

Bouquet

ET is a fine thing: not only do I keep in touch with aspects of English in which I already take an interest, but I also find myself getting fascinated by totally unknown areas of the language. *And* this is the third time I have struck gold in CrossworLd!

Eva Race,
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Urdu, Persian and English

I sympathise with Mrs Raana Sheikh (Post & Mail, *ET* 33 Jan 93) as regards English words used in Urdu. However, I would like to draw her attention to the fact that a great deal of Persian entered that language some time ago, when Persian was a 'high' language in the Indian subcontinent. With the spread of English and its popularity as a prestige language today, is it really surprising that Pakistanis draw its words and phrases into their language?

Feri McArthur
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A legislative 'themselves'

In response to your invitation in *ET* 22 (Apr 90) for examples of the use of 'themselves', I am reliably informed that the word is being used in legislation of the legislature of the province of Ontario.

I therefore enclose a photocopy of a provision of the *Psychologists Registration Act* of that province, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.36 that uses the word 'themselves'. I also enclose a photocopy of a part of a recent column from the *Toronto Sun* newspaper that was sent to me by a legislative counsel in Toronto. The author of this

'Themselves'

The Toronto Sun, Friday Sept

BREAKING NEW GROUND: All hail Bill 112, section 25 of the new Ontario Building Code Act. "Any person," it begins, "who considers *themselves* aggrieved by an order or decision made by an inspector or chief building official under this act..." It's always a happy day when a new English word is invented. *Themselves*. Apparently an effort to avoid using *himself* or *herself*, both of which are actually words but - alas - gender specific. But what's wrong with *themselves*? Did we need a new one?

Chap. P.36

PSYCHOLOGISTS REGISTRATION

(2) A person purports to be a psychologist when that person holds themselves out to the public by any title, designation or description incorporating the words "psychological", "psychologist" or "psychology" or words in any language to that effect and under such title, designation or description offers to render or renders services of any kind to one or more persons for a fee or other remuneration.

column deplores the invention of that new English word(!).

As a recent convert to the singular 'they', I look forward to *ET*'s continuing to report on singular uses of 'they', 'them' and 'themselves'.

Sandra C. Markman,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

terms for, e.g., *The Rights of Man* (sorry, *humankind*), *righting wrongs*, *the right answer*, *gauche*, *sinister*, *dexterity*, even *rectifying*, *rectangular*, *rector*, *direct(ion)*, while 'correct' itself would be suspect.

Seriously, though, such views are a backlash against cruel and violent attitudes that still linger from the past of 'civilized' nations. But they only varnish the surface with often absurd and sense-blurring Newspeak, and with actions against justice and common sense they seem a far from harmless example of a too common disease which I propose to call *doctrineeropathy*: the obsessive embracing of unwarrantable beliefs or codes (*credo quia impossibile*). The traits that PC objects to were once brutal products of a reverse doctrineeropathy, and we see all over the world the inhumanity of man to man (truly, of person to person) fuelled and 'justified' by doctrinaire slogans. We may call the instigators *doctrineeropaths*, who *doctrineer* without humour, criticism, moderation or sense. We

Wordism and worse

The Oxford Companion to the English Language judiciously notes that politically correct 'is applied, especially pejoratively by conservative academics and journalists in the US, to the views and attitudes of those who publicly object to: (1) The use of terms that they consider . . . sexist . . . racist . . . ableist . . . ageist . . . heightist . . . (2) Stereotyping . . . (3) "Inappropriately directed laughter". PC's sea-green incorruptibles haven't yet noticed the controversial slings and arrows of right-versus left-handedness. If they ever attack *handism* we might expect 'a left angle', and a set of new

are the only species that is capable of, and yearns for, enthusiastic adherence to the untenable and often wicked, down through the *auto da fe* to 'ethnic cleansing'. At the very least, this is a wasteful misuse of spiritual and mental powers: *homo insipiens insipiens* should wake up to the global realities.

David I. Masson,
Leeds, England

Diglossia, triglossia, polyglossia, hyperglossia – one last (final!) time!

The fantastic letter by Frederick Robinson of Glasgow (*ET32*, Oct 1992, p. 63) was charming, amusing and witty, yet also dead wrong in its claim that English is 'every bit as polyglossic as Arabic'. Arabic, like all languages, has synonyms, and not all synonyms, of course, are instances of polyglossia. Thus to take but a single illustration, Robinson's example of 'proposed', 'suggested', and 'put forward', I would claim, is synonymous in

Readers' letters are welcomed. *ET* policy is to publish as representative and informative a selection as possible in each issue. Such correspondence, however, may be subjected to editorial adaptation in order to make the most effective use of both the letters and the space available.

For value deceived

I'm returning these grapes,
Dear Purveyor of Food.
The price is all right
And the flavor is good,
But they're showing all signs
Of advanced *raisinhood*!

Alma Denny,
New York

certain contexts and not, as he postulates, triglossic variants since synonymy may or may not include matters of register. You can call me 'Dad', 'Daddy', 'Pop(s)', 'Pappy', 'Father', 'Pater', 'Prof.', 'Professor Kaye', 'Alan', as Robinson notes, or even 'Hey (you)', etc., depending on various factors (which are not really germane to our issue at hand here). I maintain all languages have things of this sort, so all languages are, in this trivial sense, polyglossic. So what's the point of the term then?

To turn now to the Arabic language, it is important to keep in mind that Modern Standard Arabic is no one's native tongue; furthermore, it is a different language with a different grammatical system from the native colloquial Arabic of Moroccans, Egyptians, Sudanese, Iraqis, and so on. I have explained all this and lots more in an article, 'Modern Standard Arabic and the Collquials' (*Lingua*, vol. 24, 1970) and elaborate on the sub-

ject once again with further parallels and reactions to the views of many colleagues in a (1993) paper of mine forthcoming in the *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* entitled 'Formal versus Informal in Arabic: Diglossia, Triglossia, Quadriglossia, etc., Polyglossia-Multiglossia Viewed as a Continuum'. The case of Arabic is, as I have tried to show therein, quite unique and fundamentally different from that of English, although there are, of course, similarities (as I have pointed out in *ET28*, Oct 91).

The short piece by David Crystal ('Your Turn', *ET32*) easily convinces me he is one of the most innovative and most creative linguists working today. Although I never thought about the matter before, finishing up another speaker's sentences is surely an instance of formal vs. informal style (= diglossia) in English. Crystal is right to note that this could rarely happen in 'an interviewee's finishing off an interviewer's question' (p.44); yet I suggest that this *is* possible and researching it will prove to be quite revealing, I would think. David, get busy! You have miles to go before you sleep, and we have hours of pleasurable reading of your work ahead of us.

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South African Indian English *continued from page 16*

those which engendered pidgin and creole languages. However, the reader should not be misled into anticipating all kinds of problems in the classroom because of the differences stressed in this article. For one thing, the characteristics of SAIE usually surface in intimate and informal conversations; increasingly many young speakers are able to shift to more standard ways of speaking in public and formal discourse. There has never been a problem in the interface between dialect and

standard in the classroom, given that almost all teachers in the apartheid system share the same background as their pupils. Furthermore, the writing abilities of pupils seem to me to be improving all the time. EJ

References

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Mesthrie, R. 1992. *A Lexicon of South African
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