

Today's topic:

- **Technology and literacy**
- **Txt msgs and abbvns**

Background preparation:

- *Kaplan (2016), Ch 9, "Texting makes you illiterate"*

0. Today's objectives

After today's class, you should be able to:

- Appreciate (and be able to describe or analyze) some of the linguistic skill and creativity involved in texting abbreviations!

1. Warm-up

Discussion

- Do you ever use special spellings or abbreviations or symbols when you text?
- Do you ever text with emojis only?
- Have you ever heard people worry about the consequences of everybody texting / using emojis / etc.?

1. Warm-up

Oh, no! New technology!

- Kaplan (2016: 191):

...it's useful to remind ourselves that both wild enthusiasm and abject fear are natural reactions to new and disruptive ways of communicating.

1. Warm-up

- What technology is this quotation worried about?

'...If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks.

'... by telling them of many things without teaching them you will make them seem to know much, while for the most part they know nothing, and as men filled, not with wisdom but with the conceit of wisdom, they will be a burden to their fellows.'

Plato (c. 429-347 B.C.E), *Phaedrus* (c. 360 B.C.E.),
274c-275b, translated by R. Hackforth (1952),

from <http://www.umich.edu/~lsarth/filecabinet/PlatoOnWriting.html>

1. Warm-up

Other things people have apparently been worried about
(from a fun [article on Slate.com](#), 2010):

- *The printing press!* (Conrad Gessner, 1500s)
 - Too much information is overwhelming!
- *Newspapers!* (Lamoignon de Malesherbes, 1700s)
 - People will be socially isolated, and get news without interpretation help from the church!
- *The radio!* (Gramophone magazine, 1936)
 - It will distract children from their studies!
- And Kaplan's example — *Telegrams!*

2. Telegrams

- Sent to Caroline Stokes, 1933, by Simmons College

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE 1201-S

CLASS OF SERVICE	WESTERN UNION	SIGNS
This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable sign above or preceding the address.	R. B. WHITE PRESIDENT NEWCOMB CARLTON CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD J. C. WILLEVER FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT	DL = Day Letter NM = Night Message NL = Night Letter LC = Deferred Cable NLT = Cable Night Letter Ship Radiogram

The filing time as shown in the date line on full-rate telegrams and day letters, and the time of receipt at destination as shown on all messages, is STANDARD TIME.

Received at 56 Central Square, Lynn, Mass.

BAE101 13 DLY PAID=TDB CAMBRIDGE MASS 2 945P 1933 OCT 2 PM 10 02

MISS CAROLINE STOKES=
NO FONE 236 SALEM ST LYNNFIELD MASS=

CAN OFFER YOU APPRENTICESHIP IN GEOMETRY AND BIOLOGY WILL
YOU TELEPHONE SCHOOL IMMEDIATELY=
ANNETTE RICKARD.

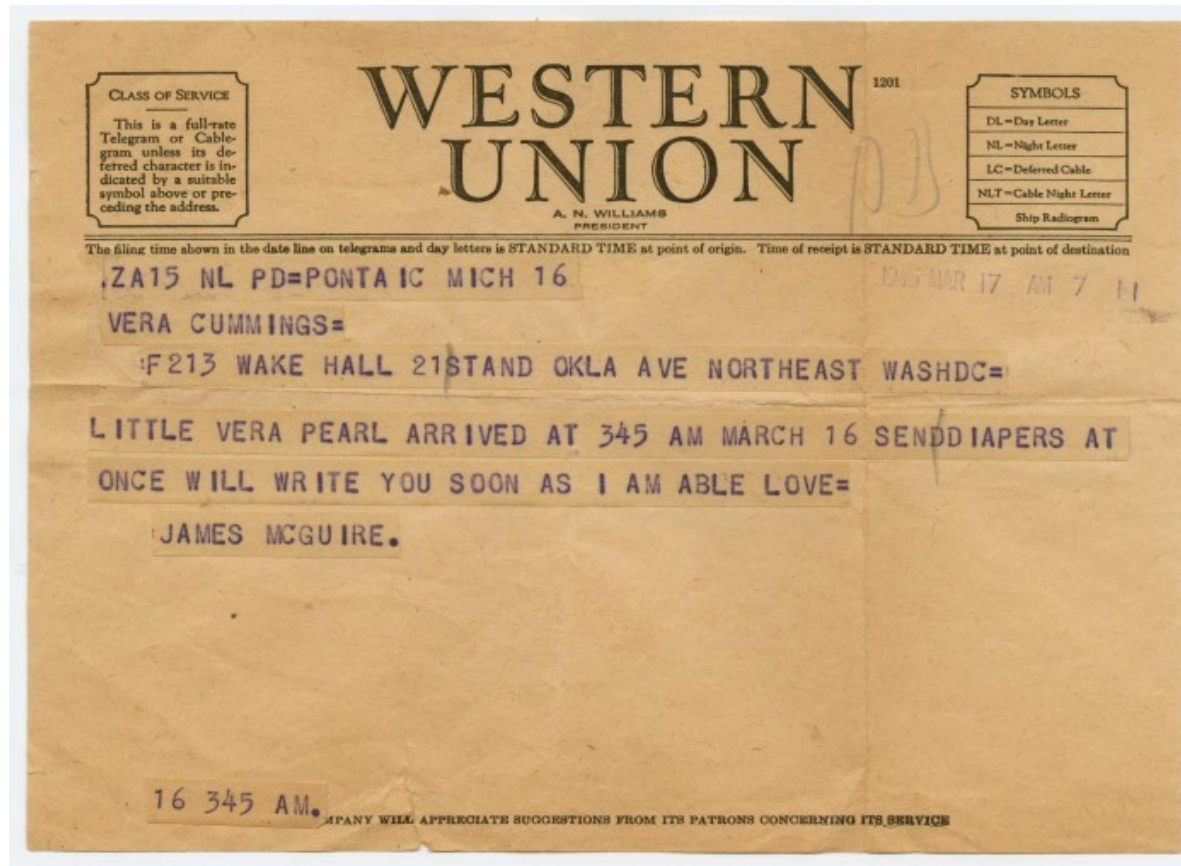
REMUNERATION \$65/YR.

