

Language Studies for the Senior School

高等院校用英语语言研究 [英]

Celestina Kitson

World Publishing Corp
The Jacaranda Press

Language Studies for the Senior School

Celestina Kitson

World Publishing Corp
The Jacaranda Press

First published 1980 by
THE JACARANDA PRESS
33 Park Road, Milton, Qld 4064
1 Thomas Holt Drive, North Ryde, N.S.W. 2113
90 Ormond Road, Elwood, Vic. 3184
236 Dominion Road, Mount Eden, Auckland 3, N.Z.

Typeset in 10/12 pt and 11/12 pt Helios Light
and 11/12 pt English Times

Reprinted in Hong Kong 1981, 1982, 1985,
1988, 1989, 1990 (twice)

© Celestina Kitson 1980

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication data

Kitson, Celestina.
Language studies for the senior school.

Index.
ISBN 0 7016 1278 9.

1. English language. I. Title.

428

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording,
or otherwise, without the prior permission of
the publisher.

Authorized Reprint of the Original Edition, Published
by Jacaranda Wiley Ltd. No part of this book may be
reproduced in any form without the written permission
of Jacaranda Wiley Ltd. this special Reprint Edition is
Licensed for Sale in China excluding Taiwan, Province
of China, Hong Kong and Macao
Jacaranda Wiley 授权由世界图书出版公司重印, 限在中
国销售。

ISBN 7 - 5062 - 0998 - 5

Preface

The introductory material and passages for analysis in this book are intended to assist both teachers and students of the English language. The questions relating to the passages are open-ended, allowing for individual expression of ideas. However, a student who misreads any passage cannot be credited with originality. The student must be guided by the teacher into recognizing his or her error. (Such students are usually the last to accept guidance.)

The most productive teaching approach would be to read and to discuss the passages fully in class, and then to set the questions for homework. Students could bring their written answers to the next language lesson, where intelligent points of view could be exchanged. In the difficult field of language analysis, student self-evaluation ought to ensue from class discussion. The teacher's role is to facilitate this enlightenment.

This language text analyses English language usage. Perhaps the individual student or teacher will choose to concentrate on a particular field of usage. Each chapter has been written with the aim of interesting as many students as possible in all aspects of language.

Acknowledgements

The author and publisher gratefully acknowledge the kind permission of the following copyright holders to reproduce material in this book:

John Fairfax and Sons Ltd for the extract from "The Truth About Little Miss Muffet" by Russell Baker; Mirror Australian Telegraph Publications for the extract from "Mumble, Mumble, Mumble" by Elizabeth Riddell; Alistair Morrison for the extract from *Let Stalk Strine* by Afferbeck Lauder; Hodder and Stoughton Ltd for the extract from *Old Yeller* by Fred Gipson; Phillip Adams for his article "I Love This Bonzer Country"; Elizabeth Riddell for her article "Get a Load of This Lot of Ridgie-Didge Ocker Lingo"; Dudley Russell on behalf of Pam Ayres for "Puddings — A Slice of Nostalgia" from *Some More of Me Poetry* by Pam Ayres, published by Arrow Books, © Pam Ayres 1976; Chatto and Windus Ltd and William Faulkner's literary estate for the extract from *The Unvanquished* by William Faulkner; Faber and Faber Ltd for the extract from "Archygrams" from *Archy's Life of Mehitabel* by Don Marquis; J. P. Donleavy for the extract from *Meet My Maker the Mad Molecule*; Curtis Brown Ltd for the extract from *The Shiralee* by D'Arcy Niland; Paul Holmes and Tracks for the article "Pro Junior '79 Looking Good"; Spurt and Harlem for "Jive Talk"; Calder and Boyars Ltd for the extract from *The Soft Machine* by William Burroughs; Wild and Woolley Ltd for the extract from *Zimmer's Essay* by Adamson and Hanford; Cyril Pearl for his article "A Prestigious Property"; A. D. Peters and Co. Ltd for the extract from *The Pump House Gang* by Tom Wolfe; John Fairfax and Sons Ltd for the articles from the *Sun-Herald*, "Proper Use, Not Abuse at BBC" by Neil Ross, and "Outlaw Official Gobbledegook" by Bill Leslie; Mirror Australian Telegraph Publications for the article "Spare Us the Gobbledegook"; John Fairfax and Sons Ltd for the article from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "A Woman's Place in the Language" by Pauline Watson; Ronald Conway for his article "Psychobabble"; "Doctors' Jargon" by Michael Crichton reprinted by permission from *Time*, the weekly newsmagazine, © Time Inc., 1976; Cyril Pearl for his article "The Maze of Words"; "The Limitations of Language" reprinted by permission from *Time*, the weekly newsmagazine, © Time Inc., 1971; Max Harris for his article "Hated, Unfamiliar Words"; "The State of the Language, 1978" by Stefan Kanfer reprinted by permission from *Time*, the weekly newsmagazine,

