THE RIGHT WORD IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Part 1

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We know that the life of the language ever grows and changes, with some remaining and others decaying, admitting the power of the masses over the language; and some dictions are destined to turn into clichés, archaisms, or obsolesces, but it is a plain fact that they once had raison d'être; and we cannot decide that none of them will have occasions in which they are to be happily utilized again. We ought to see them as they are, and find out from all points the reason why they have come out. Old expressions must not be disregarded only because they are old, while new ones should not be used only because they are new; some of them, whether they are old or new, have their places in which they are to be properly used. The choice of the precise word that will alone express the intended meaning, and the correct use of the word syntactically or idiomatically should be taken into consideration so that good style of writing or speaking will be able to be realized. Here this reminds me of Jonathan Swift's famous dictum, "Proper words in proper places, make the true definition of a style."

In conclusion, there are many causes in a change of speech habits. Our attitude should be towards the reliability of an available collection of linguistic facts, and of a careful investigation of it, because allowable usage is based on the actual practice of cultivated people rather than on rules of syntax or logic. When we cannot have a satisfactorily definite answer, the only thing that remains to be done, or that can be done, is to look at the facts and judge them for ourselves through our careful survey of them.

Monies

"The contract...in addition to prize money and other monies derived from the contest... will net her at least $11,000." (1) This is a sentence in the UPI news after Miss Kojima being named the Miss Universe of 1959, in Long Beach, California, in America.

Money is a mass word and the plural form monies is used when a writer or speaker wants to suggest such an avaricious man as Shylock—in speaking of different coinages, but about this archaic form monies the Evanses say, in their Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage, that "Here it has a pseudo-archaic flavor. The romantic effect is sometimes heightened by the obsolete spelling monies." (2)

The word money is originally derived from OF moneie, so that we can understand the plural form monies was made with the former e dropped and the s put in the end.

Albeit

This word is archaic, but it may be used in a proper place as what Gustave Flaubert calls "not propre." We found the following sentence in the UPI news from London before the final decision was made public; it was about Miss Chieko Ichinose, one of the contestans for the International Beauty Competition,... "I don't want a career, I
want to go home and help my mother as a girl should,' said Chieko, who...symbolizes...albeit reluctantly...the new place in the sun for Oriental pulchritude.” (3)

Archaisms are words or phrases belonging to an earlier period which are now out of current use and considered old-fashioned; and these should be strictly avoided except when an archaic effect is desired. Here the reporter wanted, it is evident, to make that effect stand out.

Now we remember why the fall has been standardized as a synonym for the ordinary autumn. According to M. Nicholson, “the noun fall..., now chiefly in US, was current in England as early as the 16th century. Americans should have the courage to keep it alive.” (4)

Arrival into

"It (sc. a 100-year-old-American flag) was first borne into Tokyo, then known as Yedo, in December 1857 and was used by Townsend Harris, American first consul general to Japan, to dramatize his arrival into the city to negotiate what was to become an historical treaty.” (5) This is another sentence in the UPI news.

According to SOED, arrive is construed with at, in, upon, but construing with into or to is obsolete. I am sure the reporter of the above sentence used this phrasing meaningly—to show vividly and dramatically and in an old-fashioned way Harris’s arrival into the city where it was then difficult for foreigners to enter with such an intention.

No sooner...then

“Well, no sooner had I said it then the driver swerved to avoid some obstruction on the road,...” (6) M. Felton.

We could expect her to use as soon as rather than no sooner...than or no sooner...when, because it is notorious that her style is very familiar, and yet we found there no sooner...then, an older form than no sooner...but which Shakespeare and D. Defoe usually did. (It may be said in this connection that in his Robinson Crusoe Defoe used no sooner...but thirteen times while he did no sooner...than only twice.)

Consulting with the dictionary, we know that “OE, =THEN, than; A is better than B orig. =A is better, then B.” (7) Here is, too, one of the important problems in our attitude towards studying English in the fact that such an archaic expression is employed even in a plain style of writing as Miss Felton’s.

The adverb directly can be also used as a conjunction meaning as soon as in the same way in which most conjunctions developed from adverbs. This word has been established in English literature by Dickens, Thackeray, and Matthew Arnold, and now, in spite of the objections to this particular one by some grammarians, especially in America, where the minute and the moment are used more frequently than it, this is largely an English usage in colloquial speech as well as in formal writing.