WESTERN UNION GIFT ORDERS ARE APPROPRIATE GIFTS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

<http://slis.simmons.edu/caroline/items/show/149>

2. Telegrams

- Sent to Vera Mae Cummings, 1945, by James McGuire



From The Portal to Texas History

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth246597/>

2. Telegrams

- What constraints influence the way a telegram is composed?

2. Telegrams

- Constraints: Pay by the word; avoid words (or numbers!) that might be garbled in transmission

- *How to Write Telegrams Properly* (1928)

The right way is economical, the wrong way, wasteful. If the telegram is packed full of unnecessary words [...], the sender has been guilty of economic waste. Not only has he failed to add anything to his message, but he has slowed it up by increasing the time necessary to transmit it. He added to the volume of traffic from a personal and financial point of view, he has been wasteful because he has spent more for his telegram than was necessary.

2. Telegrams

- Are all telegrams 'telegraphic'?

CLASS OF SERVICE
This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM
W. P. MARSHALL, President

SYMBOLS
DL = Day Letter
NL = Night Letter
LT = International Letter Telegram

The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.

MB012 (40) 1201

M CDU058 72 PD INTL FR=CD 1/50=CD STOCKHOLM VIA RCA 30
PROFESSOR JOSHUA LEDERBERG DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS 1540=
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN MADISON (WIS)=
1958 OCT 30 AM 9 46

THE CAROLINE INSTITUTE HAS DECIDED TO AWARD THIS YEARS
NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSIOLOGY OR MEDICINE WITH ONE HALF TO
GEORGE WELLS BEADLE AND EDWARD LAWRIE TATUM JOINTLY FOR
THEIR DISCOVERY THAT GENES ACT BY REGULATING DEFINITE
CHEMICAL EVENTS AND THE OTHER HALF TO YOU FOR YOUR
DISCOVERIES CONCERNING GENETIC RECOMBINATION AND THE
ORGANIZATION OF THE GENETIC MATERIAL OF BACTERIA=
STEN FRIBERG RECTOR=

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

1958; from The Joshua Lederberg Papers

<https://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/retrieve/ResourceMetadata/BBBABB>

2. Telegrams

- How do the constraints on sending a telegram influence the language used in telegrams?
- Are there similarities and differences to particular forms of digital communication today?
- See [Lieberman \(2011\)](#) [cited by Kaplan] for examples of people discussing the effects of telegrams on the English language

3. Text messages and abbreviations

- To what extent are text messages on phones subject to similar constraints as telegrams?
- What are some general characteristics of the texts (or other electronic messages) that ***you*** send and receive?
 - What kind(s) of **platforms** do you use?
 - What kind(s) of **device** do you use?

