THE CAMBRIDGE
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE

DAVID CRYSTAL

PART II

English vocabulary

Vocabulary is the Everest of a language. There is no larger task than to look for order among the hundreds of thousands of words which comprise the lexicon. There may be many *greater* tasks – working out a coherent grammatical system is certainly one – but nothing beats lexical study for sheer quantity and range.

Questions of size and scope are thus the first to be addressed in Part II. How big is the lexicon of English? How many words do any of us know? And how do we calculate size, with such an amorphous phenomenon? Defining the basic unit to be counted turns out to be an unexpected difficulty, and the important notion of a lexeme is introduced, which Part II relies upon greatly. We examine some of the other difficulties, such as the status of abbreviations and proper names, and draw some tentative conclusions.

Where does the vastness of the lexicon come from? We look at the question of sources. There is an important balance – not to say tension – between the stock of native words and the avalanche of foreign borrowings into English over the centuries. The use of prefixes, suffixes, compounding, and other processes of word-building turns out to play a crucial part in English vocabulary growth. We make a separate study of lexical creativity, which introduces a range of interesting processes, some sounding quite technical (portmanteaux,

reduplicatives, neologisms), others with a much more appealing resonance (nonsense-words, nonce-words).

We then turn to the detailed study of lexical history – to etymology, and the processes of semantic change. A major part of this section is devoted to one of the most fascinating topics in popular linguistic enquiry: the history of names – place-names, first names, surnames, nicknames, and much more. This is followed by a careful examination of the structure of the lexicon. Lexemes are grouped into semantic fields, and the relationships between them are plotted. We look at dictionaries and thesauri, synonyms and antonyms, collocations and idioms, and several other central concepts. A fuller account of lexical reference books, however, is left to Part VI.

Part II concludes by taking a series of slices through the lexical cake. We look at some of the ways in which words can be 'loaded', and introduce such notions as connotations, taboo words, jargon, doublespeak, and political correctness. We capture some of the ways in which the language is most alive, in the form of catch phrases, vogue words, slang, slogans, and grafitti. And we end by a sympathetic look at language which is dead or dying – at quotations, archaisms, and clichés. A few 'last' words round off the treatment of what is the largest component of the English language structure.

An impressive collection of the English lexicon – but even this library represents only a fraction of the lexical resources of the worldwide spoken and written language.

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11 · THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEXICON

In seeking guidance about the lexicon of a language, no book is more widely used or appreciated than the traditional dictionary (p. 442). Its alphabetical organization is - once we have learned how to spell – straightforwardly efficient, and its sense-by-sense entry structure is sensible and succinct. We might be forgiven, therefore, for thinking that the dictionary contains everything we would ever want to know about lexemes (p. 118). Such a belief, however, would be quite wrong. Conventional dictionaries contain very little information about the way the lexicon is structured.

When we talk about the 'structure' of the lexicon, we are referring to the network of meaning relationships which bind lexemes together – what is known as its *semantic structure*. No lexeme exists in splendid isolation. As soon as we think of one (say, *uncle*), a series of others come to mind. Some of these lexemes help to define *uncle* (*brother, father, mother*), others relate to it closely in meaning (*aunt, cousin, nephew, niece*), others have a looser semantic connection (*relatives, family, visit, outing*), and there may be figurative or literary uses (*Uncle Sam, Uncle Tom Cobleigh*), as well as a few personal or idiosyncratic associations (*birthday, funeral, loony*). If we mentally probe all aspects of the semantic network which surrounds *uncle*, we shall soon build up a large number of connections. But if we look at a dictionary entry for *uncle*, we shall see very few of our intuitions represented there. Some works give the bare minimum of information: 'brother of a father or mother', says one; and at *aunt*, 'sister of a father or mother'. Nowhere in this particular book are we told of the meaning relationship which binds these two nouns, despite the alphabetical distance which divorces them.

When we study semantic structure, we are trying to expound all the relationships of meaning that relate lexemes to each other. However, because of the size and complexity of the English lexicon, very little of this structure has been described. There have been a few theoretical accounts introducing such basic notions as synonymy and antonymy (p. 164), some attempts at general classification, and the detailed investigation of some small areas of meaning. We now know broadly what kinds of lexical relationship exist; but the descriptive task remains. The following pages can only be illustrative, therefore, and can do little more than indicate the size of the task facing those who wish to get to grips with lexical structure.

B24 nouns & verbs : the eye in detail
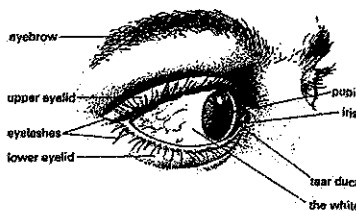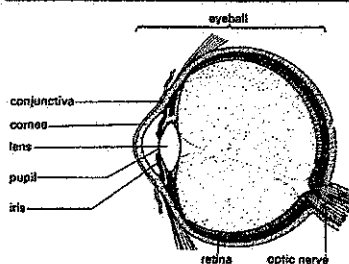
the eye

eyebrow [C] the line of hairs above each of the two human eyes: *He has very thick dark eyebrows; they make him look fierce.*
eyelid [C] one of the pieces of covering skin which can move down to close each eye: *Fish do not have eyelids and some creatures have more than one on each eye. He blinked his eyelids to clear his eyes.*
eyelash [C] one of the small hairs of which a number grow from the edge of each eyelid in humans and most hairy animals: *The eyelashes keep dust from the eyes. I have an eyelash in my eye; it's hurting my eye.*
eyeball [C] the whole of the eye, including the part inside the head, which forms a more or less round ball
pupil [C] the small black round opening which can grow larger or smaller in the middle of the coloured part of the eye, through which light passes
iris [C] the round coloured part of the eye which surrounds the pupil
white [C] the white part of the eye around the iris, which shows all the time in the human eye, but is usually hidden in animals: *The whites of his eyes were bloodshot from lack of sleep. The frightened horse showed the whites of its eyes.*
blink 1 [T1; I0] to shut and open (the eyes) quickly, usu because of strong light, surprise, tears, etc: *She blinked (her eyes) in surprise.* 2 [I0](*fig*) (of distant lights) to seem to be

unsteady; seem to go rapidly on and off: *The ship's lights blinked at us across the water.* 3 [T1; I0] *AmE* to wink 4 [C] an act of blinking: *The blink of an eye.*
wink 1 [T1; I0] to shut and open (one eye) quickly, sometimes with quick slight movement of the head, to show friendliness, amusement, a shared secret, etc: *He winked his left eye. She winked at him and smiled.* 2 [C] an act of doing this: *He gave a friendly wink.*

B25 nouns : kinds of noses [C]

Roman nose

Roman nose a nose that curves out near the top at the bridge

retroussé nose

retroussé nose a nose that is turned back at the lower end

snub nose

snub nose a nose that is short and flat with the end turned back

AN UNCONVENTIONAL DICTIONARY

A page from the *Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English* (1981), showing how lexemes are first grouped into areas of meaning and then arranged in alphabetical order. In this way it is possible to see some of the semantic links between lexemes more clearly than in a traditional dictionary. However, this approach has its penalties – not least, the space it takes up. The *Lexicon* deals only with the central vocabulary of the language – some 15,000 items – but this nonetheless requires a book of nearly 1,000 pages.

To find a lexeme, such as *uncle*, you consult a 125-page alphabetical index at the back of the book. This refers you to a particular topic area – C15, in the case of *uncle*, which is one of a series dealing with 'family relations' within the overall topic 'People and the family'. In C15, *uncle, aunt, nephew,* *niece,* and *cousin* are all grouped together.

The illustration shows a section from 'The body, its functions and welfare'. Note the differences between the lexical approach and the kind of exposition which might be found in an anatomical textbook. The latter would not be much concerned with such locations as *Roman nose* and *snub nose*, nor with the use of the phrase *the white,* or such functions as *blink* and *wink.*

SEMANTIC FIELDS

A fruitful notion in investigating lexical structure is the *semantic* or *lexical field* – a named area of meaning in which lexemes interrelate and define each other in specific ways. Think, for example, of all the lexemes we know to do with 'fruit', or 'parts of the body', or 'vehicles', or 'buildings', or 'colour'. We shall have no difficulty assigning *banana, nostril, lorry, town hall,* and *scarlet* to their respective fields. To what extent is it possible to assign all the lexemes in English to a semantic field in an unambiguous way?

The task is not as straightforward as it might appear, for several reasons. Some lexemes seem to belong to fields which are very difficult to define, or which are vague – to what field should *noise* or *difficult* belong? Some seem to belong to more than one field – does *orange* belong to 'fruit' or 'colour'? And some lexemes seem to fall midway between two fields – does *tomato* belong to 'fruit' or 'vegetable'? There is also the ques-

tion of how best to define a semantic field: shall we say that *tractor* belongs to the field of 'agricultural vehicles', 'land vehicles', or just 'vehicles'? is *flavour* part of the semantic field of 'taste', or *taste* part of the semantic field of 'flavour', or are both members of some broader semantic field, such as 'sensation'?

These are typical of the problems which keep semanticists in work, as they try to relate the neatness of their analytical categories to the fuzziness of the real world. At the same time, the existence of these difficulties must not hide the fact that a very large number of lexemes can be grouped together into fields and subfields in a fairly clear-cut way. That these accounts are illuminating can be seen from their growing use in such domains as foreign language teaching and speech therapy, where it has proved helpful to present learners with sets of related lexemes, rather than with a series of randomly chosen items (p. 434). And young children, too, learn much of their vocabulary by bringing lexemes together in this way (p. 424).

THE STYLISTIC FACTOR

Some of the lexemes belonging to the semantic field of 'madness', so arranged that it is possible to see differences in their stylistic type (p. 394). At the top of the circle are the items which are literary, academic, or technical in character; at the bottom are the colloquialisms. Items on the left are somewhat dated or archaic; those on the right are relatively recent in origin. The stylistically neutral lexeme which identifies the field as a whole is placed in the centre.

This kind of perspective is essential if we wish to see order in the long lists of lexemes found in a thesaurus (p. 158). When we are linking items in the lexicon, we need to take account of the stylistic level at which they operate. From a structural semantic point of view, the opposite of *sane* is *insane*, not *bonkers*.

(After G. Hughes, 1988.)
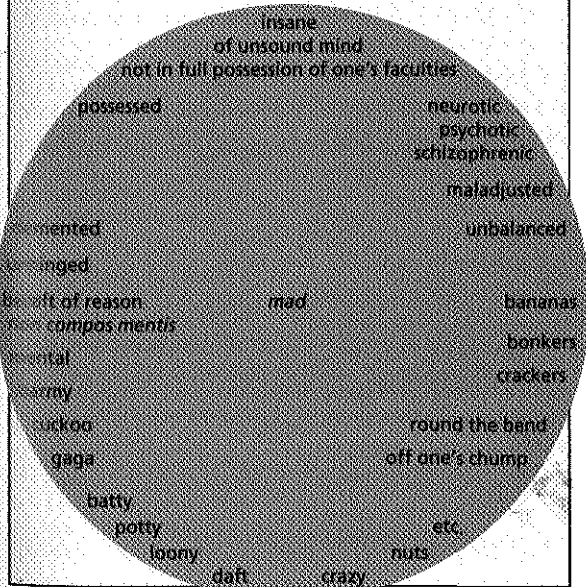
THE VOCABULARY OF WINE

Wine appreciation is an interesting semantic field, because its lexemes are largely figurative applications from other fields. Terms which we would normally associate with music, textiles, food, physique, personality, morality, and behaviour rub shoulders with terms from colour, chemistry, botany, and nutrition. Because the topic is so subjective, the lexicon plays a critical role. The relationships between the lexemes define the contrasts of taste which the wine enthusiast seeks to identify. To learn about wine is first to learn how to talk about wine. This can be seen in the following definitions, taken from a popular introduction.

bland Implies lack of character, too mild.
crisp Firm, brisk, refreshing, zestful. Indicates good level of acidity, particularly in dry whites.
dry In relation to wine always means not sweet; sugar fully fermented out.
finesse An abstract qualitative term

related to refinement, elegance.
firm Sound constitution, positive. A desirable quality on the palate.
flabby Soft, feeble, lacking acidity on the palate.
flat The next stage after flabby, well beyond bland. Total lack of vigour on nose and on palate; lack of acidity; oxidation.
heavy Over-endowed with alcohol, more than full bodied; clumsy, lacking finesse.
meaty Rich 'chunky' nose, almost chewable flavour.
piquant A high-toned, over-fragrant, fruity nose verging on sharp, usually confirmed by an over-acidic end taste.
pricked Distinctly sharper

than piquant. Acetic smell, tart. An irremediable fault.
sharp Acidity on the nose and palate somewhere between piquant and pricked. Usually indicating a fault.
sinewy Lean, muscular on the palate. Usually a wine of some potential.
stringy A texture: on the thin and scrawny side, lacking equability.
supple Texture, balance: pleasant combination of vigour and harmony.
tart Sharp, nose catching, tongue curling.
velvety A textural description: silky, smooth, a certain opulence on the palate.

(After M. Broadbent, 1983.)
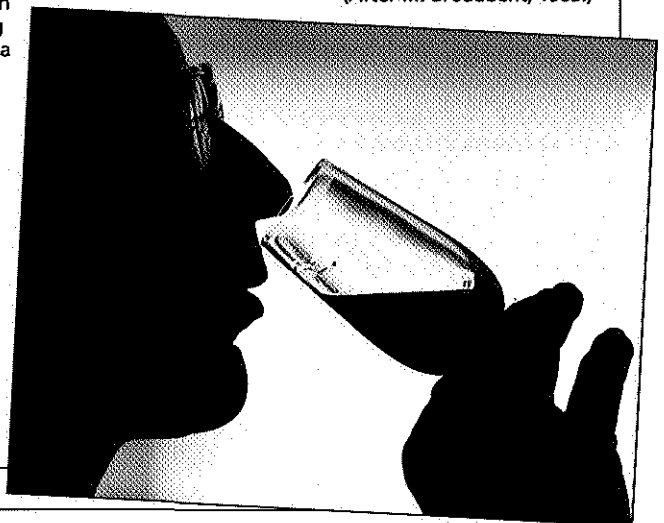
THE THESAURUS

The notion of semantic fields (p. 157) suggests that there may be other possible approaches to lexicography than the traditional one using alphabetical order. The *thesaurus* is such an alternative. Thesauri are based on the notion of grouping lexemes thematically — a notion which can be traced back to 16th-century schemes for the classification of all human knowledge. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and John Wilkins (1614–72), in particular, wrote essays which outlined a way of dividing everything into a small number of major areas, each being progressively subclassified until all concepts are dealt with in their appropriate place. Such attempts at a universal hierarchy fell out of favour until the 19th century, when scientific interest in taxonomy became a dominant feature of the age, and the botanical metaphor of the tree came to be applied to language as well as to natural history.

Roget's *Thesaurus*

The influence of natural history is evident in the work which pioneered the thesaurus as we know it today. Roget's *Thesaurus*, first published in 1852, divides the lexicon into six main areas: abstract relations, space, the material world, the intellect, volition, and sentient/moral powers. Each area is then progressively subclassified, giving a total of 1,000 semantic categories. In his Introduction, Roget explains his aim and method:

The present Work is intended to supply, with respect to the English language, a desideratum hitherto unsupplied in any language; namely, a collection of the words it contains and of the idiomatic combinations peculiar to it, arranged, not in the alphabetical order as they are in a Dictionary, but according to the *ideas* which they express ... The principle by which I have been guided in framing my verbal classification is the same as that which is employed in the various departments of Natural History. Thus the sectional divisions I have formed, correspond to Natural Families in Botany and Zoology, and the filiation of words presents a network analogous to the natural filiation of plants or animals.

Roget assumed that his readers would be able to find their way through the Thesaurus by working intuitively down through his classifications. He added a short alphabetical index, but it was left to his son, John Lewis Roget, to develop this in the 1879 edition into a major feature of the book. In modern editions, the index takes up as many pages as does the thematic classification, and is the way into the work which most people use.

New thematic models

A thesaurus acts as a complement to the traditional dictionary: in a dictionary, we have a lexeme in mind, and wish to check on its meaning or use; by contrast,

in a thesaurus we have a meaning in mind, and wish to check on the lexemes available to express it. A thesaurus such as Roget's, however, has obvious limitations. It does not provide any definitions: if we do not know the meaning of a lexeme in the thesaurus, we still need to look it up in a dictionary. It says nothing about the stylistic levels at which the lexemes are used: formal and informal items rub shoulders, as do items belonging to technical, professional, domestic, regional, and other varieties (Part V). There is no principled basis to the way lexemes are organized within entry paragraphs. And the traditional thesaurus is limited, for reasons of practicability, to the more commonly occurring lexemes: users are often left with the feeling that, even though no lexeme is listed for the meaning they have in mind, one may nonetheless exist, but have been omitted by accident. In recent years, efforts have begun to be made to reduce these limitations, some using new techniques of visual illustration, others aided by the vastly increased storage and retrieval power of the computer (p. 436).
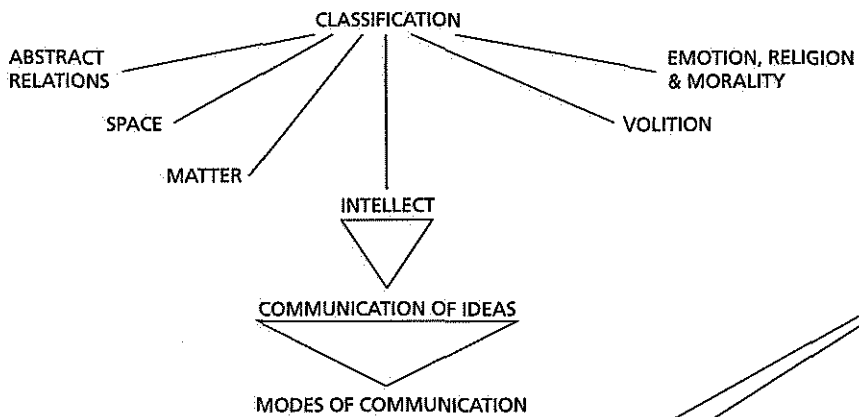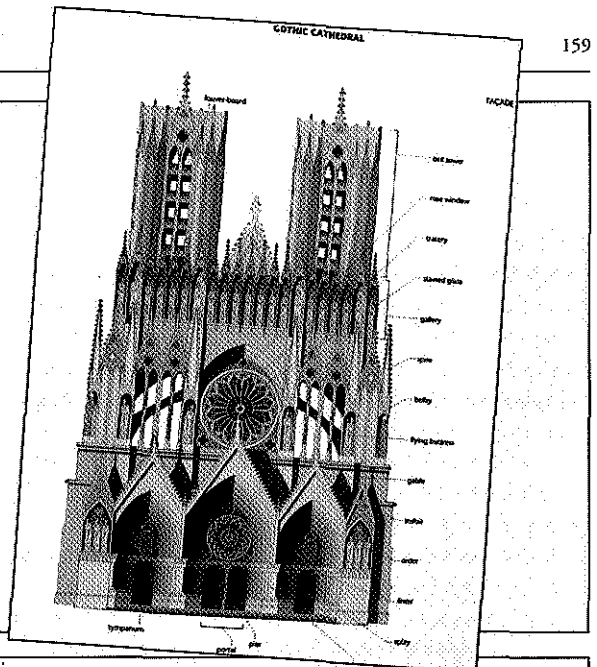
ANOTHER WORD FOR *news*?

Two ways of finding the answer to this question are illustrated below. The first is from general to particular, identifying that *news* is a matter of the intellect, to do with communication, and moreover with a particular mode of communication. The second is to go to the index, where the various meanings of *news* are identified, and b e sent directly to the relevant section (529). Most people use the latter method as the quickest way of answering a specific query; but the former method has its uses, too, when we are trying to develop a sense of the range of vocabulary available to express a concept.

Some of the noun entries for *news* are illustrated, taken from two editions of Roget: Dutch (1962) and Kirkpatrick (1987). It is interesting to compare the entries in detail, to see how the vocabulary has changed and developed during the intervening period. The general headings are those of the 1987 edition.

THE VISUAL DICTIONARY

A picture from the *Macmillan Visual Dictionary* (1992), showing the way a detailed illustration can add meaning to what would otherwise be a random listing of terms:

lintel, trefoil, pier, portal, tympanum, etc. The approach is obviously limited by the extent to which items can be clearly drawn, and so the book is largely composed of nouns. However, with over 800 pages of diagrams covering 600 subjects, it is an informative guide to the use of some 25,000 terms.

GOTHIC CATHEDRAL

CLASSIFICATION

ABSTRACT RELATIONS — SPACE — MATTER — INTELLECT

EMOTION, RELIGION & MORALITY — VOLITION

COMMUNICATION OF IDEAS

MODES OF COMMUNICATION

529 News

N. *news*, good n.; bad news 509n. *disappointment*; tidings, glad t.; gospel, evangel 973n. *religion*; budget of news, packet of n., newspacket, despatches, diplomatic bag; intelligence, report, despatch, word, advice; piece of information, something to tell, titbit, flash 524n. *information*; bulletin, communiqué, hand-out; newspaper report, press notice; fresh news, stirring n., latest n., stop-press n.; sensation, scoop; old news, stale n.; copy, filler; yarn, story, old s., tall s.; broadcast, telecast, newscast, newsreel 528n. *publicity*; news-value.
rumour, unverified news, unconfirmed report; flying rumour, fame; hearsay, gossip, gup, talk, talk of the town, tittle-tattle 584n. *chat*; scandal 926n. *calumny*; noise, cry, buzz, bruit; false report, hoax, canard; grape-vine; kite-flying.

message, oral m., word of mouth, word, advice, tip 524n. *information*; communication 547n. *signal*; marconigram, wireless message, radiogram, cablegram, cable, telegram, wire, lettergram 531n. *telecommunication*; letter, postcard, letters, despatches 588n. *correspondence*; ring, phone-call; errand, embassy 751n. *commission*.
newsmonger, quidnunc, gossip, talker 584n. *interlocutor*; tattler, chatterer; scandalmonger 926n. *defamer*; retailer of news, newspedlar; newsman, news-hound, news reporter, reporter, sob-sister, special correspondent 589n. *author*; newsboy, news-agent, newsvendor.

(Dutch, 1962)

529 News

N. *news*, good n., no news is good n.; bad news 509 *disappointment*; tidings, glad t.; gospel, evangel 973 *religion*; dispatches, diplomatic bag; intelligence, report, dispatch, word, intimation, advice; piece of information, something to tell, titbit 524 *information*; bulletin, communiqué, handout, press release; newspaper report, press notice; news item, news flash 531 *broadcast*; fresh news, stirring n., hot n., latest n., stop-press n.; sensation, scoop, exclusive; old news, stale n.; copy, filler; yarn, story, old s., tall s.; newscast, newsreel 528 *publicity*; news value, news-worthiness.
rumour, unverified news, unconfirmed report; flying rumour, fame; on dit, hearsay, gossip, gup, talk, talk of the town, tittle-tattle 584 *chat*; scandal 926 *calumny*; whisper, buzz, noise, bruit; false report, hoax, canard; grapevine, bush telegraph; kite-flying.

message, oral m., word of mouth, word, advice, tip 524 *information*; communication 547 *signal*; wireless message, radiogram, cablegram, cable, telegram, telemessage, wire, fax, electronic mail 531 *telecommunication*; postcard, pc, note, letters, dispatches 588 *correspondence*, 531 *postal communications*; ring, phone call, buzz, tinkle; errand, embassy 751 *commission*.
news reporter, newspaperman *or* -woman, reporter, cub r., journalist, correspondent, legman, stringer 589 *author*; gentleman *or* lady of the press, pressman *or* -woman, press representative 524 *informant*; newsreader, newscaster 531 *broadcaster*; newsmonger, quidnunc, gossip, tittle-tattler, talker 584 *interlocutor*; tattler, chatterer; muckraker, scandalmonger 926 *defamer*; retailer of news 528 *publicizer*; newsagent, newsvendor, newspaper boy or girl.

