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On Language and Change: Part C Final

No one would deny that the English language has been changing in our lifetimes. Though the change has not been as radical as going from Middle English to modern English, there has been a notable shift in how we use words and phrases. Especially with the advent of social media, there have been changes that are glaring. Some laud change in English as a growth in creativity, while others condemn it as a deterioration of something sacred.

Complaints about any present form of English are a recurring thing. The English language has come a long way from the old tongues, which some hail as paragons of sophistication and elegance. Dr. Bernard Lamb, president of the Queen's English Society, still advocates for the Queen's English, which he believes is the one, true form of the language. He believes that modern usage has "deliberate[ly] dumbed down" the language and the presence of various forms will lead to "linguistic anarchy and lack of understanding." Therefore, having one form of English that is accessible and adaptable to all should be strived for in order to preserve the language.

Betty Birner of the Linguistic Society of America, on the other hand, feels that just isn't the case. Birner believes that different variations of English are merely that: different; there is no degree of betterness or worseness in them. She explains that in Old

English, what we now call a *bird* was known as a *brid* and one caught slurring the pronunciation would be harshly criticized. But these days, none would bat an eye at the sight of *bird*.

With the growing popularity of everyday social media services like Facebook and Twitter, a new style of English has popped up in recent times. Because Twitter demands a mere 140 characters, shortcuts and initialisms are often forced with every post in order to satisfy the constraint. As a result, grammatical practices are often left by the wayside. Some believe that this increasingly familiar style has adverse effects on the language--that we are watching the English language “vanish[ing] before our eyes” (Friedman). Younger generations are frequent partakers of this trend. Children educator Peter Woronoff knows that there is a “strong connection between computers and learning.” He feels that young people are particularly susceptible to a habitual case of poor grammatical skills brought on by social media because they “read less [than adults], and prefer to play video games, or watch TV.” This display of poor grammatical skills can carry over into schoolwork and other non-informal facets of their lives, and it poses a danger to their learning.

On the contrary, linguistics professor John McWhorter of Columbia University argues that the changes supplied by social media are indicative of “a growing sophistication.” McWhorter believes that we have gained “awareness of the states of minds of others” and that we have created a reflective style of speech--one that is “in many ways more civilized.” In 2016, a group of linguists in The Netherlands conducted a study to analyze the effects of social media on literacy in children. Their research found

that social media “improve[s] children’s abilities in written language...and may also enhance their grammar abilities in spoken language” (Van Dijk et al.). By their study, children are aware of when to employ casual text speech and when to adhere to the proper grammatical style.

The attitudes toward change in the English language are nothing new. While the language continues to grow at a very noticeable speed, one thing remains constant: there are always those vying for either side of the change. They’ve been around for as long as the language has and will remain.

## Part C

### *Does the writer:*

- Avoid arguing for one side or the other and instead offer an objective overview of the issue and the arguments surrounding it? Yes, very well
- Include strong, reliable sources on *both* sides of the issue? Yes
- Demonstrate synthesis by organizing the paper point-by-point rather than source-by-source? Yes, very well
- Develop the paper fully to demonstrate an understanding of the issue at hand? Yes, quite well
- Avoid DQs and plagiarism by formatting and integrating quotations correctly? Yes
- Use MLA in-text citations correctly and include a Works Cited list? Yes
- Show evidence of careful editing and proofreading to avoid confusion and errors? Yes

Grade 95 A

### Works Cited

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Woronoff, Peter. "Cell Phone Texting Can Endanger Spelling." *Street Directory*, [streetdirectory.com/travel\\_guide/158484/cell\\_phones/cell\\_phone\\_texting\\_can\\_endanger\\_spelling.html](http://streetdirectory.com/travel_guide/158484/cell_phones/cell_phone_texting_can_endanger_spelling.html). Accessed 10 Mar. 2018.