© Time Inc., 1978; the extract from "On Children" from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., © 1923 by Kahlil Gibran and renewed 1951 by administrators C.T.A. of Kahlil Gibran estate, and Mary G. Gibran; Rev. Brother F. D. Marzorini for "Panegyric for John O'Keefe"; Simon and Schuster Inc., for the extract from "President Kennedy's Inaugural Address"; BBC and Peter Cook and Dudley Moore for the extract from the "Pete and Dud" radio script; Harold Pinter and Associated Book Publishers Ltd for the extract from *The Caretaker*, published by Eyre Methuen Ltd, © 1960 by Theatre Promotions Ltd; Collins Publishers for the extract from *High Road to China* by Jon Cleary; Harold Pinter and Associated Book Publishers Ltd for the extract from *The Birthday Party* published by Eyre Methuen Ltd, © 1959, 1960 and 1965 by Harold Pinter; Evans Brothers Ltd for the extract from *Billy Liar* by K. Waterhouse and W. Hall; "Endurance — But What Did It Mean?" by Donald Horne, reprinted by permission of Curtis Brown (Australia) Pty Ltd; Mirror Australian Telegraph Publications for the article from the *Daily Telegraph*, "How to Add Injury to Insult"; Phillip Adams for his article from the column "Adams' Rib"; Faber and Faber Ltd for "As I Walked Out One Evening" from *Collected Poems* by W. H. Auden; Evelyn Waugh and Associated Book Publishers Ltd for the extract from *The Loved One* by Evelyn Waugh, published by Chapman and Hall; Mrs Laura Huxley and Chatto and Windus Ltd for the extract from *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley; Mrs Sonia Brownwell Orwell and Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd for the extract from *Nineteen Eighty-four* by George Orwell; "Sportsfield" by A. D. Hope from his *Collected Poems 1930-1970* reprinted by permission of Angus and Robertson Publishers; Phillip Adams for his article "Victims of a System"; "Birches" by Robert Frost reprinted from *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, edited by Edward Connery Latham, by permission of the estate of Robert Frost, the editor and Jonathan Cape Ltd; Faber and Faber Ltd for "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T. S. Eliot from *The Collected Poems 1909-1962*; Michael Yeats, Anne Yeats and The Macmillan Co. of London and Basingstoke for "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats from *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*; Granada Publishing Ltd for "the twentieth century" by e. e. cummings from *Complete Poems*; Mrs Sonia Brownwell Orwell and Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd for the extract from *Nineteen Eighty-four* by

George Orwell; Mrs Laura Huxley and Chatto and Windus Ltd for the extract from *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley; Ogilvy and Mather (Australia) Pty Ltd for the Cyclax Skin Revival moisture lotion advertisement; Ford Motor Co. of Australia Ltd for the Capri advertisement; Donnelly-Smith and Associates Pty Ltd for the Mazda 626 advertisement; Mirror Australian Telegraph Publications for the editorials "Pig-headed Teachers" and "An Appalling Story"; Australian Government Publishing Service for the extract from the debate on "Termination of Pregnancy: Medical Benefits 1979"; Hutchinson Publishing Group Ltd for the extract from *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler; Hodder and Stoughton Ltd for the extract from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Graham; Faber and Faber Ltd for the extract from *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard; Edward Albee and Jonathan Cape Ltd for the extract from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee; the extract from *Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov from *Chekhov: The Major Plays*, a new translation by Ann Dunnigan, © 1964 by Ann Dunnigan, reprinted by arrangement with the New American Library, Inc., New York, N.Y.; Faber and Faber Ltd for the extract from *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett; the extract from *Sons and Lovers* by D. H. Lawrence reprinted by permission of Laurence Pollinger Ltd and the estate of the late Mrs Frieda Lawrence Ravagli; Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd for the extract from *Forbidden Colours* by Yukio Mishima, translated by Alfred H. Marks; the extract from *Tree of Man* by Patrick White reprinted by permission of Chatto, Bodley Head and Jonathan Cape Australia Pty Ltd and Curtis Brown Ltd, London.