(Kirkpatrick, 1987)
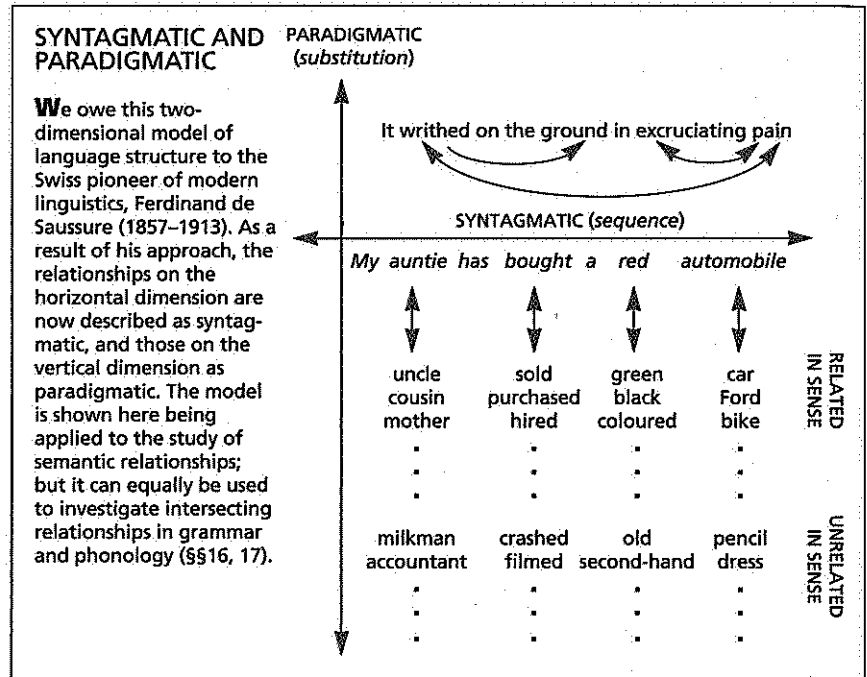
LEXICAL STRUCTURE

One way of imposing order on the thousands of lexemes which make up the English vocabulary is to group them into semantic fields (p. 157). But how are these fields structured? How exactly do the lexemes within a field relate to each other? It is obvious from dictionary definitions and thesaurus groupings that some lexemes do 'belong together'. How can we define what this 'belonging together' consists of?

A well-established model of lexical structure makes us think of lexemes as being related along two intersecting dimensions, as shown in the figure (right).

• On the horizontal dimension, we sense the relationships between lexemes in a *sequence*. There is a certain mutual expectancy between the main lexemes in the sentence *It writhed on the ground in excruciating pain.* Our linguistic intuition tells us that *excruciating* tends to occur with *pain*, *agony*, and a few other lexemes, and not with *joy*, *ignorance*, and most other nouns in the language. Likewise, *writhe* and *agony* commonly co-occur, as do *writhe* and *ground*. 'Horizontal' expectancies of this kind are known as *collocations*, or *selectional restrictions*. *Excruciating*, we can say, 'selects' or 'collocates with' *pain*.

• On the vertical dimension, we sense the way in which one lexeme can *substitute* for another, and relate to it in meaning. If the sentence were *My auntie has bought a red automobile*, we can focus on any one of the lexemes, and replace it. We might replace *bought* by a lexeme of similar meaning (a *synonym*), such as *purchased*; or by

one of contrasting meaning (an *antonym*), such as *sold*. We might replace *automobile* by a lexeme of more specific meaning (a *hyponym*), such as *Ford*, or by one of more general meaning (a *hypernym*), such as *vehicle*. Or, of course, we might replace *automobile* by a lexeme which has nothing to do with it in meaning at all, such as *dress* or *pencil*. The predictable links between lexemes are called *sense relations*, and they are at the core of any account of lexical structure (p. 164).

SYNTAGMATIC AND PARADIGMATIC

We owe this two-dimensional model of language structure to the Swiss pioneer of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). As a result of his approach, the relationships on the horizontal dimension are now described as syntagmatic, and those on the vertical dimension as paradigmatic. The model is shown here being applied to the study of semantic relationships; but it can equally be used to investigate intersecting relationships in grammar and phonology (§§16, 17).

PARADIGMATIC (*substitution*)

It writhed on the ground in excruciating pain

SYNTAGMATIC (*sequence*)

My	auntie	has	bought	a	red	automobile	
	uncle		sold		green	car	RELATED IN SENSE
	cousin		purchased		black	Ford	
	mother		hired		coloured	bike	
	milkman		crashed		old	pencil	UNRELATED IN SENSE
	accountant		filmed		second-hand	dress	

YOU SHALL KNOW A WORD BY THE COMPANY IT KEEPS

The purpose of this dictum, which appears in the writing of the British linguist, J. R. Firth (1890–1960), is to draw attention to the crucial role of the lexical context which surrounds a lexeme, when we analyse its meaning. This can be seen from the concordance print-out below, using the Longman Lancaster Corpus of 30 million words (p. 438). It shows the occurrences of *staple*, with enough context before and after to enable the reader to see how this item is being used in each. The various meanings of the lexeme begin to appear when we examine the collocations: in particular, *staple* is used to describe (1) the basic goods that a nation makes or trades in, (2) a basic main food that a community eats, and (3) a basic item of household food. Particularly important collocations, it appears from this corpus, are *diet*, *food*, *industry*, and (not shown in this illustration) *product*. (After M. Rundell & P. Stock, 1992.)

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40359 03 US  89 ns the beautiful, classy woman has long been a Hollywood staple, a disturbing change has taken place in the characte
40180 02 WAF 90 ost of it produced locally. Maize is more important as a staple among the ethnic groups in the southern savanna than
40180 02 WAF 90 on the branching habit, and petiole colour. Cassava is a staple among the ethnic groups of southern Ghana particular
30055 09 UK  02 he foul reek of the surrounding swamp. In one of these a staple and chain, with a quantity of gnawed bones, showed w
00218 09 UK  01 ungry Umballa, and were among the mile-wide green of the staple crops.<para> He was a white-bearded and affable eld
30113 08 AUS 80 esting thing about the group is that many of them form a staple diet for Aboriginal people, while others which look
00078 08 UK  66 mount.<para>    That claret was considered a part of the staple diet, even of the or- dinary man, is clear from the
30113 08 AUS 80 to the camels later on, and stuck with what was to be my staple diet: brown rice, lentils, garlic, curry, oil, panca
40135 07 UK  88 water.<para>    It was a simple frugal life. The African staple diet was a solid, stodgy porridge, called sazda, mad
40180 02 WAF 90 portant item of diet in institutions. Where it becomes a staple diet it is important that the whole grain is eaten t
43021 04 UK  87 <para>    3.''There was no real labour aristocracy in the staple export trades- coal and the main branches of textile
00116 02 UK  59 all, while for some distance south of it rice is not the staple food of the inhabitants. The climate in the rice reg
40180 02 WAF 90 reas). Both white and red grain varieties occur. It is a staple food in an area where both rainfall and other condit
42075 07 UK  73 here, but none fits exactly. This substance was Israel's staple food for 40 years, ceasing abruptly when they entere
40180 02 WAF 90 hat in much of West Africa, they are still the preferred staple food among most of the inhabitants of the forest zon
40180 02 WAF 90 rridge or added to <ff>other cereals as meal. It is the staple food of many semi-Bantu tribes of northern Nigeria.
40075 07 UK  73 here, but none fits exactly..This substance was Israel's staple food for 40 years, ceasing abruptly when they entere
10116 02 UK  59 nd) crop but more usually in water. The ripe seed is the staple food in many Eastern countries. It is not, however,
40180 02 WAF 90 rn and Millet, in the northern parts of Ghana. It is the staple food in Senegal, parts of the Ivory Coast, Gambia, S
40135 07 UK  88 On the compound they were never desperately short of the staple foods, though it was more difficult when sanctions w
60465 04 UK  89   maltreated that the country is now desperately short of staple foods.<para>   <tab>Food self-sufficiency went long a
40100 04 US  34 all groups. Hunting and fishing must still have provided staple foods. Arrow-heads indeed are  =  surprisingly rare
00091 09 US  71 tied, and the twisted rope was fastened to a strong iron staple in a heavy wooden beam above, near the fireplace. He
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Investigating collocations

The print-out of *staple* on p. 160 illustrates two useful concepts in the study of collocations: there is a central lexeme, or *node*, surrounded by a fixed amount of language – the *span* within which the search for collocations takes place. The span shown in that example is quite large, allowing 10 or so words on either side of the node: often, collocational studies look only at the lexemes which are immediately adjacent to a node, or at those which fall within three or four places on either side of it. For common lexemes, we need to examine quite a wide span, and to look at many examples of use, in order for clear lexical patterns to emerge. Computational help is essential in such cases.

ON LINE

The remarkable collocational range of an everyday lexeme. There are nearly 150 predictable contexts for *line*, which can be grouped into 30 or so senses. Traditional dictionary entries do not give this kind of information.

LONG THIN MARK
draw a ~
broken ~
contour ~
crooked ~
curved ~
dotted ~
fine / thin ~
heavy / thick ~
horizontal ~
parallel ~
perpendicular ~
solid /
  unbroken ~
straight ~
vertical ~
wavy ~

QUEUE (AmE)
form a ~
buck ('push
  into') a ~
get into ~
wait in ~
checkout ~
chow (= food) ~

ROW
form a ~
picket ~
police ~
receiving ~

ROW OF CHARACTERS
indent a ~
insert a ~
(*figurative*)
read between
  the ~s

(UNIT OF) TEXT
deliver a ~
go over one's ~s
rehearse one's
  ~s
fluff one's ~s
dull ~
witty ~

ROUTE
introduce a
  (new) ~
discontinue a ~
feeder ~
main ~
bus ~
commuter ~
high-speed ~
steamship ~
streetcar ~ (AmE)
tram ~ (BrE)
supply ~s

PATH
follow a ~ (of
  reasoning)
follow the ~
  (of least
  resistance)

TELEPHONE CONNECTION
get a ~
give someone
  a ~
the ~ is busy
  (AmE)
the ~ is
  engaged
  (BrE)
outside ~
party ~
hot ~

NOTE
drop someone
  a ~
get a ~ on some-
  one
carry a ~
handle a ~
introduce a ~
discontinue a ~
drop a ~
complete ~
full ~

CORD, FISHING DEVICE
cast a ~
reel in a ~
reel out a ~
fishing ~

POLICY
adhere to a ~
follow a ~
hew to a ~
pursue a ~
take a ~
firm ~
hard ~
official ~
party ~

ROPE
throw a ~ to
  someone
plumb ~

LINE

DIVISION
cross a ~
colour ~

TENDENCY
along certain ~s
on certain ~s

FLATTERING TALK
(*colloquial*)
give someone
  a ~
hand someone
  a ~

DYNASTY
establish a ~
found a ~
unbroken ~
fine ~
nebulous ~
thin ~

WIRE, PIPE, CONDUIT
fuel ~
oil ~
sewage ~
steam ~
telegraph ~
telephone ~
high-voltage ~
power ~

BOUNDARY
city ~
county ~
snow ~
squall ~
state ~
town
~ship ~
tree ~

(*sports*)
base ~
end ~
foul ~
goal ~
service ~
side ~
at a ~
on a ~

ESTABLISHED POSITION
(*military*)
hold a ~
battle ~
cease-fire ~
enemy ~s
at a ~
on a ~

CONVEYOR BELT
assembly ~
production ~

MISCELLANEOUS
the bottom ~
be on the
  firing ~
sign on the
  dotted ~
credit ~

OCCUPATION
what ~ are
  you in?

walk a straight ~
lay it on the ~
on ~
in the ~ of duty
put something
  on the ~

CONTOUR
~s of a ship

LIMIT
hold the ~
draw the ~

TURN, ORDER
in ~ for

ALIGNMENT
in ~
out of ~

CONFORMITY
toe the ~
bring someone
  into ~
keep someone
  in ~
get into ~
get out of ~
in ~ with

Listings derive from a dictionary which specializes in collocational data:
The BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English. (After M. Benson, E. Benson & R. Ilson, 1986a.)

WHAT MAY WE DO TO A DICTUM?

The panel on the opposite page begins:

The purpose of this dictum...

However, it did not start life like that. The first draft of this sentence was:

This dictum, — ed by the British linguist, J. R. Firth...

I puzzled for some time over which verb to collocate with

dictum. Do we *coin* a dictum, or *formulate* one, or *present* one, or *announce* one? *Made*, *given*, and *used* seemed tame or not quite right. *Propounded*, *pronounced*, and *promulgated* seemed too official. *Delivered*, *voiced*, *advanced*, *introduced*, *adumbrated*, and several other verbs all came to mind, but added distracting nuances for the neutral meaning I wished to

express. Is there a standard collocation in English?

Dictionaries exist to provide remedies for failed intuitions. Unfortunately, I could find no example of a transitive verb governing *dictum*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provided only an instance of *adduce* in a legal context. An informant test on half-a-dozen people brought no consensus – only more verbs (*mooted*,

framed, *exclaimed...*). I cut my temporal losses, and changed the construction.

The point of this anecdote is twofold: it provides a further warning against complacency, when dealing with usage (p. 196); and it highlights a typical difficulty in the study of collocations. Textbooks and teaching materials are full of the clear cases of lexical collocation, where intuition is in no

doubt. We do not have trouble with *quench my* —, *auspicious* —, *spick and* —, and many other such sequences. But there are an uncertain (and I suspect large) number of cases where usage is not established, and where any of us with confidence can become an arbiter of usage, if we so choose. If I had written, 'This dictum, coined by J. R. Firth', would anyone have noticed?

Predicting lexemes

The notion of collocation (p. 160) focuses our attention on the extent to which lexemes come together randomly or predictably. Often, a sequence of lexemes is governed by chance – that is, by factors which are controlled by an individual speaker, and not by tendencies in the language as a whole. For example, the sentence *I like* – gives us no clue about which lexeme will come next. Almost anything that exists can be liked. It is up to the individual to choose. Such sequences as *(I) like potatoes* or *like films* are said to be 'free combinations' of lexemes. They are not collocations, because there is no mutual expectancy between the items. Thousands of lexical juxtapositions in everyday speech and writing fall into this category.

By contrast, the lexical items involved in a collocation are always to some degree mutually predictable, occurring regardless of the interests or personality of the individual user. All mature native speakers use such sequences as *commit a murder* and not, say, *commit a task*, even though the sense of 'carry out' would be applicable in the latter case. And everyone says *monumental ignorance*, not *monumental brilliance*. Collocations may occur, moreover, with apparent disregard for the observable situation to which they relate: we may be *green with envy*, and a book may have a *purple passage*, even though no colour is evident on the face or page. Collocations cannot be predicted from a knowledge of the world. *Coffee* with milk may look *sepia*, *hazel*, *beige*, *buff*, *fawn*, *khaki*, *bronze*, *copper*, *amber*, and various other shades of *brown*; but we normally call it *white*.

All that is required, for a sequence of lexemes to be described as a collocation, is for one item to 'call up' another, to some extent, in the mind of a native speaker. Sometimes the predictability is weak: *heavy* collocates with quite a diverse range of items (*loss*, *wear*, *traffic*, *burden*, *defeat*, etc.), as does *line* on p. 161. Sometimes the predictability is strong: *auspicious* collocates only with *occasion*, and a few other closely-related items (*event*, *moment*, etc.); circuit collocates with *break/broken*, *close(d)*, *integrated*, *printed*, *short*, *make*, a few figurative expressions to do with travelling (e.g. *lecture*, *rodeo*, *talk-show*), but little more. However, when sequences are so highly predictable that they allow little or no change in their lexical elements (as with *spick and span* or *run amok*), it is not very illuminating to analyse them as collocations. Such minimally varying sequences are usually referred to as *fixed expressions*, or *idioms*, and require a separate analysis.

BLANKETY —

This collocation has been used as a euphemism since the mid-19th century, but it received a new lease of life from the popular British television game show, *Blankety Blank*, in the 1980s. The aim of the game was simple: participants were presented with a phrase in which one of the items was left blank, and they had to guess which was the missing lexeme. The game relied on people's everyday knowledge of collocations, and was perhaps so successful for that reason. Unlike some games, where intellectual or physical strength is a prerequisite for success, *Blankety Blank* relied only on a universal linguistic skill – our intuitive sense of 'which word comes next'. It was the most egalitarian of games.

ASSOCIATIVE RESPONSES

It is important to distinguish between collocations and associative responses. A lexeme might bring to mind all kinds of 'free associations'. If I ask you to say the first word which comes into your head when I say *whiskey*, you might respond with *Scotch*, *soda*, *dog* (because *Whiskey* is the name of your dog), or *Fred* (because Fred is someone you know who drinks a lot of whiskey); but only the first two are collocations – linguistically predictable sequences known by mature English language users. The last two are idiosyncratic, and have to be interpreted to make sense. Psychotherapists are often particularly interested in associations of this kind, believing that these can throw light on what is going on in a person's unconscious mind.

The table gives the set of associative responses made in 1952 by a group of American students to the item *city*. The list shows several personal associations (e.g. *Rochester*, *Minneapolis*), several collocations of varying degrees of predictability (e.g. *hall*, *square*, *block*, *traffic*), and several items which from a linguistic point of view would be free combinations (e.g. *here*, *people*, *large*, *noise*). Surprisingly, some of the most central collocations of *city* are not in the list – notably, *capital*.

(After L. Postman & G. Keppel, 1970.)

City No.	Response	Total
1	town	353
2	Minneapolis	121
3	state	74
4	country	69
5	square	64
6	people	32
7	street	32
8	St. Paul	24
9	building(s)	22
10	block(s)	22
11	big	20
12	New York	15
13	house(s)	12
14	large	11
15	light(s)	10
16	noise	9
17	farm	8
18	village	7
19	block	7
20	Chicago	5
21	dirty	5
22	busy	5
23	hall	4
24	traffic	4
25	dirt	4
26	dump	3
27	home	3
28	round	3
29	water	3
30	car(s)	3
31	day	2
32	here	2
33	live	2
34	man	2
35	parks	2
36	place	2
37	smoke	2
38	streetcar	2
39	towers	2

40–92   (f=1)

Ames, bustle, club, concrete, cop, county, court, crowds, dark, Des Moines, downtown, Duluth, dust, Excelsior, excitement, factory, Faribault, fun, gas, hard, high, hinge, life, map, Memphis, metropolis, Milwaukee, Montevideo, New Orleans, ocean, pig, pipe, plant, population, Preston, Rochester, RR, rural, school, Seattle, sidewalk, sin, site, skyscrapers, snow, stand, suburb, subway, triangle, urban, vast, wells, window

IDIOMS

Two central features identify an idiom. The meaning of the idiomatic expression cannot be deduced by examining the meanings of the constituent lexemes. And the expression is fixed, both grammatically (p. 216) and lexically. Thus, *put a sock in it!* means 'stop talking', and it is not possible to replace any of the lexemes and retain the idiomatic meaning. *Put a stocking in it* or *put a sock on* must be interpreted literally or not at all.

It is easy to forget just how many idiomatic constructions a lexeme can enter into. The following list of idiomatic uses of *hand*, adapted from the *Longman Dictionary of English Idioms* (1979), makes no claim to completeness.

at first hand
at second hand
a bird in the hand...
bite the hand that feeds him
bound/tied hand and foot

cap in hand
close at hand
come the heavy hand
cross my hand with silver
a dab hand
fight hand to hand
force my hand
a free hand
to get/keep my hand in
give/lend me a hand
give her the glad hand
go/be hand in hand
hand in glove
hand it to me on a plate
hand over fist
have/take a hand in it
have me eating out of her hand
have him in the palm of my hand
have to hand it to her
hold your hand ('support')
in hand
an iron hand in a velvet glove
know it like the back of my hand
lift a hand/finger
live from hand to mouth
off hand
an old hand
on every hand
on hand

on the one hand...
out of hand
put/dip his hand into his pocket
put/lay my hands on it
his left hand doesn't know what his right hand's doing
put my hand to the plough
raise/lift my hand against us
his right hand (man)
rule them with an iron hand
see the hand/finger of God in...
show/reveal your hand
stay your hand
strengthen your hand
take it in hand
throw his hand in
to hand ('within reach')
try your hand
turn/set/put your hand to
the upper/whip hand
wait on me hand and foot
with a heavy hand
with a high hand
with an open hand
with one hand tied behind my back
catch red-handed.

It is important to note that the plural form enters into a

quite different set of idioms:
all hands to the pump
at your hands
my bare hands
change hands
the devil finds work for idle hands
get my hands on...
our hands are tied
hands down
hands up!
I've only got one pair of hands
have clean hands
have my hands full
have his blood on my hands
in good hands
keep your hands off
lay my hands on it
many hands make light work
on/off her hands
out of my hands
play into his hands
shake hands
a show of hands
sit on their hands
soil/dirty our hands
take my life in my hands
take the law into our own hands
throw up my hands (in horror)
wash my hands of...

Lexical phrases

We can find other patterns within lexical sequences, apart from the free combinations, idioms, and kinds of collocation described in preceding pages. In particular, there are the specially assembled sequences of items which have been called (amongst other names) *sentence stems, composite forms,* or *lexical phrases.* (This field of study is fairly recent, so terminology is not yet fixed.) To adopt the last of these terms: *lexical phrases* are rather like the prefabricated components used in building a house or a computer. They are chunks of language in which all the items have been pre-assembled. Hundreds of such phrases exist, of varying length and complexity, such as *it seems to me...*, *would you mind...*, *on the one hand... on the other hand...*, and... *lived happily ever after.* Some resemble formulae: *let me start by Xing a/the Y* (e.g. *making the point, asking a question*) or *the Xer you Y, the Aer you B* (e.g. *the longer you wait, the angrier you get*). Such phrases are used frequently in both speech and writing, but they are especially important in conversation, where they perform a number of roles – for instance, expressing agreement, summing up an argument, introducing an example, or changing a topic. The full analysis of interactional functions of this kind, involving reference to phonological and grammatical factors as well as lexical ones, forms part of the study of *pragmatics* (p. 286).

TYPES OF LEXICAL PHRASE

One study of lexical phrases groups them into four main types.

Polywords
Short phrases which function very much like individual lexemes. They cannot be varied, and their parts cannot be separated.

in a nutshell
by the way
so to speak
so far so good
once and for all

Institutionalized expressions
Units of sentence length, functioning as separate utterances. Like polywords, they are invariable, and their parts cannot be separated. They include proverbs, aphorisms, and other quotable utterances (§12).

How do you do?
Have a nice day.
Give me a break.
Long time no see.
You can fool some of the people some of the time.

Phrasal constraints
These are phrases which allow some degree of variation; they are usually quite short.

as I was — (saying, mentioning)
good — (morning, night)
a — ago (day, long time)
as far as I — (can see, know)

Sentence builders
Phrases which provide the framework for whole sentences; they allow considerable variation.

not only... but also...
my point is that...
I'm a great believer in...
that reminds me of...
let me begin by...

