

SMS db8



Is txt ruining the English language?

Exam markers have expressed concerns over the use of text messaging language in exam answers. The proof of its increased usage came when a 13-year-old Scottish schoolgirl handed in an essay written completely in text message shorthand, much to the bemusement of her teacher.

One extract said: **My smmr hols wr CWOT. B4, we used 2go2 NY 2C my bro, his GF & thr 3 :-@ kids FTF. ILNY, it's a gr8 plc.**

The use of SMS text messaging has developed and exploded with the advent of mobile phones, although it is also common place in emails and instant messaging. The object of textese is to use the fewest number of characters needed to convey a comprehensible message, hence grammar and punctuation are largely ignored, but is this, as the article above suggests, a bad thing or is it just moving with the times?

Overleaf are some of the reader's comments received by the BBC in response to an online debate over the above, which asked:

Can you translate the above passage? **R U a txt addict?** Do you think txting is killing off the English language? **R is it jst gr8 4 tkn 2 m8s?**

Consider each of the responses overleaf with respect to the following:

- Are they positive or negative about the use of textese?
- Do you agree or disagree with what's being said?
- What do you think - which responses would best support your viewpoint in a classroom debate?



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BBC online debate responses to 'Is txt ruining the English language?'

The English language has survived and adapted through many attempts to supplant it over the centuries. Indeed the very thing that makes English such a powerful and flexible language is that over the centuries it has adopted and borrowed from other languages. English, as we know it now is quite different from 200 years ago, which in turn was quite different from 500 years ago. Shakespeare himself was responsible for introducing many new words. So unlike other languages English has survived and become so dominant through evolution. Therefore txt msging may or may not influence it in the long term, but history has shown us that any elements adopted will only serve to expand the flexibility and ease use of the language.

Perry, UK

Languages are invented for people to communicate. It is always better when a language is convenient to use, and is effective in delivering one's thought. Another key factor is that costs involved in communication cannot be too high. It is inevitable for us to "speak" in this way via a machine, to save time... We'd better invent better machines which can translate abbreviated words that we key in back into real words to the recipient.

Steve, Hong Kong

Ruining? RUINING? It's expanding our language. It's making it more compatible with a write- faster short-message society. When people started saying 'why' more often than 'wherefore', there were no doubt old-fashioned starchies around then who argued that was wrong.

Liz Bulleyment, Derbyshire

I never use text shorthand when sending text messages, but always spell properly and use proper grammar and punctuation. I have to disagree with people who say using shorthand is lazy - it's blooming hard work! It's a lot easier just to spell properly! Personally I think the schoolgirl was just having a laugh. I'm sure she can write properly really.

Emma, England

Surely as time is going on our language is getting shorter and shorter thanks to technology. Eventually we won't need to write anything down and we will just speak into microphones and it will be written/stored for us. We are all just gonna end up speaking a slang form of our language.

John Jackson, UK

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Texting is transforming our language, making it evolve at a remarkable pace. As a lecturer I find students slipping text language into everyday work, however they seem to have got to grips with reverting back to the Queen's English when submitting reports and other major written work. The frightening thing is I have noticed I've been using it when leaving notes for students to book tutorials and when sending a quick email to a work colleague. Is there no hope for us!

Stuart Rhodes, England

Some people seem really worried about this. Considering the popularity of the mobile phone, its inevitable there'll be overlaps of txt use. I think that schoolgirl was having a laugh and texting certainly won't "kill" the English language. Many forms of communication take "liberties" with standard English - e-mail, chat-rooms, lyrics, poems, newspaper headlines etc. Text messaging is a perfect example of how people adapt and mould language to suit different contexts. Maybe schools should be studying why it happens. It is the nature of language to evolve over time.

Richard, UK

Abbreviated text is fine for text messages on the phone, but in other contexts it only shows laziness in today's youth. The girl in the article should fail the paper. People need to realize that everything has its place, and in formal essay writing, spelling and grammar apply.

Andy Lightcap, USA

Texting in public areas should also be banned on the grounds of health and safety. Last week, some youth bumped into me while he was tapping away on his mobile, not giving the slightest bit of attention to where he was walking. He then had the cheek to blame me for the incident, even though I was stood looking in a shop window! I have also seen accidents on escalators and stairs, where someone is trying to text away whilst walking. Stop it in schools, and stop it in public, before a serious accident occurs.

