



University  
of Stavanger

The Faculty of Arts and Education

## MASTER'S THESIS

Study programme:

Literacy studies

Spring term, 2019

Open

Author: K. Luna Mikelsen

Signature:

*K. Luna Mikelsen*

Supervisor: Oliver M. Traxel

Title of master's thesis: The prevalence of prescriptivism and pedantry: A mixed method study of descriptive and prescriptive attitudes' predominance in two British newspapers

Keywords:

Linguistic correctness, prescriptivism, descriptivism, pedantry, sociolinguistics, folk linguistics

Pages: 105

+ attachment/other: 130

Stavanger, 06.05.2019

## Abstract

This thesis is a quantitative and qualitative study of the prevalence of descriptive and prescriptive attitudes in the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* articles about linguistics between 2000 and 2019. The main inspiration behind the study is the folk belief that non-standard English and “incorrect” English is connected with traits such as low intelligence, laziness, bad morale and criminality. In addition to measuring descriptivism and prescriptivism, the study quantifies the type of linguistic information found in the articles. It creates an overview of what type of information about linguistics each newspaper has published since the year 2000.

The thesis is a cross- quantitative qualitative study. The main method used is the compilation of articles found by searching for specific linguistic terms on the newspapers websites. Essential information from each article has been logged in two appendices. The most significant column in each appendix is the descriptivism-prescriptivism scale, a tool developed specifically for this thesis which gauges each article’s descriptive- or prescriptiveness. The information in the spreadsheets is shown in different figures, summarising, quantifying and labelling the linguistic information found in each newspaper. This enables the comparison of the newspapers, the most interesting revelation is which of them is more descriptive or prescriptive.

The qualitative part of the study lies in the analysis of the most significant of the compiled articles. The findings are grouped into suitable categories of similar or related articles, presented and interpreted. In a few cases where articles refer to other sources, such as blog entries, these are also presented. The *Telegraph* was proven to be slightly more prescriptive than the *Guardian* all over. In spite of this, the *Telegraph* more wholly descriptive articles than the *Guardian*, the reason for this may be that they write more descriptive scientific articles about linguistics, and the *Guardian* writes more colloquial ‘mostly descriptive’ opinion pieces criticising prescriptivism.

The correlation between recent articles and higher descriptiveness does not appear to be present in either of the newspapers. However, the lower number of articles about linguistic correctness and language change in more recent years suggest that journalists write less about

these topics within linguistics. This can be interpreted as a sign that the debate has ended, and prescriptivism has been proven unscientific, at least within the domain of newspaper articles about linguistic correctness.

## Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Research context</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Language Change	3
2.2 Folk linguistics	4
2.2.1 Attitude research	5
2.3 Linguistic correctness and its consequences	6
2.3.1 Prescriptivism	8
2.3.2 Descriptivism	10
2.3.3 Authorities	11
2.4 Standard English	12
2.4.1 Accent, dialect, variety and language	14
2.4.2 Non-standard English	15
2.4.3 Electronic discourse	16
2.4.4 Writing and Speech	17
2.4.5 Different definitions of grammar	19
2.5 The Complaint Tradition	20
2.5.1 Characteristics of complaints	22
2.5.2 Complainers and replies	24
<b>3. Materials and methodology</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1 Materials	27
3.1.1 The newspapers	27
3.1.2 Linguistics in the newspapers	29
3.1.3 Online sources and lay-person linguistic influencers	31
3.2 Data collection	32
3.3 Research design	33
3.3.1 Data collection: The appendices	33
3.3.2 The descriptive-prescriptive scale	35
3.3.3 Categorisation of topics	37
3.3.4 Approach to presentation, interpretation and discussion of findings	38
3.4 Validity and reliability	39
3.4.1 Validity and limitations of material	39
3.4.2 Validity of method	40
3.4.3 Hypotheses	41
<b>4. Presentation and interpretation of findings</b>	<b>42</b>
4.1 General findings	42