Phrases from any of these categories may be used to perform the same social (or 'pragmatic') function. For example, the function of leave-taking can be expressed by a polyword (*so long*), an institutionalized expression (*have a nice day*), or a phrasal constraint (*see you later*). Further examples of pragmatic functions are given on p. 288.
(After J. R. Nattinger & J. S. DeCarrico, 1992.)

CREATIVE COLLOCATIONS

Many of Dylan Thomas's poetic effects rely on a deliberate breaking of collocational conventions, especially between adjective and noun, as can be seen in this extract from 'After the Funeral', 1939.

Her flesh was meek as milk, but this skyward statue
With the wild breast and blessed and giant skull
Is carved from her in a room with a wet window
In a fiercely mourning house in a crooked year.
I know her scrubbed and sour humble hands
Lie with religion in their cramp, her threadbare
Whisper in a damp word, her wits drilled hollow,
Her fist of a face died clenched on a round pain...

Wet window, humble hands, and (possibly) *mourning house* are collocations with some degree of expectancy. *Skyward statue* and *giant skull* are unusual, but at least they can be readily interpreted. *Crooked year, threadbare whisper, damp word,* and *round pain* go well beyond our expectations, and force us to search for meanings. Critics of Thomas's verse are divided over whether coherent meanings can be found for such juxtapositions.

The breaking of collocational norms is found not only in poetry, but also in humour and religion. It is easy enough to raise a sitcom laugh with such lexical sequences as a *herd of traffic wardens*, or *I can hear neighing; it must be your mother.* And prayers such as 'Litany for the Ghetto' present a theography (p. 368) in which the divine and the human are lexically juxtaposed:

O God, who hangs on street corners, who tastes the grace of cheap wine and the sting of the needle,
Help us to touch you...

Investigating sense relations

We have a sense relation when we feel that lexemes (p. 118) relate to each other in meaning. If we pick any two lexemes at random from a dictionary, it is unlikely that they will bear any meaningful relationship to each other. There is nothing which obviously relates *echo* and *mayonnaise*, or *obedient* and *rainbow*. But we would feel otherwise if we picked out *wide* and *narrow* or *trumpet* and *bassoon*. What, then, are the chief types of lexical sense relation?

Synonyms (Greek 'same' + 'name')

Synonyms are lexemes which have the same meaning – a definition which sounds straightforward enough. However, when we think about it, the notion of synonymy is really rather curious – for why *should* a language have more than one lexeme to express a particular meaning? One lexeme per meaning ought to be sufficient.

In fact, there may be no lexemes which have exactly the same meaning. It is usually possible to find some nuance which separates them, or a context in which one of the lexemes can appear but the other(s) cannot.

• There may be a dialect difference: *autumn* and *fall* are synonymous, but the former is British English and the latter is American (p. 308); *sandwich* and *butty* are synonymous in Britain, but the former is standard and the latter is regional.

• There may be a stylistic difference: *insane* and *loony* are synonymous, but the former is formal and the latter is informal (p. 157); *salt* and *sodium chloride* are synonymous, but the former is everyday and the latter is technical.

• There may be a collocational difference (p. 160): *rancid* and *rotten* are synonymous, but the former is used only of *butter* or *bacon*; *kingly*, *royal*, and *regal* are synonymous (p. 124), but the *mail* has to be *royal* in the UK.

• There may be a difference of emotional feeling, or connotation: *youth* and *youngster* are synonymous, but youths are less pleasant than youngsters.

These are not the only ways in which synonyms can be differentiated, but the examples are enough to make the basic point: there may be no such thing as a pair of 'perfect synonyms' – lexemes which could substitute for each other in all possible locations. Slight but detectable differences are invariably present. However, for most practical purposes, these differences can be ignored: *enough*/*sufficient*, *perplexed*/*bewildered*, and *cherubic*/*angelic* are so close in meaning that they can safely be described as synonyms.

IDEA AND WORD CHART
FROM
HARTRAMPF'S VOCABULARIES
GUSTAVUS A HARTRAMPF

KEY WORDS TO ALL SPEECH
SYNONYMS - ANTONYMS - RELATIVES

seduce, draw into evil	impish, mischievous	The idea and word chart from *Hartrampf's Vocabularies* (1929) – an early attempt to plot basic sense relations. The twelve word-pairs are claimed to 'underlie the fundamental qualities in all ideas'. To use the chart, the enquirer chooses a key-word (e.g. DISORDER), finds the required vocabulary heading, and goes to the page number. That page gives lists of lexemes, each with a synonym, and cross-references to opposite and associated items. An extract from the page for *crime* is illustrative.
Victimise	injurious, bad, unjust	
frame, foist an imposition (colloq.)	maleficent, mischievous	
plant, frame (colloq.)	mischievous, bad	
sell, betray	naughty, perverse, *bad*	
victimise, dupe	**Depraved**	
Betray	abandoned, dissolute	
betray, victimise treacherously	bad, wicked	
	corrupt, bad	
Conspire	criminal, wicked	
abet, aid criminally	debased, corrupt	
apostatise, desert principles	depraved, debased	
cabal, plot	dishonest, discreditable	
connive, abet	dissolute, wicked	
conspire, concert in crime	felonious, criminal	
	ill, evil	
	immoral, corrupt	

DICTIONARIES OF SYNONYMS

A synonym dictionary is more tightly constrained than a thesaurus (p. 158). The entries are shorter and the number of items less wide-ranging. Such dictionaries usually give some guidance about antonyms, too.

This extract from the *Chambers Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms* shows how synonyms are available for all lexemes in the language, not just those which are literary, distinctive, or difficult. It also shows that multi-word lexemes can also be synonyms.

eventually *adv.* after all, at last, at length, finally, sooner or later, subsequently, ultimately.

ever *adv.* always, at all, at all times, at any time, constantly, continually, endlessly, evermore, for ever, in any case, in any circumstances, on any account, perpetually. *antonym* never.

everlasting *adj.* constant, endless, eternal, immortal, imperishable, indestructible, infinite, never-ending, permanent, perpetual, timeless, undying. *antonyms* temporary, transient.

everybody *n.* all and sundry, each one, everyone, one and all, the whole world.

Antonyms (Greek 'opposite' + 'name')

Antonyms are lexemes which are opposite in meaning – again a definition which sounds straightforward, until we begin to think about what is meant by 'opposite'. Unlike synonymy (where there is doubt about whether true synonyms exist at all), antonymy very definitely exists – and, moreover, exists in several forms.

• There are opposites such as *large/small, happy/sad,* and *wet/dry.* These are items (adjectives) which are capable of comparison; they do not refer to absolute qualities. We can say that something is *very wet* or *quite dry,* or *wetter* or *drier* than something else. Opposites of this kind are called *gradable antonyms.* It is as if there is a scale of wetness/dryness, with *wet* at one end and *dry* at the other.

• There are opposites such as *single/married, first/last,* and *alive/dead.* These are not gradable opposites: there is no scale of 'aliveness' or 'firstness'. In such cases, if one of the pair of lexemes applies, the other does not. To be alive is not to be dead; and to be dead is not to be alive. The items complement each other in their meaning, and are thus known as *complementary antonyms.*

• There are antonyms such as *over/under, buy/sell,* and *wife/husband.* These antonyms are mutually dependent on each other. There cannot be a wife without a husband. We cannot buy something without something being sold. This type of oppositeness, where one item presupposes the other, is called *converseness.* The lexemes are *converse terms.*

All these lexemes have a common feature: they can all be used in the question–answer exchange 'What is the opposite of X? Y.' In this respect, they are different from the vast majority of lexemes in the language, which have no opposites at all. It simply does not make sense to ask 'What is the opposite of rainbow? or of chemistry? or of sandwich?'.

The other point to note is that there is usually an intuitive certainty about the relationship between the lexemes. We 'know' that X is the opposite of Y, in these cases. This is what distinguishes antonymy from other, vaguer kinds of oppositeness, where the concepts may be opposed but the lexemes are not. For example, *big* and *large* are very similar in meaning, as are *little* and *small,* but the antonym of *little* is *big,* and of *large* is *small. Large* is not the antonym of *little,* even though they are conceptually opposed. And the same point applies to more extensive sets of lexemes. In relation to the concept of 'awkwardness', for example, we find such terms as *awkward, clumsy, gawky,* and *ungainly,* on the one hand, and *skilful, dexterous, adroit,* and *deft,* on the other. But it is not possible to pair these off as antonyms in any obvious way: any of the first set could be seen as the opposite of any of the second. The concepts are in opposition, certainly, but there are no pairs of antonyms.

One of the pairs of drawings by the American illustrator Joan Hanson in her children's book *Antonyms* (1972).

Create   **Destroy**
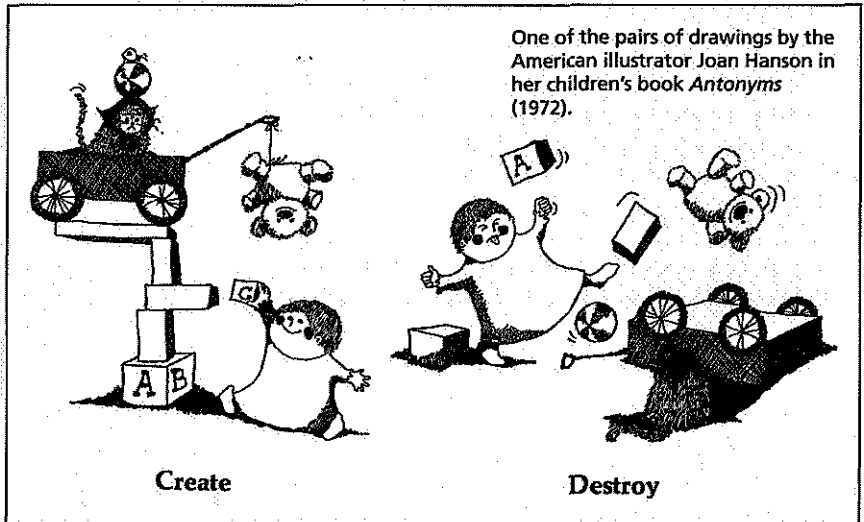
KEEPING TRACK OF ANTONYMS

The shutter aperture may be made larger or smaller by changing the foil area...
To us and to every nation of the Free World, rich or poor...
New panels are exchanged for the old...
Am I right, am I wrong?

These extracts are taken from a 25-million-word corpus of American English – a collection of 550 texts of varying sizes compiled by the American Printing House for the Blind. They show one of the most important features of antonymic use: antonym pairs frequently co-occur in the same sentence. They often appear close together, linked by a single conjunction, or function 'in parallel', within identical constructions in different parts of the sentence.

The table shows an analysis of some of the antonyms found in the corpus. The top line of the first column tells us that there were 4,981 occurrences of *bad* in the corpus, and the third column that there were 25,147 occurrences of *good.* The fifth column gives the number of sentences in which both adjectives occur, 516. The sixth column estimates the number of sentences which would be expected to have this happen by chance (81.7), and the seventh column gives the ratio of observed to expected co-occurrences. In the case of *bad/good,* the observed frequency is 6.3 times more than what would be expected by chance. The final column then estimates the probability of this happening. The result for *black/white* is especially striking, but all of the co-occurrences are statistically significant.

(After J. S. Justeson & S. M. Katz, 1992.)

Number of occurences in the corpus			Co-occurences in the same sentence			
			Observed	Expected	Ratio	Probability
4981	bad	25147	good	516	81.7	6.3	3.36×10^{-237}
11470	big	28360	little	483	212.0	2.3	3.13×10^{-59}
9842	black	11698	white	1226	75.0	16.3	1.55×10^{-1046}
2174	bottom	6061	top	198	8.6	23.1	8.47×10^{-195}
2203	clean	1143	dirty	22	1.6	13.4	7.73×10^{-18}
5259	cold	4036	hot	204	13.8	14.7	1.51×10^{-161}
5716	dark	8123	light	306	30.3	10.1	4.86×10^{-195}
4662	deep	501	shallow	19	1.5	12.5	4.13×10^{-15}
2500	dry	1501	wet	68	2.4	27.8	9.56×10^{-73}
3866	easy	7921	hard	43	19.9	2.2	4.68×10^{-6}
2507	empty	7386	full	44	12.1	3.6	8.84×10^{-13}
11985	far	5851	near	121	45.7	2.6	9.77×10^{-21}
3228	fast	2263	slow	61	4.7	12.8	1.24×10^{-45}
15915	few	25640	many	487	265.9	1.8	3.62×10^{-35}
32866	first	17439	last	764	373.6	2.0	4.38×10^{-73}
3668	happy	1176	sad	20	2.8	7.1	2.32×10^{-11}
7921	hard	2345	soft	76	12.1	6.3	2.31×10^{-35}
4004	heavy	8123	light	105	21.2	5.0	3.57×10^{-39}
11016	high	4195	low	293	30.1	9.7	1.14×10^{-182}

Hyponyms (Greek 'under' + 'name')

Hyponymy is a less familiar term to most people than either synonymy or antonymy (p. 164), but it refers to a much more important sense relation. It describes what happens when we say 'An X is a kind of Y' – *A daffodil is a kind of flower*, or simply, *A daffodil is a flower*. The relationship between the lexemes can best be shown in the form of a tree diagram, where the more general term is placed at the top, and the more specific terms are placed underneath. In the present example, *daffodil* is one of many lexemes which are all 'included' within *flower*.
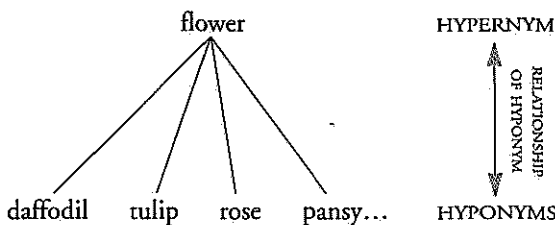
The included items, as the etymology suggests, are the *hyponyms*. The lexeme at the top is the *superordinate* term, or *hypernym* (Greek 'above' + 'name').

Hyponymy is particularly important to linguists because it is the core relationship within a dictionary. The most illuminating way of defining a lexeme is to provide a hypernym along with various distinguishing features – an approach to definition whose history can be traced back to Aristotle. For example, a *majorette* is 'a girl' (the hypernym) 'who twirls a baton and accompanies a marching band'. It is usually possible to trace a hierarchical path through a dictionary, following the hypernyms as they become increasingly abstract, until we arrive at such general notions (*essence, being, existence*) that clear sense-relations between the lexemes no longer exist. At any point along this path, a lexeme can be seen to have a hyponymic relationship with everything above it, though we usually take seriously only those involving successive levels. So, in answer to the question, 'What is Gorgonzola?', the expected answer is 'a kind of cheese'. If someone does not know exactly what Gorgonzola is, 'a kind of food' would be an acceptable first approximation; but to go higher in the hierarchy of abstraction by saying 'a kind of substance' or 'a sort of thing' would not.

MISSING HYPERNYMS

There are many lexemes which belong to no hypernym. If we try the formula 'X is a kind of Y' on such items as chaos, nightclub, interesting, and balloon, we shall be unable to assign any hypernym other than a vague general term, such as state, place, or thing. Dictionaries grope for better alternatives, but not always successfully: balloon, for example, is variously described as a bag, ball, pouch, and toy. Abstract nouns are especially difficult, in this respect, and verbs and adjectives are more awkward still. Also, the level of abstraction of a lexeme may be difficult to determine. Is noise a kind of sound or sound a kind of noise? When the answer is 'neither', some other way of analysing the sense relation must be found, such as by using the notion of synonymy (p.164) or incompatibility (see facing page).

HYPONYMIC HIERARCHIES

Eventually, all classifications and definitions lead inexorably to some basic notion of BEING. Roget's Thesaurus, Part 1, Section 1, is entitled simply EXISTENCE (p.158). The figure shows what happens if we follow a set of lexemes through a dictionary, being guided only by the hypernyms. Only one of the senses is quoted in each case, and only one of the many possible paths. The further down the page we travel, the less easy it becomes to find clear hypernyms.

If we read the figure in the reverse direction, the point is reinforced. Thus, there are a limited number of items which can answer the question 'What can be a cheese?' and 'What can be food?'. These questions make sense. But such questions as 'What can be a material?' or 'What can be a substance? cannot be given a coherent linguistic interpretation.
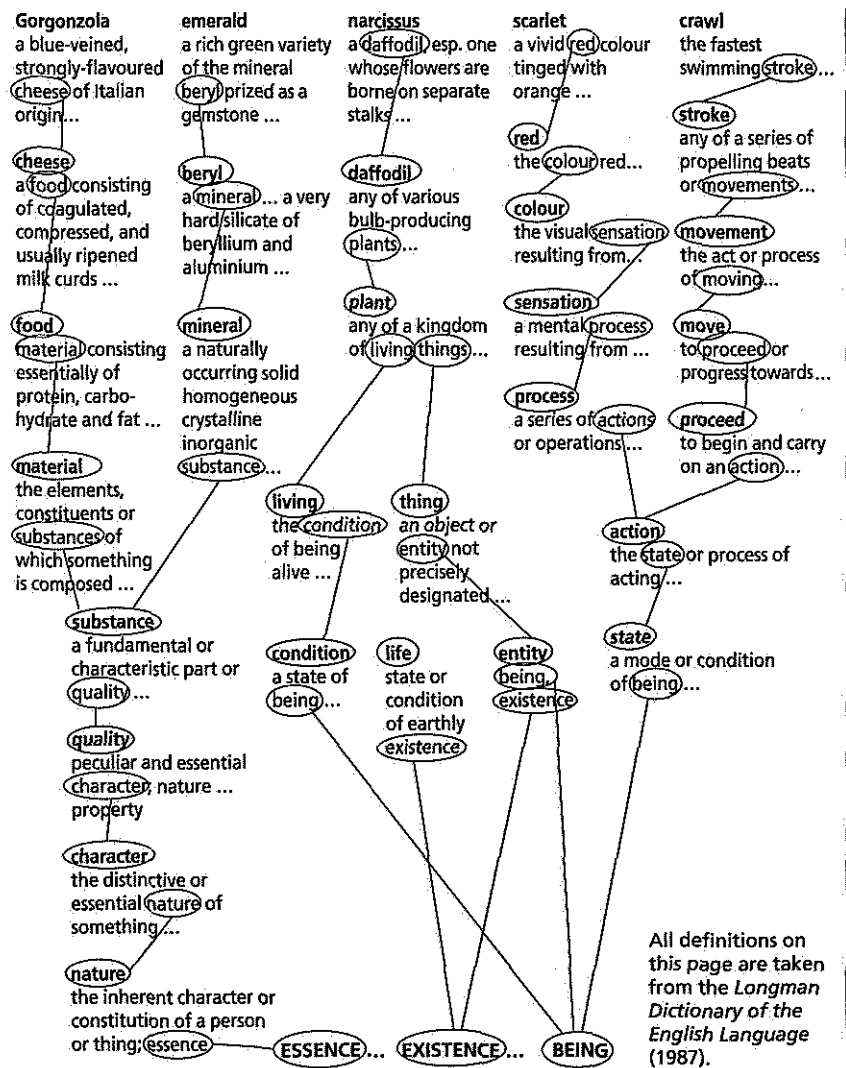
Incompatibles

When we want to include one meaning within another, we talk about hyponymy. When we want to exclude one meaning from another, we talk about incompatibility. Under this heading are grouped sets of lexemes which are mutually exclusive members of the same superordinate category. *Daffodil, tulip, rose,* and *pansy,* shown on the facing page, are examples, because they are all hyponyms of the same hypernym (*flower*). What this means can be seen by comparing these two sentences:

I am thinking of a single flower and it is a daffodil and a rose.

I am thinking of a single flower and it is a daffodil and a prizewinner.

The first sentence fails to make sense because *daffodil* and *rose* are incompatible. The second sentence succeeds because *daffodil* and *prizewinner* are not; they are compatible. Here is another pair of examples – this time, using adjectives:

I am thinking of an object which is painted in a single colour, and it is red and yellow.

I am thinking of an object which is painted in a single colour, and it is red and dirty.

Again, there is a problem with the first sentence, because *red* and *yellow* are both hyponyms under *colour. Red* and *dirty,* however, do not belong to the same set, and can be used together without difficulty.

Learning about sets of hyponyms is an important feature of lexical acquisition (p. 430). To begin with, we may have no idea how to differentiate them. All we may know is that the lexemes relate to the same hypernym. An example is *crocodile* and *alligator.* Most people know that these are types of *reptile,* but are still unclear about how to tell them apart. Similar difficulties can be encountered within any semantic field: there is no doubt that *second cousin* and *cousin once removed* are types of *relative,* or that *trumpet* and *flugelhorn* are types of *musical instrument,* but for many people that is as far as they are able to go without a reference book.

MUSICAL RELATIONS

The most familiar examples of the interaction between hyponymy and incompatibility are the classifications of objects and organisms which we learn as part of our basic education. The largest domain is that of natural history, where organisms are grouped into their presumed evolutionary relationships – the distinctions between species, genus, family, order, class, phylum (for animals) or division (for plants), and kingdom (p. 372).

The instruments of the modern symphony orchestra provide another example. These are traditionally divided into four types – woodwind, brass, percussion, and strings – and that is how we see them in the concert hall. However, it has long been known that this classification is not entirely satisfactory: it is difficult to place certain instruments under these headings, and the labels are sometimes misleading. For example, some woodwind instruments can be made of metal (such as saxophones), and some brass instruments can be made of wood (such as alphorns).

The standard classification in modern musicology is different, and derives from the work of Erich von Hornbostel and Kurt Sachs, published in 1914. Instruments are now divided into five types, according to the physical characteristics of the sound source – the vibrating agent.

• **aerophones** In this group, the sound is generated by air. They include the brass, reed, and woodwind instruments.

• **chordophones** In this group, the sound is generated by one or more strings. They include the stringed instruments and most keyboard instruments.

• **idiophones** In this group, the sound is generated by the body of the instrument itself. They include several percussion instruments, such as bells and the triangle, as well as the musical saw, and a few others.

• **membranophones** In this group, the sound is generated by a stretched membrane. They include the various kinds of drum, as well as such items as the kazoo and tambourine.

• **electrophones** In this group, the sound is generated by non-acoustic devices, such as oscillators. They include synthesizers and electric guitars.

Although the aim of any new classification is conceptual rather than linguistic, there are always consequences for the way the language is used. The arrival of a new level within the lexical hierarchy for talking about instruments alters the way we express ourselves. In the traditional classification, there is no problem with saying this:

I can play every kind of brass instrument, but I can't play any woodwind.

But in the modern classification, we cannot say this:

I can play every kind of aerophone, but I can't play any woodwind.

If we wish to enter into a conversation in this area, we need to do more than just 'learn the terminology'. We have to learn how the terminology is organized. And this means learning how the lexemes interrelate in terms of hyponymy and incompatibility. Without an awareness of the lexical structure of the field, we quite literally 'don't know what we're talking about'.

SHOWING OUR TRUE COLOURS

The way the linguistic world fails to correspond to the physical world is well illustrated by the use of the lexeme *colour.* A physical account recognizes *red, yellow,* and *blue* as primary colours, and *green, violet,* and *orange* as their comple-mentaries. In a large box of paints, several dozen colours will be found, including *black, white, grey, brown,* and a number of increasingly fine discriminations (*lilac, mauve, purple, indigo,* etc.).

In language, what is considered to be a hyponym of *colour* depends very much on the context.

• In the field of snooker, the *colours* exclude *red.* The *coloured* balls can be played only after a red ball has been potted.

• By contrast, in the field of health (for Caucasians), *colour* can mean *only* red, or at least pink (in *the colour came back to his cheeks*).

