



Language Use in Social Media

Bringing Research into the Classroom: New Resources for
Teaching A-Level English Language

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Hi!

- I started my PhD in 2015, funded by the ESRC
- My research is an ethnography of an East London youth group
- I recorded speakers & extracted some of their social media data



Young people use text speak in job applications

🕒 19 March 2015

Struggling pupils now use 'text speak' in essays

Social Media Is Destroying Quality Human Interaction

By Jessica Serra, Septemb

Is Social Media Ruining Our Communication Skills?

The effects of social media on our future in the workplace.

Society & Technology

- Swiss scientist Conrad Gessner called for an end to the use of a well-known hand-held media device that threatened our minds by overloading us with information causing "confusing and harmful" results.

What was that 'media device'?

- 1565: Books!

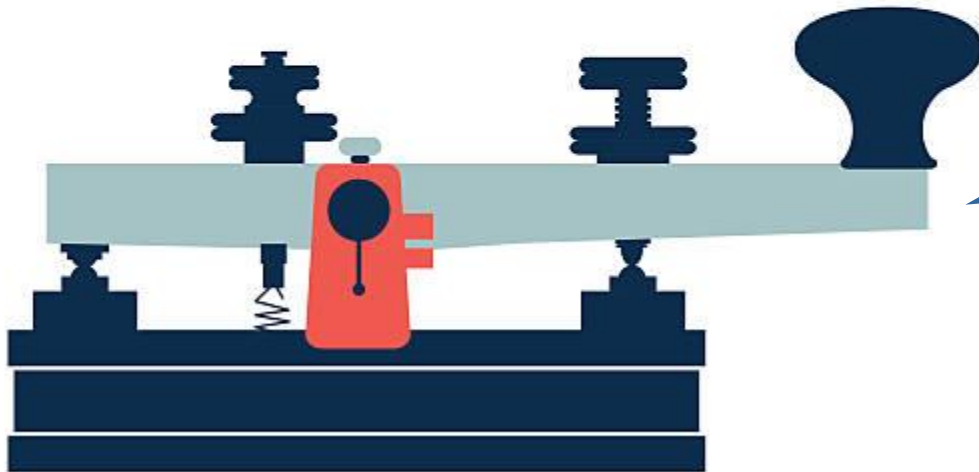
"that horrible mass of books keeps growing might lead to a fall back into barbarism"

[Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz](#)



Txtspk, netspeak, etc.

- The language of social media/texts are often described as a 'unique' variety, unlike anything ever seen before
- Somewhere in-between speech and writing
- But, we have seen these forms before...

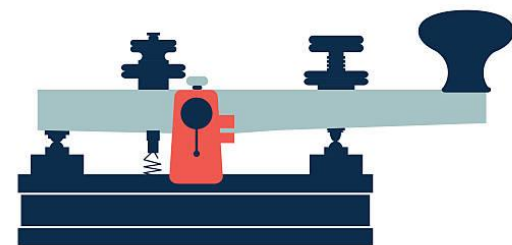


*Telegrams were charged
by the word*

People developed
abbreviations & innovative
spellings to circumvent this

Txtspk, netspeak, etc.

“ Their morning greeting to a friend in a distant city is usually “g. m.,” and the farewell for the evening, “g. n.,” the letters of course standing for good morning and good night. The salutation may be accompanied by an inquiry by one as to the health of the other, which would be expressed thus: “Hw r u ts mng?” And the answer would be: “I’m pty wl; hw r u?” or “I’m nt flg vy wl; fraid I’ve gt t mlaria.” ”



A continuum?

- ‘electronic discourse is writing that very often reads as if it were being spoken – that is, as if the sender were writing talking’. (Davis & Brewer, 1997)
- We *write* emails but use *chat* rooms
- The earlier work tried to place features on a continuum
- In speech we have access to intonation and prosody → creative use of punctuation to mimic this

I'll **try**
and do it
today


AHHHHH!!!!!!
!!!!!!



Speech

Writing

Claim 1: Standard Spelling

- | | | | |
|----------|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Lisa | lol guys I've just been asked if I want to go to Barbados for 5 nights over New Years FOR FREE | 13. Lisa | Nooo I already made plans with y'all! |
| 2. Abi | wtf | 14. Lisa | Can I split myself in half |
| 3. Abi | ?? | 15. Abi | Lol |
| 4. Ellie | What?! | 16. Abi | Are you STUPID |
| 5. Ellie | Why don't you go | 17. Abi | Lisa |
| 6. Abi | Well obviously answer is yes | 18. Ellie | hahahaha |
| 7. Lisa | My friend is an air hostess hahah | 19. Abi | It's Barbados |
| 8. Ellie | I'll go if you don't | 20. Ellie | Wow |
| 9. Stef | Whaaaat | 21. Ellie | Spelling |
| 10. Stef | Yeah me three | 22. Lisa | Hahahaha spelling |
| 11. Abi | Can we all go hahaha | 23. Stef | We are going to Broadgate circus |
| 12. Stef |  | | |

