

Texting shorthand annoys purists, but it has its charm

By Seth Mydans

If u cn rEd ths, ur doin gr8.

- 1 It is the newest variant of English, a compressed jumble of letters and numbers that has emerged in recent years as the language of the telephone text message. Quick, inventive and utilitarian, it is a minimalist form of the language that some linguists call irrelevant and many schoolteachers say is an insult to its mother tongue. But with more than a trillion text messages sent every year, showering the world with a confetti of tiny missives, it is impossible to ignore.
- 2 Texting is pure communication, pragmatic and terse, a facsimile of the sounds of English cut loose from the roots and history of the language. It has produced its own vocabulary of acronyms, homonyms and abbreviations, things like LOL (laughing out loud) and CUL8R (see you later) that have, in their own context, become new English words. It is a language driven by the young, a generation with the most agile thumbs in human history, whipping across the keyboard as they text.
- 3 The vocabulary of text messaging realizes an old lexicographical dream – the realignment of spelling with sound. No more rough, trough, thought, through – just ruf, trof, thot, thru. New conventions in spelling have emerged, like the use of a capital letter to denote a long vowel: ths is EzE to rEd.
- 4 The question is whether this new lingo is anything but a curiosity. David Crystal, author of “English as a Global Language”, called telephone text messaging “a very tiny, tiny thing, a variety of English that has evolved purely as a response to a technological restraint.” That restraint is the little screen on a mobile telephone, and Crystal said that is where texting would remain, thankfully leaving little imprint on the language at large.
- 5 But there is evidence that some spellings are leaking out into broader use. Last November, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, which sets standards for the testing of students, said phrases like 2B R NT 2B and I LUV U would be acceptable in exam papers. Also late last year education officials in New Zealand said they might accept some abbreviations like WOT or WANNA or CUZ on examinations.
- 6 There was, of course, a backlash. Newspapers called the Scottish proposal ridiculous. In New Zealand, Judy Turner, a member of Parliament, put her objection in writing: “Skoolz r ther 2 educ8 + raze litracy 2 certn standrds.”
- 7 But there is no pristine version of English that must be protected from alien incursions, said Denis Pyatt, principal of Papanui High School in Christchurch, New Zealand, who is

a linguist. “Text messaging is one of the more exciting developments of language that has occurred for a long time,” Pyatt said in a telephone interview. “I think it’s another wonderful example of how language grows, and it’s another example of how language change cannot be stopped.”

- 8 Even the British Council, one of the arbiters of the international use of English, seems to be giving ground. Its Web site offers a lesson plan for Valentine’s Day that lets students “create their own romantic text message in English.” This bastion of the Queen’s English offered a couple of suggestions:
WUBMV, it said – Will you be my Valentine? and: xoxoxoxoxo – hugs and kisses.

<http://www.iht.com>

Tekst 7 Texting shorthand annoys purists, but it has its charm

“it is a minimalist form of the language that some linguists call irrelevant”
(alinea 1)

- 1p **30** Welke van de in het artikel genoemde personen vindt dit ook?
Noteer de naam van deze persoon.

“..., but it has its charm” (titel)

- 1p **31** Welk kenmerk van het woordgebruik in sms-taal is volgens de schrijver van dit artikel een verbetering ten opzichte van conventioneel taalgebruik?
Citeer uit de alinea's 2 tot en met 4 het deel van de zin dat dit kenmerk kernachtig **samenvat**.

In het artikel worden enkele personen en/of instellingen genoemd, die positief staan tegenover het gebruik van sms-taal in een educatieve context.

- 2p **32** Noteer de namen van **drie** personen of instellingen voor wie dit geldt.
- 1p **33** Welke zin uit de tekst is ironisch bedoeld met betrekking tot het gebruik van sms-taal?
Citeer het eerste woord van deze zin.

Bronvermelding

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.