

## Sixth Form Summer Transition Work

Welcome to Arnewood Sixth! You are about to embark on a busy and important two years of sixth form study.

Sixth form life is very different. You are going to feel much more independent, empowered and responsible for your own learning. The expectation is that this journey is down to you. You need to commit and relish in the challenge of sixth form life; ambition, belief and commitment are essential for your success.

Below is a transition activity designed for you to complete over the late spring into summer in preparation for your chosen course. By completing the task, you will be better prepared for the start of your course. Your A level teachers will check the work in September. Your commitment starts now!

<b>Subject</b>	English Language	
<b>Key Question</b>	'What are the key linguistic features of spoken language and how can I analyse a spoken interaction effectively?'	
<b>Resource List</b>	Course specification, for reference only.	<a href="https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-language-2015.html">https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-language-2015.html</a>  <b>All resources needed for tasks are attached as additional resources at the end of this document in the correct order.</b>

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Your Task	<p><b>There are 4 parts to your transition task. The first three will help you to complete the final task, which is a mini-investigation into spoken language.</b></p> <p><b>Task 1:</b> Read through the page, 'Linguistic Terms to analyse Digital Messages'. Find an additional example for each of the terms given. Example: Abbreviation e.g. NY = New York. Additional example TY= Thank you.</p> <p><b>Task 2:</b> Read the article: 'I h8 txt msgs: How texting is wrecking our language' By JOHN HUMPHRYS September 23, 2007</p> <p>And the interview: 'Text-pocalypse Now' Interview with David Crystal, author of 'Txtng: the Gr8 Db8'</p> <p>Consider the general mode, field, function and audience of these two pieces of non-fiction writing. (Look up the definitions to these key terms if needed).</p> <p><b>Task 3:</b></p> <p>Use your understanding of each of these two pieces of non-fiction writing on 'text speak' to answer the question sheets for each.</p> <p><b>Task 4:</b> Complete an investigation on the features of spoken language. All information and instructions included in the additional resources.</p> <p>There is a walk-through guide with activities which will help you to understand how to analyse the key linguistic features of spoken language transcripts.</p> <p>You will then collect your own data, recording spoken language interactions, writing out your own transcripts and writing short commentaries on these.</p> <p>Use the articles given to help you to formulate your ideas.</p>
Additional resources	Attached at the end of this document.

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## Linguistic Terms to analyse Digital Messages

Abbreviation e.g. NY = New York

Acronym e.g. LOL

Short form e.g. hols

Contraction e.g. haven't, couldn't, I'm

Deletion – missing vowels e.g. kds

Phonetic spelling = spelling a word as it sounds e.g. 'bak'

Number homophones: 2 = to

Letter homophones: c = see

Ellipsis: missing out words from a sentence

Emoticons: symbols to represent emotions

Symbols: icons used instead of words e.g. + (plus)

Emoji: an image to represent a feeling/idea

Non-standard spelling = 'incorrect' spelling used

Non-standard punctuation = missing punctuation e.g. apostrophes

Neologism = inventing new words e.g. 'Superbamundo' or 'food chokingly'

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Idiolect = your unique style of speech – especially sounding like your spoken English and the

slang/informal phrases you use

Elision = when a sound is left out in connected speech to produce one word e.g. I'm gonna leave when I

wanna (going to/want to)

Informal language/slang = terms you use between friends

Taboo language = expletives/swear words

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

By JOHN HUMPHRYS

September 23, 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.

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 neighbors eight hundred years ago. They are destroying it: pillaging our punctuation; savaging our sentences; destroying 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 (answering machine) 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. My own outgoing message asks callers to be very brief - ideally just name and number - but that doesn't stop some callers burbling on for ten minutes and always, always ending by saying: "Ooh - sorry I went on so long!" But can that be any more irritating than those absurd little smiley faces with which texters litter their messages? It is 25 years since the emoticon (that's the posh word) was born.

