

Longer Forms of Writing are Essential for Young English Speakers

Abstract

This essay will explain the reasons why longer forms of writing are necessary for young English speakers. It will explain why abbreviated forms of writing are not enough for the young people of today and why their declining writing abilities need to be assessed as quickly as possible. Longer forms of English writing are needed to keep English a worldwide language which can be used at international events, to allow people to communicate smoothly with other people of different generations and backgrounds, and to allow people of today to learn from people of the past and pass down information for the future. These cannot be achieved by short, abbreviated forms of writing that are commonly used by young people for mobile texting. There is no substitute to longer forms of English writing in the way that they connect billions of people in many regions and many generations, and it is essential for young speakers to continue to use them.

Longer Forms of Writing are Essential for Young English Speakers

In recent times, it is said that the writing abilities of young English speakers around the world is declining. Barrett (2010) says that up to 30% of the high school students that take the English language exam at Waterloo University have poor grammar such as punctuation and spelling errors. New advanced technology and social networking sites that have allowed teenagers to text to friends, post on Facebook, and tweet something on Twitter have not helped the cause. This is because most teenagers type in abbreviated forms on mobile phones to save time, energy, and the batteries of the phone. Abbreviated forms of writing are written sentences that leave out necessary words such as subjects or verbs, or necessary punctuation such as periods or capital letters. They can also be sentences that contain abbreviated words or slang. Writing like this has spread throughout the young English speaking population and used so commonly, that it raises the question of the values of longer forms of writing for young English speakers. The values are that they keep English a language that people of most regions can understand, that they allow all generations of English speakers to communicate with each other, and that they make it possible for young people to enjoy English writings in the past and to write works that are understandable for people of future generations. This essay will explain these three values.

Communication with Other Regions

Many millions of people around the world understand English, and it has a history of over 15 centuries (English Club, n.d.). English is the official language of more countries than any other language. It is the language which is used most often when two or more countries which do not use the same language as each other interact, and it is the language used most commonly for international events and business. Therefore, it is a language not only used by people of English speaking regions but a language used by many people of other regions as a

foreign language. In fact, around three quarters of the English speaking population use a language other than English at home (British Council, 1997). It is the closest thing the world has to a universal language, and it is becoming necessary for non-English speaking countries like Japan to be able to communicate in English. Companies in Japan such as Nissan, Rakuten, Lawson, and Fast Retailing., the company behind Uniqlo, have made English as their official language and hold company meetings in English in order to try to thrive outside of Japan as well (Matsutani, 2012). Also, in Japan, English is a compulsory subject for every single secondary school student (McCurry, 2011).

On the other hand, abbreviated forms of English writing cannot be understood by a large number of people. Abbreviated forms of writing are not something one learns at school but something that was made up when using electronic devices to communicate. It is primarily the people who consider English as their strongest language who use and understand abbreviated forms of writing. People who do not consider English as their strongest language mainly use their native language when they want to deliver quick messages, thus not having an opportunity to use and understand abbreviated forms of English writing. This is why it is hard for people who do not come from English speaking backgrounds to get to understand abbreviated forms of writing. As mentioned above, many English users do not use English as their first language, so without longer forms of writing, English would not be anything close to the worldwide language it is now. English would become just another language out of the countless dialects that are spoken on this planet.

Longer forms of English writing are necessary between strong English writers as well. Even if the person one is communicating with is a person who can understand abbreviated forms of writing, there could be many misunderstandings depending on the relationship between them. Abbreviated forms of writing sometimes leave out key words and leave it to the reader to figure out for themselves on what is being left out. This may vary on

how well the two people know each other or the background of the person at the other end. People's interpretations could change on what part of the world they live in or what kind of people they grew up with. These misunderstandings could lead to a dispute and could even put an end to relationships. This is why it is safer to use longer forms of writing when communicating with people of different backgrounds.

Communication with Other Generations

Longer forms of English writing are also understood by all generations, from the young people to the elderly. Although there might have been different ways of teaching, the English language that is taught now and that was taught a century ago is hardly different (Thanasoulas, 2002). It is rather easy to communicate with people of different generations by using longer forms of writing. For example, young children could write a letter to their grandparents in a longer form of writing, and their grandparents would seldom have a problem understanding it.

On the other hand, if young children sent a text message in an abbreviated form of writing with their mobile phones, most grandparents would undoubtedly have trouble understanding it. This is because it has only been 40 years since the first call with a mobile phone has been made (Sky News, 2013). Texting with mobile phones did not even exist 60 years ago, so they did not have an opportunity to use and understand abbreviated forms of writing in their younger years. In 2008, there was a study in the United States that showed that only 20% of adults aged 55 to 64 used mobile phones for texting (Tiemeyer, 2008). For people older than 64, the percentage would surely go down. This explains that not many elderly people have caught on to the trend of texting, and that it is hard for them to try to understand abbreviated forms of writing from their older years. Also, many of them do not usually use Facebook or Twitter since they were only created this century. This is why most elderly people do not understand abbreviated forms of English writing, and it is clear that

longer forms of writing are needed to communicate well with them.

Similar to the example above about the strong English writers misunderstanding each other, there could also be problems even between people who often use mobile texting to communicate. Even if the person one is communicating with is a regular user of mobile texting, there could be many misunderstandings due to key words being omitted. The way the other person interprets the text could vary on their age group and the sayings that were popular when they grew up. Like the example above, these misunderstandings may be fatal to relationships, and this shows that it is safer to use longer forms of writing to try to avoid these misunderstandings.

Works of the Past and Works for the Future

Since the birth of the English language, there have been many pieces of work such as essays, stories and plays that have been written in longer forms. It might be possible for people who only know abbreviated forms of English writing to enjoy them, but for young English speakers to fully understand and feel the beauty of them, they need to learn about longer forms of English writing. Especially works such as William Shakespeare's that are hard to interpret need proper education on longer forms of writing to understand them (The Literature Network, 2006). It is important for young English speakers worldwide to study longer forms of writing and read works that have been made in the past. It is essential for young people of any region to learn from past works and to understand about the history of the language.

Just as the people of the past have left behind famous works, young people of today need to leave behind works for the future. People of today need to pass information down to the people of the future, and they need to write down the ideas that they have thought of. As Harri Baker and Browning (2002) say, "someday, a long, long time from now, people will want to know about how we lived in this time." Whether it is a fictional story, or whether it is

a researched essay, they need to be understandable so it can be read by the people of the future. Therefore, they need to be written in longer forms of English. As mentioned above, abbreviated forms of English writing may cause confusion and misunderstanding. This is especially so when one is looking to leave behind works for centuries to come. Some people might say that it would only be a handful of people who are going leave behind writing works that are going to be read in the future, and it would be more convenient to have them study longer forms of writing on their own. However, there are more than a handful of people who actually write works, but it is only a handful that gets selected to be passed down to the future. For this reason it is important for all young English speakers to learn how to write in longer forms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, longer forms of writing are needed for young English speakers because the fact that they keep English as the main language that is accepted worldwide, that they allow them to be able to communicate with people of many different generations and regions around the world, and that they allow them to communicate with the people of the past and people of the future through writing. Most importantly, longer forms of English writing can pass on information more accurately than abbreviated forms of English writing. It may be convenient to use abbreviated forms when texting friends with mobile phones, but longer forms of writing is more important as it needs to be used in formal situations.

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