4.2	General quantitative findings in the <i>Guardian</i>	43
4.3	Significant findings in the <i>Guardian</i>	48
4.3.1	Articles about linguistic books in the <i>Guardian</i>	49
4.3.2	Linguists in the <i>Guardian</i>	52
4.3.3	Linguistic information in the <i>Guardian</i>	53
4.3.4	Criticism of the complaint tradition in the <i>Guardian</i>	55
4.3.5	Particularly prescriptive articles in the <i>Guardian</i>	62
4.3.6	David Marsh and “Mind your language”	67
4.3.7	Articles concerning the <i>Telegraph</i> in the <i>Guardian</i>	70
4.4	General quantitative findings in the <i>Telegraph</i>	72
4.5	Significant findings in the <i>Telegraph</i>	75
4.5.1	Articles in the appearing descriptive, prescriptive attitude category	75
4.5.2	Articles about linguistic books in the <i>Telegraph</i>	77
4.5.3	Linguists in the <i>Telegraph</i>	79
4.5.4	Linguistic information in the <i>Telegraph</i>	83
4.5.5	Criticism of the complaint tradition in the <i>Telegraph</i>	86
4.5.6	Particularly prescriptive articles and replies in the <i>Telegraph</i>	87
4.6	Comparison of the newspapers	92
<b>5.</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>94</b>
5.1	Where the descriptivism-prescriptivism debate stands today	94
5.2	Linguistics’ presence in the newspapers	94
5.3	Descriptive-prescriptive consistency	95
5.4	Misconceptions about linguistics	96
5.4.1	Myth 1: Speaking and writing bad English makes you a bad person	96
5.4.2	Myth 2: Literacy is in decline	97
5.4.3	Myth 3: English is doomed and/or dying	98
5.5	Reflexive pedants	99
5.6	On different terms	100
<b>6.</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>102</b>
6.1	Outlook	104
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>106</b>
	<b>Appendix 1 Summary of articles compiled from the <i>Guardian</i></b>	<b>1 - 84</b>
	<b>Appendix 2 Summary of articles compiled from the <i>Telegraph</i></b>	<b>1 - 35</b>

*(The appendices have separate sets of page numbers)*

## List of figures and tables

Figure 4.1.1: The descriptive-prescriptive scale in the <i>Guardian</i>	44
Figure 4.1.2: Distribution of topics in the <i>Guardian</i>	45
Figure 4.1.3: Timeline of descriptivism-prescriptivism in the <i>Guardian</i>	46
Figure 4.2.1: Descriptivism-prescriptivism in the <i>Telegraph</i>	72
Figure 4.2.2: Distribution of topics in the <i>Telegraph</i>	73
Figure 4.2.3: Timeline of descriptivism-prescriptivism in the <i>Telegraph</i>	74
Table 5.1: Distribution of descriptivism compared	93
Table 5.2: Distribution of prescriptivism compared	93

## 1. Introduction

This thesis is a folk linguistic study exploring the relationship between sociolinguistic theory and online newspaper articles about linguistics in the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* between 2000 and 2018. The primary inspiration behind the study is the folk belief that non-standard English and “incorrect” English is associated with traits such as low intelligence, laziness, bad morale and criminality. This is a topic of concern for many sociolinguists, expressly discussed by amongst others by Bauer, Trudgill et al. in *Language Myths* (1998), and by Milroy and Milroy in *Authority in Language* (2012). This thesis’ main aim is to establish whether such attitudes are prevalent. It aims to find out which attitudes and beliefs the general public are presented with through media, by examining articles about linguistics in two British newspapers between 2000 and 2018. The results from the research of these two newspapers are indicators of how prevalent discrimination on linguistic grounds is in general.

Through an analysis of the discrepancies between sociolinguistic theory and what has been written about linguistics in two online newspapers, this study establishes where the debate on linguistic correctness and English language change stands today, and how it has evolved since the year 2000. Linguistic correctness is closely tied with the term Standard English, and this is a connection which will be explored. The study is a cross qualified-quantified survey of articles about language change and linguistics in the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian*. Relevant material referred to in the articles is also briefly presented, because it is assumed that readers may follow links articles refer to.