It started with the smiley face and the gloomy face and now there are 16 pages of them in the texters' A-Z. It has now reached the stage where my computer will not allow me to type the colon, dash and bracket without automatically turning it into a picture

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of a smiling face. Aargh! Even worse are the **grotesque** abbreviations. It is interesting, in a masochistic sort of way, to look at how text language has changed over the years. It began with some fairly obvious and relatively inoffensive abbreviations: 'tks' for 'thanks'; 'u' for 'you'; 4 for 'for'. But as it has developed its users have sought out increasingly **obscure** ways of expressing themselves which, when you think about it, entirely defeats the purpose. If the recipient of the message has to spend ten minutes trying to translate it, those precious minutes are being wasted. And isn't the whole point to 'save' time?

Then there's the problem of **ambiguity**. With my vast knowledge of text language I had assumed LOL meant 'lots of love', but now I discover it means 'laugh out loud'. Or at least it did the last time I asked. But how would you know? Instead of aiding communication it can be a barrier. I can work out BTW (by the way) but I was baffled by IMHO U R GR8. It means: "In my humble opinion you are great." But, once again, how would you know?

Let me anticipate the reaction to this modest little rant against the text revolution and the OED for being influenced by it. Its defenders will say language changes. It is constantly evolving and anyone who tries to get in the way is a fuddy-duddy who deserves to be run down. I agree. One of the joys of the English language and one of the reasons it has been so successful in spreading across the globe is that it is infinitely **adaptable**. If we see an Americanism we like, we snaffle it - and so we should. But texting and 'netspeak' are effectively different languages.

The danger - for young people especially - is that they will come to dominate. Our written language may end up as a series of ridiculous emoticons and everchanging abbreviations. It is too late to save the hand-written letter. E-mailing has seen to that and I must confess that I would find it difficult to live without it. That does not mean I like it. I resent the fact that I spend so much of my working day (and, even more regrettably, weekends) checking for e-mails - most of which are junk. I am also cross with myself for the way I have adapted my own style. In the early days I treated e-mails as though they were letters. I tried to construct proper, grammatical sentences and used punctuation that would have brought a smile to the lips of that guardian of our language, Lynne Truss. Now I find myself slipping into sloppy habits, abandoning capital letters and using rows of dots. But at least I have not succumbed to 'text-speak' and I wish the OED had not **hoisted** the white flag either. I recall a piece of rhyme which sums up my fears nicely: Mary had a cell phone. She texted day and night. But when it came to her exams she'd forgotten how to write.

To the editor of the OED I will simply say: For many years you've been GR8. Don't spoil it now. Tks.

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in\\_article\\_id=483511&in\\_page\\_id=1770](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=483511&in_page_id=1770)

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*(Some parts of this article have been changed for use in the classroom. M. Adams, 2007)*

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**'Text-pocalypse Now' Interview with David Crystal, author of 'Txtng: the Gr8 Db8'**

**David Crystal – Professor of Linguistics – an expert in English Language**



"People believe that a text message is "full" of abbreviations, as in the classic c u l8r. In fact, when you collect a corpus of messages and analyse them, the average number of words per message that are abbreviated is around 10 per cent. That means that most words are in standard spelling. This is especially true of messages between adults, now constituting about 80 per cent of all text messages. Organisations such as the stock exchange, colleges, broadcasting stations and political parties (not least, Barack Obama) now routinely text as a means of informing people about things. Some actually ban abbreviations, because of their possible unfamiliarity or ambiguity. Anyone who believes that texting is just for kids is totally out of date.

Hardly any of these abbreviations are new. Several are hundreds of years old. Those adults who object to initialisms such as bbl ('be back later') forget that, once upon a time, they did the same sort of thing themselves - only without a cell phone. Remember SWALK on the back of an envelope? Or the Rebus puzzles in magazines and Christmas annuals such as Y Y U R, Y Y U B...?

