

formation of compounds, back formations (as *burgle* from *burglar*), and folk etymology. In the next chapter we are treated to a survey of English borrowings from various languages throughout the historical English period and finally, in *Words and Meanings*, types of semantic change are mentioned and euphemism and taboo words are discussed. Amusing is the British Captain Marryat's account of the American taboo on the word *leg* in Victorian times. After being told that this word was never used in the presence of ladies he visited a school for young ladies where he saw, according to his own testimony, 'a square pianoforte with four limbs', dressed, moreover, in little frilled pantalettes!

When all is said and done, this book makes interesting enough reading and the index of words, affixes and phrases which is appended enables one to refer to information on words both new and not-so-new. The maps of the Old English and Middle English dialect areas, new in this edition, help to impress the divisions more readily in the reader's memory. Pyles writes lucidly, easily, sometimes with his tongue in his cheek. It is a pity though that his approach is precisely the same as that encountered in most books on the history of English, that is to say, strictly traditional. There is no shortage of such works and one feels that a definite focus on the dynamics of syntactic, semantic and phonological change, rather than a concentration on collecting word lists for each period, would lead to a better understanding on the part of the reader of the *process* of linguistic change in English, thereby enhancing the value of this work as a university text.

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The Public Service Commission, *Talking About English*, Volume 1, nos 1 and 2, October – November 1974.

The editor of this publication disclaims any intention of 'cover[ing] ground which has already been so expertly and entertainingly covered by the ... greats', such as H.W. Fowler, Sir Ernest Gowers and others. For whereas the 'greats' examined English usage and abuse in a purely English-speaking society, this monthly 'newsletter' is designed to assist

the public servant who 'is obliged to use the two languages constantly'. It therefore concerns itself with those specifically South African problems which arise when the two official languages 'interfere' with each other.

I agree with his contention that 'languages in contact in [the South African's] own mind and in the society of which he is part' will inevitably 'rub off' on each other. He quotes Paul Christophersen to reinforce his claim: '... the regular use of an additional, a second-learned language, whatever its particular role and however learned, gives rise to special problems of bilingualism, which do not exist among unilingual people...'

The editor reveals a clear insight into the problem and handles it competently, with a modicum of sly humour which renders the 'newsletter' entirely readable. He begins by quoting an elementary example of contamination of the two official languages, in the words *lemon* (*suurlemoen*) and *lemoen* (*orange*). These 'false friends... look so much alike and are apparently so closely akin to each other that one readily believes them to be equivalent or at least similar in meaning'. He then adds humorously (and perhaps reminiscently):

Confusion of these two through infelicitous translation or interpretation is likely to cause trouble in the kitchen and ruffle tempers in the pub.

The writer admits to some difficulty in 'preparing a guide ... for a readership ranging from people of rather limited ability in English as their second language, to those who have attained a high standard of proficiency in the language'. He does, however, consider that this is a necessary exercise, in view of the fact that the examples of errors have been chosen for the following reasons:

1. Frequency of occurrence in telephone enquiries made to the Language Services Bureau by public servants and members of the public of both language groups.
2. Frequency of occurrence in documents submitted to the Bureau by Government departments.
3. Frequency of occurrence in the English-language Press and radio new bulletins.

The method of assistance comprises a list of twenty faulty

sentences to be corrected by the reader before he turns to the answers and notes. A few examples are sufficient to demonstrate the nature of the errors and the manner in which the editor corrects these and justifies his corrections:

Municipalities, divisional councils and other instances were invited to submit memoranda.

This is the answer and the comprehensive note:

The offending word is *instances* (Afr, *instansies*). *Instansie* is a very handy word in Afrikaans, since it can be used as an umbrella term for words like *authority*, *body*, *organisation* and even *individual* or *person*. Thus, if an Afrikaans writer has to refer to bodies, authorities and persons as diverse as the Provincial Administrations, benevolent societies, the mayor of a city, divisional councils, the CSIR and a judge of the Supreme Court, he has the decided advantage of being able to group them all together under the heading of *instansies*. But the English language has no equally flexible term that can be used in such cases. The best way of rendering the word *instansies* in English is to use a phrase like *bodies and organisations* or *bodies and authorities* or *bodies, authorities and individuals*, depending on how inclusive the Afrikaans word is in its particular context.

Of course the word *instance* has its proper place in English, as the following examples will show:

In the first *instance* (place) (Afr. *in die eerste instansie*) you should have consulted your doctor.

I can give you several *instances* (examples) of people who have been misled by this instruction.

Several members of the committee objected, *for instance* (for example), Mr X and Mr Y.

The enquiry was held *at the instance* (request, suggestion) of the Government.

This matter should be decided by the *court of first instance* (Afr. *hof van eerste instansie*).

He was able *to instance* (give examples of) several cases where notices had not been received.

Another faulty sentence is the following:

Applicants holding a *baccalaureus* or *magister* degree will be eligible for appointment.

The discussion reads:

Here the 'false friends' are the respectable-looking Latin words *baccalaureus* and *magister*. Of course this does not mean to say that all Latin words are suspect in English. Many of them have become so much a part of the language that they hardly strike one as being Latin, e.g. *memorandum*, *compendium*, *data*, *addendum*, and a host of others. But the point we want to make here is that the Latin word is not always equally appropriate in Afrikaans and English. Thus our translation of *baccalaureus-* of *magistergraad* should be *bachelor's* or *master's degree*.

The sentence, 'You will have to get a *visum* to enter the country', contains what the editor refers to as 'another shady character parading in a respectable Roman toga!' The word *visum* (Afr. *visum*) should be *visa*.

In his final paragraph the editor warns that 'a single error of the kind given in these examples will mar an otherwise perfect passage of English, making the writer and, more important, the organisation he represents look silly'.

This is a most useful publication and we hope that it has come to stay.

Mey Hurter

Valerie Kay & Peter Strevens: *Beyond the Dictionary in English*, London, Cassell, 1974, 105 pp., Paper, n.p.

Because of the rapidity with which language develops and changes in meaning, and because of the fairly long period between the revision and up-dating of dictionaries, dictionaries are often little help to the person trying to understand current English colloquialisms. It is gratifying, therefore, to find 'a handbook of colloquial usage' designed to provide