
Language Change Essay

Garv Shah

Caulfield Grammar School
GarvShah@caulfieldgs.vic.edu.au

Abstract

Spelling and correct grammar are no longer important in modern society

Spelling and correct grammar are no longer important in modern society, a controversial claim for sure. The influence and grammatical syntax has had a profound impact on our use of language, the change of which makes language easier or harder to understand based on who you ask. So how important is spelling and grammar truly in our modern society?

Before we can answer the question of whether syntax is important anymore in society, we must first ponder upon the purpose of language in the first place. Language's primary purpose is communication, to be able to convey our thoughts and ideas from one person to another. These ideas may be the ones explicitly being communicated by the speaker, or judgements we perceive through their use of the language itself. This key distinction is one that the debate hinges upon: does a lack of "correct" grammar make language easier or harder to understand?

Correct grammar is a tricky concept. When your friend texts you "omg i'm running saurrr late", would that constitute as correct grammar? Most people would say no, yet they can perfectly understand the intended concept that the message communicates. It can thus be argued that despite not following the conventions of "Standard English", these abbreviations, slang and alternate spellings of the digital age make communication of ideas more effective and efficient, *at least to those who understand them*. And this is the problem that many advocates for "correct grammar" struggle with, they do not understand the complex rules and structure of "community languages". The previous sentence starting with an "and" did not obfuscate meaning, but the initialism "gghf" (good game, have fun) would make no sense to someone not in the gaming community, which turns these expressions into a shared identity. As such, a more flexible approach to grammar not only allows for ideas to be communicated more efficiently and effectively, but also builds up a culture in language that can convey many more perceptions of the speaker than just the words themselves.

Bad grammar has social implications. Advocates for "correct grammar usage" have a point: the use of conventions from Standard English does make one seem more educated, professional and elite, and it therefore *must* be taught in schools if one wants any job viability. The problem with this view is that a truly educated individual can control the perception that they portray to others. You do not want to sound like a court official when speaking with your friends; the informal environment of friendship also calls for the use of informal language, but it is most definitely a needed skill, as much is being able to switch register. Grammar should not come in the way of expression, but needs to be viewed as a tool that can be wielded to control how others perceive you, and the way that grammatical structure is taught in schools must follow suite. Could it perhaps be a solution for schools to teach the grammatical conventions of our new online world side by side with those of Standard English? Should we not expect the children of the future to be able to communicate in more ways than simply a formal register? "Bad" grammar has social implications, but so called "good" grammar does too, and people need to be able to learn how to switch between them.

Finally, it seems apt to touch on the role of grammar and spelling in our education system. Increasingly, "correct grammar" has become less indicative of education and status due to the prevalence of auto

correction tools built into every major computing platform, turning the previously difficult and admirable task of using the “correct” syntax into something any child can do. School should not teach about spelling and grammar in a way that restricts creativity or expression; so easily can a teacher give a student bad marks for spelling a few words wrong instead of focusing on the wonderful ideas that they bring to the table. Rather, it can be proposed that grammar and namely spelling can be viewed in the same way as handwriting: if it makes your work incomprehensible then it is an issue, but in no way shape or form is handwriting a large consideration for grades, and spelling should not be either, given that they are both significantly aided by the use of modern technology. Children should be taught to write *eloquently* and to think deeper and harder about what they write rather than how they write it.

To summarise, writing is a tool for communication. Grammar, spelling and syntax can tell the reader a lot about the writer, both in terms of social perception *and* in terms of the direct message conveyed, but children in our new rapidly changing world should be taught to use this as their sword rather than it being a barrier to entry in the first place.