Illustration credits

p. 6, Stanley A. Sawicki for the "Strife: Be in It" poster; p. 8, Alistair Morrison and Paul Hamlyn Pty Ltd for the illustration from *Let Stalk Strine*; pp. 13, 116 and 131, Mirror Australian Telegraph Publications and Phillip Adams for the photograph of Phillip Adams; p. 19, BBC Hulton Picture Library for the painting "The Crown of the Feast" by Mrs E. M. Ward, 1865; p. 25, W. Blackburn for his photograph of a cockroach; p. 29, West Australian Newspapers Ltd for the outback photograph; p. 32, Allen Crisp for his photograph from *A Certain Age*; p. 36, Rob Tonge and Associates for the surfing photograph

from *Discover Noosa and Surroundings*; p. 38, The Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive, for the still from *New Orleans*; p. 48, the editor, *Education News*, for the cartoon from *Education News*, Vol. 16, No. 12, 1979; p. 50, BTQ Channel 7, Brisbane, for the photograph of a newsreader; p. 54, Field Newspaper Syndicate and Alan Foley Pty Ltd for the *Wizard of Id* cartoon strip; p. 56, Julian Wasser for his photograph of Dr Michael Crichton; p. 63, Mirror Australian Telegraph Publications for the photograph of Max Harris; p. 68, Robin Smith Photography Pty Ltd for the photograph of "Queen Victoria's Assent", from *The Birth of Australia*; p. 73, The Lord Chamberlain for the painting "Apollo and Diana" by Lucas Cranach the Elder, reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen; p. 79, BBC Hulton Picture Library for the engraving of the dock strike, 1889; p. 81, Australian Associated Press Pty Ltd for the photograph of J. F. Kennedy; p. 84, *Pol* magazine for the photograph of Fred Scepisi; pp. 86 and 91, British Broadcasting Corporation for the photograph of Peter Cook and Dudley Moore, and for the photograph from the production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*; p. 94, Richard Meikle and *Theatre Australia* for the photograph of the Independent Theatre production of *The Caretaker*; p. 98, The Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive for the still from Franco Zeffirelli's production of *Romeo and Juliet*, © 1965 by Paramount Pictures Corporation; pp. 110, 111, Mirror Australian Telegraph Publications for the Mitchell cartoon and for the photograph of R. Menzies; p. 122, The Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive for the still from *The Barefoot Contessa*; p. 130, John Fairfax and Sons Ltd for the photograph of football players; p. 134, Australian Youth Ballet Company and Derek Duparcq for the photograph of a ballet dancer; p. 147, Victoria and Albert Museum for the painting "A Burning Lover" by Nicholas Hilliard; p. 149, The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum for the painting "Arrest for Debt", a scene from "The Rake's Progress" by William Hogarth; pp. 158, 9, National Gallery of Victoria for the painting "The Cahill Expressway" by Jeffrey Smart; p. 160, The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London, for the World War I poster; p. 165, *Honi Soit*, Sydney University magazine, 1971, for the cartoon "Martin's Kampf"; p. 185, Institute of Contemporary History and the Wiener Library for the photographs of Hitler; p. 188, *Brisbane Courier-Mail* for the photograph of Billy Graham; p. 190, Sally McGon-

nell, *Theatre Australia* and the Nimrod Theatre for the photograph from the stage performance of *Romeo and Juliet*; p. 195, Victoria and Albert Museum for the engraving of the interior of the Sadler's Wells Theatre, 1809, crown copyright reserved; p. 214, Old Tote Theatre Company for the photograph from the stage production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; p. 225, National Institute of Dramatic Art for the photograph from the stage production of *Waiting for Godot*; p. 226, The Trustees of the Wallace Collection for the painting "The Swing" by Jean Fragonard; p. 235, The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum for the painting "The Orgy" by William Hogarth; p. 245, The National Gallery, Lon-

don, for the painting "The Morning Walk" by T. Gainsborough; p. 250, The Royal Holloway College, University of London, for the painting "Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward" by Luke Fildes; p. 257, Rijksmuseum-Stichting, Amsterdam, for the Japanese woodcut of a Portuguese ship; p. 259, National Gallery of Victoria for the painting "Burke and Wills at the Gulf" by Sidney Nolan.

