

INTERACTIVE ENGLISH

LESSON 1.3

Two
“Englishes”

PERSONAL
ACADEMIC
NOTEBOOK



ACADEMIC
SYSTEMS

INTERACTIVE ENGLISH

LESSON 1.3

Two "Englishes"



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LESSON 1.3

Two “Englishes”



Speakers of all languages vary what they say and how they say it whenever they need to. They scarcely think about these shifts—and yet this ability is part of what makes us who we are. You may never have realized that you too are an expert user of many different “Englishes.”

To learn more about your language expertise for the essay you will write in this lesson, you will need the materials in this chapter for **Explore, Focus, Revise, Edit and Conclude.**

EXPLORE

Experienced writers know that writing is easier when they first explore to discover what they already know about a particular subject. The

more deeply they consider a subject, the more they have to write about.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

Most of us grow up speaking whatever language we hear at home. As we mature, the number of people we communicate with increases and through these experiences we acquire new ways of speaking.

As you begin to think about your Englishes, answer questions such as the ones that follow.

Take time to think about each question and about others that occur to you as you write.

If you have not written your responses in the online journal, write them in the space provided below. When you read what you’ve written, you will see you have valuable ideas about language in your life.

- ◆ Do I speak differently at school than I do at home or at work?
How can I describe those differences?

- ◆ How would I ask to borrow money from my parents? from my boss? from my best friend?
- ◆ Do I write differently than I talk? Why?

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

How many kinds of English do you know? Your first reaction may be “Just one—English.” But in fact, every adult uses several language varieties—one with children, another with friends, another on the job, and so on. Before you explore your use of language, read the assignment for the essay you will write.

In “Mother Tongue,” Amy Tan explains what she calls her “two Englishes:” the English she learned at school and through books, and the English she learned at home from her mother. For Tan, examining the ways in which she used both versions of English helped her find her voice as a writer. You too use more than one variety of English in your daily life. Although the differences between your varieties of English may not be as dramatic as Tan’s, you can learn much about yourself as a language user by examining them.

For this assignment, use your Language Use Chart. For insights into the different ways you use language, reread your journal entries. For example, you might focus on the different rhythm or emphasis you give words in different situations, or on how your school language differs from your home or your work language.

Write an essay in which you select and describe two of your “Englishes,” and explain the ways in which your experiences with these Englishes are either like or unlike those of Amy Tan.

READING TO EXPLORE

The three short readings in the first reading selection illustrate different Englishes speakers may use. Each passage suggests how language is shaped by the speakers’ place of birth, their family and friends, or their careers. In the second reading selection, Amy Tan writes about her “two Englishes.”

READING SELECTION ONE

Prepare to Read.

Watch for particular words and phrases used by authors Jackson, White, and Konner which you find unusual or unfamiliar.

Your Reading Goal is to understand how the English varieties that appear in these readings

are similar to or different from the ways you use language.

Prepare to Make Reading Notes. As you read each of these three short selections, mark words or phrases that seem to be typical of special varieties of English. A chart for your reading notes follows the three reading selections.

I

Know the Author. A. J. Jackson is a columnist for the California-based weekly newspaper, *City Sports*. The readers of this newspaper are inter-

ested in various kinds of sporting activities; these sports range from skiing to running to swimming to skateboarding.

HARDLINE with A.J. JACKSON

by A.J. Jackson

Yo, sk8-tas what up? Are you staying real to it? I just came back from Northern Cal (the PacOne tour) with my **hardline** bro Steve Mitchell. There we met up with the bros from NUVO. You man ou should have seen my boyee BJ Bernhardt go off bustin a phat nine **kinked** rail! Check the photo. Stay sick with it, BJ...props go'z out to ya. We also hook't up with the homie'z from the **San Francisco scene**, then headed over to Santa Rosa for a couple of biggie up night sessions (those bros are nuts and true players...keep rippen' it).



Know the Author. Bailey White is a schoolteacher and essayist who lives in Georgia. She writes essays about her family and is often a featured commentator on National Public Radio.

VACATION THROUGH NORTH CAROLINA

by Bailey White

...Before we had left on this trip, Aunt Belle had taken the map and marked with a red star every place name in the whole state of North Carolina containing the word ferry, and we had spent all of
 1 July aimlessly crossing and recrossing rivers and inlets on ferryboats. The only problem was, many towns, like Hadley Ferry and Crawford's Ferry, no longer have operating ferries. In these towns, after some serarching along the waterfront, I would be sent to ask.

I was in the throes of adolescence that summer, suffering from a paralyzing shyness, and my main goal in life was to not be noticed. My aunt would park across the street from a knot of
 2 rough-looking men lounging outside the feed store, and I would shuffle over to them with my shoulders hunched up to my ears and my hands in my pockets.

3 "Um. Where's the ferry?" I would whisper.

"Ferry?" they would hoot. "Ferry?" Then they would call some
 4 other men out from the back of the store. "This here girl's looking for the ferry!" They would slap each other and double over laughing.

