and are able to perform discursive enactment of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic information, e.g., through representing sounds and actions following modality conventions and through individual creativity.

Like in all interpersonal interactions, where people constantly display characteristics of self and expect other people to believe the impression that is fostered before them, the texters' true selves are distinct (to a smaller or larger extent) from their represented personae, the latter created and existing in what Fauconnier (1985, p.16) refers to as *mental spaces* and describes as "constructs distinct from linguistic structures but built up in any discourse according to guidelines provided by the linguistic expressions." Interaction, then, occurs not between the sender and the recipient directly, but between their embodied representations in each other's mind.

This enactment and self-positioning in a discursively created embodied space is governed by a set of user-initiated rules and results in a varied degree of affect, as reported by users and most evident in the case of sexting, and result in a momentary experience of ‘being there’.

Taking into account the range of embodied behaviours in texting, I conclude that texting should be perceived not as a mono-modal (text-only) form of communication, but as one characterised by a text-only multimodal behaviour (a phenomenon to which I refer as *embedded multimodality*).