While every effort has been made to locate copyright holders, this has not been possible in a few cases. Should any infringement of copyright have occurred, the publisher and author tender their apologies, and welcome further information.

Contents

Preface vi

Acknowledgements vii

1. Introduction 1
 2. Colloquial Language 7
 3. Slang 33
 4. The Abuse of Language 49
 5. Language for Formal Occasions 69
 6. Language as a Tool 85
 7. Language as a Weapon 111
 8. The Language of Richness and Precision 135
 9. The Language of Persuasion 161
 10. The Language of the Theatre 191
 11. The Language of Style 227
- Index 261

Introduction

The aim of this book is to aid the student to analyse language. A certain piece of writing is a pleasure to read, but explaining why it is enjoyable is often an abstract and irritating chore. This book therefore presents a range of literary material and then offers guidelines on how to analyse that material. For the sake of convenience, all material has been arranged in chapters, although language cannot be so easily compartmentalized. Thus there are points of analysis in a chapter on poetry which are also relevant to a chapter on advertising. This is the case with facts about colloquial usage, which can be found in many different kinds of writing. However, in some contexts, colloquial usage may be inappropriate, and thus detract from the effectiveness of a piece of writing. Unfortunately many highly colloquial expressions, or slang, become accepted as standard or correct usage simply by force of their consistent misuse. The concept that "correct English" is the language which is most appropriate to the particular occasion can lead to the misconception that there is no such thing as correct, grammatical usage. "C'mon, Aussies, c'mon" may be fine on the cricket field, but will only confuse overseas listeners or readers. Although grammar is no longer a formal subject taught in schools, it is badly in need of resuscitation so that simple errors such as "they was running" are not made.

To ensure you have not reached the heady heights of senior high school without some knowledge of grammar, complete the following exercises. Each exercise presents a grammatical rule, coupled with an example of language misuse. You have the easy task of applying the rule to analyse the error.

1. Finite verbs must agree with their subjects. What is wrong with writing "They works hard"; "He done it"?
2. Adjectives refer to nouns and adverbs to verbs. Can you say "I run quick"; "I can do it perfect"?
3. The pronoun "which" refers to animals and inanimate objects, and "who" refers to people. Correct these: "The boys which were hungry ate their cabbage"; "The dogs who fought were taken to the pound".
4. Gerunds take the possessive case. Correct "Me singing should not interfere

with your work.” (You can say “Listen to me singing” when “singing” is a participle.)

5. Avoid using the double negative. How are these examples wrong: “No one, saw nothing”; “I haven’t seen nobody”?

6. Conjunctions are used to join words, phrases or clauses. They should not start sentences. “And that’s not all” is incorrect. Would you say “But the ball travelled well” in formal speech?

7. Pronouns must agree with their antecedent noun or pronoun. Correct: “Every man is expected to do their share”.

8. A sentence makes a self-contained message, and it must have a subject and predicate. Rewrite the following for sense: “Going to work tomorrow?”; “Who down the street?”

9. Words have definite meanings, so that to repeat an idea in different words, as in “cooperate together”, is wrong. This is an example of *tautology* (pointless use of words to say the same thing) and such errors are frequently found in colloquial usage. Correct these sentences: “I’ve got a cold,”; “I am going to go shopping tomorrow”; “The more preferable route is the new road”.

10. There are many other grammatical rules that you are already familiar with. Test yourself by correcting the following examples of incorrect usage:

- (a) He learned the dog to beg.
- (b) Who did you give it to?
- (c) Between you and I, I wouldn’t believe him.
- (d) Everyone thought theirs was the best cake.
- (e) She swum out too far.
- (f) If anyone sees the dog, they should tell the owner.
- (g) I had the most happiest time of my life.
- (h) It is me, not him, who are to blame.
- (i) I know to really succeed is necessary in this world.
- (j) I have heard both stories but believe Linda’s to absolutely be the best.

