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Eng 574

### The Evolution of Grammar: Electronic Communication Contextualizes the Shavian Dream

The main purpose of this article is to address the current changes happening within the context of written communication. The nature of various new avenues of communication require that language be used as efficiently as possible, and the resulting changes affecting written language are actually akin to what playwright George Bernard Shaw proposed in 1941. Shaw's proposal was motivated by a desire to create a more efficient English alphabet that would increase understanding and eliminate inconsistencies found in an inadequate alphabet. As electronic communication becomes more and more common, written is starting to resemble what Shaw had in mind, but instead of developing a new alphabet, written language is growing more efficient from within the confines of our original, Latin alphabet. While these changes seem to confound traditional grammatical rules, they need to be regarded as legitimate shifts in how we write, read, and use our language in order to express our thoughts. Change is inevitable, and in order for our language to grow along with us, we need to recognize the fact that language will change, and the rules governing language will have to change as well.

"...As avenues of communication change and the form of transmitted information is altered, the rules of grammar that govern that new form must also change, must also evolve in order to function adequately."

"Different types of communication are governed by different types of grammar, so why should the informal, fragmented communication of a text message adhere to the strict, pedantic rules of formal written grammar?"

"A text message or an email is not bound to the rules of formal written English any more than a note scribbled to friend or family member and left on a counter top should be."

"In today's fast-paced society, any means of reducing time and improving efficiency are both encouraged and praised, so why is the opposite the case with regard to language and grammar?"

"Why do we expect a fast food restaurant to prepare our food as quickly as possible, but cluck our tongues when we read the words "drive thru" on the sign? Is not "thru" a more efficient spelling of the word "through"?"

"The very nature of these new forms of communication requires that our written texts be as efficient as possible."

"Just as linguists assert that all dialects are equal, so should grammarians assert that all grammar is equal."

As teachers, we must recognize the validity of these changes and teach our students the appropriate context in which to communicate. The importance of Standard Edited English should not be underestimated, for it is the most widely accepted form of communication in the United States, both written and oral. Contextual grammar should be taught alongside Standard Edited English to educate students on grammar appropriateness, and also to give validity to subcultural vocabulary and grammatical conventions that may one day become conventions of Standard Edited English. If students find teachers who recognize that the way they communicate is legitimate, teachers may find students more willing to learn a form of written English that their teachers consider legitimate.