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COMM 340

March 21, 2012

Definition Column

Totes def, man

I love words. I love how the mouth, combined with the lips and tongue, turns sounds into a word, and then connects those words into a sentence. I love how writers take those words and sentences and create pieces of art. I love how as humans, we can take those words and express every feeling we have.

I love words. I hate when people, particularly those of a younger age (and those who think they are younger than they are), take words and shorten them into text-speak. It is one thing to text, IM or email a certain word. But through my eyes, it is a sin to actually let those faux words leave the lips.

There is a new word circulating through the population's youth that makes my heart twist and turn and my ear drums pinch in pain. Even now I can hear a close friend of mine saying it.

"That's *totes* fine."

When I first heard this word, I was confused about what my friend was trying say. Was she referring to a bucket or box used for storage? Possibly she was talking about her baggage she was taking on vacation. Or that she was actually picking up fine, throwing it over her shoulder and taking it over to her house.

It took me a moment, until I realized what she was doing. She was shortening the already ridiculous word totally into an even more ridiculous word.

According to urbandictionary.com, totally is a word "used by ditzy, young girls that means definitely or for sure." If totally is already used by ditzy, young girls, do they really think that saying totes is going to make them seem suave and sophisticated?

Urban dictionary says that a person takes about 0.14 seconds to speak a syllable, and that the average young valley-girl uses the word totally about 190 times a day. Saying totes instead of totally saves these girls about 26.6 seconds a day. Think of all the things these girls can do with that extra 26.6 seconds in a day. The possibilities are can actually be counted in that same amount of time.

What irks me the most about totes is that by shortening one word, people are shortening other words as well. And then they combine it with totes.

Instead of something being very adorable, it is now *totes adorbs.* Also, if a girl sees something cute, like a baby or puppy, she may say that it is *totes presh.* Note that both of these totes forms could be used interchangeably.

Of course becomes *totes def* and something that might be considered cool is now *totes legit*.

If someone says they are *totes jelly*, it does not mean the person is craving a PBJ, but rather the person is totally jealous.

And the exclamation of *totes obvi* is not a potential "Star Wars" name, but instead means something is totally obvious.

It's eerie how close this word shortening is to George Orwell's newspeak. In his novel 1984, newspeak is thought of as "a beautiful thing, the destruction of words" because it takes all of the great, fantastic, incredible words we have in our language, and gets rid of them. Something can only be good, ungood, plusgood doubleplusgood.

We aren't at such a destructive state in our language, but using totes like Orwell uses good is getting us that much closer.