These and similar grammatical errors are common. Some grammatical errors have become a part of *journalese*, the term given to writing in newspapers where space and time are important. Colloquialisms and clichés are used frequently, and material is often presented sensationally. “Sentences” are often begun with the conjunction “and”, for example, and current adjectives such as “super” are abused and overused. Readers would not expect to find incorrect usage such as “I ain’t seen nobody” in a newspaper, however, and such language must be recognized as unacceptable.

At the opposite end of the scale to the colloquial language used in *journalese* is scientific language. Consider the following extract:

Extract from *Practical Knowledge For All*

Though the element carbon comprises less than one per cent of the materials of the earth’s crust, it occurs very widely distributed in nature. Almost all substances associated with living organisms — whether human, animal or vegetable — contain carbon combined with other elements. In the early days of chemistry it was believed that these carbon compounds could be obtained only by the agency of living organisms; they were, therefore, studied as a separate branch of chemistry called “organic chemistry”, and though it was later shown that many of the compounds of carbon — of which more than 200 000 are known — can be prepared synthetically in

the laboratory and, in fact, do not exist in nature, the name "organic" is still retained. Combined carbon is also the main constituent of petroleum, and exists as carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and also as mineral carbonates.

On examining this passage, you will notice the following language features:

1. The use of some *jargon* or technical terms, such as "carbon"; "organic"; "chemistry"; these terms are not only appropriate, but also lend authority to the passage. Precision in a scientific communication is essential.
2. The use of exact figures to lend weight and credibility to facts.
3. The use of the definite article ("the") rather than the indefinite, which conveys a sense of accuracy.
4. The use of constructions such as "do not" rather than the colloquial elision "don't". Formal words are preferred to less formal words; "retained" rather than "kept", for example. The colloquial abbreviation of words is also avoided, so that "petroleum" is preferred to "petrol". Informal usage would be inappropriate in this context, and would alter the scholarly tone of the passage.
5. The sentence construction of this passage is complex. Since the passage is written chiefly to provide information, the sentences are lengthy, laden with dashes and semi-colons to allow the writer to continue a flow of facts. Unfortunately, predictable sentence construction can lead to boredom!

It is important to note that *jargon* appropriate to scientific writing can be misused. This misuse results from using terms out of context, to enhance the status of a particular trade or profession, or deliberately to confuse so as to sound impressively learned while, in fact, saying nothing. Such misuse is termed *cant*, and may be divided into categories, depending on the field to which the jargon belongs. Thus there are: *officialese*, *legalese*, *journalese*, *commercialese*. *Legalese*, for example, in a search for precision, often contains unnecessary constructions, like "the party of the third part" or "whereof receipt is acknowledged" which are *verbose*. This usage is not favoured because it does not communicate; it confuses. Politicians are particularly adept at cant. A slang term has been coined for this widespread abuse of language — *gobbledegook* — and you will find more examples in Chapter 4. You will not find any technical language in this book, however, since textbooks provide examples.

This text contains a range of language usage so that when you have completed the book, you ought to be able to cope with an exercise along the lines of the following passage:

**Extract from *The Truth About Little Miss Muffet*
by Russell Baker**

In an article "The Truth About Little Miss Muffet", Russell Baker asks us to suppose that a conference has been held to analyse the significance of the Little Miss Muffet story.

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on her tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey.
There came a big spider
Who sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Gl: curds — the coagulated substance formed from milk by the action of acids.

whey — the watery part of milk which remains after the separation of the curd by coagulation.

coagulate — to convert (a fluid) into a solid mass.

He then offers excerpts from the transcripts of the discussion.
Here are excerpts from his excerpts.

SOCIOLOGIST: Miss Muffet is nutritionally underprivileged, as evidenced by the subminimal diet of curds and whey upon which she is forced to subsist, while the spider's cultural disadvantage is evidenced by such phenomena as legs exceeding standard norms, odd mating habits and so forth.

In this instance, spider expectations lead the culturally disadvantaged to assert demands to share the tuffet with the nutritionally underprivileged. Due to a communications failure, Miss Muffet assumes without evidence that the spider will not be satisfied to share her tuffet, but will also insist on eating her curds and whey.

