

The first and eighth chapters are dedicated to the public controversy surrounding texting and language. Chapter 1 outlines the global history and growth of text messaging and introduces popular beliefs and concerns regarding the impact of texting on language that have made their way into popular discourse as a result. Here Crystal alludes to an additive role for texting, a position he elaborates in chapter 8 alongside a critique of media misrepresentation and over-inflated reports of text language use by students. Although admitting that research on the impact of texting on other aspects of language development, such as discourse skills, is too limited to suggest a clear trend, Crystal maintains that texting is in fact another language variety that fosters linguistic creativity and adaptability in the face of the demands and limitations of new technologies.

The middle six chapters are peppered with texting examples from English and several European and East Asian languages to explore its nature and function. In chapter 2 Crystal describes the orthographic diversity of texting and argues that the perception many share regarding the deviance of texting stems from a tendency to focus on special symbols and distinct spellings to the exclusion of other, more standardized elements. Chapter 3 identifies six distinctive features of texting: logographs, rebus writing, initialisms, omitted letters, and nonstandard spellings. However, examples drawn from non-texting environments are used to demonstrate that many of the conventions commonly associated with the abbreviated language of texting are not in fact linguistically novel. Chapter 4 explores the technical limitations of mobile devices that foster such brevity of language, as well as the creative and playful nature of texting language that has emerged as a result. Chapter 5 looks at characteristics of those who use texting and touches upon research that highlights differences across age groups and gender, while chapter 6 describes common social (e.g. humor, wordplay) and informational (e.g. meet-up arrangements, checking in, alerts) functions of texting. Finally, chapter 7 details texting characteristics and trends in languages other than English, including character-based languages, agglutinative languages, and languages that utilize diacritics. Overall, *Txtng: The gr8 db8* is a quick and somewhat humorous overview of texting trends and research on texting generated over the past ten years, packaged in language accessible to the non-linguist.

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MIKKO LAITINEN, *Agreement patterns in English: Diachronic corpus studies on common-number pronouns*. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 2007. Pp. xviii, 324. Pb: €45.

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*Agreement patterns in English* is a collection of variationist corpus studies examining the development of the English generic third person pronoun, that is, generic *he* or *they* used with no number or gender specification. The studies focus on the increasing prevalence of the plural pronoun *they* used in this context, commonly referred to as “epicene *they*,” in competition with the singular pronoun *he*. A number of factors are examined in the studies, including internal linguistic factors such as the number and definiteness of the antecedent, as well as extralinguistic factors such as the formality and type of text (imaginative or informative), gender of the writer, and century (from 1500 to the present).

With regard to the antecedent, Laitinen finds the increasing distribution of epicene *they* closely mirroring the grammaticalization and the gender- and number-leveling process of the indefinite pronoun antecedents, which moved from independent forms that maintained their number and gender specification (such as *every man*) to compounds with the generic meaning, where number and gender are both unspecified (such as *everyone*). A significant effect of the definiteness of the antecedent, for example *everyone* vs. *everybody*, was also shown to influence singular or plural epicene choice.

The social factors examined reveal the interaction of speakers and writers with the language and their awareness of language choices. Texts categorized as “informative” (including scientific, journalistic, commercial, philosophical, and leisure texts), while overall favoring the plural pronoun, used generic *he* more than did the “imaginative” texts (fiction), suggesting that authors are more aware of normative pressures in more formal texts. The gender of the writer proved to be enormously influential on pronoun choice, with female writers utilizing the plural pronoun almost exclusively, indicating a preference for semantic agreement (unspecified gender) over grammatical (number) agreement. Over the centuries, continuing variation in pronoun usage is demonstrated, with the plural gaining favor despite normative pressures toward singular *he* beginning in 1746.

The overall conclusion presented by Laitinen through these studies is that epicene *they* has been a variable in the English grammar since the Early Modern period, gradually gaining in strength through a process of grammaticalization that is nearing completion in the present day. This grammaticalization process is related to the overall development of the English language by examination of the entire referent subsystem, both anaphoric and cataphoric, which displays a tendency toward semantic agreement in contrast to grammatical agreement. At the earlier end of diachrony, these internal linguistic factors were highly influential in pronoun choice, but toward the end of the change, the social factors, particularly gender, become more prominent.

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