An appendix of articles from each online newspaper was compiled and is the basis for the analysis. The appendices summarise the relevant information from each article which is studied, categorise the article into a linguistic topic, and gauge the article on a scale ranging from descriptive to prescriptive. The appendices are described in detail in section 3.3.2 below. The specific details of the compilation process are presented in sections 3.2 and 3.3 below.

The amount of prescriptive articles versus the amount of descriptive articles indicate to which extent each newspaper has encouraged prescriptivism. Further the categories and other details describe which type of linguistic information is most prevalent. The point of investigating this is that there is a close link between prescriptive attitudes and the justification of linguistic discrimination.

The data collection was performed by searching for specific linguistic terms in each newspapers' search engine, the details of the search are provided in section 3.2 below. A reflection on the validity and reliability of the thesis follows the methodology. A set of hypotheses are also given.

The findings and interpretations of the articles compiled are in chapter 4. This is a presentation and analysis of articles which were considered significant. They are group together in various categories, using the same set of categories for each newspaper. The articles described in the findings are considered case studies, exemplifying how the specific types of linguistic information were presented in the newspapers. The interpretation or analysis borders on discussion, because to separate the two with such a copious amount of articles would be infeasible.

What follows in chapter 5 is a more full discussion, using the questions outlined in the hypothesis and theory from chapter 2 as groundwork. Three common myths that were common themes in the articles and are presented in the theory chapter are discussed in further detail.

Using the information compiled, this thesis examines whether discrimination on linguistic grounds was encouraged or discouraged by the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* between 2000 and 2018. It reveals that while the prescriptivist attitudes are criticised in the media and even considered defeated by some linguists, the consequences of the attitudes are not criticised. The thesis provides a foundation and framework for further documentation of negative attitudes and misinformation concerning linguistics in the media.



## 2. Research context

This thesis is placed in a sociolinguistic and folk linguistic context. There is a worry expressed in an abundance of linguistic theory, namely that there is a troubling discrepancy between what people believe about linguistics and what linguistic research has shown over the last few centuries. The main theoretical material which prompted this study are two sociolinguistic books: *Language Myths* (1998) and *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English* (2012). *Language Myths* is a compilation of essays by sociolinguists, edited by Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill. The essays detail and dispel myths concerning linguistics that are commonly believed by the general public. *Authority in Language* by Milroy and Milroy concerns many of the same myths, expressing a worry that what the general public believe about Standard English is causing discrimination of non-standard varieties. *Authority in Language* was published in its 4th edition in 2012, showing that the content of the book was as relevant in 2012 as in 1985 when its first edition was published. This thesis proves that the issues addressed in it are still highly significant in 2018.

Theoretical concepts and terms from the field of sociolinguistics that are relevant for this study are defined, delimited, and discussed in this section. The definitions of concepts that linguists and non-linguists have differing ideas about are clarified. An example of such a difference is non-linguists' tendency to define 'accent' and 'dialect' as synonyms, these terms are presented in section 2.4.1 below.

### 2.1 Language Change

Linguists tend to be interested in how language changes, for example how speech sounds develop in certain varieties, or the etymological development of lexical words. However, this thesis focuses on folk linguistic language change: what non-linguists think about the fact that language changes. Several researchers have found that people think language change in itself is negative (Trudgill 1998: 1). The tendency amongst these researchers is to acknowledge that

people think language change is negative, and then the researchers explain that it would be irrational for a linguist (or indeed anyone) to evaluate anything related to their field (or any science) as negative or positive. Many linguists express their regret that non-linguists feel this way, but little research has been done on why and how such beliefs and attitudes arise. The research of this kind that can be found typically explores how people in a particular geographical area report feeling about the speech variety of people in another area (Garrett 2010: 179).

