

In our lively discussion we touched upon one of the key themes of the A Level course; how and why does a language change over time?

As you can see from the attached article by John Humphreys for many people changes to our language can be a source of both concern and anger. To others, any alterations to how a language is used is simply a reflection of the many other developments that are taking place in the modern world.

We will start the course in September by looking closely at the issues surrounding language change. In order to prepare we would like you to do some thinking beforehand and write a brief (250 word) discussion of your views in response to the question below.

### **To what extent is our language being ruined by technology and social media?**

Your responses should be ready for the **first lesson of the course in September**.

#### **Possible sources of inspiration:**

Radio 4's linguistics programme "Word of Mouth" is an accessible treasure trove of information, theories and discussion about the English Language and all of the episodes are available to download or as podcasts (over 151 episodes)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtnz>

Game On: The language of Video Games

Emoji: The Future of Language?

Language Evolution: A gene for Language?

Anything by Steven Pinker (the rock star of the language and psychology world), David Crystal or Jean Aitchison



# I h8 txt msgs: How texting is wrecking our language

By JOHN HUMPHRYS  
Last updated at 07:29 24 September 2007

A good dictionary is a fine thing - I yield to no man in my love for one. If I stretch out my right arm as I type, I can pluck from my shelves the two volumes of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

They are as close to my heart as they are to my desk because they are so much more than a useful tool.

Leafing through a good dictionary in search of a single word is a small voyage of discovery - infinitely more satisfying than looking something up on the internet.

It's partly the physical sensation - the feel and smell of good paper - and partly the minor triumph of finding the word you seek, but it's rare to open a dictionary without being diverted somewhere else.



The eye falls on a word you've never seen before or one whose meaning you have always wanted to check, and you close the dictionary just a little bit richer for the experience. But my lifetime love affair with the OED is at risk. The sixth edition has just been published and - I feel a small shudder as I write these words - it has fallen victim to fashion.

It has removed the hyphen from no fewer than 16,000 words.

So in future we are required to spell pigeon-hole, for instance, as pigeonhole and leap-frog as leapfrog. In other cases we have two words instead of one. Pot-belly shall henceforth be pot belly.

You may very well say: so what? Indeed, you may well have functioned perfectly well until now spelling leapfrog without a hyphen.

The spell-check (sorry: spellcheck) on my computer is happy with both. But that's not why I feel betrayed by my precious OED.



## <English language> <Summer task> <2018 >

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It's because of the reason for this change. It has happened because we are changing the way we communicate with each other, which means, says the OED editor Angus Stevenson that we no longer have time to reach for the hyphen key.

Have you ever heard anything quite so daft? No time to make one tiny key-stroke (sorry: key stroke).

Has it really come to this? Are our lives really so pressured, every minute occupied in so many vital tasks, every second accounted for, that we cannot afford the millisecond (no hyphen) it takes to tap that key?

Obviously not. No, there's another reason - and it's far more sinister and deeply troubling.

It is the relentless onward march of the texters, the SMS (Short Message Service) vandals who are doing to our language what Genghis Khan did to his neighbours eight hundred years ago.

They are destroying it: pillaging our punctuation; savaging our sentences; raping our vocabulary. And they must be stopped.

This, I grant you, is a tall order. The texters have many more arrows in their quiver than we who defend the old way.

Ridicule is one of them. "What! You don't text? What century are you living in then, granddad? Need me to sharpen your quill pen for you?"

You know the sort of thing; those of us who have survived for years without a mobile phone have to put up with it all the time. My old friend Amanda Platell, who graces these pages on Saturdays, has an answerphone message that says the caller may leave a message but she'd prefer a text. One feels so inadequate.

(Or should that have been ansafone? Of course it should. There are fewer letters in that hideous word and think how much time I could have saved typing it.)

The texters also have economy on their side. It costs almost nothing to send a text message compared with a voice message. That's perfectly true. I must also concede that some voice messages can be profoundly irritating.