There was a hoax school essay produced in 2003 which was entirely written in texting abbreviations. Unfortunately, millions were taken in by it. Such things simply don't happen. I work a lot with schools, and I often ask teachers to show me examples of textisms in schoolwork. They never can. I think I've been shown one example over the past two years, and that was a single instance of rushed writing. I ask the kids themselves would they ever use textisms in their writing. They look at me as if I'm nuts. "Why would you ever want to do that?" said one to me. "That would be stupid." Quite so. You'd have to be pretty dumb to not see the difference between texting style and essay style. Or, putting this another way, teachers who let kids think

the difference doesn't matter wouldn't be doing their job. And the same point applies to examinations. I've asked many examiners whether they have seen textisms in exam answers. The answer is always no. But ask Joe Public if kids use textisms in schoolwork and exams, and there is an almost universal yes. It's extraordinary how these myths take hold of the public imagination.

A further myth is that texting is harming children's literacy. Well of course, once you see the reality, this myth disappears. What is interesting is the recent research which is showing that the more kids text, the better their literacy scores. This shouldn't surprise anyone. Reading and writing improve with practice. Texting provides that practice."

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## Questions on 'I h8 txt msgs: How texting is wrecking our language' by John Humphrys

1. Find a quotation to show that John Humphrys thinks that texting is wrecking the English Language.

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2. Find a quotation to John Humphrys' hatred of abbreviation:

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3. Why does John Humphrys hate abbreviation? (Try to explain in your own words).

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4. What is the other problem Humphrys sees with texting abbreviations?

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5. Give an example of a text acronym he misunderstood because it could be read in two different ways:

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6. Overall, Humphrys fears that text message language will take over from standard English. Find a quote to show his opinion:

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## Questions on 'Text-pocalypse Now' Interview with David Crystal, author of 'Txtng: the Gr8 Db8'

1) In David Crystal's research, what percentage of text messages use non-standard forms? \_\_\_\_\_

2) David Crystal claims that abbreviations/initialisms are not new. What evidence does he give for this?

\_\_\_\_\_

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3) David Crystal claims that the general public (Joe Public) think that textisms are used by students in exam answers. Find a quote for this view:

\_\_\_\_\_

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3) David Crystal says that it is a myth to think that textisms are used in school work or examination answers. Find 2 examples he gives to support this idea.

a) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4) Find a quote to show David Crystal's explanation for the link between kids' texting and improved literacy.

'Reading and writing \_\_\_\_\_'

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## Transition to English Language A Level Investigation into Spoken Language.

In this investigation you will find out about the specific features of spoken language and how these differ from written language. You will learn to analyse transcripts, as well as how to write your own. You will collect your own data from two comparable interactions and write a commentary on these. All of this will give you a great start in preparation for your A Level English Language course, showing you just how different and varied the subject is compared to English GCSE.

You will already know from GCSE English some linguistic features, such as what nouns, adjectives verbs and adverbs are. However, spoken language has some features of its own that you may not have met yet. Here are some useful terms that will help you with your investigation.

### Pauses and fillers

We very rarely plan what we are going to say. So, we pause while we are thinking what to say. We also use 'fillers' such as 'I mean' or 'er'.

I mean

er

### False starts

Talk is spontaneous, so you don't plan what you are going to say. You might start a sentence and then start it again.

When I went ... I went to Alton Towers last week.

### Taking turns and interruptions

When we speak with someone we usually take turns. However, we often interrupt, or we even speak at the same time as someone else.

### Feedback

We are usually very polite when we listen to other people. We let them know that we are listening, or that we are interested in what they are saying. We do this by using words or phrases such as 'oh yeah', 'really?' or even 'hmm'.

hmm

really?

Look at the following examples of spoken language. Copy the table and label the linguistic feature that has been highlighted each time.

Spoken language examples	Linguistic feature
John: Are you coming down town? Nicky: I want to, <b>I mean</b> , it would be fun.	
Lloyd: Then I ran 30 metres with the ball. Percy: <b>Oh yeah</b> . Lloyd: And passed to Phil.	
Kate: So, he said to me, 'Where did you ...' Lynn: <b>Do you fancy him?</b> Kate: Listen. He said to me, 'Where did you get that hat?' I didn't know what to say.	
David: <b>Tomorrow, well, later this week</b> I'm definitely going to do my homework.	

