

Seminar 6 Lexical Strata in English

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Newspaper English

The vocabulary of newspapers is very special and it requires a high level of language command.

There are several principles that make newspaper English so typical.

- They all follow the main idea: **economical, condensed** and **attractive** language.
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Newspaper Headlines

Using as **few words** as possible. Grammar words often left out.

- E.g. *Turkish Minister Quits in Car Crash Scandal*

A **simple form** of the verb is used.

- E.g. *Pepsi To Test New Colours, Cities Seek Restitution*

The **infinitive** is used - something is going to happen.

- E.g. *USD 20 Million to Be Invested in Office Centre*

Words are usually **shorter** and sound more **dramatic** than ordinary English words (abbreviations).

Attracting Attention

Jokes - playing with words, **punning** (humorous use of words) or making **anagrams** from the names of famous people (rearranging the letters to spell something else).

- E.g. Wild *Ant, Yes?* = Walt Disney (Disney's new animal theme park opens) *James' Romance* = James Cameron (Director of "Titanic" romantic story)

New words with vague etymology invented by journalists.

- E.g. *venditation* = the act of setting forth ostentatiously
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Stylistically Marked & Stylistically Neutral Vocabulary

The same idea may be differently expressed by different people in different situations.

Some words have some stylistic colouring, typical for a particular style of speech or level of formality. These words are **stylistically marked**, contrasted with words used independently of the sphere of communication – **stylistically neutral**.

- E.g. *steed* (archaic, poetic) = *gee-gee* (informal, nursery) – *horse* (neutral), *to converse* (formal) = *to chat* (informal) = *to talk, speak* (neutral)
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Formal Vocabulary

Formal vocabulary is the part of English vocabulary used only in official situations, talks, documents, literary works, lectures, scientific works, etc.

Formal vocabulary is rather conservative, it also uses words that do not belong to the present-day English vocabulary.

- E.g. *efficacious* = effective, *donation* = gift, *summon* = send for, *whereby*, *furthermore*
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Colloquialisms

Colloquialisms are used in **everyday speech** and in correspondence to friends. They are emotional, a lot of them jocularly coloured, with figurative meaning.

There are sets of colloquialisms specific to particular field of human activity, e.g. in **business oral communication**. (On the contrary, official correspondence is characterised by highly formal vocabulary.)

- E.g. *blind alley job* = job that has no future, *get cracking* = work fast, *long-winded* = using more words than necessary to say something
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- To use colloquialisms one must have an **adequate fluency** in English and **sufficient familiarity** with the language, otherwise one may sound ridiculous, especially if one uses a mixture of British and American colloquialisms, pronounced with a foreign accent.
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Slang

Slang is a set of **new, very informal** words used in private conversation language. Slang is used by a **specific social** or **age group**, only later becoming more widely used. These words are expressive, witty, frequently ironical and often impolite, using unpredictable formation. Slang may combine with local colouring. American slang is different from British slang.

- E.g. *yuppie* (Young Upwardly Mobile/ Young Urban Professional) = young successful man with a good job, *baby kissers* = politicians
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Standard English & Local Dialects

- **Standard English** is the official language of Great Britain taught at schools, used by the media, and spoken by educated people.
 - **Local dialects** are varieties of the English spoken in some districts and having no normalised literary form. Regional varieties possessing a literary form are called variants. In Great Britain there are two variants, Scottish English and Irish English, and five main groups of dialects: Northern, Midland, Eastern, Western, and Southern.
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Regional Varieties of English I

Cockney, the regional dialect of London. Cockney vocabulary is lively and witty, imaginative and colourful. Its specific feature is the so-called rhyming slang.

- E.g. boots are called *daisy roots*, hat = *tit for tat*, head = *loaf of bread*, wife = *trouble and strife*

Scottish English uses a number of special dialect words.

- E.g. *aye* = yes, *dram* = drink (usually whisky), *loch* = lake, *lassie* = girl

Black English is the term used to refer to the English which originated in the Caribbean islands and has now spread to many parts of the United Kingdom, Canada and the USA.

- E.g. *jam* = improvise, *rap* = street talk, *beat* = exhausted
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Regional Varieties of English II

Indian English – **Indglish**. Well-educated, middle-aged Indian people speak English which has retained in everyday usage words that may be found in the classics of 19th century.

Australian English - highly colloquial words and expressions. Australian colloquialisms often involve shortening a word.

- E.g. *smoko* (from smoking) = tea or coffee break, *beaut* (from beautiful) = great

Canadian English is influenced both by British and American but it also has some specific features.

- E.g. *shack* = a hut, *to fathom out* = to explain
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American English

- The variety of English spoken in the USA has a literary normalised form called **Standard American**. It is not a separate language, because it does not possess grammar, phonetic system nor vocabulary of its own. Norms of American national standard are just modified norms of those accepted in Great Britain. American English slightly differs from British English in pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling and grammar.
 - The term **Americanism** is referred to a word or phrase peculiar to the English language as spoken in the USA.
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Examples of Americanisms

□ University degrees:

AE

BE

instructor = assistant lecturer

assistant = lecturer

associate professor = senior lecturer,
reader

professor = professor

English in New Space

The technology of the Internet supports and encourages the use of English more than other languages, but **English itself is changing** as a result of its use on the Internet.

New Tendencies

- Internet supports the tendency to **simplify** the language.
 - **American English** has become the number one language in the world of computers -American English spelling is used even in texts written in British English. E.g. TV programme in BE, but computer program – both BE and AE.
 - The economy of language is reflected in the use of new Internet **acronyms** (netcronyms).
 - The mixture of oral, written and drama genres on Internet results in creation of '**smileys**' (emoticons).
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Emoticons

: -)	Basic smiley
: -D	User is laughing (at you)
: -*	User is drunk
: -x	A kiss
8:-)	User is a little girl
: -)-8	User is a big girl
: -(User is upset or depressed
: -{ }	User wears lipstick
: -~)	User has a cold

Netcronyms

F2F	=	Face to Face (real meeting)
FAQ	=	Frequently Asked Question
BTW	=	BY THE WAY
IMHO	=	In My Humble Opinion
ROFL	=	Rolling On the Floor Laughing
RTFM	=	Read The F..... Manual
SWAK	=	Sealed With A Kiss

Everything is on the Net...

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Cartoon by Peter Steiner. The New Yorker, July 5, 1993 issue (Vol.69 (LXIX) no. 20) page 61