Claim 1: Standard Spelling

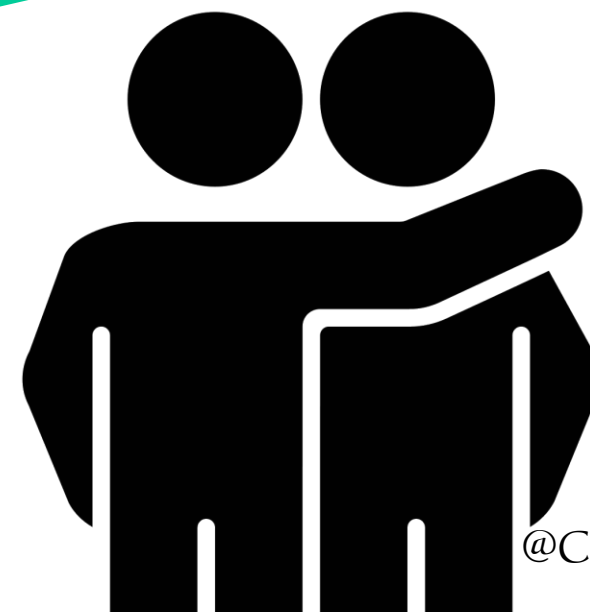


83.9% (N= 725/865):
Spelling Errors

Claim 2: Use of 'txtspk'

- | | |
|---------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Mark | Ok! I'll meet yaaa |
| 2. Abi | Yeah George |
| 3. Abi | I'm walking up the road |
| 4. Stef | We're in the garden bbz |
| 5. Abi | Cooooool |
| 6. Abi | C u in a min |
| 7. Mark | You guys still there? |
| 8. Abi | Yeeeeeee |

1293 of "see" – but only
7 are spelt as <c> as
opposed to the 1286
tokens of standard, <see>



Claim 2: Use of 'txtspk'

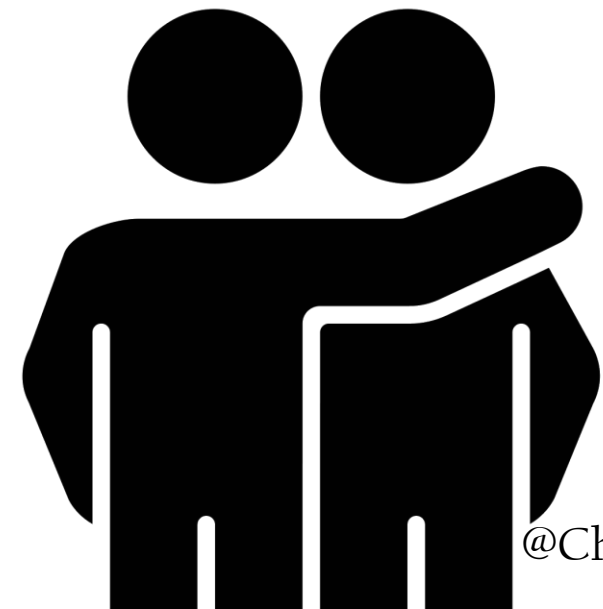
1. Mark Ok I've paid the council tax, so if everyone

could please transfer £23.56 asap that

would be **gr8 thaaanks!**
-

1. Abi How was the first morning?
2. Rachel Nothing to do really just familiarising myself with

the back end of the website
3. Rachel Haha at least it's a job **bbz!!**
4. Abi Not complaining



Claim 3: Write how you speak

User:

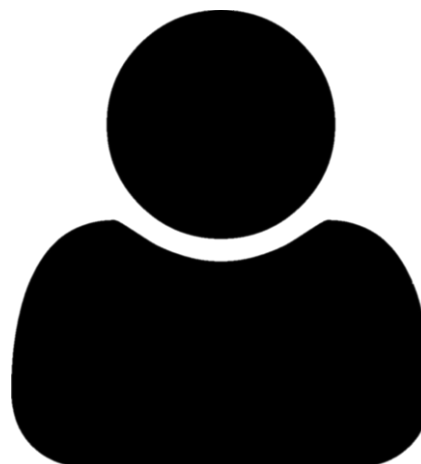
Work **dat** pole **gurl**! @VENUE <link to photo>

User:

@USER don't come for my queen.
ELSE WE GONNA FALL OUT! And
that will have negative
consequences for you



Claim 3: Write how you speak



?

P1: I might meet my friend John for a drink, y'all welcome

P2: Whose [sic] John????

P1: He's the guy from Sussex? He lives like opposite us?

P2: What guy from Sussex I forget

P2: Sorry

P2: Hahaha

P1: He does law and lives virtually opposite us I think I've spoken about him before ???

P1: I got McDonald's on Saturday with him hahahah

Online communities

- Most people have social media networks that look like their offline networks
- Snapchat & Instagram are growing amongst young people *why?*

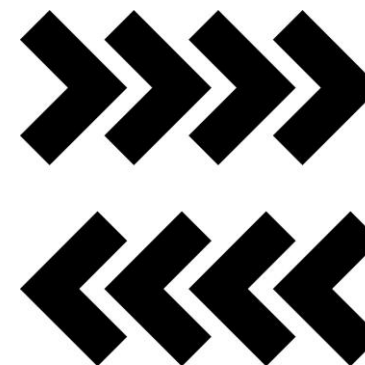
1 Int What do you use?
2 JM Snapchat and that's it, I don't use Facebook
3 anymore cos that's just stupid (.) like {NS}
4 people can ask to meet y- up with you yeah
5 and then {NS} that's actually not the real
6 person and then you end up getting shanked
7 or something like that



Growing family membership



Privacy awareness



Convergence

Language Investigation

1. In what ways has social media changed?
2. What are the key differences between social media?
3. What does content look like on each platform?
4. How have older platforms copied elements of new ones?

- What factors influence people's usage?



The Data

Gathering data

- Ethical considerations
- Independent & dependent variables
- Selecting the data

Analysing the data

- Encouraging the student to think about patterns
- Thinking about comparing and contrasting

