

Ch 9 case studies

- **“Texting makes you illiterate”**

Background preparation:

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

1. Myths and research questions

- Ch 9 “myth”: ‘Texting makes you illiterate’
- Case-study section theme:
‘Does text messaging hurt literacy skills?’
- How does this case-study themes relate to...
 - The “myth”
 - Topics presented in the rest of the chapter (discussed last time)?

2. Powell & Dixon (2011)

- College students in the UK
(Data table is Table 9.1 in textbook, p 202)

2. Powell & Dixon (2011)

- Measurable RQ:
 - Does exposure to textisms decrease spelling scores?
- Results
 - Exposure to *incorrect spelling* ==> more spelling errors (replicates past research)
 - Exposure to *texting abbreviations* ==> did not show the same effect!
- Some methodological concerns

3. Kemp & Bushnell (2011)

- 5th, 6th graders in Australia
(Data table is Table 9.2 in textbook, p 205)

3. Kemp & Bushnell (2011)

- Measurable RQ
 - Does being a texter affect scores on literacy tests?
- Results
 - No effect
 - Also — on a text reading/writing task, better performance was correlated with *higher* scores on literacy tests
- Some methodological concerns

4. Plester et al. (2009)

- 6th, 7th graders in the UK
(Data table is Table 9.3 in textbook, p 207)

4. Plester et al. (2009)

- Measurable RQ: Does age at first phone correlate with scores for cognitive ability, phonological knowledge, vocabulary, reading, spelling?
- Results
 - Age of first phone *negatively* correlated with phonological score, spelling score (younger is *better*?)
 - Proportion use of textisms weakly correlated with spelling; significantly correlated with reading ability
- More methodological issues

5. Wood et al. (2011a)

- 110 9-10 year old UK schoolchildren with no phone
(Data table is Table 9.4 in textbook, p 210)

5. Wood et al. (2011a)

- Measurable RQ:
 - Does number of texts sent affect spelling and reading test scores?
- Results
 - Not much effect on spelling, reading scores
 - Possible small improvement on phonological tasks for higher-volume texters
- Yet again, methodological issues

6. General discussion

Does texting make us illiterate?

- Case-study results
 - Despite the methodological issues, can we draw any general conclusions?

6. General discussion

- Other points from Kaplan's discussion
 - Many "textspeak" abbreviations are older than texting
 - Abbreviation strategies and types are not unique to texting
 - Some textspeak strategies are linguistically creative and sophisticated — might help with literacy skills?
 - Abbreviations are low proportion of text content
- Myth: Busted?

7. Another digital medium: Twitter

Tamburrini et al. (2015) [[link to article](#) @UNC]

- Big-picture question: Are sociolinguistic aspects of Twitter language use like those of spoken language?
- Measurable questions:
 - Do community members vary their language characteristics depending on which community they are communicating with?
 - Does the level of isolation of a community correlate with the level of linguistic variation?

Nadine Tamburrini, Marco Cinnirella, Vincent A.A. Jansen, & John Bryden (2015). Twitter users change word usage according to conversation-partner social identity. *Social Networks* 40: 84-89.