• In publishing, a book printed in black type on white paper is not considered to be in colour. Yet if blue, say, is introduced to add interest to the page, this is called using a second colour (*black* being the 'first' colour).

• In the field of South African racial relations, coloured excludes black and white.

• In the cinema and on television, there is a contrast between films made in colour (as in Technicolor) and in black-and-white. Camera film and television sets, too, are categorized in this way.
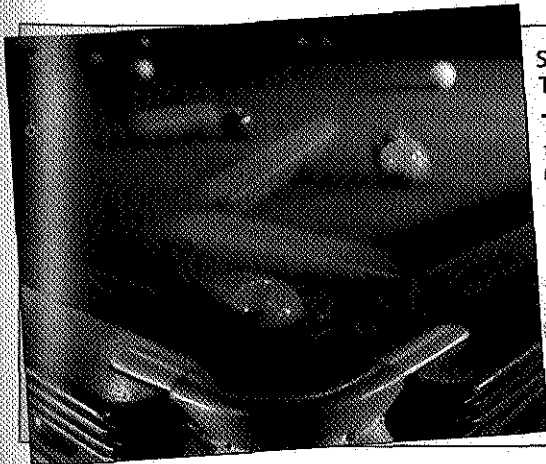
Other sense relations

Notions such as synonymy and hyponymy (pp. 164–7) are fundamental to semantic analysis, because they express basic logical relationships which are represented widely throughout the lexicon. Certain other kinds of meaning relationship, however, are much less widespread, applying to restricted sets of lexemes. Three such categories are illustrated below: parts/wholes, hierarchies, and series.

PARTS AND WHOLES

The relationship between *wheel* and *car*, or *sleeve* and *jacket*, illustrates a further kind of sense relation – that between *part* and *whole*. The relationship is not as obvious as it may seem: in particular, there is a strong tendency for the relationship to be acceptable only between adjacent items in a chain of more than two items. Thus, a *door* is a part of a *house* and a *house* is a part of a *village*, but it would be most unusual to say that a *door* is a part of a *village*. On the other hand, certain chains do permit a relationship between non-adjacent items: a *cuff* is a part of a *sleeve* which is part of a *shirt* – but also, a *cuff* is a part of a *shirt*. Why some chains permit this and others do not is unclear.

There are several other refinements to the part–whole issue, some of which have attracted the attention of philosophers as well as linguists. One distinction has been drawn between those parts *which are an* essential feature of an entity and those which are optional: an *arm* is an essential feature of a (normal) male body, whereas a *beard* is not. There is also an uncertain boundary between allowing something to be a 'part' at all, as opposed to an 'attribute': may we consider a stout person's girth to be a part of the body?

Part–whole relations can be seen in many areas of the lexicon.

- Clothing: zip, button, hem, collar, lining, cuff
- Food: stalk, leaf, root, husk, shell, bone, seed
- Vehicle: *wheel, brakes, engine, door, steering wheel*
- Animal: hoof, mane, leg, feather, claw, tail
- Container: top, lid, door, side, handle, back
- House: bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, roof, window, door

HIERARCHIES

A lexical hierarchy is a graded series of lexemes in which each item holds a particular rank, being 'higher' or 'lower' than adjacent items. The sequence *corporal–sergeant–lieutenant* is part of one such hierarchy. The relationship between *corporal* and *sergeant* is not one of synonymy (they are not the same in meaning), nor antonymy (they are not opposites), nor hyponymy (a *corporal* is not a kind of *sergeant*, or vice versa). It is really one of incompatibility, but of a rather special kind: the relationship between *corporal* and *sergeant* is not like that between *clarinet* and *oboe*. *Sergeant* is 'higher' than *corporal*, whereas neither of the instruments can be said to outrank the other (though soloists of either instrument might disagree).

Several lexical domains are organized as hierarchies. They often reflect relationships between people, as in the case of military ranks or church seniority: *priest– bishop– archbishop...* Notions of *quantity are also important*, especially in relation to units of measurement: *second–minute–hour...* Some hierarchies also represent levels of abstraction, as can be seen in the levels of grammar identified on p. 217.

The hierarchy of military ranks, showing the differences between British and American usage.

Royal Navy	US Navy	Army	US Army	RAF	USAF
admiral of the fleet	fleet admiral	field marshal	general of the army	marshal of the RAF	general of the air force
admiral	admiral	general	general	air chief marshal	general
vice admiral	vice admiral	lieutenant general	lieutenant general	air marshal	lieutenant general
rear admiral	rear admiral	major general	major general	air vice marshal	major general
commodore	commodore	brigadier	brigadier general	air commodore	brigadier general
captain	captain	colonel	colonel	group captain	colonel
commander	commander	lieutenant colonel	lieutenant colonel	wing commander	lieutenant colonel
lieutenant commander	lieutenant commander	major	major	squadron leader	major
lieutenant	lieutenant	captain	captain	flight lieutenant	captain
sub lieutenant	lieutenant junior grade	lieutenant	1st lieutenant	flying officer	1st lieutenant
midshipman	ensign	2nd lieutenant	2nd lieutenant	pilot officer	2nd lieutenant

SERIES

The number system is unique, in the lexicon of a language, because its items are members of an open-ended series in which the place of each item is defined by mathematical rules. We might be tempted to refer to such items as one, two, three, four... as a hierarchy, like military ranks, but the number system is different: from a lexical point of view, 2 is not always 'higher' than 1.

There are other lexical series which are not open-ended. The commonest examples are the days of the week and the months of the year, which are cyclical in character: we reach the end of the series then we start again.

A calendar illustrates three types of lexical series: dates, days, and months

MARCH 1994						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
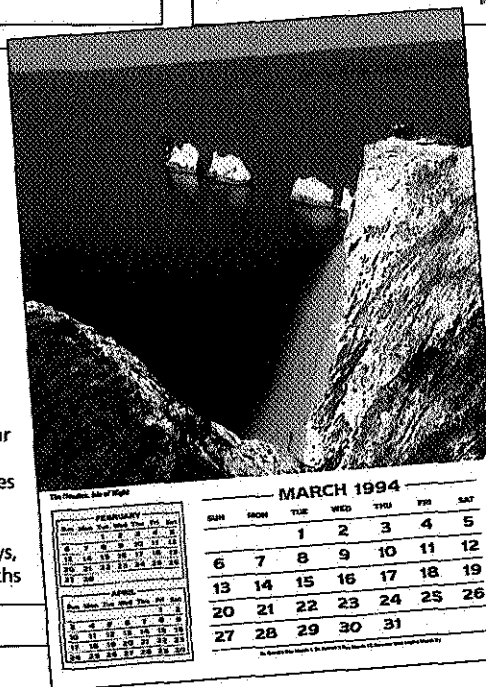
WHO IS NUMBER 1?

In *The Prisoner*, British cult television series of the 1960s, Patrick McGoohan finds himself trapped in a village where everyone has a number. Number 2 is in charge, but subordinate to a hidden Number 1.
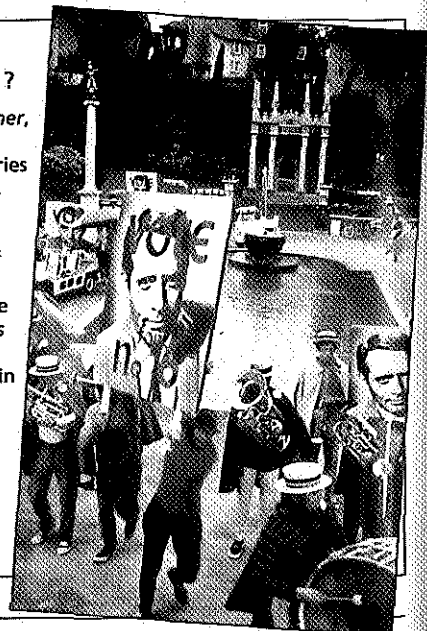
Making sense

This section has examined the main ways in which the English lexicon is structured. It has been an investigation of what we mean when we say that something 'makes sense'. But there is one notion which we still need to recognize before this investigation is complete: the *definition*. A definition is the linguistic mechanism which brings everything together. It is a special type of sentence which relates all the relevant aspects of a lexeme's meaning, enabling us to understand it. Definitions are listed in dictionaries, sometimes using a full sentence (*A dress is a piece of clothing which...*), sometimes in an abbreviated form (*dress: a piece of clothing which...*).

The basic structure of a definitional sentence has been known since the time of Aristotle, who distinguished two factors: a general category to which a word belongs, and the specific features or attributes which distinguish that word from related words. Thus, *a cow is an animal which moos* is a childlike attempt at a definition, but this might be sufficient to distinguish it from *a dog is an animal which barks*. In these cases, *animal* is the more general term (the hypernym, p. 166), and *mooing* and *barking* are the distinguished attributes. In mature definitions, several attributes may be required, often involving both formal distinguishing features (e.g. a cow has four legs, horns, a tail) and functional ones (e.g. a cow gives milk, lives in a field, does not give rides). It can also be quite a task working out the essential attributes needed in a definition, as the *factory* example (below) illustrates; and the theoretical problems of working with definitions have kept several generations of linguistic philosophers happily occupied.

WHAT'S A FACTORY?

When someone asks a question like this (a child, a foreigner, a politician), there are two ways of answering. One way is to find a factory and point to it. The other way, which is generally more practicable, is to attempt a definition of the word *factory*. The first approach, which identifies the word's *reference* in the outside world, is of limited interest to linguists. The second, which gives the *sense* of the word in English, is central to linguistic enquiry.

But how do we define *factory*? The first task is to examine the way in which the word is used in spoken or written English. This is in fact what lexicographers do when they write their dictionary entries. But as *factory* can be used in all kinds of contexts, it is still necessary to make a selection, to decide which attributes are essential to the definition and which are not. Dictionaries do not always agree on this matter, as the following definitions show.

factory
• a building or set of buildings where the production of goods or processing of raw materials takes place (*Longman Dictionary of the English Language*)
• a large building or group of buildings where goods are made in large quantities, usually with the use of machines (*Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*)
• a place where goods are manufactured (*Chambers English Dictionary*)
• a building or buildings containing plant or equipment for manufacturing machinery or goods (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*)

Five main elements emerge from a comparison of these definitions (along with the definition of *manufacture* in

Chambers: 'make, usually by machinery and on a large scale').

• the more general term is *place*, more specifically, *building or buildings*.
• things are *made* or *manufactured*, more specifically (according to one of the definitions) *produced and processed*.
• the things which are made are *goods*, but (in one case) *raw materials* and (in another case) *machinery* are distinguished separately from the category of *goods*.
• the *goods* are made with *machines*, in one case described as *plant or equipment*.
• the building is *large*, and in one case the goods are said to be made in *large* quantities.

On this basis, a 'minimalist' definition of factory would be:

A large building in which machines make goods in quantity.

A children's dictionary comes near to this:

a large building or group of buildings where goods are made (*Childcraft Dictionary*)

And a dictionary for foreign learners of English gives a two-level definition:

a building or group of buildings where goods are made, especially in great quantities by machines.
(*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*)

It is easy to see how an oversimplified or careless definition can be misleading. In one reported case, a mother replied to her young child that a factory was 'a place where you make things'. The child then later referred to her kitchen as a factory! Indeed, on the basis of this response, it could be argued that none of the above books mentions the salient point, which is that the manufactured goods are for sale.

SEMANTIC FUZZINESS

Definitions are not always as precise as we would like them to be, largely because the entities and events which we want to talk about in the real world are not always clear and determinate. It is not possible to give a watertight definition of *factory* in everyday language. How large is *large*? Can a small building never be a factory? Must it contain machines? One of the dictionaries actually builds this uncertainty into its definition: '*especially* in great quantities by machines'.

For the most part, such 'hedges' do not matter. We tolerate a great deal of imprecision in daily interaction. Only in special cases, such as an Act of Parliament or a legal conflict (p. 374), is it necessary to be truly precise, and to give a definition to such notions as 'large'.

There are many areas of lexical fuzziness: when does a *booklet* become a *book*? or a *hill* become a *mountain*? or a *village* become a *town*? or a *discussion* become a *dispute*? In relation to attributes, how essential is the feature 'able to fly' for *bird* (allowing for ostriches and penguins)? or 'having a handle' for *cup* (allowing for paper cups and egg cups)? The more abstract the notion, the more difficult it is to arrive at a watertight lexical definition.

Everyday language contains many expressions which introduce imprecision into what we say: *typically, roughly, practically, in the region of, thereabouts, well nigh, within an ace of, verging on, virtually, perhaps, usually, invariably, sort of*, etc. They are also found in technical and scientific discussion, which often uses such expressions as *there are perhaps 1,500 such cases a year*. It is too easy to dismiss all fuzzy expressions as manifestations of sloppiness in thought or speech. Rather, by enabling us to get the gist of a point across, or to focus on a major issue, they can play an important role in efficient communication.

12 · LEXICAL DIMENSIONS

The English lexicon is so vast and varied that it is impossible to classify it into neat categories. It is not like a cake, which we can cut up into distinct slices. A single lexeme (p. 118) simultaneously contains information relating to several linguistic dimensions: when it came into English (the historical dimension), how it is formed (the structural dimension), whether it is in standard use or restricted to a dialect (the regional dimension), whether it carries resonances of gender, class, formality, or ethnicity (the social dimension), whether it has special status in such domains as science, religion, or law (the occupational dimension), and much more. The lexicon is a particularly sensitive index of historical, social, and technological change. As a consequence, vocabulary is a relevant aspect of the discussion in many parts of this book, but especially in the historical, regional, and social sections (Parts I, V).

We conclude Part II by surveying several routine ways in which the lexicon plays a role in our lives – sometimes quietly and unconsciously, sometimes aggressively and controversially. One important role will be conspicuous by its absence: the humorous use of lexical items, which receives separate treatment in §22.

THE LOADED LEXICON

Most of our discussion about the lexicon has been taken up with the dictionary meaning of lexemes – what is often called their *denotation*. A denotation is the objective relationship between a lexeme and the reality to which it refers: so, the denotation of *spectacles* is the object which balances on our nose in front of the eyes; and the denotation of *purple* is a colour with certain definable physical characteristics. A denotation identifies the central aspect of lexical meaning, which everyone would agree about – hence, the concept of a 'dictionary definition'.

By contrast, *connotation* refers to the personal aspect of lexical meaning – often, the emotional associations which a lexeme incidentally brings to mind. So, for many people, *bus* has such connotations as 'cheapness' and 'convenience'; for others, 'discomfort' and 'inconvenience'; for many children, it connotes 'school'; and for many American adults, in this connection, it has a political overtone (because of the 1960s policy in the USA of 'bussing' children to school as a means of promoting social integration in ethnically divided urban communities). Connotations vary according to the experience of individuals, and (unlike collocations, p. 160) are to some degree unpredictable. On the other

hand, because people do have some common experiences, many lexemes in the language have connotations which would be shared by large groups of speakers. Among the widely-recognized connotations of *city*, for example, are 'bustle', 'crowds', 'dust', 'excitement', 'fun', and 'sin' (see p. 162).

When a lexeme is highly charged with connotations, we commonly refer to it as 'loaded'. The language of politics and religion is full of such loaded expressions: *capitalist, fascism, radical, federalism, democracy, bureaucracy, politician, priest, dogma, pagan, orthodox, sect, heresy, fundamentalist.* The language of science and law, on the other hand, attempts (not always successfully) to avoid vocabulary which is highly connotative. In general, the more a domain or topic is controversial, the more it will contain loaded vocabulary, providing people with the lexical ammunition they need to reinforce their point of view.

ALL THE RIGHT CONNOTATIONS . . .

residence, dwelling, luxury, substantial, spacious, quiet, potential, benefit, views, well-appointed, well-screened, desirable, landscaped, select, prestige position, attractive, refurbished, restored, mature, character, unspoilt, tasteful, well-proportioned, individual, well-stocked, convenient, modernized, immaculate, magnificent opportunity ...

RECEPTION AREAS AND FACILITIES
The approach to Osborne Court is via an elegant stairway, through double doors into a glass vestibule. A secured door entry system gives access to the impressive main reception hall with marble flooring and period decor. The main staircase is of polished hardwood with turned handrail and spindles, and an eight-person lift offers a less exacting route to the upper levels. The staircase and upstairs corridors are fitted with heavy duty Axminster carpet, whilst the decor maintains the building's Italian theme.
The atmosphere as a whole is of sumptuous elegance recalling the grandeur of another age.

THE APARTMENTS
Each of the apartments at Osborne Court is individual in nature, and efforts are being made where possible to accommodate purchasers' own selections from appointed suppliers on a range of fittings. The apartments themselves have been

designed to provide optimum space with interesting aspects, and layouts to meet the needs of modern day living.

Entrance halls are generally spacious providing a comfortable area in which to receive guests, and they afford an impressive introduction to the apartments. Living rooms are of generous proportions with ceiling height accentuated by moulded plaster coving. Lighting to these main rooms includes both wall and ceiling

CONNOTATIVE FUNCTIONS

Connotations can play an important role in explaining the way in which lexemes are used. A group of synonyms, for example, cannot by definition (p. 164) be distinguished in terms of their denotation, but they usually display noticeable differences of connotation, as in the case of *car, automobile, runabout, buggy, banger, bus, hot rod, jalopy, old crock, racer,* and so on. Indeed, in describing an unconventional design, the connotations may become critical marketing considerations (p. 388).

Connotations are also an important means of conveying personal attitude and point of view. Bertrand Russell, on a BBC Brains Trust programme some years ago, gave a perfect illustration of this when he 'conjugated' the following 'irregular verb':

> I am firm.
> You are obstinate.
> He is a pig-headed fool.

The idea prompted the British periodical, *The New Statesman,* to set a competition for its readers. Here are some of the published entries.

> I am sparkling.
> You are unusually talkative.
> He is drunk.

> I am a creative writer.
> You have a journalistic flair.
> He is a prosperous hack.

> I day dream.
> You are an escapist.
> He ought to see a psychiatrist.

Many other triplets could be devised: slender/thin/skinny, frank/blunt/ insolent, overweight/ plump/fat...

SNARLING AND PURRING

The American writer on semantics, S. I. Hayakawa (1906–), distinguished between 'snarl' words and 'purr' words, when discussing connotations. To take his examples: the sentence *You filthy scum* is little more than a verbal snarl, whereas *You're the sweetest girl in all the world* is the linguistic equivalent of a feline purr or canine tail wag. There is little objective content (denotation) in either sentence.

The most ferocious snarl words raise distinct issues, and are best discussed separately under such headings as *invective* and *taboo* (p. 172). But there are many other words which carry negative or unfavourable connotations, as well as many which carry positive or favourable ones. Often

these contrast, as in the distinction between *a youngster* and *a youth*:

A group of youngsters stood on the street corner.
A group of youths stood on the street corner.

You might well chat to the first group, as you passed them by; you might well avoid eye contact with the second. Similarly, *politicians* are somewhat less respectable than *statesmen* and *states-women*, as are *lodgers* compared with *paying guests*, *plots* compared with *plans*, and *papists* compared with *Catholics*.

A random selection of snarl words includes *terrorist, exploitation, steam-roller* (vb.), *skulk, nag, clammy, clique, loafing, politicking,* and *pontificate.* Among the purr words of the language are *comrade, enterprise, freedom,*

patriot, colourful, compact, partnership, jolly, green, and *environment.* People will often disagree over whether a lexeme snarls or purrs, as in the case of *curiosity, hanging, communist, civil servant, republican,* and *ambitious.*

Part of the problem of studying connotations is that they readily change with the passage of time (p. 138). *Lewd* once meant simply 'of the laity', 'uneducated', but along with its change of meaning has come a distinctly negative tone. *Gentle*, which comes from a word meaning 'clan' or 'people', now has very positive associations. It is particularly difficult keeping track of the way connotations respond to short-term changes in fashion and social status – which is one reason why it is so difficult to make sense of 'political correctness' (p. 177).

COLOUR VITAMINS

The symbolic or psychological associations of colours have a long history. In the 12th century, a colour sequence for the liturgical year in the Roman Catholic Church was outlined by Pope Innocent III, and continues to be used today. For example, red vestments are used at Pentecost or for the feasts of martyrs, the colour representing tongues of fire and the shedding of blood; black vestments are the colour of mourning; violet vestments represent the mitigation of black, in Advent and Lent; and green is the 'neutral' colour, used 'in ordinary time', when there is no special period or feast-day being celebrated. These and certain other colours (notably white, blue, gold, and rose) are

also often used symbolically in many medieval religious paintings.

In modern times, the psychological associations of colours, and thus the connotations of colour vocabulary, continue to be exploited in a wide range of contexts, such as in the description of paint shades (p. 154), advertising language, and techniques of self-imaging. The *Color Me Beautiful* system is a good example within the last category. This consultancy was founded by Carole Jackson in the USA in 1974, and now has branches in many parts of the world. Its aim is to help women discover their natural beauty through colour, using the metaphor of the four seasons. In much the same way as each season presents a distinct array of colours, a person's colouring is said to be in harmony with one of these palettes, and advice is given about how to enhance these natural colours, and about how to choose additional colours (of make-up and clothing). There are 11 key 'colour vitamins', and these are related to a range of positive (+) and negative (–) attributes.

red
+ up-beat, confident, assertive, exciting
– aggressive, domineering, bossy, threatening

pink
+ feminine, gentle, accessible, non-threatening
– pathetic, unimportant, safe, under-confident

blue
+ peaceful, trustworthy, constant, orderly
– 'holier than thou', tiresome, predictable, conservative

brown
+ earthy, homely, gregarious
– safe, boring, unsophisticated

yellow
+ cheerful, hopeful, active, uninhibited
– impulsive, tiresome, whirlwind, volatile

green
+ self-reliant, tenacious, nurturing, dependable
– boring, stubborn, risk-averse, predictable

orange
+ vital, funny, enthusiastic, sociable, uninhibited
– superficial, common, faddist, giddy

violet
+ imaginative, sensitive, intuitive, unusual, unselfish
– weird, impractical, immature, superior

grey
+ respectable, neutral, balanced
– non-committal, deceptive, uncertain, safe

black
+ formal, sophisticated, mysterious, strong
– mournful, aloof, negative, lifeless

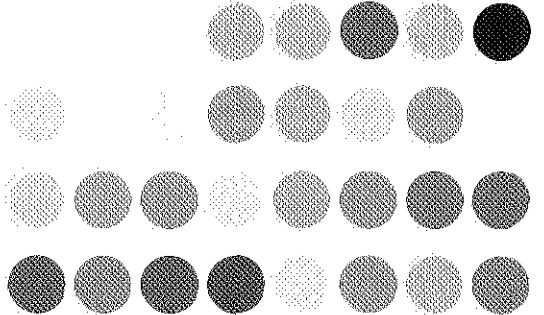*white*
+ pure, clean, fresh, futuristic
– clinical, 'colourless', cold, neutral

(After M. Spillane, 1991.)