3. Text messages and abbreviations

- A classification of types of texting abbreviations

Kaplan (2016: 195): these are often used far beyond the context of texting, and some are pretty old

- Acronyms
- Letter/number names used for their sound value
- Spellings that more closely represent speech — use fewer letters, represent a non-standard pronunciation

3. Text messages and abbreviations

- Examples: Acronyms (from previous years)

lmao	'laughing my [tail] off'
rofl	'roll on the floor laughing'
brb	'be right back'
otw	'on the way'
rn	'right now'
wyd	'what are you doing?'
k, ok, K	'okay'
kk	'okay, cool'
wtf, WTF	'what the [freak]!'
omg, OMG	'oh my gosh (etc.)'

ikr

'I know, right?'

smh

'shaking my head'

3. Text messages and abbreviations

- Examples: Acronyms (from previous years)

idk, IDK	'I don't know'
nvm	'never mind'
bc	'because'
tbh	'to be honest'
fr	'for real'
iirc	'if I remember correctly'
TBD	'to be determined'
JSYK	'just so you know'
GG	'good game'

exp

'experience'

ASAP

'as soon as possible'

3. Text messages and abbreviations

- Examples: Letter/number names for sound value

gr8 'great'

2day 'today'

b4 'before'

(last two are from Kaplan 2016: 196)

3. Text messages and abbreviations

- Examples: Spellings that approximate speech (from previous years)

wanna	'want to'
gonna	'going to'
imma	'I'm gonna'
u	'you'
ur	'your', 'you're'
wat	'what'
r	'are'
tho	'though'

din

'dinner' (familiar, cozy)

4. Texting abbreviations in context

Proportion of abbreviations in the avg txt msg (Kaplan 2016: 200)

- Thurlow and Brown (2003) asked 135 students at the University of Cardiff to transcribe five text messages they had sent the previous week. Across all the text messages they collected, 18.75% of words were abbreviated, an average of 3 per message.
- Lyddy et al. (2014) asked 139 Irish college students to transcribe up to 10 of their own text messages each: 24% of the words in these messages were abbreviated or used non-standard spelling; of these, a fifth just lacked capitalization.
- Ling and Baron (2007) collected texting diaries from 22 American college women. In the 191 texts that were transcribed, 3.2% of all words were abbreviated and only .005% were acronyms.
- Drouin and Driver (2014) asked 183 American college students to transcribe the last five text messages they had sent: 24% of words in these texts were coded as abbreviations; of these, nearly 40% were merely uncapitalized.
- Grace et al. (2014) obtained similar transcriptions from 150 Canadian and 86 Australian college students; under 20% of the words in these samples used textisms.
- Wood et al. (2011b) collected two weekends' worth of text messages from each of 119 British children between 8 and 12 years old. About 40% of the words in these messages were abbreviated; the rate of abbreviation varied by grade level.
- Wood et al. (2011a) lent mobile phones to 56 9- and 10-year-old British children and transcribed their text messages. Across the entire set of text messages, 15.6% of words were abbreviated. (See section 9.3.4 for more on this study.)

4. Texting abbreviations in context

- Comments about when people use texting abbreviations (from previous years)
 - not with a boss or professor: seems too casual
 - not with parents, older relatives, or L2 English speakers: they might not understand
 - less familiar abbreviations used only with people who are expected to understand them (specific friend groups, etc.)
 - only text people who would get a casual conversation style anyway
 - use them more with people who also use them

5. Further insights into abbreviations (a sample)

- "I have noticed in my own texting that when I type a lower case "lol" I use it to indicate that I found that something was funny, but I am not actually laughing out loud. I use all uppercase "LOL" to indicate I am literally laughing."
- "I found that I use 'lol' more when I am trying to be ironic and use 'lmao' when I actually found the previous statement to be comical"
- "I use "haha" and "lol" routinely in order to show or create a sense of casualness, friendliness, or uncertainty. Because my brother and I interpret these words differently, it causes some annoyance in our communication over text."

5. Further insights into abbreviations (a sample)

- "Texting 'k' seems to come off that you are 'okay' with something but not really showing interest, while texting 'kk' is much more 'polite'."
- "if I am using both "your" and "you're" in one message, I will only use "ur" to abbreviate one of the words and not the other"
- "I use "u" when texting close friends and usually in the context of something sarcastic or cheeky. For example, if my roommate texts me about something embarrassing she did, I might respond with "u r doing gr8." On the other hand, if she texted me about a good grade my response would look more like "You did so great!""

6. Texting and the demise of English?

- Based on today's discussion, what would you say to someone who is afraid that pervasive use of texting (or Twitter) will destroy the English language?

7. Tips for the case-study presentation

- Looking at other kinds of “tech” and language is a fine option