MILITARIST: Second-strike capability, sir, that's what was lacking. If Miss Muffet had developed a second-strike capability instead of squandering her resources on curds and whey, no spider on earth would have dared launch a first strike capable of carrying him right to the heart of her tuffet.

BOOK REVIEWER: Written on several levels, this searing, sensitive exploration of the arachnid heart illuminates the agony and splendour of Jewish family life with a candour that is at once breathtaking in its simplicity and soul-shattering in its implied ambiguity.

EDITORIAL WRITER: Why has the Government not seen fit to tell the public all it knows about the so-called curds-and-whey affair? It is not enough to suggest that this was merely a random incident involving a lonely spider and a young diner. In today's world, poised as it is on the knife edge of . . .

PSYCHIATRIST: Little Miss Muffet is, of course, neither little, nor a miss. These are obviously the self she has created in her own fantasies to escape the reality that she is a gross divorcee whose superego makes it impossible for her to sustain a normal relationship with any man, symbolised by the spider, who, of course, has no existence outside her fantasies.

FLOWER CHILD: This beautiful kid is on a bad trip. Like . . .

CHILD: This is about a little girl who gets scared by a spider.

Exercise: Construct parallel analyses for
1. Three Blind Mice.

Remember that you will be writing many essays before leaving secondary

school — not only in English. The more familiar you become with the use of language, the better a writer you will become. You may even enjoy experimenting by using poetry in a prose passage, or by thinking of an unusual adjective rather than relying on the *cliché*. Soon this written facility will convey itself verbally, and no longer will the average Australian be accused of inarticulateness, as in the following passage:

Extract from *Mumble, mumble, mumble* (newspaper article)

ELIZABETH RIDDELL enunciates on the great Australian speech habit

Sir Robert Menzies is the second elder statesman within the past few months to complain that Australians mumble.

Lord Casey was the other. But as he had a hand cupped around his ear at the moment of making his criticism the whole thing somehow lacked validity. I mean, we've been mumbling for years, and for years Lord Casey and Sir Robert had no trouble at all understanding us.

It is not our mumbling that has got worse, but their hearing. The Australian mumble is as much a part of the scene as the Australian beer-belly or the Australian gum-tree.

I am sure there are academics all over the place who could supply the full glottal-stop rundown on the reasons that Australians speak the way they do, but I favour

two simple reasons.

The first is that we don't seem to be able to get our upper lips mobile. Within a day or two of Sir Robert's somewhat querulous statement I saw him on television and observed that his magisterial upper lip also remained motionless while he was enunciating some profound thought.

Later on that evening I noticed the actors in an Australian-made comedy wiggling their lower jaws, which appeared to be hinged like those of the snake, while their upper lips remained as if set in plaster of Paris.

The other reason why Australians mumble is because they lack confidence in what they have to say — with a few exceptions who will be familiar to all. And it is natural for a man uncertain of his opinions

not to deliver them loudly.

The exceptions to this attitude occur in a hotel bar or at a sporting event. On these occasions all will speak up loudly and clearly, if not always to the point.

In fact I don't know that mumbling is such a bad thing. It has social value, because if you are attacked on some mumbled statement you have a chance to avoid trouble by saying you really didn't say that at all. Your true mumbler can never be pinned down. He has an in-built escape hatch.

Another thing about mumbling is that it is less likely to kill a conversation stone dead than some piercingly articulated statement which leaves everybody else with nothing to say. The mumbler does not, as it were, paint himself into a corner.

Let's not waste time considering why Australians speak without confidence; let's start acquiring the knowledge of our language that will make us confident!



Strife.
Be in it.

2

Colloquial Language

Introduction

Before studying the written use of colloquial English (although some people write as they speak), you must remember that the written word is very inaccurate as a record of pronunciation. Consider the following extract, in which the author tries to reproduce the sounds of spoken Australian English. It is taken from *Let Stalk Strine* by Afferbeck Lauder. What aspects of Australian pronunciation is he satirising? It is a satire, isn't it?