Aitchison begins her book on language change with a reflection on how everything changes over time. Language development is just as natural as any other change in science or technology (Aitchison 2013: 3-4). Ferdinand de Saussure's quote "Time changes all things: there is no reason why language should escape this universal law", is one of the many examples Aitchison uses to declare that this is not just her own opinion as a professor of language and communication, but an agreed universal fact, frequently referred to in poetry and philosophy, as well as in theoretical texts within the linguistic field.

To a linguist it is fairly obvious and not new that language change is natural, but to many people it is not. These people express intense dislike of language change. While they often understand that language has to change, they regard some specific parts of language's gradual development as sloppy, lazy or ignorant. Examples of changes that people often react to are new meanings of words and new pronunciations. These people do not hesitate to write about their frustration, and get their opinions published in newspapers and other media (Aitchison 2013: 4-5). These people, often called "language guardians", will be presented further below.

## 2.2 Folk linguistics

Folk linguistics (sometimes called folklinguistics) is the study of people's beliefs about language. Linguists writing about folk linguistics often present their work in conjunction with a defence of their field. People's opinions about linguistics are often disregarded by linguists, and found too unimportant to study (Niedzielski and Preston 2000: vii). Niedzielski and Preston evidently felt it necessary to defend their field of study, so much that they include a

discussion of it in the foreword to their *Folk Linguistics* (2000). They have three main arguments:

1: It is important to learn about a culture's beliefs concerning the naming of, relationships among, and uses for language. This is done in other aspects of culture and there is no reason why it should not be studied in linguistics.

The relationship between folk- and scientific linguistics is complex, and their roles in a larger cultural framework are relevant to the study of linguistics.

2: The contrast between belief and use of language needs to be understood. One needs to understand what people think about language in order to make them more enlightened users of it. People's beliefs are ubiquitous and strong, and they need to be considered when educating people about language. In order to consider the beliefs, one needs to know what they are.

3: What people believe may in part determine the shape of language in itself. As people shape language, their beliefs about it should have some effect on its development.

Linguists and non-linguists do not take each other's views into account when it comes to linguistics (Niedzielski 2000: 1). It seems that people are less willing to accept that their beliefs about linguistics are inadequate than they are with other sciences. Because everyone uses language, it is natural for people to assume that they know a lot about it. Upon having their beliefs corrected, many will refuse to believe or acknowledge that linguists know their own science.

### 2.2.1 Attitude research

There are three common approaches to researching language attitudes: Societal approach, direct approach and indirect approach. The societal approach entails various observational studies as well as studies of different sources in the public domain. A study using a direct approach will simply ask participants about their perceptions, whereas an indirect approach involves deceiving the participants in certain ways in order to avoid the social desirability or acquiescence responses associated with the direct approach (Garrett 2007: 116-117). Using such indirect methods, for example the matched-guise technique, researchers have identified

three dimensions on which people tend to judge language: Superiority (prestige/intelligence), social attractiveness (friendliness, trustworthiness), and dynamism (enthusiasm, liveliness) (Zahn and Hopper: 1985). Using both an indirect and a direct method in a study can reveal the prevalence of biased answers in the direct approach responses. Several studies by Preston show that language correctness is a topic frequently commented on in studies of regional varieties of US English. This trend is epitomised in the comment “Ain’t ain’t a word, is it?”, illustrating that the speaker thinks non-standard English is not part of the language (Preston 1996: 55 in Garrett 2007: 119).

It appears that little research has been done on people’s general attitudes to language. Most attitude studies are for example on perceptual dialectology, such as those by Preston mentioned above. It would be interesting to see whether people differ in their perceptions of spoken and written non-standard English, or if they think of written and spoken correct English as one concept with the same rules.

### 2.3 Linguistic correctness and its consequences

Linguistic correctness is the belief in or practice of upholding a set of linguistic rules.

