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On Language and Change: Annotated Bibliography

Humphrys, John. "I h8 txt msgs: How texting is wrecking our language." *Daily Mail*, 24 Sep. 2007.

Writing for *The Daily Mail*, John Humphrys, a British broadcaster and journalist, laments the changes in the English language that cater to a generation of what he considers lazy users. As the Oxford English Dictionary removes the hyphen from many compound words, Humphrys feels we as a people have gotten too rushed for time to bother with the sign. He attributes this sense of hurry to the growing prevalence of text speak.

Humphrys wastes no time presenting himself to those of an older generation--his peers--to empathize with them and request their empathy in turn. He reminds them of the simpler times in life, before a mobile phone was needed to function in the world, pulling at their emotions and their nostalgia. He also shares his relatable struggles with terms like "LOL" and "IMHO," a pain many adults know all too well. However, he also claims "tks" is an abbreviation for "thanks"--in the texting world, the form is "thnx" or "thx." This ignorance slightly calls his credibility into question, but it also highlights his point that text speak is difficult for adults to grasp.

Humphrys fears that the English language will eventually be replaced by text speak as it grows in popularity and usage. He thinks it is a dangerous inevitability. However, he offers no evidence to support this fear. While it makes for an effective and convincing emotional claim, logically, it has no substance.

The whole of Humphrys's argument is rooted in emotional appeal. He lacks any ethical or logical aspect. Describing text speak as "grotesque" and being pleased he hasn't "succumbed" to its horrors, Humphrys takes on the role a grown man who's tired from trying to keep up with a seemingly new language that the younger generation has created.

Lamb, Bernard. "God Save the Queen's English: Our language is under threat from ignorance, inverted snobbery and deliberate 'dumbing down'." *The Independent*, 6 Oct. 2010, [independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/god-save-the-queens-english-our-language-is-under-threat-from-ignorance-inverted-snobbery-and-2099825.html](http://independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/god-save-the-queens-english-our-language-is-under-threat-from-ignorance-inverted-snobbery-and-2099825.html). Accessed 14 Feb. 2018.

Writing for the British newspaper *The Independent*, Dr. Bernard Lamb, president of the Queen's English Society, maintains that using the Queen's English--that is, "standard or correct English"--is important in order to combat ignorance and the decline of our language. As Emeritus Reader at Imperial College London, Dr. Lamb appears to have an

air of credibility about him for his academic merits. However, he is a geneticist, not a linguist.

Dr. Lamb employs little to no emotional appeal in his argument because he finds no need for them. Using a mostly logical approach, he describes how the confusion of similar terms in English--such as effect vs. affect or compliment vs. complement--blurs the meaning of the language. This obscurity needs to be avoided in order to promote clarity in expression. Dr. Lamb also stresses the importance of proper punctuation, for the same purpose. Though he strictly follows the rules set forth by the Queen's English, he concedes that it is not set in stone and that it continually adds new words and phrases to keep up with modern advances in life.

However, Dr. Lamb takes it a step further by insisting that the Queen's English not only be used in writing, it should be used in speech. "Why settle for less?" he asks. His emotional appeal is nearly absent and becomes more devoid by his condescension toward the majority he considers non-standard users of English. He is Henry Higgins without the charm--less of an authority and more of an authoritarian.

The only effective argument made by Dr. Lamb is the promotion of clarity, which is hardly monopolized by the Queen's English. His sanctification of the Queen's English, promoted mainly through logic, is severely questionable because it holds no true

linguistic backing. Rather, the reasoning behind it all is merely personal preference with no regard for different cultures.

McWorther, John. "Like, Degrading the Language? No Way." *The New York Times*, 5 April 2014, p. SR5.

John McWorther is a professor of linguistics at Columbia University writing for *The New York Times*. His learned tone reflects his own status as a credible source on the subject. He establishes himself as one who's versed in linguistics by discussing his own research. However, he refrains from sounding arrogant, so as to not distance himself from his audience.

Being a professor, McWorther seeks not just to persuade but to inform. He claims that one of the most reviled instances of change in English is not what it seems: the use of "like" by today's youth. Because it's mostly used by younger generations, McWorther seeks to persuade those of an older generation, who view "like" as an inarticulate tick that's plaguing the language. McWorther instead turns the table on the notion and claims that it's an act of sophistication. He notes that one day, the generation using "like" will be the elders of the language and it will sound normal. These quick revelations function as both logical and emotional appeals, offering a simple but sound statement, as well as a brief moment of awe.

McWorther prefers a logical approach above all. While trying to convince his audience to view “like” in a new light, he also brings up today’s youths’ use of “totally” and text speak. He paints these, too, in a new light, praising them as creative, civilized, and socially-aware changes in English. McWorther opens up his audience to these modern changes that are often thought to be abominations. He then dispels that myth over and over. This highly effective means has the audience ready to accept anything he throws at them.

McWorther also refers back to historical changes in the language. He notes the gone days where euphemistic language like “egad” substituted “Ye Gods!” and dark and white meat referred to certain parts of the body. This humors the audience and elicits a chuckle for something so seemingly ridiculous. But it’s the realization following the chuckle that’s so powerful: that sometimes change is for the better.

Zanuttini, Raffaella. "Don't Fear Our Changing Language." *Pacific Standard*, 17 Feb. 2014, [psmag.com/social-justice/dont-fear-our-totally-changing-language](http://psmag.com/social-justice/dont-fear-our-totally-changing-language). Accessed 5 Feb. 2018.

In the *Pacific Standard*, Rafaella Zanuttini, a professor of linguistics at Yale University, tries to assuage people’s growing fears that the English language is deteriorating with recent changes. Most of the fear originates from the older generation of users--those who might not be privy to the seemingly new language our modern culture has created. He

understands their desire to resist change, but he reminds them that they've embraced change all their lives. Rather than seeking to push people into submission, he instead sympathizes with them.

Zanuttini highlights the innovation behind modern language changes from the young generations. He also refutes the possible claim that these changes are born out of laziness, noting similar but widely accepted practices present in the language today. By this process, Zanuttini brings to light precedents that we have established together through our past acceptance of certain changes in the language. He then asks why we don't accept new changes that fall under the same category. This is effective from a logical perspective.

Zanuttini's tone is not reflective of his scholarly status. While his casualness may appear to betray his credibility, it is in fact used to brilliant emotional effect. Zanuttini doesn't wish to paint himself as an arbitrator of the language, sitting atop a high chair, but instead as a common person standing among his target audience.

Though a linguist himself and highly credible on the matter, Zanuttini instead calls upon other credible sources in order to present his evidence. He never makes any mention of his own work or research, though he has ample. Again, Zanuttini presents himself as a member of his audience in order to gain their trust.