AORTA (pronounced A-orta) is the vessel through which courses the life-blood of Strine public opinion. Aorta is a composite but non-existent Authority which is held responsible for practically everything unpleasant in the Strine way of life; for the punishment of criminals; for the weather; for the Bomb and the Pill; for all public transport; and for all the manifold irritating trivia of everyday living. Aorta comprises the Federal and State legislatures; local government councils; all public services; and even, it is now thought, Parents' and Citizens' Associations and the CSIRO.

Aorta's, in fact, the personification of the benevolently paternal welfare State to which all Strines — being fiercely independent and individualistic — appeal for help and comfort in moments of frustration and anguish. The following are typical examples of such appeals. They reveal the innate reasonableness and sense of justice which all Strines possess to such a marked degree:

"Aorta build another arber bridge. An aorta stop half of these cars from cummer ninner the city — so a feller can get twirkon time."

"Aorta mica laura genst all these prairlers and sleshers an pervs. Aorta puttem in jile an shootem."

"Aorta stop all these transistors from cummer ninner the country. Look what they're doone to the weather. All this rine! Doan tell me it's not all these transistors — an all these hydriken bombs too. Aorta stoppem!"

"Aorta have more buses. An aorta mikem smaller so they don't take up half the road. An aorta put more seats innem so you doan tefter stann all the time. An aorta have more room innem — you carn tardly move innem air so crairded. Aorta do something about it."



When we use language in everyday situations, we are speaking colloquially. This type of usage is suitable for daily social interchange. There should be no perjorative connotations to colloquial language. Herein lies the difference between slang and colloquial usage. Slang has always been associated with sub-standard English. Rather than using the term "sub-standard", you can say that slang is only appropriate for use in certain situations. These situations are outlined in Chapter 3. When defining the difference between slang and colloquial usage, you can say that while everyone understands colloquial expressions such as "turn

in" for "go to bed", only a specific group of people, at a specific point in time, understand slang terms. For example, in Australia many years ago, expressions such as "he's a mug lair", "he's a standover merchant" and so on were in current usage. Now such expressions have fallen from favour, and sound picturesque while having no special meaning for modern Australians. If present-day Australian parents use such expressions, their children are likely to cringe in the presence of their peers, to whom Americanisms such as "I'm into a crazy scene with this guy" are acceptable usage.

Slang is therefore usually usage which is fashionable with certain people for a limited period of time. When the times and fashions change, slang changes. Some words which were slang, however, have become an accepted part of our everyday speech; but most slang of forty years ago in Australia, for example, has now dropped from usage. Terms used in colloquial speech, on the other hand, remain reasonably constant in popularity and meaning for many years.

Colloquial usage is the informal manner of using standard correct English. The following passage is an example of colloquial usage.

Extract from *Old Yeller*

by Fred Gipson

The bad drought that Bud Searcy predicted had come. The green grass all dried up till Jumper was no longer satisfied to eat it. He took to jumping the field fence and eating the corn that I'd never yet gotten around to gathering.

Mama couldn't let that go on; that was our bread corn. Without it, we'd have no bread for the winter. But it looked like for a while that there wasn't any way to save it. Mama would go to the field and run Jumper out; then before she got her back turned good, he'd jump back in and go to eating corn again.

Finally, Mama figured out a way to keep Jumper from jumping. She tied a drag to him. She got a rope and tied one end of it to his right forefoot. To the other end, she tied a big heavy chunk of wood. By pulling hard, Jumper could move his drag along enough to graze and get to water; but any time he tried to rear up for a jump, the drag held him down.

The drag on Jumper's foot saved the corn but it didn't save Mama from a lot of work. Jumper was getting his chunk of wood hung up behind a bush or rock, so that he couldn't get away. Then he'd have himself a big scare and rear up, fighting the rope and falling down and pitching and bawling. If Mama didn't hear him right away, he'd start braying, and he'd keep it up till she went and loosened the drag.

Altogether, Mama sure had her hands full, and Little Arliss wasn't any help. He was too little to do any work. And with neither of us to play with, he got lonesome. He'd follow Mama around every step she made, getting in the way and feeling hurt because she didn't have time to pay him any mind. When he wasn't pestering her, he was pestering me. A dozen times a day, he'd come in to stare at me and say: "Whatcha doin' in bed, Travis? Why doncha get up? Why doncha get up and come play with me?"

I didn't know about the pup at first. I didn't even know that Lisbeth had come. I heard Bud Searcy's talk to Mama when they