SPRINGS

The range of colours recommended for Springs (note the unusual countable noun, p. 209). Carole Jackson advises: 'peach, apricot, salmon, and coral, as well as all peachy pinks, are for Spring...'
(After C. Jackson, 1980.)
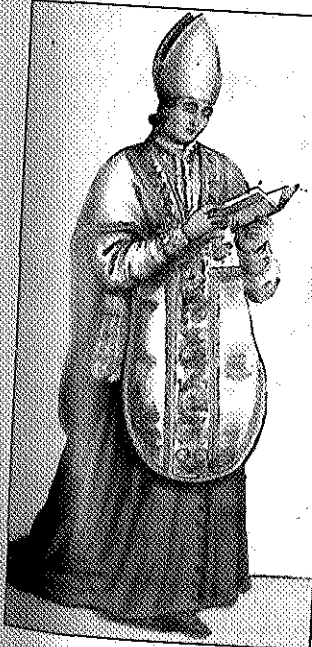
Taboo

A few dozen lexemes comprise the special category of *taboo* language – items which people avoid using in polite society, either because they believe them harmful or feel them embarrassing or offensive. The possibility of harm may be genuinely thought to exist, in the case of notions to do with death and the supernatural, or there may be merely a vague discomfort deriving from a half-believed superstition. Embarrassment tends to be associated with the sexual act and its consequences. Offensiveness relates to the various substances exuded by the body, and to the different forms of physical, mental, and social abnormality. Words associated with certain other topics may also be called taboo, from time to time, because society is sensitive to them. During the *recession* of the early 1990s, newspapers would talk about 'the R word', and after the 1991 Maastricht conference would refer to the proposed *federalism* of the European Community as 'the F word'. For some people, indeed, all jargon is taboo (p. 174).

The prohibition on use may be explicit, as in the law courts ('contempt of court'), the Houses of Parliament ('unparliamentary language'), and the broadcasting media (words officially banned until after a certain time in the evening, so that children are less likely to be exposed to them). More commonly, it is a tacit understanding between people, which occasionally becomes explicit in the form of a comment, correction, or sanction (such as a parental rebuke). The comment may be directed to oneself ('Pardon my French') or to others ('Ladies present'), and may be jocular ('Wash your mouth out') or serious ('God forgive me for swearing').

There are various ways of avoiding a taboo item. One is to replace it by a more technical term, as commonly happens in medicine (e.g. *anus, genitalia, vagina, penis*). Another, common in older writing, is to part-spell the item (*f—k, bl——*). The everyday method is to employ an expression which refers to the taboo topic in a vague or indirect way – a *euphemism*. English has thousands of euphemistic expressions, of which these are a tiny sample:

casket (coffin), fall asleep (die), push up the daisies (be dead), the ultimate sacrifice (be killed), under the weather (ill), after a long illness (cancer), not all there (mentally subnormal), little girl's room (toilet), spend a penny (urinate), be economical with the truth (lie), adult video (pornography), let you go (sack), industrial action (strike), in the family way (pregnant), expectorate (spit), tired and emotional (drunk).

GORDON BENNETT

A list of euphemisms involving the word *God*, and the year of their earliest recorded use in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, would begin with *gog* (1350s), *cokk* (1386), *cod* (1569), and include such later forms as *gosh* (1743), *golly* (1743), *gracious* (1760s), *by George* (1842), *Drat* (= God rot) (1844), *Doggone* (= God-Damn (1851), and *Great Scott* (1884). Many pronunciation variants can be found, over the centuries, such as *adad, bedad, begad, begar, begob, dod, gar, ged, gom, gosse, gud, gum, icod,* and *igad. Gordon Bennett* and *Gordon Highlanders* are more recent coinages.

All swear words generate euphemisms, sooner or later, and the stronger the taboo, the larger the number of avoidance forms. The number of euphemistic expressions based on *God* is quite impressive, but the strongest taboo word, *cunt*, has accumulated around 700 forms.
(After G. Hughes, 1991.)

TABOO USAGE

It is difficult to generalize about the usage of taboo words. They express varying degrees of force, and no two are exactly the same with respect to the way they are grammatically used. It may seem strange to think of taboo words as following grammatical rules, but they do. *Damn*, for example, cannot be used with a preceding personal pronoun (**You damn!*) and *arse* cannot be followed by one (**Arse you!*); *fart* cannot be followed by *off* or *it; bugger*, however, can be used in all four of these contexts. Taboo words, moreover, vary in their ability to be used as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, or to form part of compounds. *Shit* is a versatile term, in this respect.

It is also difficult to define the 'tabooness' of a taboo word. *Shit*, for example (represented as *S* in the display), includes a great deal more than its central, literal sense of 'excrement' (as in *have a shit*). It has several figurative and idiomatic uses, which vary greatly in rhetorical force, from insult and rudeness to intimacy and solidarity, and it merges with an interesting range of euphemistic and jocular forms. The usage display is already complex, but it is by no means complete, because of the problem of keeping track of the way such forms are used among social dialects and subcultures.

S
'excrement'
(plural *the Ss* 'diarrhoea')

POSITIVE

NEGATIVE

general emotive response (wonder, sympathy, embarrassment, etc.)
Aw S!, a cute little S,
S a brick!,
Shee-y-it, She-it, Sh-i-i-i-t!,
Hot S!, S-hot,
Tough S!

hard cheese,
tough cheddar,
stiff biscuits,
etc.

drugs (cannabis, etc.)
want some S?,
S was scarce,
good S for sale,
clean white S

personal abuse
he's a regular/little/first-class S,
they're Ss, on my S-list,
S-arse/-bag/-breeches/-face/-hawk/-head/-heel/-hole/-house/-poke/-pot,
S-kicker (AmE 'rustic')

dirty activities
S-work ('menial housework'),
S-kickers (AmE, 'heavy work-boots')

negation
not give a S, ain't worth a S, ain't got S, don't tell them S

trouble
be in the S, been through a lot of S, be in S street, S out of luck, take a lot of S, when the S flies, when the S hits the fan, up S creek (without a paddle), S on someone from a great height

fear
S scared, S oneself, S bricks, scared S-less, beat/fuck/kick/knock the S out of someone, give one the Ss

deception/tease
are you S-ting me?, No S!

nastiness
that's a S-ty thing to say, in a S-ty mood, it's S-ting down outside

rubbish
load of S, all that S, shoot the S, don't give me any S, full of S, he thinks the Zodiacs are S

shirty

EUPHEMISTIC
Shivers! Sugar!
Shoot! Shute!
Shucks! Sherbert!

bull-S,
chicken-S

DIALECT/JOCULAR
shite, shice, sheiss(e)

bull,
chicken droppings,
etc.

Swearing

We need to draw a clear distinction between the language of taboo, the language of abuse (*invective*), and the language of swearing. The three may overlap or coincide: to call someone a *shit* is to use a taboo word as a term of abuse, and if said with enough emotional force would be considered an act of swearing. But there is no necessary identity. *Piss* is a taboo word which is not usually employed on its own as invective or as a swear word. *Wimp* is a term of abuse which is neither a taboo word nor a swear word. And *heck* is a swear word which is neither taboo nor invective. Yet other distinctions are often drawn, some being given legal definition, and invoking sanctions in certain circumstances. Probably the commonest notions are *obscenity*, which involves the expression of indecent sexuality – 'dirty' or 'rude' words; *blasphemy*, which shows contempt or lack of reverence specifically towards God or gods; and *profanity*, which has a wider range, including irreverent reference to holy things or people (such as, in Christianity, the cross or the saints). However, despite these distinctions, the term *swearing* is often used as a general label for all kinds of 'foul-mouthed' language, whatever its purpose.

In a narrower sense, swearing refers to the strongly emotive use of a taboo word or phrase. 'Use' is perhaps too weak. Swearing is an outburst, an explosion, which gives relief to surges of emotional energy. It is a substitute for an aggressive bodily response, and can be aimed either at people or at objects (as when our head makes inadvertent contact with a low roof beam). Its forcefulness is reflected in its use of short, sharp sounds (p. 251) and emphatic rhythms. Its function is to express a wide range of emotions, from mild annoyance through strong frustration to seething anger, and not to make sense. Indeed, if we look closely at swearing formulae, we may find no meaning at all: *fucking hell* and other such phrases are, literally, nonsense.

However, the view of swearing as an emotional phenomenon is itself too narrow. Swearing has important social functions. It can mark social distance, as when a group of youths display their contempt for social conventions by swearing loudly in public or writing obscene graffiti on walls. And it can mark social solidarity, as when a group develops identical swearing habits. It is important to appreciate, in this respect, that swearing is universal. Everyone swears – though the mild expletive use of *sugar* or *golly* by one person would probably not be considered as swearing by someone whose normal imprecation is *sonofabitch* or *motherfucker*.

When we join a new social group, it seems we are much influenced by its swearing norms. Swearing is contagious. In one study, the swearing patterns of zoologists during an expedition to the Arctic were observed by a psychologist. She noted that when the members of the group were relaxed, there was a noticeable increase in the amount of social ('one of the gang') swearing. This, the commonest swearing pattern, always depended for its effect upon an audience being present, and varied in intensity according to the swearing habits of the participants – social swearing diminished all round if a non-swearer was present. Annoyance swearing was different: this occurred as a reaction to stress, regardless of audience, and became more frequent as conditions became more difficult. However, when a situation was extremely stressful, there was no swearing at all, not even of the annoyance type. One of the psychologist's conclusions was that swearing is a sign that a stressful situation is bearable, and indeed may be a factor in helping to reduce stress. It raises the interesting hypothesis that those who swear suffer less from stress than those who do not. (After H. E. Ross, 1960.)

This was a daring front page, for a British newspaper in 1960.

Daily Mirror

MR. K!

(*If you will pardon an olde English phrase*)

DON'T BE SO BLOODY RUDE!

PS *Who do you think you are? STALIN?*
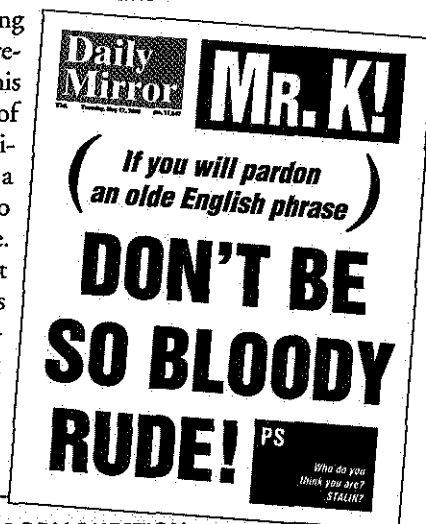
TO B— OR NOT TO — — THAT IS THE *BLOODY* QUESTION

TO-NIGHT'S "PYGMALION," IN WHICH MRS. PATRICK CAMPBELL IS EXPECTED TO CAUSE THE GREATEST THEATRICAL SENSATION FOR YEARS

On 28 May 1714, Jonathan Swift commented, in one of his letters to Stella, that 'it was bloody hot walking today'. Almost exactly 200 years later, the *Daily Sketch* of 11 April 1914 used the above headline to report a sensation, when Mrs Patrick Campbell had to say the line 'Not bloody likely' for the opening of Shaw's *Pygmalion*, thus using in public a word which 'is certainly not used in decent society'. (For the full report, see p. 383). Indeed, public outrage at even the hint of the word had caused Gilbert and Sullivan in 1887 to alter the spelling of their opera *Ruddygore* to *Ruddigore*.

The literal use of the word can be traced back to Old English, and was common in Elizabethan drama: 'O most bloody sight' (*Julius Caesar*, III.2) is one of many Shakespearian quotations. Its later use as an intensifier (with the basic meaning of 'very') has never been satisfactorily explained. One theory has associated it with the rowdy behaviour of the 'young bloods' of the Restoration period; another

(rather more likely) claims a figurative development, meaning 'the blood is up' (so that *bloody drunk* would mean 'ready for a fight'). There are several popular etymologies (p. 139) deriving the word from *by Our Lady* or from *God's blood*. Perhaps the association of the word with uncouth behaviour, plus the popular belief that it might be profane, gradually led to its being used by the lower classes as a swear-word. It had certainly begun to fall from grace in Britain by the end of the 18th century, when it was recorded as part of underworld slang, and dictionaries began to refer to it as 'vulgar'. It was definitely a common swear-word by the early 19th century, called a 'horrid word', and printed as b——y.

The word became a major social issue only in Britain. It never gained popularity in America, and in Australia it became so frequent that it quickly lost its pejorative associations. The 'great Australian adjective', as it was called towards the end of the 19th century, ceased to be regarded as swearing by the 1940s, and was often heard in respectable settings. This contrasts with the situation at the time in Britain, where the Lord Chamberlain's office was still excising the word from plays submitted to it, and people were being fined for using the word in public. But times were changing, and indeed*The Times* printed it in full in 1941 (in a poem containing the line 'I really loathe the bloody Hun'). The word's progress towards renewed respectability has been steady since then, though Prince Charles' comment in 1989 that English 'is taught so bloody badly' received less publicity for what he said than for the way he said it. The associations of some 200 years die hard, and many people never use the word in public, feel embarrassed if someone does so, and (in Britain) complain to the BBC if they hear it on air before 9 pm.

Jargon

Jargon is itself a loaded word (p. 170). One dictionary defines it, neatly and neutrally, as 'the technical vocabulary or idiom of a special activity or group', but this sense is almost completely overshadowed by another: 'obscure and often pretentious language marked by a roundabout way of expression and use of long words'. For most people, it is this second sense which is at the front of their minds when they think about jargon. Jargon is said to be a *bad* use of language, something to be avoided at all costs. No one ever describes it in positive terms ('that was a delightful piece of rousing jargon'). Nor does one usually admit to using it oneself: the myth is that jargon is something only *other* people employ.

The up side

The reality is that everyone uses jargon. It is an essential part of the network of occupations and pursuits which make up society. All jobs present an element of jargon, which workers learn as they develop their expertise. All hobbies require mastery of a jargon. All sports and games have their jargon. Each society grouping has its jargon. The phenomenon turns out to be universal – and valuable. It is the jargon element which, in a job, can promote economy and precision of expression, and thus help make life easier for the workers. It is also the chief linguistic element which shows professional awareness ('know-how') and social togetherness ('shop-talk').

When we have learned to command it, jargon is something we readily take pleasure in, whether the subject area is motorcycles, knitting, cricket, baseball, computers, or wine. It can add pace, variety, and humour to speech – as when, with an important event approaching, we might slip into NASA-speak, and talk about *countdown, all systems go*, and *lift-off*. We enjoy the mutual showing-off which stems from a fluent use of terminology, and we enjoy the in-jokes which shared linguistic experience permits. Moreover, we are jealous of this knowledge. We are quick to demean anyone who tries to be part of our group without being prepared to take on its jargon. And we resent it when some other group, sensing our lack of linguistic awareness, refuses to let us in.

The down side

If jargon is so essential a part of our lives, why then has it had such a bad press? The most important reason stems from the way jargon can exclude as well as include. We may not be too concerned if we find ourselves faced with an impenetrable wall of jargon when the subject matter has little perceived relevance to our everyday lives, as in the case of hydrology or linguistics. But when the subject matter is one where we feel implicated, and think we have a right to know, and the speaker uses words which act as a barrier to our under-standing, then we start to complain; and if we suspect that the obfuscation is deliberate policy, we unreservedly condemn, labelling it *gobbledegook* and calling down public derision upon it.

No area is sacrosanct, but advertising, political, and military statements have been especially criticised in recent years by the various campaigns for Plain English (p. 376). In these domains, the extent to which people are prepared to use jargon to hide realities is a ready source of amusement, disbelief, and horror. A lie is a lie, which can be only temporarily hidden by calling it an 'inoperative statement' or 'an instance of plausible deniability'. Nor can a nuclear plant explosion be suppressed for long behind such phrases as 'energetic disassembly', 'abnormal evolution', or 'plant transient'.

While condemning unnecessary or obscuring jargon in others, we should not forget to look out for it in ourselves. It is so easy to 'slip into' jargon, without realizing that our own listeners/readers do not understand. It is also temptingly easy to slip some jargon into our expression, to *ensure* that others do not understand. And it is just as easy to begin using jargon which we ourselves do not understand. The motivation to do such apparently perverse things is not difficult to grasp. People like to be 'in', to be part of an intellectual or technical elite; and the use of jargon, whether understood or not, is a badge of membership. Jargon, also, can provide a lazy way into a group or an easy way of hiding uncertainties and inadequacies: when terminology slips plausibly from the tongue, it is not essential for the brain to keep up. Indeed, it is commonly asserted that politicians and civil servants have developed this skill to professional levels. And certainly, faced with a telling or awkward question, and the need to say something acceptable in public, slipping into jargon becomes a simple way out, and can soon develop into a bad habit. It is a short step, then, to jargon's first cousin, cliché (p. 186).

30 WAYS OF GETTING THE SACK

The following expressions were all used in 1991 by businesses which were having to 'let people go'. Presumably they felt that the jargon would somehow provide justification for their policy, or perhaps it would reduce the trauma for the ex-workforce. In such cases, jargon is taking on the role of euphemism (p. 172).

career change opportunity
chemistry change
coerced transition
decruitment
degrowing
dehiring
deselection
destaffing
downsizing
executive culling
force reduction
indefinite idling
involuntary separation
negotiated departure
outplacement
personnel surplus reduction
redeployment
reducing headcount
redundancy elimination
release
rightsizing
schedule adjustment
selective separation
skill-mix adjustment
transitioned
vocational relocation
voluntary severance
voluntary termination
work force adjustment
work force imbalance
correction
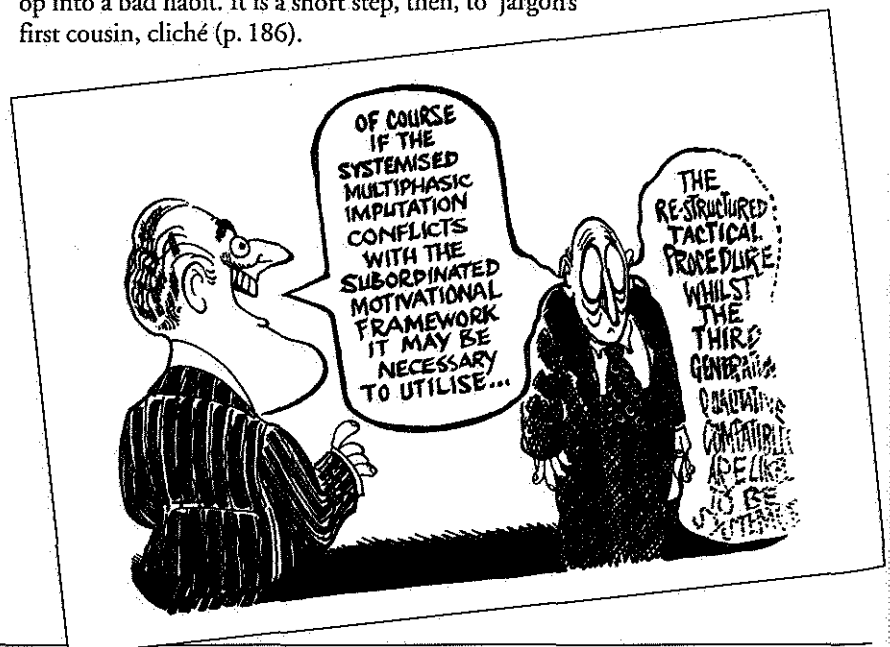
AMAZE YOUR FRIENDS

The way jargon enters into our lives, often without our even noticing it, can be seen in this short selection of published examples (from W. Nash, 1993).

• ... smells interestingly of flowers and curiously of bath salts, but has tropical fruit on the palate, with rough sauvignon blanc edges absent, except perhaps on the finish

• His breast of chicken with tarragon and girolles goes back to the classic French repertoire: the skin of the fowl crisped to gold, oderiferously swathed in a thick, creamy sauce ...

• ... Labour has to establish its credentials as the party of economic growth, and hang the recession round the neck of the Government's monetary and fiscal stewardship.

• A mere yard off the fairway at the fourth, he could only hack out from the clinging Bermuda rough, three putts adding up to a six. Much the same happened at the par-five sixth for another six.

A famous jargonizer

Literary examples show that jargon is by no means only a modern phenomenon. Here, Hamlet takes issue with Osric over the pretentious use of *carriages* – a term more appropriately used, in Hamlet's estimation, for guns (*cannon*) than for swords.

Osric: The king, sir, hath wager'd with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so; three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, of very liberal conceit.
Hamlet : What call you the carriages?
Horatio (aside to Hamlet): I knew you must be edified by the margent ['margin'] ere you had done.
Osric: The carriages, sir, are the hangers.
Hamlet: The phrase would be more german to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides: I would it might be hangers until then. (*Hamlet* V.ii)

FIGHTING BACK

When people get fed up with obscure or unnecessary jargon, there at first seems very little they can do about it. Below are a few examples of the way some people have chosen to counter-attack using the weapons of satire and parody. On p. 176 is an account of the way one organization has successfully orchestrated a much more ambitious campaign.

Q

To be, or the contrary? Whether the former or the latter be preferable would seem to admit of some difference of opinion; the answer in the present case being of an affirmative or of a negative character according as to whether one elects on the one hand to mentally suffer the disfavour of fortune, albeit in an extreme degree, or on the other to boldly envisage adverse conditions in the prospect of bringing them to a conclusion. The condition of sleep is similar to, if not indistinguishable from, that of death; and with the addition of finality the former might be considered identical with the latter; so that in this connection it might be argued with regard to sleep that, could the addition be effected, a termination would be put to the endurance of a multiplicity of inconveniences, not to mention a number of downright evils incidental to our fallen humanity, and thus a consummation achieved of a most gratifying nature.

(According to Arthur Quiller-Couch, 1916.)

CARSPEAK: A SHOPPER'S GUIDE

specimen, a: a very large, very, very shiny, long-nosed motor car with leather seats.

must be seen: a fairly large, shiny car with a host of extras; alt., a rather peculiar foreign model that you might hesitate to buy because of the rumours you have heard.

host of extras: (usu. in conn. with *must be seen*), a sun-roof, stereo speakers, badge bar, and a horn that plays the opening strains of 'Dixie'.

one careful, lady owner: boringly sedate and reliable; unscratched, over-hoovered, taken through the car-wash once a week; called Belinda.

snip, a: a vehicle priced at $50–£100 below the sum the vendor originally thought of, because the reading on the mileometer is suspect, because the alternator is *in articulo mortis* (called, in the trade, 'dead dodgy') and because he needs to get this car off his forecourt in order to make room for a *specimen*.

good runner, a: a vehicle which has not had the benefit of *one careful, lady owner*. It will do you no credit at the Country Club, but will trundle you round the houses well enough. Sometimes abbreviated to *a runner*, in which case it may not be good enough to trundle you all the way round *all* the houses, because it *needs some attention*.

needs some attention: (usu. in conn. with *runner*), needs a new gearbox, clutch, offside rear wing panel, windscreen wiper motor, doorlock and window crank on driver's side; otherwise, in A1 condition.

(According to W. Nash, 1993.)

THE FOLKLORE ARTICLE RECONSTITUTION KIT

This aid to academic article writing was circulated anonymously in the 1970s by a disaffected folklore scholar. Anyone wishing to produce an acceptable paper for a folklore journal, the author contends, has simply to construct sentences from the columns below, in the sequence A-B-C-D.

A	B	C	D
1 Obviously,	1 a large proportion of intercultural communicative coordination	1 must utilize and be functionally interwoven with	1 Propp's basic formulation.
2 On the other hand,	2 a constant flow of field-collected input ordinates	2 maximizes the probability of project success while minimizing cross-cultural shock	2 the anticipated epistemological repercussions.
3 From the inter-cultural standpoint,	3 the characterization of critically co-optive criteria	3 adds explicit performance contours to	3 improved subcultural compatibility-testing.
4 Similarly,	4 initiation of basic charismatic subculture development	4 necessitates that coagulative measures be applied to	4 all deeper structuralistic conceptualization.
5 As Lévi-Strauss contends,	5 our fully integrated field program	5 requires considerable further performance analysis and computer studies to arrive at	5 any communicatively-programmed computer techniques.
6 In this regard,	6 any exponential Folklife coefficient	6 is holistically compounded, in the context of	6 the profound meaning of *The Raw and the Cooked*.
7 Based on my own field-work in Guatemala,	7 further and associated contradictory elements	7 presents a valuable challenge showing the necessity for	7 our hedonic Folklife perspectives over a given time-period.
8 For example,	8 the incorporation of agonistic cultural constraints	8 recognizes the importance of other disc-iplines, while taking into account	8 any normative concept of the linguistic / holistic continuum.
9 Thus, within given parameters,	9 my proposed independent structuralistic concept	9 effects a significant implementation of	9 the total configurational rationale.
10 In respect to essential departmental goals,	10 a primary interrelationship between systems and/or subsystems logistics	10 adds overwhelming Folkloristic significance to	10 *Krapp's Last Tape*.