American Lesley Milroy her late British husband James Milroy are pioneering sociolinguists who have worked together in large parts of their careers to explore attitudes to linguistic correctness, and their effect on society. In British and American societies it is common to have judgments regarding what is ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ use of English. Some countries even have academies who prescribe the ‘correct’ use (Milroy and Milroy 2012: vii). Standard English is a recurring theme which Milroy and Milroy tie to correctness. According to them, complaints by politicians, broadcasters, authors and the general public about incorrect language are part of a more general continuous process, of language standardisation and maintenance (Milroy and Milroy 2012: xiii).

‘Correct’ use of language is codified in handbooks of usage. It is probable that all speakers of English (and other languages) have several opinions as to what is ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ in the language they use. When in doubt, they tend to consult an ‘expert opinion’, rather than their own knowledge of the language, in order to decide (Milroy and Milroy 2012:

1). This expert opinion is often a dictionary or something else people consider an authority of correctness. Such authorities will be discussed further below in section 2.3.3.

The complaints about incorrect use are more or less conscious efforts to maintain Standard English. They arise from a belief that non-standard forms are mistakes or deliberate deviations from Standard English, and that Standard English is in some sense approved by law, whereas non-standard English is not (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 30). Moreover, people who engage in correctness tend to equate what they perceive as unlawful writing with unlawful behaviour in general. Plainly, they assume that writing or even speaking a non-standard variety is an indication of having low morals and committing crimes (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 41).

In addition to low morale, traits that complainers tend to attribute stupidity and laziness to the writers of so-called incorrect writing. John Simon, one of the major voices in The Complaint Tradition who will be introduced further in paragraph 2.5, describes several of these mistakes, such as including apostrophes where there should not be any ('wing's' instead of 'wings') as "illiteracies", indicating that the writer of them is in some way illiterate. Calling the writer of such a mistake "illiterate" clearly illustrates Simon's lack of understanding for what being literate means. Further and perhaps even more boldly, he includes spoken "mistakes" in this definition, such as saying "you guys was" instead of "you guys were". This is a perfectly common construction in non-standard spoken English, and not a mistake. From this judgment in error it is apparent that Simon does not separate between rules of written and spoken English, assuming that spoken language should follow the rules of writing (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 31). This point will be returned to below in section 2.4.4, which concerns the difference between writing and speech.

As early as 1950, Hall published a book called *Leave Your Language Alone!* It is evident from the title of the book that it aims to "Address the general public, in favor of a scientific attitude towards language, and of linguistic relativism and tolerance" (Hall 1950: vii). This work is testimony to how linguists have been trying for a long time to tell people that tolerance to variation is important. Hall frequently points to how he has edited his text for the benefit of the non-linguist. By avoiding phonetic transcription and reducing technical aspects as much as possible, he has catered to the general public (Hall 1950: vii).

Instead of using the word 'correctness' to denote the strict attitude the general public has to what is correct and not, Hall exemplifies what he calls the 'worries' of the general

public. The public, he writes, label certain constructions as “Bad, wrong, incorrect, ungrammatical, uneducated, ignorant, or something else equally uncomplimentary”. Examples of such constructions are “I ain’t, he done it”, “I gotta stay ‘n work but I don’t wanna”, and ‘forehead’ pronounced to rhyme ‘horrid’ (Hall 1950: 1). Hall specifies that the public worry about both spoken constructions and written ones. He points out that people worry and criticise some constructions, but do not criticise other constructions that he would qualify as equally illegitimate. One example of such a word is “delight” which was an erroneous spelling mimicking the spelling of ‘flight’ and ‘light’ (OED).

The Complaint Tradition’s unqualified ascertaining of certain forms as correct and others as incorrect has continued to be a topic of much concern for linguists (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 1). Milroy and Milroy write that people have a strong compulsion to pick one correct form instead of having several accepted forms. They also reflect on why a form is selected to be the correct one. According to these two linguists what is chosen to be correct is relatively arbitrary, but can often be socially motivated, determined by which form the “best people” use (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 14-15).