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Once you have understood some of the key linguistic features of spoken language, you then need to understand how to transcribe spoken language and how to read these transcripts. You will need to know the symbols used.

- Do not include any punctuation such as commas, full stops or question marks.
- Use the following symbols to represent the features of spoken language:

Symbol	What the symbol means	What the symbol tells us
(.)	pause	We use pauses (usually less than half a second long) to punctuate what we say and to give ourselves time to think.
(2)	pause in seconds	Longer pauses usually mean that a speaker is waiting for a reply or is thinking.
underlined words	emphasis	We emphasise words that we think are particularly important.
	overlap	Sometimes, we speak at the same time as another speaker, either by accident or on purpose.

Look at the transcript below. It is a written record of a conversation between two teenage boys. Label any transcript features you can see, such as pauses, overlaps and emphasis.

**Chris:** Hey man  
**Mike:** Sup buddy  
**Chris:** How'd the date go last night  
**Mike:** Alright Went to the cinema (.) watched | Toy Soldier 3 |  
**Chris:** | Great film |  
**Mike:** Yeah (2) It was a good night  
**Chris:** And  
**Mike:** We went I mean we were Yeah (2) It was good

Once you have identified features of spoken language, you will need to think about what these features might tell you about the speakers. You need to show you can decode a transcript and explain what these features tell you about the conversation. You then need to comment on the relationship between the speakers, understanding that this will affect the way they speak to each other.

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Here is an example of how you could comment on the start of the conversation –

*This conversation is between two friends so we should expect the language to be informal. They greet each other: 'Hey man' and 'Sup buddy' which is very informal and shows they know each other well.*

Below is the rest of the conversation between Chris and Mike. Read it through carefully and then write a paragraph about the transcript using the advice you have been given so far. Don't just identify linguistic features such as 'the two boys talk at the same time'. Also say something about them such as 'This shows that Chris has got excited about what Mike is saying.' Consider the relationship between the two friends, whether or not you expect the language to be formal or informal, as well as the ages of the teenage boys and therefore the language they will be using.

**Chris:** You going to see her again

**Mike:** Yeah We're going to the school  
| disco |

**Chris:** | Disco | Excellent I'm going as  
well

**Mike:** You're not are you (.) I hope  
you're not going to take the  
mick

**Chris:** What do you mean

**Mike:** You know exactly what I  
mean (.) When you saw me  
with Sue (.) when I went out  
with her (.) you kept asking  
really embarrassing questions  
in front of her It made me  
sound like a right idiot

**Chris:** What like

**Mike:** One question (.) one question  
was (.) it was (.) | have you  
two kissed yet |

**Chris:** | Oh yeah |  
(.) That was a laugh



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Now have a look at a transcript between four friends discussing why girls get better GCSE results than boys.

What linguistic features of spoken language can you identify and what does this tell you about the speakers?

Use the hint boxes around the transcript to guide your thinking and annotations.

Four students were asked to discuss why girls get better GCSE marks than boys. The student below has started to annotate the discussion. Look at what they have written about the informal spoken language and then complete the annotation by filling in the empty boxes. Use the hints to help you.

This is quite formal and suggests that Julie thinks that she's important. The 2 second pause suggests that now that she has got everyone's attention she has to think of something to say.

Hint: What do the vertical lines tell you?

Hint: Why does Ravi use LOL? What does it tell you about his tone?

Hint: What do the two hesitations suggest?

Hint: What has happened here

Hint: What do the vertical lines tell you here?

**Julie:** It's quite obvious (2) Yes it's obvious that in class (2) girls work harder than boys

**Alyssa:** That's because we're more | mature |

**Ravi:** | That's | not true

**Harry:** | I disagree |

**Ravi:** I think that girls just look as though they're working harder. The boys work hard but want to have a laugh (.) Look how many girls get mobiles taken because they're texting during lessons. They're not working very hard are they LOL.

**Julie:** That's possibly true (2) But why do you think we get better GCSE grades than you

**Ravi:** Because (2) because (2) you write neater. That's it. The examiner likes neat writing so he gives girls' writing better marks.