The Doublespeak campaign

During the 1970s in the USA, there was a marked increase in concern about the way jargon was being used to confuse or deceive by people in power. In 1971, the National Council of Teachers of English passed two resolutions on language.

On Dishonest and Inhumane Uses of Language

That the National Council of Teachers of English find means to study dishonest and inhumane uses of language and literature by advertisers, to bring offenses to public attention, and to propose classroom techniques for preparing children to cope with commercial propaganda.

On the Relation of Language to Public Policy

That the National Council of Teachers of English find means to study the relation of language to public policy, to keep track of, publicize, and combat semantic distortion by public officials, candidates for office, political commentators, and all those who transmit through the mass media.

In 1973 the Council decided on its way forward, forming a Committee on Public Doublespeak – a blend of *newspeak* + *doublethink* from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (p. 135). The Committee focused on classroom activities and on professional awareness, publishing a newsletter (later, the *Quarterly Review of Doublespeak*) and other materials; but its highest public profile came with the birth of the annual Doublespeak Awards in 1974.

So what is doublespeak? In the view of the Committee Chair, it is 'language which pretends to communicate, but really doesn't. It is language which makes the bad seem good, the negative seem positive, the unpleasant appear attractive, or at least tolerable. It is language which avoids or shifts responsibility, language which is at variance with its real or its purported meaning. It is language which conceals or prevents thought' (W. Lutz, 1987). It is stressed that such language is not the product of carelessness or sloppy thinking; rather, it is the result of clear thinking. The claim is that this language has been carefully designed to change reality and to mislead.

Judging by the media attention given to the annual awards, the emergence of similar societies in other countries, the growth in public awareness of the problem, and the way in which many organizations have responded positively to the demand for 'plain English' (p. 376), the campaign to date has been remarkably successful. But, in view of the examples which continue to be cited in the yearly award ceremonies, no one is suggesting that the problem is anywhere near being solved.

AIR SUPPORT

The winner of the first Doublespeak Award in 1974 was Colonel Opfer, the United States Air Force press officer in Cambodia. After a US bombing raid, he told reporters: 'You always write it's bombing, bombing, bombing. It's not bombing! It's air support!'
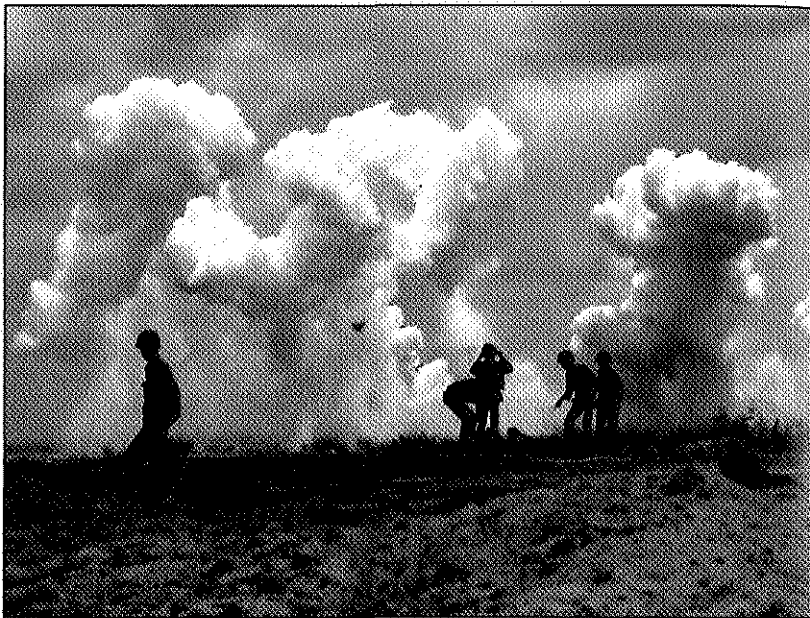
AND SOME OTHER WINNERS

• 1977 The Pentagon and the Energy Research and Development Administration, for explaining that the neutron bomb was 'an efficient nuclear weapon that eliminates an enemy with a minimum degree of damage to friendly territory'.

• 1979 The nuclear power industry, for the euphemisms devised in relation to the incident at Three Mile Island, when an explosion was called 'energetic disassembly', a fire 'rapid oxidation', a reactor accident a 'normal aberration', and plutonium contamination 'infiltration'.

• 1984 The US Department of State, for announcing that in reports on the status of human rights in other countries, the word *killing* would in future be replaced by 'unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of life'.

THE GOLDEN BULL AWARDS

These are the British equivalent of the Doublespeak Awards, organized by the Plain English Campaign and the National Consumer Council.

The first plaque was given in 1982 to the author of Section 38 of the Criminal Justice Act, for writing as follows:

(4) An enactment in which section 31 (6) and (7) of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (pre-1949 enactments) produced the same fine or maximum fine for different convictions shall be treated for the purposes of this section as if there were omitted from it so much of it as before 29th July 1977...

The use of 'plain English' involves much more than an avoidance of unnecessary jargon, but must take into account questions of grammar and typography, as this example shows. The issues raised by such examples are therefore discussed later in this book (p. 376).

THE ORWELL AWARDS

It should not always be bad news. While the thrust of the Doublespeak campaign has been directed against language misuse, there have also been efforts to reward those who have helped to direct public attention to the issues, and who themselves use language well.

The Orwell Awards were introduced by the National Council of Teachers of English to recognize a work which has made an outstanding contribution to the critical analysis of public discourse. The first award was given in 1975 to David Wise for his book *The Politics of Lying*. Particularly appropriate to this section was the award given to Dwight Bolinger's book, *Language, the Loaded Weapon* (1980).

A similar concern to develop positive initiatives is found in the UK, where in 1990 the Plain English Campaign introduced the Crystal Mark scheme to recognize clarity in written documents (p. 376). The choice of this title, it is believed, does not derive from the name of any linguistics author living or dead.

Political correctness

Some of the most loaded words in the language are those associated with the way society talks about itself, and especially about groups of people whom it perceives to be disadvantaged or oppressed. The most sensitive domains are to do with race, gender, sexual affinity, ecology, and (physical or mental) personal development. During the 1980s, an increasing number of people became concerned to eradicate what they saw to be prejudice (especially language prejudice) in these areas. The label *racialist* was already known from the turn of the century, and *racist* from the 1930s. *Sexist* was added in the 1960s, and followed by a series of other *-ist* terms which focussed on real or imagined areas of linguistic discrimination. Many of the critics were members of progressive or activist groups (e.g. advocates of minority rights), especially in universities, and thus, as the movement grew, attracting hard-line extremists alongside moderates, it drew down upon itself the antagonism of conservative academics and journalists. By the 1990s, this hard-line linguistic orthodoxy was being referred to, pejoratively, as *political correctness (PC)*.

Anyone who used vocabulary held to be 'politically incorrect' risked severe condemnation by PC activists. Organizations, fearful of public criticism and litigation, went out of their way to avoid using language which might be construed as offensive. The word *black*, for example, was felt to be so sensitive that some banned its use in all possible contexts (including such instances as *blackboard* and the *black pieces* in chess). The generic use of *man* was widely attacked (p. 368). *Mentally handicapped* people were to become people *with learning difficulties*. *Disabled* people were to be *differently abled*. *Third World* countries were to be *developing nations*. All but the most beautiful or handsome were *aesthetically challenged*. And in the academic literary world there would need to be safeguards against the unhealthy influence wielded by such *DWEMs* ('Dead White European Males') as Shakespeare, Goethe, and Molière.

Critical reaction

In the early 1990s, many people reacted strongly to what they saw as a trend towards terminological absurdity. The inflexible condemnation of 'incorrect' vocabulary reminded some of the 'thought police' of futuristic novels. Newspaper headlines contained references to 'McCarthyism' and 'the end of academic freedom of speech'. And certainly, there were cases cited of academics who had criticised the PC position being labelled racist or sexist, and losing their courses or their case for promotion. According to a writer in the *New York Times* (July, 1991), PC had become 'a lethal weapon for silencing anyone whose ideas you don't like'. It was, according to an *Economist* editorial of the time, 'the most pernicious form of intolerance'.

The arguments continue. Critics of PC believe that the search for a 'caring' lexicon is pointless, as long as the inequalities which the language reflects do not change. Proponents of PC argue that the use of language itself helps to perpetuate these inequalities. At present, the speed at which fashions change in the use of PC terms suggests that it is not so easy to manipulate language as the reformers think. Dissatisfaction over one term tends to spread to its replacement, as has been seen with such sequences as *negro* to *black* to *Afro-American* to *African-American*. Above all, it is very difficult to ascertain just how far linguistic attitudes are generally held. In one 1991 survey of black Americans, carried out in the USA by the black-oriented Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, over 70 per cent of blacks said they preferred to be called *black*, notwithstanding the supposed contemporary vogue for the politically-correct *African-American*.

Political correctness has become one of the most contentious issues on the US socio-political scene in recent years, and attitudes continue to harden. Those who adopt a PC line typically do so with an aggressiveness which creates antagonism even among those who might themselves be concerned about traditional labels. However, extreme positions quickly attract ridicule, and it is not surprising to find several publications in the 1990s beginning to satirise them. It may yet be humour which will restore a balanced perspective to the debate.

-ISTS AND -ISMS

Suffixes (p. 198) mark the areas which cause greatest concern. In each case, the label identifies one way in which people can discriminate against others by using language which is demeaning or offensive.

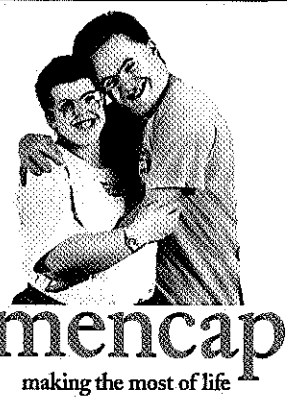*Sexist*: discrimination against one sex, typically men against women.

Racist: discrimination against a race, typically whites against blacks.

Ableist: discrimination by the able-bodied against those with physical or mental difficulties.

Ageist: discrimination against those of a particular age, typically the very young or the very old.

Heightist: discrimination against those of a certain height, typically against very short people.

Other such labels have been proposed, such as *fattyist* or *weightist* (against fat people) and *heterosexist* (against homosexuals of either sex), and the list has been extended in many ways, especially by those who have little sympathy with the PC frame of mind. *Alphabetist*, for example, was proposed in 1987 to label discrimination against someone on the grounds of alphabetical order. If your name begins with an A, you are advantaged (e.g. in a pile of job applications); if with Z, you are not.

INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE

The image of 'Little Stephen', for 25 years the logo of the British charity Mencap, which represents mentally-handicapped people. In 1992 Mencap launched a new campaign to promote a more positive image, using pictures of real people and a fresh slogan 'Making the most of life'.

There was controversy, however, when Mencap decided not to change the name *mental handicap*. The opposition came from critics who felt that this was a term of insult, implying that these people were unable to help themselves. Alternative names proposed, said to be more positive, included *people with learning difficulties* and the *intellectually challenged*.

Mencap's director of marketing said at the time: 'A change in name is not going to make any difference to the problems people face. The general public – the people whose attitudes we need to change – do not recognise "learning difficulty" as mental handicap. It is only a matter of time before even the most right-on expression becomes a term of abuse. It has been the same since people talked about village idiots, and "learning difficulties" is no exception. Children are already calling each other LDs as an insult'.

Such points, however, did not persuade those seeking linguistic change, who continue their campaign. As for the parents of people with a learning disability, they seemed to be for or against change in very similar numbers. The arguments have been bitter and long-running. Arguments which involve issues of political correctness always are.

mencap

making the most of life

THE LIVING LEXICON

We know that something is alive when we see it move; and language is no exception. Spoken language, in particular, is always on the move; and the more alive a language is, the more we see it change, as it adapts to new demands and circumstances. English, by this criterion, is in the forefront of living languages.

In reality, of course, this way of putting it is somewhat misleading. It is not language, as such, which adapts and changes. Only people do that. And it is people who, as they try to communicate fresh thoughts and feelings, and look for new ways of making an impact on each other, explore and stretch the limits of the lexicon. This section examines some of the main areas of vocabulary where we are likely to find this energy and life most clearly displayed. (For other examples of the 'life' of language, see Part V.)

Catch phrases

In catch phrases, we see the spoken language 'on the wing'. As the name suggests, a catch phrase is simply a phrase which is so appealing that people take pleasure in using it. It comes to be on everyone's lips, for a while. In some cases, a phrase comes and goes within a few weeks. More usually, it stays for a few years. And, every now and then, it stays in use for decades, at least among older people. It is even possible for catch phrases to be so useful that they become permanent additions to the language, in the form of rather self-conscious and often jocular expressions whose origins people may have long forgotten. Anyone who says (or adapts) *A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do*, *They went thataway*, or *This town isn't big enough for both of us* is 'recalling' the catch phrases of a generation of cowboy Western films, now several decades old – though it is unlikely that anyone could now recollect where they first heard them.

Catch phrases, typically, are not like these last examples, but have a clearly identifiable source. However, to identify them, we need to be part of the culture which gave rise to them. The catch phrases currently echoing around Australia are unlikely to be recognized in Britain or the USA (and vice versa), unless they have managed to capture international attention through the media. The cinema has been the chief 20th-century medium, in this respect. It is probable that most native speakers of English will know the following examples, though not everyone will be able to identify their sources with certainty (*see foot of facing page, if needed*).

What's up, doc?
Here's another fine mess you've gotten me into.
You cannot be serious!

CATCH STRUCTURES

The grammatical structure of a catch phrase may become popular in its own right. A famous case occurs in the opening text of *Star Trek*: *to boldly go where no man has gone before*. This construction is often transferred to other contexts, retaining *boldly* between *to* and the verb (p. 195), but altering the chief meaning-carrying lexemes: *to boldly split infinitives where no man has split before* is one (somewhat abstruse) instance, heard at a conference on English usage in the 1980s
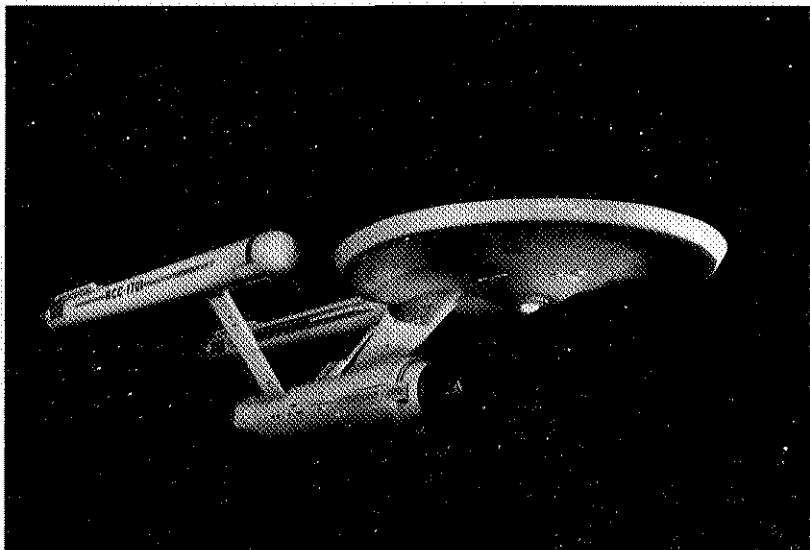
Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

Here's looking at you, kid.
Phone home.
May the Force be with you!

On the other hand, many examples will have a much more 'local' response. Most people in Britain will know (and many will have used) such TV catch phrases as the following, though few English speakers in other countries will have much of an intuition about them.

Pass Used in the sense 'I don't know, ask me another' in both the BBC TV quiz game *Mastermind* and the US TV show *Password*. It is said by contestants who are unable to answer one question and who wish to move onto the next as quickly as possible before they run out of time.

Gissa job 'Give us a job' – a Liverpool dialect form of 'Give us (=me) a job', used by the unemployed character Yosser in Alan Bleasdale's TV play, *Boys from the Black Stuff* (1982).

Evenin' all 'Good evening, all', typically spoken in a mock-Cockney pronunciation (with final /g/ omitted and a vowel-like version of /l/). The greeting was used in the 1950s by the TV character PC Dixon in the series about a London policeman, *Dixon of Dock Green*, and is still widespread.

Most American viewers, on the other hand, would have no trouble recognizing

Here's Johnny Used at the beginning of the US TV chat programme, *The Johnny Carson Show*, to welcome the host. It is echoed by the insane character played by Jack Nicholson as he axes through the door at the climax of the film *The Shining*.

Very interesting Spoken in a mock German accent, with a lengthened 'meditative' first vowel, by the 'German soldier' on *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*, shown on US TV in the 1960s–70s. He would be seen peering at other characters through foliage and commenting on their idiocy.

The transatlantic situation is not a symmetrical one, however. Far more American films and shows are seen in Britain than move in the other direction. Thus, most British people would have no trouble with *Who loves ya, baby?* (from *Kojak*) or *Hi-yo, Silver* (from *The Lone Ranger*), and many other catch phrases from television series. *The 64-dollar* (later, *64-thousand dollar*) *question* is used in Britain without hesitation (and without any replacement of the word *dollar*). It is distinctly more unusual for a British catch-phrase to take off in the USA – though the *Monty Python* series first shown on British TV had some impact in the 1980s, with such phrases as *And now for something completely different*, and *Nudge nudge, wink wink, say no more*.

It is not just the media which generates catch phrases, of course. Anyone in the public domain can – wittingly or unwittingly – be the source of one. Politicians provide one breeding-ground, as illustrated by *You never had it so good*, found both in the USA (as the slogan of the Democratic Party in the 1952 presidential election) and the UK (by Harold Macmillan in 1957: *most of our people have never had it so good*). Sports personalities provide another: a famous case is *We wuz robbed*, attributed to Joe Jacobs, the manager of boxing heavyweight Max Schmeling, who lost on points to Jack Sharkey in 1932. Generals, admirals, singers, archbishops, judges, the British Royal Family – indeed, anyone who is likely to attract the public eye, and be quoted in the press – can, if they say the right words at the right time, find themselves taking up residence in a *Dictionary of Catch Phrases*. And if what they say is truly memorable, it might even be a *Dictionary of Quotations* (p. 184).

MYTHICAL CATCH PHRASES

Me Tarzan, you Jane is not to be found in any of the Tarzan films, though Tarzan and Jane do greet each other elliptically in some productions. Nor did Sherlock Holmes ever say *Elementary, my dear Watson* in any of the books by Conan Doyle (though it does appear in a film). Catch phrases are often adapted and renewed with scant regard for accuracy.

VOGUE WORDS

Vogue words, as the name suggests, are lexemes which take on a fashionable or cult status within the language as a whole, or among the members of a particular group (such as teachers, government ministers, or teenagers). They are similar in many ways to catch phrases (which might, indeed, be called *vogue phrases*), but vogue words usually lack the specific sources which can be found for most catch phrases.

Vogue words do not suddenly appear, but grow gradually and unobtrusively, until one day we are aware that everybody is using them.

Vogue words are not the same as neologisms (p. 130). A lexeme which has been in the language for years may become a vogue word – as happened to *absolutely* in the late 1980s, which came to be used as an emphatic substitute for 'yes I agree'. A neologism must have a certain popularity, of course, otherwise it would not become part of the language at all; but only a few neologisms become so popular that they could be called 'vogue'.

To become a vogue word, something extra has to happen – a word has to be taken up and used with extra frequency by large numbers of people, and must be extended to contexts beyond the one which originally gave rise to it (as when *gridlock*, a term describing a type of unmoving traffic jam, is applied to other forms of impasse, such as the positions in an argument). The term *buzz word* is also used to describe such a development, and in some ways is a more appropriate term, with its suggestion of excitement, activity, and change – the features of any fashion.

The use of affixes (p. 128) has come to be an important feature of vogue words in recent years. The *-gate* of *Watergate* has retained its popularity into the 1990s, producing hundreds of expressions (*Cartergate, Hollywoodgate, Dallasgate, Dianagate, Camillagate*, etc). *Euro-* in the early 1990s also achieved vogue status, being attached to almost anything which had – or could be given – a European Community application (*Eurowisdom, Eurocrat, Eurodollar, Euromess*, etc.). Other examples of vogue affixes which emerged during the 1980s include *-athon* (p. 131), *mega-, -aid, -speak*, and all the *-isms* and *-ists* (p. 177).

The trouble with vogue words is that they are transient and unpredictable. At the time of writing (1993), the vogue words of the 1980s (*Yuppie* and its friends, *glasnost, perestroika, Rambo*, etc.) are still in use, but have been overtaken by the fresh tones of the 1990s (*double whammy, virtual reality*, etc.). And by the time this book appears, most of these may well have lost their vogue, and been replaced. To be up-to-date with examples of vogue words, in fact, you will have to put this book down, go out-and-about, and listen.
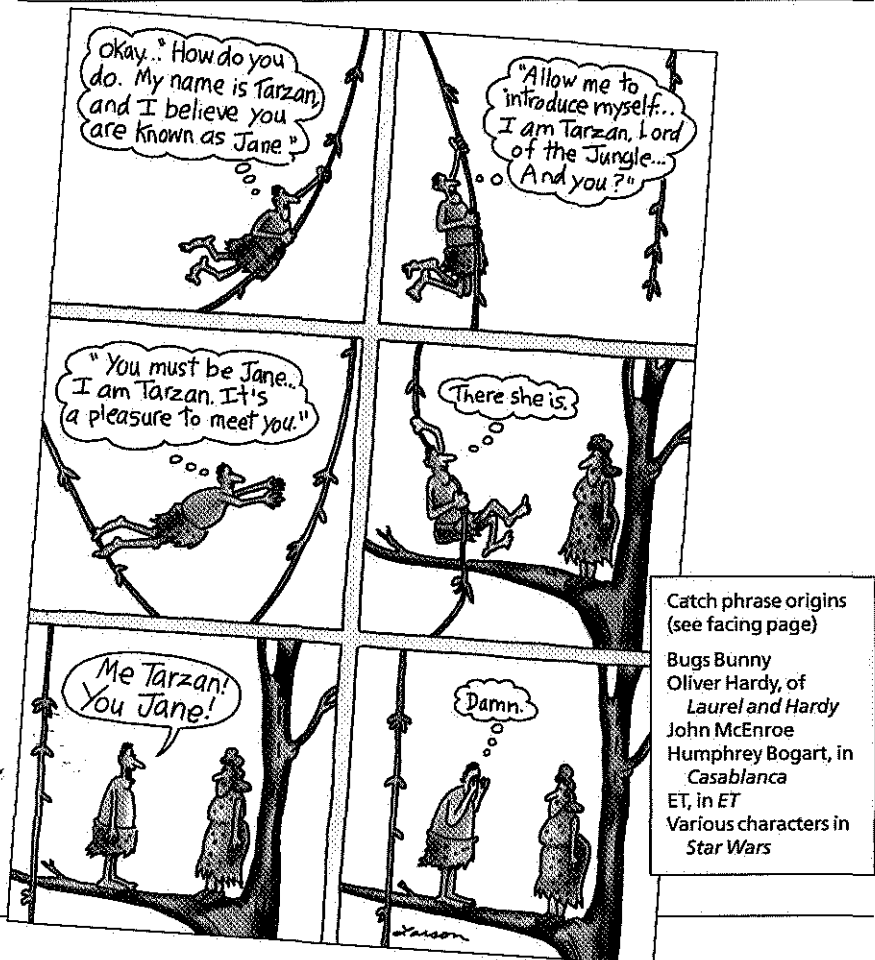
Catch phrase origins (see facing page)

Bugs Bunny
Oliver Hardy, of *Laurel and Hardy*
John McEnroe
Humphrey Bogart, in *Casablanca*
ET, in *ET*
Various characters in *Star Wars*

Slogans

Originally, the word *slogan* was used to describe the battle-cry or rallying-cry of a Scottish clan. Today, the application is different, but the intention behind modern slogans is much the same – to form a forceful, catchy, mind-grabbing utterance which will rally people, in this case to buy something, or to behave in a certain way. Indeed, the force of the hard sell with which some slogans are placed before the public would no doubt have received the enthusiastic approval of any ancient Highlander.