How come

The older literary form how come may still be used in question, as in “How come the schools don’t close on Beethoven’s birthday?” This expression is followed by an infinitive when come has a personal subject, as in “How came you to be there?” The Evanses say, “When used in the present tense without a subject, the construction is
impersonal, meaning *how comes it*, and is followed by a clause, as in *how comes you were there.* These two constructions are acceptable in present-day American English. Such an impersonal construction as *How come* you don't go there? having no ending *s* does not stand in the same way. It is used in speech only.

Alibi

This word originally meant, in law, the plea that when an alleged act took place one was elsewhere, but it has come to be used in common speech as a synonym for excuse by a natural extension. In fact there is a perpetual shifting of the meaning of words. As to the origin of this new meaning in America, it is said it has come from the frequent excuses of a certain baseball player for wrong plays that he did, explaining away his failures.

In England, too, this *alibi* was used as a noun in one case and as a verb in another. H. G. Wells writes, ...the quotation is rather long, but I dare write down it, because it is very important for us to know—, "The other day I had a grossly insulting letter (anonymous, of course) declaring that my contempt for a 'classical' training had led me to use 'alibi' as an equivalent for 'excuse,' whereas it has no such meaning. The poor gentleman was scandalously ignorant of his Dickens and his Dictionary. Sam Weller gave a new twist to 'alibi,' and from the great Oxford English Dictionary, my correspondent will learn that in the English language now, not only is this meaning for 'alibi' as an evasion accepted, but that there is a verb, 'to alibi,' with various derivatives, carrying exactly the sense I gave it." (9)

In English the conversion of noun into verb is most usual. Such a phenomenon appeared in about the 16th century when the inflection *-en* of the infinitive dropped off, the forms of noun and verb becoming the same; and in the 17th century this ceased to be by the readjustment of the English language, and then in the 19th century gained headway, most nouns being used as verbs, and vice versa. This can be said to be one tendency in present-day American English.

For example: (to) powder, (to) people, (to) eye. (to) husband. (to) author, etc.

As to the last example, Mr. Nakamura points it out in a sentence in *Time* (March 24, '61, p. 10)— "Born in Japan (of U.S. parents) and married to a Japanese, Scholar-Diplomat Reischauer served in the State Department in the 1940s, has *authored* an armful of books on the Orient." (9) One more example: "Don't 'woman-and-dog-and-walnut tree' me!" (10)

As a matter of fact

This is one of those clichés which should be avoided in writing. The substitutes can be found in a second thought: for these threadbare, ready-made and hackneyed expressions which are spoilt by over-familiality, but there are certain times when it is not so easy to avoid them in talking; they sometimes slip out only too ready, but they sometimes are necessary to be used. So they should not be shunned only because they are trite or stereotyped.

Cliché is part of the French verb *clicher*, which means *to mould or cast*. The very first cliché in England was a "respectable female" ...a safe description of any woman not obviously a criminal.
The expression *as a matter of fact* is sometimes interjected into the conversation in order to give the interjecter time to think of some way of evading the facts. A number of trustworthy writers use this in their writing. I will give one example from Heffner's scientific treatise:

"As a matter of fact, the distinction is commonly not at all clearly marked in this way unless the level of presupposition requires it to be...." (11)

*It goes without saying* is another word-fault-to-be-avoided, but this is so often heard, just being similar to the Japanese "Sore wa iwazumo gana da yo."

Lyell says, "That goes without saying is used in ordinary speech." (12)

The word *pray* as in "Pray tell me" (cf. Please can you tell me?), which originally means "beseech earnestly for thing," is frequently used in conversations in the works by many famous writers.

"Pray understand, then, .. that I intend to remain with you." (13)

"'Pray sit down,' said Mr parker Pyne."—Agatha Christie.

It is known the verb *intend* with *to*-infinitive is another cliche and *intend* - *ing* as in "I intend going there" can be used in conversation, but this expression also is often heard or seen in familiar syle of talking or writing.