**Alyssa:** | You |

**Julie:** | Don't get | wound up. He's talking rubbish. Right Ravi (.) so why do girls get better grades for coursework even when it's done on the computer

**Ravi:** (4) | Well |

**Harry:** | Yeah | I think that you're right girls do work harder | than boys

Hint: What does the underlining tell you about the way Julie answered Ravi?

Hint: Is this formal language?

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For your own investigation you will be required to write a commentary on the transcripts you write.

Have a look at this example commenting on the previous extract to see what this should look like.

Use this as a guide for your own commentaries.

The opening paragraph explains the background to the conversation and then says what linguistic features we might expect from this particular conversation. This is a good way to start the analysis.

The rest of the answer works its way through what is said, almost in sequence. This is one way to structure a good response. Another might be to look at each speaker in turn.

There is a lot of good analysis in this paragraph. The student isn't just identifying features – they are commenting on what those features tell them.

The student shows they understand and can apply terms such as 'false starts' and 'hesitations'.

The student continues to analyse the conversation thoroughly.

In this conversation there are four speakers in a reasonably formal situation, in a classroom. We might expect some formal language, but because the conversation is spontaneous there is also likely to be informal language. Because there are four speakers we might also expect to see interruptions and examples of speakers talking at the same time.

Julie starts the conversation off with 'It's quite obvious' which is quite formal and suggests that Julie thinks that she is important. She takes a lead role in the discussion, always trying to get the boys to take part seriously. The two second pause suggests that now she has everyone's attention she has to think of something to say.

Nyssa makes the comment that girls are more mature, but the boys feel so strongly about this that they both speak over her. Ravi then takes on the conversation. He doesn't seem to be taking the conversation very seriously because he finishes off with 'LOL'. He has used text speak in a conversation to say that it is funny that girls get their mobile phones confiscated in lessons. This informal language suggests that Ravi is not taking the discussion seriously.

Julie realises that Ravi is not taking the discussion very seriously so she says, 'But why do you think...' to encourage Ravi to say something serious. Ravi starts his response off with a false start and two hesitations, which suggests that he is desperately trying to think of something to say. The use of the phrase 'That's it' shows that he is pleased with what he has managed to think of.

Nyssa gets cross because Ravi is still not taking the discussion seriously, and interrupts him with 'You' but Julie realises that Ravi is only trying to get the girls angry and interrupts Nyssa to stop her from getting angry, although the informal phrase 'He's talking rubbish' suggests that Julie is also getting angry. Julie's comment, 'Right Ravi' is another attempt to get Ravi to say something sensible. Ravi tries to say something but Harry interrupts and speaks over him. Harry seems to be embarrassed about Ravi's contribution to the discussion and wants to agree with the girls.

## **Collecting your own data for your spoken language investigation.**

Now that you understand the features of spoken language and how to analyse a transcript, you are going to collect your own data by recording conversations, writing up transcripts of these and writing a commentary of these.

1. Choose two different conversations. These should be spontaneous and not rehearsed interactions so try to record longer interactions and simply take a section from it to focus on e.g. just one minute. You can use your phone to record these- but ensure you have permission!
2. The two interactions you choose should be comparable. You could choose between:
  - Conversation between parent and child
  - Conversation between siblings
  - Conversation between friends
  - You could also think about comparing a conversation between two friends and a group of friends.
  - Conversations face to face as opposed to on the phone or Zoom.
3. Once you have collected your two comparable pieces of data- spoken language interactions - you then need to write these out as transcripts. Make sure that you are using the symbols of transcripts as we looked at earlier.
4. You then need to write a short commentary on each of your two spoken interactions, commenting on the features of spoken language used, formality of language used, (think back to the 'text speak' that you read about in the two articles) and what this tells you about the relationship between the subjects of your transcripts.

### **TIPS for your commentary**

- Start off with an introductory paragraph giving the context or background information of the conversation and what linguistic features you might expect to see.
- Decide whether you want to go through the conversation in sequence, or whether you want to focus on one person at a time.
- Once you've identified any features, always ask yourself 'what does this suggest about the speaker?'

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