"Ain't been no ferry here for fifty years, girl," they would say, drying their eyes. They would straighten up and look me over. My
 5 ears would begin to ring. Then would come the inevitable question: "Where you trying to get to, honey?"

6 "Well," I would say, "we're not really trying to get to anywhere."

7 Big goofy grins would spread over their faces, and I would try to blend in with the air.

8 "My aunt just wants to ride the ferry."

"Well, she ain't gon ride no ferry here," one of the men would
 9 howl, and I would creep back across the street to a chorus of snorting and hollering. "She sho ain't gon ride no ferry here!..."



Know the Author. Melvin Konner, M.D, is an anthropologist who taught at Harvard and did field work in Africa's Kalahari Desert. When he returned from Africa, he became a physician. His book, *Becoming a Doctor: A Journey of Initiation in*

Medical School, describes his view of medical training in America. The selection which follows describes the technical language he had to master in his first two days on duty in the Emergency room.

KNOW YOUR ABCs

by Melvin Konner

...We awaited the arrival of Jack Parker, the respected and feared Director of Trauma Surgery....He arrived on the dot of 1
seven, muscular and well-rested, and sat down and began talking.

...“You are the first-hour physician. You are not supposed to sit around like that bunch of mopes and fleas upstairs figuring out an analysis. Now a lot of times you’re going to go blank when the guy 2
hits the door. You can’t look it up. You can’t stand around thinking while the guy is trying to box.”

“But all you have to do is remember your ABC’s. If you’ve got those down pat, you have nothing to worry about. A”—Here he paused for a moment, and I thought he was looking for an answer. 3
As a former teacher, I tried to help in those situations, and this was so easy it could not be like showing off—

“Airway,” I said. 4

He shot me an unpleasant look, letting me know that my answer had not been called for, and went on with his monologue. “Airway, Breathing, and Circulation. Those are the things you check for first and establish first if they’re missing. A. B, C, D, E. Sounds simple, but people forget it every day. D is for disability, which means neurologic, but basic. We’re talking level of con- 5
sciousness here—how much of his brain is blown. E is for Expose. That means, take their clothes off. Every item. Until you’ve seen every inch of that patient you don’t know what it is you’ve got. A-B-C-D-E. Learn your ABC’s and you won’t be one of the ones who forget.”...

Any questions about the alphabet soup?” 6

7 I should have recognized this as an offer to pass up. But I said,
“How do you handle a c-spine injury with CPR?”

8 He shot another nastier look at me and said, “We’ll get to that.”

I reminded myself of some of my own alphabet soup... “KMS,
9 you jerk,” I said to myself as loud as I could inside my head. KEEP
MOUTH SHUT...



Activity One: Reading Notes

Use the space below for your reading notes. In the left column, copy each of the two or three words or phrases you marked from the readings by Jackson, White, and Konner. In the right column, explain why you chose each one and what

you thought about it.

To start you off, here are one student’s reading notes. When you have finished making your reading notes, discuss them with a partner if possible.

Author Says	My Response
Jackson: phat nine kinked rail.	What the heck is a phat kinked rail? Why would he spell fat with ph? What does it mean? I don’t even know anyone I can ask. Frustrating!! These words are definitely slang.
White: “she ain’t gon ride no ferry here,” one of the men would howl...She sho ain’t...”	I’ve known people in Iowa and Texas that say those same words like that, where “sure” sounds like “sho.” I thought she was writing about North Carolina. Hmmmm wonder why it’s the same?

Author Says

Konner: "You can't stand around thinking while the guy is trying to box."

My Response

"trying to box..." is that a doctor's way of saying "die"? Like getting put in a coffin? I think this is doctor's slang.

Activity Two: Examining Language Varieties _____

Experienced readers become sensitive to authors' ways of writing. They also use what they read to prompt their own thinking. Answer the following questions. Your responses may help you start thinking about your essay.

1. Looking over the notes you made about A. J. Jackson's column, ask yourself if your friends have influenced your speech. If so, list a few examples of the specialized language you learned and tell who used it, when, where, and for what purpose.

What Speakers Say	Who	When/Where	For What Purpose

2. Rereading the notes you took on Bailey White's article, think about how the region where you grew up may have influenced your language. Write down one or two examples of the special way of talking you remember from hearing adults around you talk when you were a youngster.

What Speakers Say	Who	When/Where	For What Purpose

3. Look over the notes you made about Melvin Konner's "Alphabet Soup." Has your job influenced how you speak? If so, list words and phrases you learned at work.

What Speakers Say	Who	When/Where	For What Purpose

4. Find similarities and differences between language varieties in these selections.

- ♦ List two words or phrases from A. J. Jackson's column, the speech of the men in Bailey White's Southern town, and the doctors' "alphabet soup." Point out something these examples share in common.

Hint: When you compare two things, tell how they are alike.

- ♦ Using the examples you compared above, now find a contrast. That is, point out something that makes your examples different from one another.

Hint: Contrasts only make sense when there is a basic similarity between two items. A yellow sky and a red apple are different—but they are so different the contrast is not meaningful. However, a contrast between apples and bananas could be meaningful and make sense; both are “fruit.” Writers often find both similarities and differences in the examples they choose.