In their linguistic structure, slogans are very like proverbs (p. 184). Sentences tend to be short, with a strong rhythm:

Safety First
Beanz Meanz Heinz
Ban the Bomb
Walls Have Ears

They often have a balanced structure, especially if they get at all lengthy:

Make love, not war
When you need aspirin, drink Disprin

There can be striking use of figurative language:

Terylene keeps its promises
Switch on the sunshine (Kellogg's cereal)

Frequent use is made of alliteration (p. 415) and rhyme ('jingles'):

Guinness is good for you
Electrolux brings luxury to life
Drinka pinta milka day
Put a tiger in your tank (Exxon/Esso)
You'll wonder where the yellow went
    When you brush your teeth with Pepsodent

And several mimic a conversational style:

It's fingerlickin' good (Kentucky Fried Chicken)
I bet (s)he drinks Carling Black Label
That'll do nicely (American Express).

As these examples suggest, slogans are used for far more than advertising commercial products, but are an essential part of all campaigns – political, safety, protest, health, environmental, and so on. Indeed, one of the first steps in any campaign is to think up a good slogan, and some companies run regular competitions to obtain fresh ideas from the public. Invent a successful slogan today, and (who knows?) it could be Sun City for you tomorrow.

BP Britain at its best.

BMW
THE ULTIMATE DRIVING MACHINE

CENTRAL HEATING *for* KIDS

hygena
Simply beautiful. And beautifully simple.

IBERIA
AIRLINES OF SPAIN
WARM TO THE EXPERIENCE.

Nikon
SPORT OPTICS
You'll never see things quite the same again.™

KYOMI
WORKS WITH YOUR BODY, NOT AGAINST IT.

Leica
The freedom to see

TROY-BILT®
An American Legend Caring For The Land.®

YOU CAN BE SURE OF SHELL

American Sunflower Seed Bureau
FOR A HEALTHY APPETITE

Leading the way to the USA.
TWA

Graffiti

The word *graffito* originally referred to a drawing or inscription scratched on an ancient wall, such as those which have been found at Pompeii. In the present century, the name has come to be used for any spontaneous and unauthorized writing or drawing on walls, vehicles, and other public places. It is typically obscene or political in character, but a great deal of humour and popular wisdom can also be found, which has formed the basis of several collections by folklorists and humorists.

Graffiti are often occasional, in character, responding to current events and preoccupations, such as an election or a famous scandal. Most graffiti, however, bear no relation to a particular time or place. The same themes recur, over the years, as do some of the favourite formulae of the graffiti-writers. For example, there must by now be thousands of variants of the *X rules OK* structure, said to have begun as a British soccer boast (*Arsenal rules, OK?*). A small sample from one paperback collection illustrates this sub-genre in action (N. Rees, 1981):

Apathy rules, oh dear.
Examples rule, e.g.
Einstein rules relatively, OK.
Bureaucracy rules OK
      OK
      OK

Several other general characteristics can also be observed.

• There is a great deal of straightforward praise or invective, for or against particular gangs, religious groups, political parties, protest groups, etc. The group's symbols or logos often play a prominent role in the design.

• Likewise, a large amount of space is devoted to obscenity and dirty jokes in general, as is only to be expected from data which originates on lavatory walls.

• A common tactic is to respond to a well-known quotation or slogan. Biblical quotations are frequently used (*Faith can move mountains. She's a big girl*) as are commercial slogans (*I thought that an innuendo was an Italian suppository until I discovered Smirnoff*).

• Graffiti dialogues also exist, as writers react to each other.

Be alert.
Your country needs lerts.
– No, Britain has got enough lerts now, thank you.
Be aloof.
– No, really, be alert. There's safety in numbers.

• Puns and word play abound. These are usually of the category that might charitably be described as execrable (*Quasimodo – that name rings a bell*), but they are sometimes highly ingenious – in this case, playing with the words of a once popular song ('Miss Otis regrets she's unable to lunch today'):

LIFT UNDER REPAIR – USE OTHER LIFT.
This Otis regrets it's unable to lift today.

WHO WUZ HERE?

Two of the longest-standing graffiti are *Kilroy* and *Chad*, both of World War 2 origin, and still being drawn around the world in the 1990s.

KILROY WOZ HERE

Kilroy
Kilroy began in America. He may have been a Massachusetts shipyard inspector, James Kilroy, who in 1941 was marking the phrase on equipment to show he had checked it. Or he may have been a Sergeant Francis Kilroy whose arrival at a Florida air base was anticipated by the notice *Kilroy will be here next week*. Several other theories exist, and the truth may never be known.

WOT, NO BANANAS?

Chad
Chad (also known as *Mr Chad*) appeared in Britain early in the War, always accompanied by a standard phrase of the type *What, no —?*. He turns up, often under a different name, in several countries (e.g. *Clem*, in Canada). Again, many explanations have been proposed, both for the drawing and for the name. A popular view is that the face grew out of a diagram, such as that of an alternating wave form, which could have been part of a lecture to military personnel.

The name *Chad* was chiefly Royal Air Force; *Private Snoops* was the Army equivalent, and *The Watcher* was often found in the Navy. Theories about its origins are also highly speculative: they include the view that it derives from the name of a forces lecture centre (*Chadwick House*), and that it comes from the name of a 1940s' film (*Chad Hannah*).

Slang

Slang, according to the American poet, Carl Sandburg (1878–1967) is 'language which takes off its coat, spits on its hands – and goes to work'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a more judicious account: 'language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of educated standard speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense'. In a related definition, it also describes slang as 'language of a low or vulgar type' and 'the special vocabulary or phraseology of a particular calling or profession'. This sums up the paradox of slang very well. People look down on it, but can hardly avoid using it, for everyone has some 'calling or profession', even if the 'call' is only to watch football, collect stamps, or go drinking. There is upper-class slang alongside lower-class slang, the slang of doctors and of lawyers, the slang of footballers and philatelists, as well as the slang which cuts across social class and occupation, available to anyone as the most colloquial variety of language (p. 290). The word 'most' is important. *Let's have a drink* is colloquial, but not slang. *Let's dip the bill* (Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*), which means the same thing, is both.

The complexity of slang is immediately apparent when we examine its varied functions (see right). If forced to choose the primary function of slang from Eric Partridge's list, it would have to be number 13 (and its complement, 14). 'The chief use of slang', it has been wisely said, 'is to show that you're one of the gang' – and, in Chandler's novels, literally so. Slang is one of the chief markers of in-group identity. As such, it comes very close to jargon (p. 174).

THE USES OF SLANG

According to the British lexicographer, Eric Partridge (1894–1979), people use slang for any of at least 15 reasons:

1 In sheer high spirits, by the young in heart as well as by the young in years; 'just for the fun of the thing'; in playfulness or waggishness.
2 As an exercise either in wit and ingenuity or in humour. (The motive behind this is usually self-display or snobbishness, emulation or responsiveness, delight in virtuosity.)
3 To be 'different', to be novel.
4 To be picturesque (either positively or – as in the wish to avoid insipidity – negatively).
5 To be unmistakeably arresting, even startling.
6 To escape from clichés, or to be brief and concise. (Actuated by impatience with existing terms.)
7 To enrich the language. (This deliberateness is rare save among the well-educated, Cockneys forming the most notable exception; it is literary rather than spontaneous.)
8 To lend an air of solidity, concreteness, to the abstract; of earthiness to the idealistic; of immediacy and appositeness to the remote. (In the cultured the effort is usually premeditated, while in the uncultured it is almost always unconscious when it is not rather subconscious.)
9a To lessen the sting of, or on the other hand to give additional point to, a refusal, a rejection, a recantation;
9b To reduce, perhaps also to disperse, the solemnity, the pomposity, the excessive seriousness of a conversation (or of a piece of writing);
9c To soften the tragedy, to lighten or to 'prettify' the inevitability of death or madness, or to mask the ugliness or the pity of profound turpitude (e.g. treachery, ingratitude); and/or thus to enable the speaker or his auditor or both to endure, to 'carry on'.
10 To speak or write down to an inferior, or to amuse a superior public; or merely to be on a colloquial level with either one's audience or one's subject matter.
11 For ease of social intercourse. (Not to be confused or merged with the preceding.)
12 To induce either friendliness or intimacy of a deep or a durable kind. (Same remark.)
13 To show that one belongs to a certain school, trade, or profession, artistic or intellectual set, or social class; in brief, to be 'in the swim' or to establish contact.
14 Hence, to show or prove that someone is *not* 'in the swim'.
15 To be secret – not understood by those around one. (Children, students, lovers, members of political secret societies, and criminals in or out of prison, innocent persons in prison, are the chief exponents.)

(From *Slang: Today and Yesterday*, 1933, Ch. 2.)

CLASSY TALK

The upper-class dialogues of Wodehouse are not usually obscure, though here the quasi-legal phrase *in durance vile* ('in awful confinement') might give pause.

She lugged the poor wench off to Blandings, and she's been there ever since, practically in durance vile, her every movement watched. But this Myra seems to be a sensible, level-headed girl, because, learning from her spies that Lady C was to go to Shrewsbury for a hair-do and wouldn't be around till dinner time, she phoned Bill that she would be free that day and would nip up to London and marry him.
(P.G. Wodehouse, *Service With a Smile*, 1961.)

EARLY AUSSIE

An adapted extract from one of the slang vocabulary lists (for early 20th-century Australian) compiled by Eric Partridge (1933).

canary A convict (c. 1820–1900).
clinah, cliner A sweetheart (from Yiddish, c. 1900).
cobber A friend or mate (c. 1895).
cossie Swimming costume (c. 1920).
derry A grudge (c. 1896).
dilly-bag A shopping or utility bag (c. 1885).
dingbat An officer's servant (dingo + batman, World War 1).
dinkum Good, true (c. 1900).
drum Correct information (c. 1912).

RHYMING SLANG

Best-known for its use by London Cockneys, these unusual formations are little recorded before the mid-19th-century. Probably originating as part of a criminal argot, the underworld associations have now largely disappeared.

apples and pears stairs
artful dodger lodger
Cain and Abel table
Chalk Farm arm
Gawd forbids kids
Hampstead Heath teeth
I suppose nose
lean and lurch church
mince pie eye
north and south mouth
read and write fight
tit for tat hat
trouble and strife wife

TOUGH GUY TALK

She's a grifter, shamus. I'm a grifter. We're all grifters. So we sell each other out for a nickel. Okey. See can you make me. ... I haven't pulled anything in here ...I came in talking two C's. That's still the price. I come because I thought I'd get a take it or leave it, one right gee to another. Now you're waving cops at me. You oughta be ashamed of yourself.

(Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*, 1939, Ch. 25.)

Gloss (for amateurs):
grifter small-time criminal
shamus private detective
C 100-dollar note
gee man (first letter of *guy*)

ARGOT

There is a close link between slang and *argot*, the special language of a secretive social group. In this piece of literary invention, context is cleverly used to aid the reader.

Our pockets were full of deng, so there was no real need from the point of view of crasting any more pretty polly to tolchock some old veck in an alley and viddy him swim in his blood while we counted the takings and divided by four, nor to do the ultra-violent on some shivering starry grey-haired ptitsa in a shop and go smecking off with the till's guts. But, as they say, money isn't everything.
(Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*, 1962, Ch. 1.)

PUCKER

664

PROVINCE OF BACCHUS

character of Providence: coll.: 1856, Emerson (O.E.D.).

province of Bacchus. Drunkenness: Oxford University: ca. 1820-40. Egan's Grose.

provost. A garrison or other cell for short-sentence prisoners: military coll. (— 1890) >, ca. 1905, S.E.: ob. Abbr. provost-cell.

prow. A bumpkin: naval: ca. 1800-90. ? ex *ob. prow*, good, worthy.

prowl. To womanise: low coll.: late C. 17-20. B.E., as *proling* [sic]. (Like a wild beast for meat: cf. *mutton*, q.v.)—2. To wait for 'the ghost to walk': theatrical: from ca. 1870; ob. See *ghost.*—3. To go about, looking for something to steal: c. (— 1887). Baumann.

Prowler, Hugh. A generalised (? low) coll. nick-name for a thief, a highwayman: mid-C. 16-17. Tusser, 'For fear of Hugh Prowler get home with the rest.'

proxime. Proxime accessit: coll. abbr. (schools', universities'): 1896. O.E.D.

Pru, the. The Prudential insurance company: insurance: late C. 19-20. Collinson.

pruff. Sturdy: Winchester College: from ca. 1870. Ex *proof against pain*. Pascoe, 1881, 'Deprive a Wykehamist of words . . . such as quill . . . pruff . . . cad . . . and his vocabulary becomes limited.'

prugg(e). A female partner; a doxy: C. 17: either (low) s. or c. Nares (1822); Halliwell (1847). Prob. cognate with *prig* and perhaps with *prog*, qq.v.

prunella, leather and. This misquotation of Pope's *leather or prunella* has been misapplied to mean something to which one is completely in-different. (Fowler.)

Prunella, Mr ; or prunella. A clergyman: late C. 18-mid-19. Grose, 1st ed. Clergymen's, like barristers', gowns were formerly made from this strong (silk, later) worsted stuff.

Prussian blue, my. An endearment: ca. 1815-70, though app. not recorded before 1837, Dickens, '"Vell, my Prooshan Blue," responded the son.' Punning the colour; ex the tremendous popularity of the colour; ex the tremendous popularity of the Prussians after Waterloo: cf. the old toast,

1909 condemned by the O.E.D. as illiterate; by 1920 (so I infer from W.) it was no worse coll.; by 1930, it was S.E., for the orig. co *toe-may-in* had disappeared,—the author (*hor* *dictu !*) has never even heard it. Cf. *potomain*

pu-pu. A variant of *pooh-pooh*.

pub. A public-house (see *public*, n.): H., in his first ed.: s. >, ca. 1890, Anon., *The Siliad*, ca. 1871, 'All the great and the minor pubs.'—2. See *P.B.*

pub (always pub it). To frequent ' pubs ': 1880, Jerome K. Jerome. Ex preceding.

pub-crawl ; esp. do a p.-c. A liquoris grination from bar to bar : from not later th Hence *pub-crawler, pub-crawling*: from

pubes. An incorrect pl. of *pubis*, a pa inominate bone : from ca. 1840.—2. correct for *pubis*, the pubic bone : 1872

pubis. A mistake for *pubes*, the h region : from ca. 1680. O.E.D.

public. A public-house: coll.: 1709 warden's account (O.E.D.); ob. S woman keeps an inn, then ? interrupt A public, in a prim way, replied Blanc q.v.

public, adj. In, of, a public-house : C. 18-20. Ex preceding.

public buildings, inspector of. loafer : from ca. 1850 ; ob. Hence, of work : from ca. 1860 ; † by 1930

public ledger. A harlot : low : very ob. ' Because like that paper, all parties,' Grose, 2nd ed. Pu *Public Ledger* (of Philadelphia, 18 the Public Register.

public line, something in the. tualler : coll. Dickens, who, in 1 or, at the least, gave currency to— on *the public business.*

public man. A bankrupt : *Bal.*, 1811. Perhaps suggested woman (Fr. *femme publique*), a harlot

*public patterer. A ' swell m mobsman) who, pretending to be preacher, harangues in the open a crowd for his confederates to rob': 1910. H., 3rd ed., 1864. See patt

public-room men. ' In modern

Prudential men, or men of the Prudential. Officers in the Special Branch of the R.N.V.R.: Naval: 1939-45. With a pun on the Prudential insurance company. (P-G-R.)

prune is short for *Prune, P/O*. John Moore, in *The Observer*, Oct. 4, 1942, '"Lost anybody?" "Some prune who thought he could beat up the searchlights"'; B., 1942.

prune, v. To adjust or otherwise tinker with (a ship's engines): Naval: since ca. 1930. (P-G-R.)

Prune, P/O; in speech, Pilot Officer Prune. 'A pilot who takes unnecessary risks, and generally loses his neck through his *prunery*' and '"P/O Prune" is the title bestowed upon a pilot who has several "prangs" on his record' (H. & P.): R.A.F.: since ca. 1935. He is a constant em-blematic monitory figure in the pages of *The R.A.F. Journal.* Not unconnected with the im-practicality of 'prunes and prisms'. Created, Jackson tells us, by S/Ldr Anthony Armstrong and L.A.C.W. Hooper ('Raff').

prune-juice. Hard liquor: since ca. 1935. (Richard Gordon, *Doctor and Son*, 1953.)

Prussian Guard. A flea: Army: 1914-18. 'Dignity and Impudence.'—2. In the game of House, a card: rhyming s.: C. 20.

psych. A 'psychological' bet, one made on a hunch: Australian two-up players': since ca. 1930. (Lawson Glassop, *Lucky Palmer*, 1949.)

*psyche man. See front man.

psychedelia. 'Drugs, flashing lights, sound, colour, movies, dance—usually experienced simul-taneously' (Peter Fryer in *The Observer* colour supplement, Dec. 3, 1967): drug addicts' and hippies': since early 1967. Ex *psychedelic*

A MONUMENT TO SLANG

The speed at which slang moves can be sensed by trac-ing the natural history of what many regard as the greatest publication on slang: Eric Partridge's *Dictio-nary of Slang and Unconven-tional English*. This monumental work first appeared in 1937, with the sub-heading *Colloquialisms and Catch-phrases, Solecisms and Catachreses, Nicknames, Vulgarisms, and such Ameri-canisms as have been natu-ralized*. The second edition (1938) contained a substan-tial Addendum. The third edition appeared in 1948 with a much longer Adden-dum, largely consisting of new items from World War 2. By the time of the fifth edition (1960), the new

material had run to 100,000 words, and justified sepa-rate publication as a supple-mentary volume. There is now an integrated edition.

An extract from both vol-umes is shown, illustrating the first compilation, as well as the additional informa-tion discovered. Every page of the work shows its social, historical, and geographical range, and the meticulous care with which the author approached his task. It was a real labour of love, for Par-tridge was no salaried acad-emic, but a free-lance enthusiast. Although he lacked the means available to the *Oxford English Dictio-nary* to give full authentica-tion to all his historical observations on slang, his work was the first major col-lection of evidence about the development of a genre

which the first editors of the *OED* had almost completely ignored. The *Dictionary* was well received at the time, though when librarians dis-covered that it had 'those words' in it, many banned it from their shelves, and it is still often available only on restricted loan.

The *Dictionary* confirmed Partridge in his chosen career. In, 'Genesis of a Lexi-cographer', he wrote:

Although I have linguistic interests other than lexicog-raphy and etymology, and shall, I hope, be able to in-dulge myself in expressing them, yet, being a passably honest man, I am bound to admit the justice of the charge, 'Once a lexicog-rapher, always a lexi-cographer'. There are worse fates.

GODFATHER IV: THE DICTIONARY

Lexicography is not usually thought of as a dangerous profession – though opinions might change after read-ing Partridge's account of data sources for *A Dictionary of the Underworld, British and American* (1949).

Only a little of the underworld material that came to me direct was in written form, professional criminals being, with the exception of confidence tricksters ('con men'), notoriously inept with the pen, even 'penmen' or 'scratchers' being useless – outside of forgery. Luckily, famous criminals have employed 'ghosts', and they and other criminals have frequently been tapped by journal-ists and authors; prison chaplains and governors, or war-dens, are, to coin a phrase, mines of information; police officers, especially detectives, pick up many words and phrases; tramps and hoboes, whether ex-professional or amateur, tend much more than criminals to write of their experiences; special investigators into prostitution and the drug-traffic – that is, those of them who take their work seriously and are engaged therein for long periods – learn much of the cant (the philologists' term for 'language of the underworld') used by the purveyors and their customers; police-court proceedings are occa-sionally helpful. That is an incomplete though not a grossly inadequate list of the more accessible sources available to a researcher into cant.

But he who deals, or professes to deal, directly with the underworld has to be very careful. Criminals are nat-urally suspicious of a stranger: and usually they either withhold information or supply 'phoney' material.... . More than one British, and more than one American, journalist and social worker and philologist have had their legs pulled.

The book took Partridge 13 years to complete. How he avoided having more than just his leg pulled through-out this time is difficult to imagine.

THE DYING AND DEAD LEXICON

Words can come alive overnight (as happened to *sputnik*, on 4 October 1957); but they take decades to die. Indeed, deciding that a word is dead is by no means easy. For when *is* a word dead? Presumably, when no one uses it any more. But when can we be sure that people are no longer using a word? How much time should we allow to go by before we can say that a word has stopped being *obsolescent* (in occasional use by a few) and has come to be *obsolete* (used by no one)? In the case of the standard lexicon, we might have to wait for a whole generation to pass away, before an inquest would return anything other than an open verdict. In the case of small-group slang, a word may be born and die within weeks or months.

We can rarely observe the birth of a word (but see p. 139), and never its death – something of a problem, of course, for anyone interested in (lexical) natural history. On the other hand, there are several clues which tell us that a word is dying, and several corners of the lexicon which demonstrate the changelessness that we associate with death.

Quotations

A quotation is a fragment of socially-embalmed language. It is language which has been placed on a pedestal, freely available for anyone to use, but readily sensitive to abuse. An error (*misquotation*) may not always be noticed, but if it is, there is a real risk of peer-group derision. Anything which someone has said or written can be a quotation, but the term usually refers to those instances which have become 'famous' over the years. Both *To be or not to be* and *Let me see one* are extracts from *Hamlet*, but only the former has come to be treated as quotation.

It can be useful to distinguish quotations from catch phrases (p. 178). By definition, the utterances which fall within both of these categories have impact and are memorable, and most can be traced to a specific source. Catch phrases are, indeed, a species of quotation. But there are important differences. Catch phrases tend to be of spoken origin, very short, subject to variation, relatively trivial in subject matter, and popular for only a short period. Quotations tend to be of written origin, indeterminate in length, highly restricted in the contexts where they may be used, semantically more profound, and capable of standing the test of time. There is a colloquial tone to the former, and a literary tone to the latter. There is no identity.

Sometimes, especially with political utterances, it is possible to see shifting between the categories. Harold Macmillan's *never had it so good* (p. 179) began life as a quotation, became a catch phrase variant, and the

variant is now a quotation again. But when an utterance finally settles down as a quotation, there is no longer any capability for change. We might even consider it as a linguistic specimen, to be collected in the manner of a natural history or anatomy museum. Such catalogues, indeed, do exist, in the form of dictionaries of quotations. However, the analogy with death can be taken only so far before it too becomes moribund. Unlike an anatomical specimen in formaldehyde (horror films aside), a quotation may still exercise a strong and lively pragmatic effect (p. 286).

