

**Strange, but english...
language plus vocabulary oddities, and not only...**

*The words of a living language are like creatures: they are alive.
Each word has a physical character, a look and a personality,
an ancestry, an expectation of life and death, a hope of posterity.*

Morris Bishop, American Linguist

Everyone, from beginning learners in English to language professionals, knows the frustration of not having 'the right word' immediately available in one's lexicon. Sometimes it is a matter of not being able to recall the right word, sometimes we never knew it. It is also frustrating to read or cope with assignments based on genuine texts and run across words whose meanings elude us. Building a vocabulary that is adequate to the needs of one's reading and self-expression has to be a personal goal for every language learner acquiring authentic-like writing and speaking skills.

To bring up word patterns as well as word choice awareness is of no doubt one of the key factors in achieving excellence in teaching together with grammar, syntax, organization, content, purpose and audience awareness in writing and public speaking, which in their unity lead to clear, fluent and effective communication of ideas. Equally crucial is to pay attention to stylistic awareness that helps students gauge the impression their words will make on others. The better they understand the circumstances that prompt them to write or speak, the better they can correspond, adjusting their style to suit the specific context. It should also be kept in mind that each of us has a unique, individual voice that comes across in all our written and spoken performance, thus to get what we want or to impress a reader or a listener we are to change our style and know how it could be done in practice. Unfortunately present-day manuals omit minor language oddities which in real-life fulfil major roles in creating humorous effect, becoming buzz-words or politically correct phrases.

In the course of a workshop, together with fascinating factual information on language records, we would like to propose a number of absorbing activities which could be used in writing class with students whose command of English is fairly advanced. The educational design of the materials presented encourages learners to think more clearly and critically as well as to develop their own voices as speakers, participants of discussion and, consequently, as writers. A delightful collection of modern euphemisms, portmanteaux words, brand-new neologisms, reduplicatives, politically correct vocabulary, overelaborate wordage, tautologies and pleonasm, contradictory proverbs, sayings, celebrity styled quotations, contemporary aphorisms, bushisms, notorious mistranslations and funny signs, which lay the basis of numerous tasks, offers EFL learners a wealth of linguistic and cultural information to be relied on.

With the aim to determine a number of reasons why word choice matters so much to learners we demonstrate a selection of awareness-raising exercises (with a focus on elicitation, multiple choice, gap-filling, mind-map compilation, finding 'an odd man out', synonyms differentiation, definition compilation, mistakes analysis, etc.) logical sequence of which leads to better word application through language acquisition, and

what is more creates an invaluable resource bank for both learners and teachers of English as a second language.