
Texting is killing language. JK!!

[listening comprehension questions]

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Level: *** ** [B2/C1]

TED TALKS Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/john_mcwhorter_txtng_is_killing_language_jk

Check these words before listening:

Key vocabulary

1. A scourge
2. Literacy
3. Miraculous
4. Complexity
5. An artifice
6. Conscious
7. Casual speech / formal speech
8. Unmonitored
9. Telepathic
10. Reflective
11. Bleed between two things (metaphoric)
12. A typewriter
13. Shorthand (a type of writing)
14. Punctuation
15. A bagginess of structure
16. Emergent
17. Subtle
18. Theatrically
19. A substrate
20. Pragmatic
21. Empathy
22. Dissertation
23. Sophisticated
24. TV programmes 'I Love Lucy' / Downton Abbey / The Wire
25. Cognitive
26. Bidialectal
27. Bilingual
28. A repertoire

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Texting is killing language. JK!!

TED TALK: John McWhorter [Feb 2013. 13:48]

Explain what you understand

1. What is the point of the lecture? What is the general outline?
2. What is the reason for the history example?
3. What are the advantages of writing? What example does he give?
4. Why is casual speech different?
5. What examples are given to show the correlation between writing and speaking in the past?
6. Why didn't people write like they speak in the past?
7. What is significant about capital letters and punctuation?
8. What is texting?

9. Why do we think that texting is destroying language?
10. What are we seeing now?
11. How has LOL evolved?
12. What are 'pragmatic participles'? Give examples.
13. How is slash used? Construction overall?
14. What is the point to reference these dates 1956 / 1917 / 1871 / 1841 / 63AD?
15. What is bidialectal?
16. Summary

Critical thinking? Do you agree with everything he has said? Is texting a miracle of language? Surely, the loose language and structure will cross over to writing? As texting become more commonplace, then it will corrupt the use of language? Spelling / grammar needs practice to learn but if I text and abbreviate words will this help my spelling / grammar in the long term? If common punctuation use is changed like the 'slash', will I become confused in its real use? How can a decline in literacy be measured? Perhaps, the future will be speech recognition text and how will this change language? Anything else??

Texting is killing language ANSWERS

1. What is the point of the lecture? What is the general outline?

The point is to show that texting is a miraculous thing and it doesn't mean that English literacy is in decline

Outline: to show that when you really investigate language then texting is not writing.

2. What is the reason for the history example?

Language has existed for 150,000 years and arose as speech – writing came along a lot later.

Uses a clock metaphor to say in 24 hours – writing came into existence at 11:07pm

3. What are the advantages of writing? What example does he give?

Writing is a conscious process and can look back easily compared to talking.

Example a passage from Edward Gibbon's 'The decline and fall of the Roman Empire'

This example is given to show that this kind of writing is very different to the way we speak.

4. Why is casual speech different?

We tend to speak in packets of seven to ten words. Speech is much looser, telepathic, reflective – often we think written language is the same but in fact they are very different.

5. What examples are given to show the correlation between writing and speaking in the past?

In the past people gave speeches – very formal – talking like you write. Example; The Gettysburg Address / the speech before by 'Edward Everett'

6. Why didn't people write like they speak in the past?

The simple reason is that materials didn't lend themselves to it. Type-writers and even computers were slow at spoken writing and of course you need a device that can message quickly.

7. What is significant about capital letters and punctuation?

This is not thought about / used in spoken language and nor in texting.

8. What is texting?

Fingered speech

Txting is killing language **ANSWERS**

9. Why do we think that texting is destroying language?

It is very easy to think it represents some kind of decline. The bagginess of structure, lack of concern for rules, the way we are used to learning from a blackboard – it's a natural sense to think it is wrong.

10. What are we seeing now?

A kind of emergent complexity, new kind of language, a new structure for fingered speech.

11. How has LOL evolved?

In the example text it shows that once it meant 'Laugh Out Loud' but it has evolved into empathy, accommodation = pragmatic participles.

12. What are 'pragmatic participles'? Give examples.

The way a word is used in certain ways / a way of using the language between actual people – Examples: LOL, in Japanese 'ne' at the end of sentences, in the black youth 'yo'

13. How is slash used? Construction overall?

Slash is used to show two parts of something. However, in texting it is used to change the scene.

Construction is that a whole new way of structure is developing – still easy to think it is wrong. Not sophisticated like the language from the Wall Street Journal but...

14. What is the point to reference these dates 1956 / 1917 / 1871 / 1841 / 63AD?

1956 – many do not know the alphabet, cannot write grammatically

1917 – Freshmen can't spell, can't punctuate

1871 – bad spelling, incorrectness / inelegance of expression in writing

1841 – entire neglect of the original

63AD – doesn't like the way people are speaking Latin

Overall, lots of worrying and problems with language but does it really matter??

15. What is bidialectal?

Two different types of writing

16. Summary

Texting is a whole new way of writing developing alongside normal writing. Over time all language has evolved and changed and texting can be viewed as a linguistic miracle.