Andy, UK

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It seems that as technology speeds along at ever increasing rates of processing power coupled with the perceived notion that a quick written communiqué is better than an eloquently crafted piece of writing the children of the world are inventing ways of keeping pace with this in their own way.

Jeff, USA

Anyone using text messaging language in an exam is trying to be funny. I think the language is safe enough; examiners should try to hide their pomposity more successfully.

Tom, UK

The difficulty with texting is that it isn't uniform and has many dialects. While it's fine among friends who use the same texting dialect, others may misinterpret. Texting may save space, but it doesn't save time for anyone who can use a keyboard decently. It takes me longer to text than it does to type the phrase, as I have to suppress too much.

Arri London, EU/US

We should ban shorthand for secretaries and journalists as well as text messaging for school children. That would stop everyone intruding on the English language. After all there are no slang words, foreign words or dialects used in this country at all at the moment.

Richard Stokoe, London

TMMy sister in law is proud of the speed at which she can text - and she is a teacher! Personally I find it an annoying habit (bit like chewing gum!) and think all texters should just ring the recipient. Even the moronic "I'm on the train" is better to hear than that infernal bleeping!

Anon, UK

Far from worrying about text messaging finding its way into schools, it's more worrying that a pupil is so idiotic to think it would be acceptable. If a pupil cannot change their communication to suit the context then they're hopeless.

Fraser Heath, Aberdeen UK

Kids are just trying to rebel, didn't we all do that with our own little slang? I admit I spoke bad Portuguese when I was a teenager, but it was out of choice and I could write a proper essay for school when I needed to.

Carla, UK, formerly Portugal

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The use of these abbreviations allows the user to avoid having to spell correctly and masks their ignorance of the language and its usage. I am ashamed of our low standards in our native tongue when compared against non-UK nationals' ability to use our own language correctly. How long before we accept grunts accompanied by vague finger pointing as the primary means of communication? (See Harry Enfield's character, Kevin).

Richard, UK

It won't stick, don't fret. Every generation aims to annoy the hell out of their elders. The only tragedy is the adults who try to appear young and cool by using it too. I fully expect someone here will do just that.

Matt, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (ex-UK)

Wot do u mean? Ttxtin is gr8 & quik & easy 2 rite!

Johnster, Scotland

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What a disaster. The great English language, with its power to move and to anger, to frighten and to perplex, to amuse and to inspire, to change the course of history, is being debased into some moronic machine code by this mind-numbing new form of communication. What has happened to the passion and power of a well written letter?

Simon, UK

This is all very well but if anybody tried to get a job at the BBC by filling in the application with this gobbledegook, he or she would quickly learn the limitations of its use.

Hugh, England

It's not just text messaging that is doing this. Media are using it a lot too. It's seen as trendy but to me it's 90% gibberish. With predictive texting starting to come in, it's easier to use real words than the code some people come up with. This falls into the same category as music acts spelling their names wrong (yes, I know it's because you can't copyright real words) which kids then use to spell in school.

Steve G, UK

Blame the network operators. With approx 160 characters per SMS it's logical to try and say as much as you can in one message.

Giles, UK

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I run a youth dance company for teens. They sometimes send me messages to tell me if they will be late or absent or ask me questions. Most of the time I can understand them, but sometimes there is so many codes in the message I have no idea what they are talking about and have to phone them!

Hannah, UK

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Text messaging shorthand is no more of a threat to the English language than the radio phonetic alphabet or Morse code. I learned both while at school but would never have dreamed of using them in an exam. The only threats to English are the schools' inability to teach it properly and their failure to mark down papers when they contain bad grammar and incorrect spelling.

Bill, UK

If this form of language has made it into classrooms then it's a problem. I only ever use abbreviations like that in text messages if I use them at all; however I regularly receive e-mails in that form. It's a scary thought that this could become the 'new English', and one that I don't want to become a reality.

Ralph, UK

What nonsense! Text-messaging shorthand is an informal way of abbreviating language to suit the informal and cramped circumstances of the text message. This is simply a matter of classroom discipline: Submitting schoolwork in this informal shorthand is as unacceptable as turning up at school in a bathing costume. There is full-dress language and informal language, and students must learn to distinguish.

Matt, UK

It's just a new form of shorthand. Older forms of shorthand haven't taken over from written language, so I can see no reason for "txt" to do so.

Peter Judge, WYorks, UK