Have a bath

In England it can be known by his diction what classes a man belongs to. According to Nancy Mitford, a man who uses *have a bath* belongs to the upper classes, while one who does *take a bath* to the non-upper classes. (14)

Wyld also describes, admitting the difference of age occasions differences in vocabulary, etc.— "The young may sometimes notice the elders use words...which they themselves would never dream of employing. Such are 'to drink tea,' instead of 'have tea,' or come to tea'; 'to take wine with' someone, instead of 'to drink his health,' and so on." (15)

A noun can always express the essential meaning of a verb. A relatively empty verb can be used with a noun that carries the same meaning of the verb which is enough meaningful, as *have a dance, have a dream, have a walk, have a look, have a try, have a long talk, have a dry run*, etc.

Hornby explains like this, "Verbs such as *rest, drink, dine, smoke, walk*, are often replaced by *have a rest, have a drink, have dinner, etc.*

Did you *have a pleasant walk?* Don't you sometimes *have a rest? Did you have a sleep?*" (16)

This practice has become very popular in the last thirty or forty years. In spoken English, those constructions are heard more often than the direct forms composed of the verbs without nouns. It is simply a very powerful trend in present-day English. In written English there are cases, of course, where the direct forms without nouns are used, as in "Mrs Packington lunched, teaed, tangoed, dined, danced, and supped." (17)

We could go to such extremes as to say that we would need only the verb *to be* and the appropriate nouns in order to express all the English verbal ideas.

Turn in

"When my husband and I *turned in* at 1 a.m. two mornings ago, the crowds on the
board-walk were still eating with unabated enthusiasm." (18) This is a sentence in INEZ ROBB, an essay by a certain woman. It is noteworthy that this still intimate but less slangy phrase is used in literary English, though we can understand her type of writing is familiar by another sentence of hers, too, in the same essay, as "Every man, woman and child eats while he strolls, and the variety and amounts consumed are awesome."

R. C. Pooley clearly recognizes at least five gradations of tone in the commonplace circumstance of going to bed, each one being appropriate to a particular situation:

1. I think I'll hit the hay.
2. It's time for me to turn in.
3. I believe I'll go to bed.
4. I think it is time to retire.
5. I shall withdraw to seek repose." (19)

Here he gives each sentence each explanation.

For example:

Sentence 3. is the simplest and most direct of the five forms; it is acceptable usage in almost any circumstance.

I have once quoted his idea in my thesis from another point of view, but I cannot help mentioning again because this is very useful for us to bear in mind.

By the way, the following is another example by the same author about the idea expressed by the verb to go.

"1. You'd better scram!
2. Get out fast.
3. You ought to go.
4. It is necessary to go.
5. Get thee hence!"

Bacteria

Traditionally speaking the word bacteria is regarded as a plural form of bacterium, which is very rarely used in general English, but "When it refers to a class or a variety, it may also be treated as a singular, as in 'this particular bacteria is harmless' and 'a new bacteria has happened'. In this sense, a regular plural in s is sometimes heard, as in 'not enough is known about the bacterias'. This is acceptable, but a double latin plural, bacteriae, is not." (20) Let us give one more example.

"He read that article about how much bacteria there is in food."

This is almost the same with the data. In the social sciences data is usually treated as a singular noun meaning information or collection of facts, despite the fact that it is a Latin plural.

On the other hand, in the physical sciences data is more often treated as a plural.

The use of data as a singular form like this has been doubtlessly established, not because of logical correctness, but because of social preference.

But of the three plurals of phenomenon, phenomenons probably does not evoke a greater deal of comment and criticism than phenomena or phenomenas.

Flowers of this kind
When demonstrative pronouns are used as adjectives with nouns like sort, class, kind, type, some difficulty almost always arises especially to us foreign students in English. The four following patterns are possible.

1. these kind of flowers
2. this kind of flowers
3. this kind of flower
4. flowers of this kind

Pattern 1, both in speaking and writing, was often perceived by the 19th century grammarians as acceptable and correct. But nowadays this diction is rarely used. In this case these agrees with flowers whereas it should agree with kind.

Pattern 2 is said to be formal English. But even this does not sound too satisfactory. Pattern 3 is the expression suitable to a modern tendency which makes both nouns singular.

Pattern 4 is the re-arranged one by which we can come easiest out of the difficulty.

References

8. H. G. Wells: Shall We Have a World Language?
10. George Meredith: An Assembly at the Pilot Inn.

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