

Km Explore varieties of and attitudes to text messaging



Your response to this task should consider the following ideas.

1. What are text messages like?
2. How and why do you and others use text messages?
3. What are others' views on text messages and what is your response to this?

Your writing should be lively and interesting, demonstrating an overview of attitudes to text messaging and supporting this with references to specific views and features.

1. What are text messages like?

The main modes of communication are speech and writing. Although similar information may be conveyed by each of these modes, they are very different in their characteristics and how they are perceived. This unit is focusing on spoken language study; however, you may find that text messages also have some written language features.

Task

Consider the features in the following table of spoken and written language. Create a new table for text message language, selecting features from both sides of the table. Are there more features from spoken or written language in your new table? Why do you think this is?

Spoken language		Written language	
uses pitch, volume and pace to aid communication	is ephemeral (it disappears as soon as it's said)	uses punctuation and sentence structure to aid communication	has a permanence (it is written and exists in a physical form)
is often informal	is often spontaneous	is often formal	is often planned
may not be structured in sentences	is often viewed as more unique to an individual, more personal	is usually structured in sentences	is often viewed as more standardised, less personal or unique
is often interactional (conversations between speakers)	is often viewed as having a lower status	is often transactional (conveying information to a reader or readers)	is often viewer as having a higher status

Thinking about whether text messages are more of a spoken or written form of communication will help you to explain their purpose, audience and the way they are perceived by others.

2. How do you and others use text messages?

An important aspect of text language is the use of spelling. In your own messages, or those sent to you, you may notice patterns in the way that non-standard spellings are used.

Task

- In the table on page 3 write down ten text messages sent by you to other people. Copy the spelling, punctuation and capitalization exactly as it appears in the message. Try to write down messages sent by you to different people.
- Now write down ten text messages received by you, preferably from different people. Write these into the table on page 4.
- Look at the table of text messaging spelling features below. Can you identify any of the features in messages sent by you? Can you identify any of the features in messages received by you? Record these in your tables and comment on any patterns that you spot.

Text message spelling features

Feature	Definition	Example/s
Deletion	Missing letters out, often vowels	gd, ppl
Clipping	Missing off start and end letters of words	goin
Letter homophones	Using a single letter to replace a similar-sounding word	u, r, cu
Number homophones	Using a number to replace a similar-sounding word or part of word.	4, h8, 2
Phonetic spelling	Spelling a word as it sounds	fone
Acronym	Using initial letters of words only, can be pronounced as a word	lol,
Initialism	Using initial letters of words only, not pronounced as a word	btw, omg, tbh
Blend	Combining two or more words or part-words	blogosphere
Deviant spelling	Using non-standard spelling for effect, rather than to reduce number of letters	boi, woz, dai

Commenting on my text message data

Messages sent by you

Sent to ...	Message/s	Spelling features	Comment (why do you use these spelling features?)

Task

Now comment on your own use of text message language. Consider what spelling features you use, when and why. Try to give specific examples.

From my analysis of the data, it seems that I use ... When texting my best friend ... When texting my mum ... This makes me think that ...

Commenting on my text message data

Messages received by you

Sent by...	Message/s	Spelling features	Comment (why do you think that these spelling features were used?)

Task

Now comment on others' use of text message language. Consider what spelling features they use and how this might vary according to their age, gender and interests. Try to give specific examples from your data.

When looking at the data from my received messages, it is interesting to see that my school friends use ... However, my mum uses ... This makes me think that ...

3. What are others' views on text messages and what is your response to this?

The language of text messages and its potential effect on Standard English has been a controversial topic for several years.

In these articles you can see that strong views are expressed. The writers are expressing contrasting opinions about the way that language is changing. One writer thinks that change in language is bad, one writer thinks that change in language is a good and, ultimately, inevitable.

These views could also be described as being **prescriptive** and **descriptive**.

Prescriptive and descriptive approaches to language

A **prescriptive** approach to language is one that seeks to impose a set of rules on the 'correct' use of language, to stop the 'wrong' use of language or a changing use of language. If a person takes a prescriptive approach to language they may be unhappy about new or non-standard uses of language and how it is changing.

A **descriptive** approach to language comments on language as it is, not as it should be. If a person takes a descriptive approach to language they may be interested in how speakers or writers use language, the subtle rules or patterns in how it is changing. They will not be attempting to control or 'contain' language.

Task

Below are links to two newspaper articles presenting contrasting views on this topic. Read the two articles, underlining any sections that you feel show a strong opinion about text messaging.

The first article is written by broadcaster, John Humphrys: 'I h8 text messages. How texting is wrecking our language'

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-483511/I-h8-txt-msgs-How-texting-wrecking-language.html>

The second article is written by linguist, David Crystal, '2b or not 2b?'

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jul/05/saturdayreviewsfeatres.guardianreview>

When you have read and annotated the articles, record the key quotations and your own reactions in the tables on pages 6 and 7.

Commenting on others' views and attitudes

Article: John Humphrys, 'I h8 text messaging. How texting is wrecking our language'.

Quotation	View expressed	My personal response to this view

Commenting on others' views and attitudes

Article: David Crystal, '2b or not 2b'.

Quotation	View expressed	My personal response to this view