ON MYTHS AND MEN

Many quotations have become so well-known that they have entered the standard language, with their origins all but forgotten. How many now know that *the best-laid schemes of mice and men* is a quotation from Robert Burns' poem *To a Mouse*, or that *all hell broke loose* is from Milton's *Paradise Lost*? (*Of mice and men* is in fact a double quotation, as it was also used by John Steinbeck as the title of a novel). Several Shakespearian and Biblical quotations have entered the language in this way (pp. 63, 64).

Quite often, a quotation is adapted in the process. An example is *Ours not to reason why*, which is an adaptation of *Theirs not to reason why*, from Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1854). Sometimes, more subtle processes are at work. In 1981, British Conservative politician Norman Tebbitt included in a speech a reference to his father's search for employment, using the words *He got on his bike and looked for work*. The media headlined it with the older colloquialism *On your bike* ('Go away'), and today it is this phrase which most people would confidently assert to be what Mr Tebbitt said. Like Topsy, the story just 'grow'd'.

SO WHO WAS TOPSY?

'**H**ave you ever heard anything about God, Topsy?' The child looked bewildered, but grinned as usual. 'Do you know who made you?' 'Nobody, as I knows on,' said the child, with a short laugh. The idea appeared to amuse her considerably; for her eyes twinkled, and she added,— 'I spect I grow'd. Don't think nobody never made me.' (Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1851–2, Ch. 20.)

PROVERBS

Proverbial expressions have been given a variety of labels: *adages, dictums, maxims, mottoes, precepts, saws, truisms*. The terms all convey the notion of a piece of traditional wisdom, handed down by previous generations. In most cases, the origin of a proverb is unknown.

The effectiveness of a proverb lies largely in its brevity and directness. The syntax is simple, the images vivid, and the allusions domestic, and thus easy to understand. Memorability is aided through the use of alliteration, rhythm, and rhyme (p. 415). These points can all be identified in the following selection.

General
Children should be seen and not heard.
Still waters run deep.
Once bitten, twice shy.

Look before you leap.
A cat may look at a king.
An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
A friend in need is a friend indeed.
Every little helps.
Curiosity killed the cat.
Ask no questions, hear no lies.
It never rains but it pours.
The pen is mightier than the sword.

Scottish
Fuils and bairns never ken when they're weel aff. ('Fools and children never know when they're well off')
Ye canna tak clean water out o a foul wall. ('You can't take clean water out of a foul well')
Muckle whistlin but little redd land. ('Much whistling but little ploughed land')
There's aye some water whar the strikie drouns. ('There's always some

water where the steer drowns')
(From D. Murison, 1981.)

American
There's no such thing as a horse that can't be rode or a cowboy that can't be throwed.
Another day, another dollar.
Nothing is certain except death and taxes.
A friend in power is a friend lost.
The wheel that does the squeaking is the one that gets the grease.
The big possum walks just before dawn.
Every man must skin his own skunk.
Never trust a fellow that wears a suit.
Puttin' feathers on a buzzard don't make it no eagle.
Too many Eskimos, too few seals.
(From W. Mieder, 1992.)

Archaisms

An archaism is a feature of an older state of the language which continues to be used while retaining the aura of its past. Grammar and the lexicon provide the chief examples, though older pronunciations will from time to time be heard, and archaic spellings seen. The clearest cases are those which are separated by a substantial time-gap, notably those dating from Middle and Early Modern English (Part I).

• Lexical items include *behold, damsel, ere* ('before'), *fain* ('rather'), *hither, oft, quoth, smite, unto, wight* ('person'), *wot* ('know'), *yonder, varlet, forsooth, sire*.
• Grammatical features include present-tense verb endings (*-est, -eth*) and their irregular forms (*wilt, shouldst*, etc.), contracted forms (*'tis, 'twas, 'gainst, e'en* ('even'), *ne'er, o'er*), past tenses (*spake, clothèd*), pronouns such as *thou* and *ye*, and vocative (p. 220) constructions beginning with *O*.

The hunter of archaisms will find them in an unexpectedly diverse range of contexts. Most obviously, they are used in many historical novels, plays, poems, and films about such topics as King Arthur or Robin Hood. Novelists who have used archaic language in a careful way include Walter Scott in *Ivanhoe* and William Thackeray in *Esmond*. In poetry, Spenser and Milton were influential in maintaining an archaic tradition of usage (p. 125). Children's historical stories also tend to use them, albeit in a somewhat stereotyped manner. Archaisms can be found in religious and legal settings (p. 371, 374), in nursery rhymes and fairy tales, and (if the product warrants it) in trade names and commercial advertising. Rural dialects often retain words which have gone out of use in the standard language. And many older elements, such as *thorpe* ('village') and *lea* ('wood'), are preserved in place names (p. 140).

THUS WROTE ISILDUR THEREIN

The Great Ring shall go now to be an heirloom of the North Kingdom; but records of it shall be left in Gondor, where also dwell the heirs of Elendil, lest a time come when the memory of these great matters shall grow dim. It was hot when I first took it, hot as a glede, and my hand was scorched, so that I doubt if ever again I shall be free of the pain of it. Yet even as I write it is cooled, and it seemeth to shrink, though it loseth neither its beauty nor its shape. Already the writing upon it, which at first was as clear as red flame, fadeth and is now only barely to be read...
(J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 1954–5, Part I, Ch. 2.)

J. R. R. Tolkien
(1892–1973)
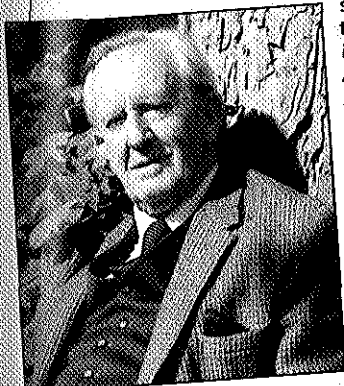
FORM !

" Good Heavens ! What a swell! What is it ? Tea-fight ? Wedding breakfast ?"
" Oh no ; only going to my tailor's. *Must* be decently dressed when I go to see *him*. He's so beastly critical !"

UNCOMMONLY DATED

Not all archaisms are ancient. Many items evoke Victorian or Edwardian times, and include a great deal of slang (p. 182) and social usage, as well as outmoded technical names and notions. In such cases as the following, we may prefer to give them a less definite label, such as *old-fashioned* or *dated*.

|	
beau	beastly
esquire	gov'nor
blest	(father)
(if I know)	grandpapa
bodice	luncheon
breeches	parlour
brougham	pray (sit
capital!	down)
civil (of you)	rotter
confound you!	spiffing
damnable	uncommon
(cheek)	(nice)
deuced	wireless

The stereotyped nature of archaic language in children's comic strips about historical characters can be seen in this piece from *Beano* (13 May 1939). The occasional *forsooth, varlet, zounds,* or *gadzooks* has been deemed enough to give such characters a historical identity.
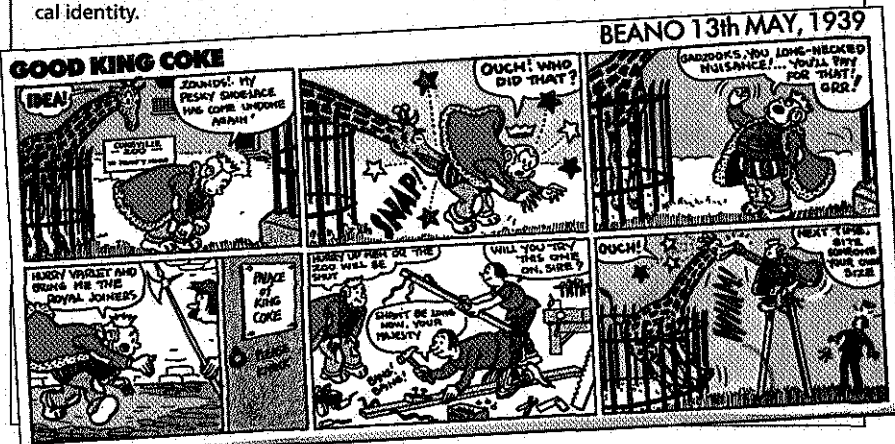
IN THE OLD STYLE

Archaic spellings and styles of writing immediately add an extra layer of meaning to a text, whether it be a pub sign or a poem.

In that open field
If you do not come too close, if you do not
    come too close,
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum
And see them dancing around the bonfire
The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie –
A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm
Which betokeneth concorde...
(T. S. Eliot, *East Coker*, 1944.)
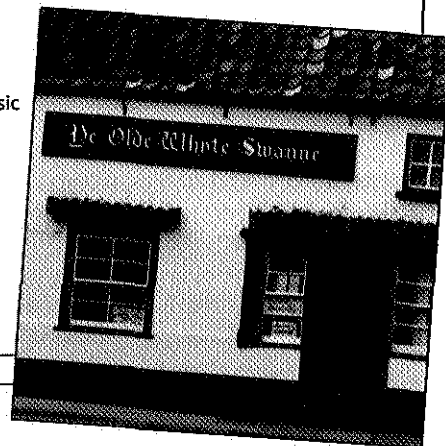
Clichés

In clichés we see fragments of language apparently dying, yet unable to die. Clichés emerge when expressions outlive their usefulness as conveyors of information. They are dying not from underuse, as with the gradual disappearance of old-fashioned words (p. 185), but from overuse. Such phrases as *at this moment in time* and *every Tom, Dick, and Harry*, it is said, have come to be so frequently used that they have lost their power to inform, to enliven, to mean. They have become trite, hackneyed expressions. And yet they survive, in a kind of living death, because people continue to use them, despite complaints and criticisms. They are, in effect, lexical zombies.

Why do clichés receive such a bad press? Because, in the view of the critics, it is the cliché-user who is the zombie. To use expressions which have been largely emptied of meaning implies that the user is someone who cannot be bothered to be fresh, clear, careful, or precise, or possibly someone who wishes to avoid clarity and precision. The suggestion is that such people are at best lazy or unimaginative, at worst careless or deceitful. In the case of learnèd clichés, perhaps they also wish to impress, to show off.

But clichés have their defenders, who point out that many of the expressions cited as clichés (such as those listed below) have a value. Indeed, their value is precisely the ability to express what the critics condemn. If we wish to be lazy or routine in our thinking, if we wish to avoid saying anything precise, then clichés are what we need. Such wishes are commonplace. It is not possible to be fresh and imaginative all the time. Life is full of occasions when a serious conversation is simply too difficult, or too energetic, and we gratefully fall back on clichés. They can fill an awkward gap in a conversation; and there is no denying that there are some conversations which we would rather not have. In such circumstances, clichés are an admirable lexical life-jacket. The passing remarks as people recognize each other in the street but with no time to stop, the self-conscious politeness of strangers on a train, the forced interactions at cocktail parties, or the desperate platitudes which follow a funeral: these are the kinds of occasion which give clichés their right to be.

No one would be satisfied with clichés when we expect something better from a speaker or writer. A politician who answers a direct question with clichés can expect to be attacked or satirized. A student who answers a teacher's question with a cliché is, we hope, not going to get away with it. Likewise, we complain if we encounter poems, essays, or radio talks filled with clichés. But a blanket condemnation of all clichés is as futile as unthinking acceptance.

The need for a flexible view of cliché is reinforced by a collage of quotations from various places in Walter Redfern's book, *Clichés and Coinages* (1989). Clichés, he argues, are 'bad, indispensable, sometimes good'. On the one hand, they are 'comfortable', 'Musak of the mind', 'a labour-saving device', 'a line of least resistance'. On the other hand, they 'stop us thinking of nothing', and provide 'social lubrication', 'verbal caulking', 'useful padding'. But, whether we like them or not, one thing is certain: 'They are highly contagious, and there is no known immunity, except possibly silence … and even that only conceals the infection.'
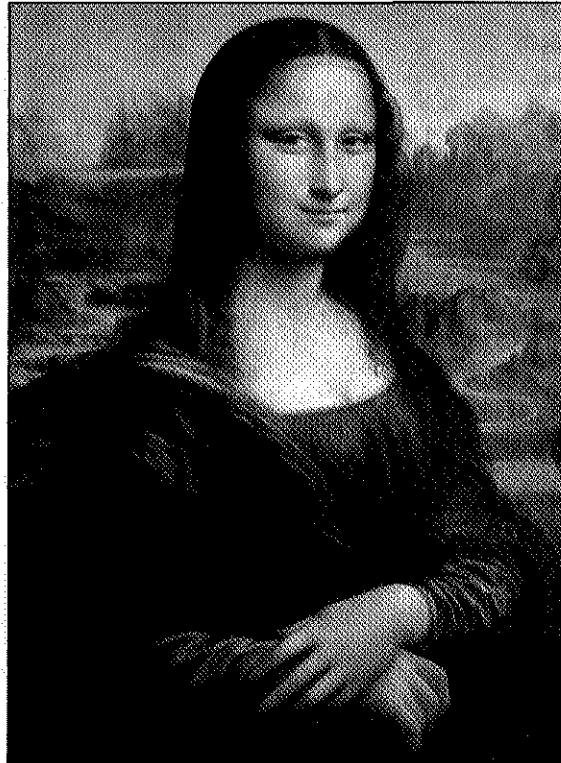
IN A NUTSHELL

If I may venture an opinion, when all is said and done, it would ill become me to suggest that I should come down like a ton of bricks, as large as life and twice as natural, and make a mountain out of a molehill on this issue. From time immemorial, in point of fact, the object of the exercise, as sure as eggs are eggs, has been, first and foremost, to take the bull by the horns and spell it out loud and clear. At the end of the day, the point of the exercise is to tell it like it is, lay it on the line, put it on the table – putting it in a nutshell, drop a bombshell and get down to the nitty-gritty, the bottom line. I think I can honestly say, without fear or favour, that I have left no stone unturned, kept my nose firmly to the grindstone, and stuck to my last, lock stock and barrel, hook line and sinker. This is not to beat about the bush or upset the apple-cart, but to give the green light to the calm before the storm, to hit the nail on the head, to bite the bullet, and thus at the drop of a hat to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

That's it. Take it or leave it. On your own head be it. All good things must come to an end. I must love you and leave you. I kid you not. Don't call us, we'll call you. And I don't mean maybe.

Am I right or am I right?

The words won't lie down

This quotation is from Dylan Thomas – or, at least, from a television dramatization of his last illness – and it acts as an effective epitaph to this part of the Encyclopedia. Whatever else we may say about the lexicon, and whatever we call the units (*words, lexemes, lexical items, idioms* ...), it is undoubtedly the area of language which is most difficult to systematize and control. Its size, range, and variability is both an attraction and a hindrance. It comprises the largest part of the forms and structures which make up a language. As a consequence, the present section is inevitably the largest in the encyclopedia.

The words will not lie down. Even if we left them alone, they would not, for vocabulary grows, changes, and dies without anyone being in charge. There is no Minister for the Lexicon, and in countries which do have an Academy with responsibility for the language, vocabulary rules (*au Quai*, for example, p. 181) with a bland disregard for the pronouncements of academics, politicians, and pedants. It is the most anarchic area of language.

But we do not leave words alone. We do not even let them rest in peace. There are linguistic resurrectionists, who try to revive words that have been dead for centuries – such as the Anglo-Saxon enthusiasts (p. 124). There are reincarnationists, who recall the previous existence of a word, and let it influence their lives (p. 125). There are revolutionaries, who are trying to change the lexical world today, and even that is too late (p. 177). There are resuscitators, who assail the letter-columns of publications with pleas to preserve past usage; redeemers, who believe that all words can be saved; and retributionists, who believe that, for some words, hanging's too good for 'em. A few, well-intentioned souls think that the government should legalize lexical euthanasia.

Lastly, there are the linguistic necrologists, who should be given the last word in any treatment of the lexicon. These are the people who collect last words and pore over them, attributing to them a fascination which no other quotations could possibly possess. The utterances are a source of pathos, humour, irony, joy, bewilderment, sadness – indeed, all possible human emotions. They provide an apposite coda to any study of the lexicon.

LAST WORDS

It has all been very interesting.
(Mary Wortley Montagu, 1762)

It would really be more than the English could stand if another century began and I were still alive. I am dying as I have lived – beyond my means.
(Oscar Wilde, 1900)

I've had eighteen straight whiskies, I think that's the record ... After 39 years, this is all I've done.
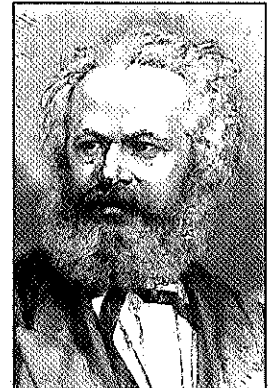(Dylan Thomas, 1953)

Make the world better.
(Lucy Stone, suffragist, 1893)

Now I'll have eine kleine pause.
(Kathleen Ferrier, 1953)

Go on, get out! Last words are for fools who haven't said enough.
(Karl Marx, 1883)

Does nobody understand?
(James Joyce, 1941)

On the whole, I'd rather be in Philadelphia.
(W. C. Fields, 1946)

The rest is silence.
(Hamlet)

If this is dying, I don't think much of it.
(Lytton Strachey, 1932)

I am about to, or I am going to, die. Either expression is used.
(Dominique Bouhours, grammarian, 1702)

(From J. Green, 1979.)

LEXICAL GHOST STORIES

A ghost word is one which has never existed in real life, but which nonetheless turns up in a dictionary. It often happens because lexicographers are human, and make mistakes. An error in copying, typing, programming, or filing can easily lead to a false spelling or hyphenation, and sometimes even a completely fictitious item. Once the dictionary has appeared, however, its 'authority' will then make readers assume that the form is genuine. Some people may begin to use it. Certainly other lexicographers will notice it, and it may then find its way into other dictionaries.

Such was the history of *dord*. In the early 1930s, the office preparing the second edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary* (p. 442) held a file of abbreviations, one of which was 'D or d' for *density*. When the work was published, in 1934, the item appeared as *Dord*, and given the meaning 'density'. Before long, the word was appearing in other dictionaries too.

This is a somewhat unusual case, but fictitious forms are certainly not rare. It is very easy for a lexicographer to imagine that a form exists, and to slip it into a dictionary, even though it may never have been used. Is there such a word as *antiparliamentarianism*? The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives evidence only of *antiparliamentarian*. Our intuitions very readily create these potential words.

Scientific terms have been particularly prone to ghost treatment, and none more so than medical terms. One study cites over a dozen nonstandard approximations for the disease whose standard name is *myelofibrosis*. And the field of speech pathology is well known for the uncertainty of its terminology. Someone suffering from a serious difficulty in pronunciation, for example, might be described as manifesting an *articulation disorder, articulatory handicap, articulatory defect, articulation syndrome, misarticulation,* or any of over a dozen other words or phrases. Dictionaries of speech pathology do not agree about which terms to include as legitimate alternatives, and in the absence of lexical research there is no guarantee that the terms a particular dictionary selects are the most commonly used ones – or, indeed, whether there is anyone out there using them at all.

Fragment (top left, typed)

as a fascination for
be "Railways have
"He is fascinated by
the rescuers had co'
have been saved.".

been saved" – what's
sult"?

'egotiating table" –
le into it every ti
thout a table?
Never ever". We use
was that in Never
"He was jeered" for
ally Telegraph, no
this one.

I hope I have not g
a teacher, by the w
d, but all the abov
erature of my blood
ing point.

Fragment (top centre, handwritten)

Pet hate – less for FEWER –

"less buses"
people
etc
etc

and one battle long-since lost

SPLIT INFINITIVES.

Fragment (top right, handwritten)

ear Sir, Help! What is this
modern craze for prefacing the
word "missing" with "gone"?
One hears it continually on T.V.
and radio! Surely someone
is missing. – "gone missing" is
tautology?

Fragment (upper right, handwritten fragments)

which make
by the word
used by sports comme
For instance – "He plays
or "He scored a convincing
What on earth does this me

Fragment (handwritten letter, centre left)

15ᵗʰ Feb 198

Dear David Crystal, You will see from my address that I am BASED about
fifty KILOMETERS from London. BASICALLY my wife SORT of told me
about your programme and I understand you have GIVEN THE GO AHEAD
to listeners to write in about what they find most HORRENDOUS about spoken
English in the TRANNY or the BOX.

Personally I've become increasingly concerned that
English is AT RISK but UP UNTIL now have refrained from writing
As far about it. Perhaps the deterioration is no DIFFERENT to what
it was in the past but spoken English does seem to be in an increasingly
VUNNERABLE (sic) SITUATION – one hopes my TEMPO RARE
HOPEFULLY mis comments may reach some HIGH RANKING official
who will be able to SORT OUT such conTROVersy before it
ESCALATES.

HAVING SAID THAT IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS
AND AT THE END OF THE DAY, THAT'S WHAT
IT'S ALL ABOUT!

Fragment (typed letters, centre)

he lives in the central area-r of th
He works in the area-r of horses. (W
I enjoyed a soprano aria-r in the St
There was an armada-r of ships in N
I felt a sense of awe-r and wonder.
The electric cinema-r in London sta
A Cortina-r or some car like it.
He has good data-r about X-Rays.
The drama-r of deteriorating homes
listen to Drama-r on R

Fragment (card, centre)

ENGLISH NOW

Thurs 11.50 am LW

It makes my
blood boil –
to hear! LESS
when it should
be FEWER

Fragment (handwritten letter, right)

Dear Sirs

I would appreciate your
about why so many eminent authors
of English, who must know better,
gravitate so abjectly to the regret
tendency that if enough idiots say
something wrong it becomes right,
instead of endeavouring to educate
same idiots into some appreci
he beauty found by using the
les of meaning in our very ver
guage.

Fragment (typed letter, bottom left)

The Presenter,
"English Now."
Radio 4.

Dear Sir,

A few weeks ago, on "English Now," you
asked listeners what it was in English usage which
particularly irritated them. I should like to reply:

1) The worst offender is the habitual use of
"hopefully", which should have an adverb meaning "in a
hopeful manner" and instead is used wrongly by most
of broadcasters to mean "I hope" "it is hoped" etc.
How can "hopefully" possibly be better than my hopes?
Its use is particularly bad when used in a sentence
like, "hopefully, this will soon stop happen
[How can "this" be "hopeful"? Is there no possibl
silly that this double stuping of a word can be
attempt

2) Another irritation is a matter of pronunciation.
the use of "th" ......

Fragment (typed letter, bottom centre)

21st February, 1988

Mr. David Crystal,
English Now,
BBC London,
W1A 1AA

Dear Mr. Crystal,

I welcome the return of your series.

You asked for examples of bad English that "make
our blood boil". I should like to oblige with
the following:

1. Pleonastic use of the subordinating
conjunction "that" after a parenthesis, e.g.,
"He said that, if it was raining, that he
would not go". This locution is frequently
heard now, even from educated people, but
to my knowledge no-one has drawn attention
to it.

2. Phrases like "... unfair to we old people".
Mind you, I have heard the speaker make up
for it by saying in the very next sentence
"Us old people don't like it"!

3. Sentences using the perfect infinitive
where the present one would be correct, e.g.,
"He would have liked to have done it" for
"He would have liked to do it" for, with a

Fragment (bottom right, typed)

7. "Negotiating table" – Why b
table into it every time?
without a table?

8. "never ever". He used to
or was that in Never Neve

9. "He was jeered" for "He was
Daily Telegraph, no less, of
this one.

I hope I have not given you an
a teacher, by the way, in st
d, but all the above solecisms
erature of my blood, though not
ing point.