Text language – love it or loathe it?

Here are links to two newspaper articles about the ways in which text language has affected our written language, making it more like speech.

1. Read each article.
2. Note down the main points each writer makes and the evidence he offers for his point of view.
3. Discuss these points with a partner. Which writer do you agree with and why? Do you know if you would agree with the other viewpoint?
4. What relevance do these articles have to your own texting style? Do you use abbreviations? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. Share your feedback on question 4 with the whole group.

Go to the following web link and read the article:
http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jul/05/saturdayreviewsfeatres.guardianreview

The writer of the article, Professor David Crystal, is an expert on the English Language. The article was published in The Guardian in July 2008. He is arguing for accepting change in language and suggests that people’s fears about the effects of text language on written English might be exaggerated.

Now go to this web link and read the article:

This extract is by John Humphrys, a presenter on Radio 4’s current affairs programme, Today. It was published in The Daily Mail in September 2007. He is arguing against the use of text language and is concerned that it has affected other types of written and spoken communication.

Extension activities:

- Conduct interviews with your peers and adults to see if there are different attitudes according to age. You could present these findings to the class as a PowerPoint or in a written report.
- Experiment with your text language. Try texting parents with abbreviations to test their understanding or write in a different style to your friends. See if this affects their understanding of your messages.
- Find other media articles about people’s attitudes to language used in technology e.g. texting or instant messaging, chatrooms, social networking sites. Use the online websites for both broadsheets and tabloids to see if there are differences based on these categorisations.
- Analyse a stretch of your chatroom discourse and compare to your texts to friends. Do you use more abbreviations in one or the other? Do you use different abbreviations in one medium? Can you think of reasons for any differences? You could present these findings as a table to show any differences.