On Your Own: Reading Strategies to Use Now and Later

If an essay contrasts ideas, make sure you understand each idea and how it differs from the others. Use one or more of the following questions to help you locate important information:

1. **What** is one idea? How does the author illustrate it?
2. **What** is the second idea? How does the author illustrate it?
3. **How** are these ideas similar? **How** are these ideas different?

When people try new skills—particularly those skills required when reading essays rich with many voices—it helps to read with a partner. If possible, work on Tan’s essay with a classmate.

READING SELECTION TWO

Know the Author. Amy Tan’s family immigrated to San Francisco when she was two. Tan became a writer. She has written several bestselling novels. One of them, *The Joy Luck Club*, tells about four women who grew up in China and their American-born daughters. A movie based on this book appeared in 1994.

Prepare to Read.

Watch for different “Englishes” Tan describes.

Your Reading Goal is to understand how language changes depending on who speaks, where and when they speak, what they say, and their purpose.

Prepare to Make Reading Notes. As you read, quickly mark several specific words or phrases that show Tan’s “two Englishes.” A chart for your reading notes follows the reading selection.

MOTHER TONGUE

by Amy Tan

I am not a scholar of English or literature. I cannot give you
1 much more than personal opinions on the English language and its
variations in this country or others.

I am a writer. And by that definition, I am someone who has
always loved language. I am fascinated by language in daily life. I
2 spend a great deal of my time thinking about the power of lan-
guage—the way it can evoke an emotion, a visual image, a com-
plex idea, or a simple truth. Language is the tool of my trade. And
I use them all—all the Englishes I grew up with.

Recently, I was made keenly aware of the different Englishes I
do use. I was giving a talk to a large group of people, the same talk
I had already given to half a dozen other groups. The nature of the
talk was about my writing, my life, and my book, *The Joy Luck Club*. The talk was going along well enough, until I remembered
one major difference that made the whole talk sound wrong. My
mother was in the room. And it was perhaps the first time she had
heard me give a lengthy speech, using the kind of English I have
3 never used with her. I was saying things like, “The intersection of
memory upon imagination” and “There is an aspect of my fiction
that relates to thus-and-thus”—a speech filled with carefully
wrought grammatical phrases, burdened, it suddenly seemed to
me, with nominalized forms, past perfect tenses, conditional phras-
es, all the forms of standard English that I had learned in school
and through books, the forms of English I did not use at home with
my mother.

Just last week, I was walking down the street with my mother,
and I again found myself conscious of the English I was using, the
English I do use with her. We were talking about the price of new
and used furniture and I heard myself saying this: “Not waste
4 money that way.” My husband was with us as well, and he didn’t
notice any switch in my English. And then I realized why. It’s
because over the twenty years we’ve been together I’ve often used
that same kind of English with him, and sometimes he even uses it
with me. It has become our language of intimacy, a different sort of
English that relates to family talk, the language I grew up with.

So you’ll have some idea of what this family talk I heard
sounds like, I’ll quote what my mother said during a recent conver-
sation which I videotaped and then transcribed. During this conver-

sation, my mother was talking about a political gangster in Shanghai who had the same last name as her family's, Du, and how the gangster in his early years wanted to be adopted by her family, which was rich by comparison. Later, the gangster became more powerful, far richer than my mother's family, and one day showed up at my mother's wedding to pay his respects. Here's what she said in part:

“Du Yusong having business like fruit stand. Like off the street kind. He is Du like Du Zong—but not Tsung-ming Island people. The local people call putong, the river east side, he belong to that side local people. That man want to ask Du Zong father take him in like become own family. Du Zong father wasn't look down on him, but didn't take seriously, until that man big like become a mafia. Now important person, very hard to inviting him. Chinese way, came only to show respect, don't stay for dinner. Respect for making big celebration, he shows up. Mean gives lots of respect. Chinese custom. Chinese social life that way. If too important won't have to stay too long. He come to my wedding. I didn't see. I heard it. I gone to boy's side, they have YMCA dinner. Chinese age I was nineteen.

You should know that my mother's expressive command of English belies how much she actually understands. She reads the Forbes report, listens to Wall Street Week, converses daily with her stockbroker, reads all of Shirley MacLaine's books with ease—all kinds of things I can't begin to understand. Yet some of my friends tell me they understand 50 percent of what my mother says. Some say they understand 80 to 90 percent. Some say they understand none of it, as if she were speaking pure Chinese. But to me, my mother's English is perfectly clear, perfectly natural. It's my mother tongue. Her language, as I hear it, is vivid, direct, full of observation and imagery. That was the language that helped shape the way I saw things, expressed things, made sense of the world.

Lately, I've been giving more thought to the kind of English my mother speaks. Like others, I have described it to people as “broken” or “fractured” English. But I wince when I say that. It has always bothered me that I can think of no way to describe it other than “broken,” as if it were damaged and needed to be fixed, as if it lacked a certain wholeness and soundness. I've heard other terms used, “limited English,” for example. But they seem just as bad, as if everything is limited, including people's perceptions of the limited English speaker.