LITERACY CAN BE CHILD'S PLAY

With Coventry University research revealing that text message abbreviations can improve a child's literacy skills, LEGO UK reveals that essential literacy skills can be developed much earlier in a child's life through play.

Through play, children acquire the ability for abstract thought and symbolic representation, and an understanding of rules - all of which are fundamental for linguistic processing.

Dr Nicola Pitchford, Lecturer of Developmental Psychology at Nottingham University explains: "Play facilitates the development of the basic building blocks of cognitive processing that are crucial for later acquired scholastic skills.

"Through play children learn to represent things symbolically and start to understand the relations between objects and events. Symbolic representations are the basis of many scholastic skills, such as literacy, writing, spelling and mathematics. Pretend play also helps children develop story-telling skills, supporting their development of imagination and grammar, both of which are necessary for understanding and creating literature."

Cecilia Weckstrom, Head of the LEGO Learning Institute adds: "Language is an example of a system where meaning is constructed by assembling constituent parts together – you put together letters that form words, which form sentences that convey meaning."

"LEGO bricks work in the same way as sentence formation; you put together pieces that form parts, which make up a model that also conveys meaning. The model can be taken apart and put together in many different ways, much like language and mathematic equations. It often takes a few different iterations to get it "right" so willingness to iterate and persevere is crucial to learning."

Challenging, creative play helps children enhance their cognitive and behavioral skills, within a protected environment – helping to foster confident learners.

Notes:

- The Coventry University study of eleven-year old children explored how the use of text abbreviations might be related to the skills children need in reading and writing

- The findings, first presented in the British Journal for Developmental Psychology, March 2009, revealed that the children who were better at spelling and writing used the most 'textisms'.