### 2.3.1 Prescriptivism

Milroy and Milroy define prescriptivism in language as “an ideology (or set of beliefs) concerning language which requires that in language use, as in other matters, things shall be done in the ‘right’ way” (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 1).

According to Huddleston and Pullum (2005), a prescriptive English grammar book is one that aims to tell people how they should speak and write. Unlike descriptive books, they take the form of usage manuals. In principle, descriptive and prescriptive grammar books are not in conflict. To avoid solecisms, one would simply follow what is described. However, prescriptive books tend to make mistakes, they often do not represent Standard English grammar correctly. They can invent grammatical rules that do not adhere to what Standard English is actually like (Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 5).

Prescriptivism largely overlaps with linguistic correctness. It encompasses correctness within spelling, syntax, definitions of words and sometimes even pronunciation. To someone

who believes in prescriptivism, it is obvious and inherently true that there is one correct way to spell something, a correct definition of a word, and a correct way to pronounce a word. Some degree of prescriptive linguistic norm is necessary, otherwise writing grammar guides for foreign learners would be impossible. However, even given vast variation, people will always try to make themselves understood, using the same forms as people around them to achieve mutual understanding. The worry that permitting too much variation in Standard English would cause confusion is therefore not a valid concern. There is a fine line between describing grammar that occurs, and inventing seemingly logical but unfounded linguistic rules. Books concerned with prescription of linguistic rules are often hugely popular, such as Lynne Truss' prescriptive guide to punctuation, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* (2003). The book was a #1 New York Times Bestseller and is legitimised by having a reputable publisher associated with several respected authors and brand names like The Economist and HarperCollins UK. The subtitle of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* is "The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation". In other words, Truss openly defies variation. She effectively prescribes punctuation how it should be done, rather than describing how it is used. Her relentless attitude towards harmless punctuation mistakes, embraced by institutions like The New York Times bestseller list, contributes to legitimising prescriptivism. Hinchings critiques Truss in his *The Language Wars* (2011). While he credits Truss' belief that children should get a better education in writing, Hinchings doubts the book's success in achieving this goal, and questions the complaining tone it has, rather than being constructive (Hinchings 2011: 264). While variation in punctuation might not be a good example of variation that should be tolerated, supporting Truss' book lends support to other similar works, criticising common spelling variations and other aspects of language.

Avoiding prescriptivist attitudes can prove difficult. An example which illustrates that linguists are not necessarily better at avoiding claims of correctness is Steven Pinker's contribution to the *American Heritage Dictionary*. In the introduction, Pinker writes that it is lexicographers' 'dirty little secret' that no one actually knows what is correct: "There's no one in charge, the lunatics are running the asylum" (Horobin 2016: 42). However, Pinker is also head of the board of authors, journalists, editors and academics who decide what is indeed classified as correct in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, the Usage Panel. In the very same introduction where Pinker writes that no one can decide what is correct, he also writes that "the Usage Panel [which he is in charge of] is always right" (Horobin 2016: 46).

In concluding his chapter on authorities, Horobin explains that linguists also struggle with problems related to prescriptivism. Relatively recently the Linguistic Association of Great Britain proposed changing their “chairman” to “chairperson”. The vote fell because linguists, who observe and describe language, should not be seen engaging in prescriptive practices concerning political correctness (Horobin 2016: 71).

Prescriptivism is often regarded as a continuum rather than a constant, seeing as even grammar books for L2 learners that describe language tend to prescribe rules to an extent.

### 2.3.2 Descriptivism

Aitchison describes the field of linguistics as inherently descriptive. She writes that a linguist is interested in what is said, not what he thinks ought to be said. A linguist describes language in all its aspects, but does not prescribe rules of ‘correctness’ (Aitchison 1978: 13).

Most modern dictionaries are descriptive. They describe how a word is used, often listing occurrences of its usage as evidence of how the word has functioned. People often look to dictionaries for proof of what a word ‘really’ means. They expect dictionaries to be authorities that should enforce proper standards, but what dictionaries do is record how people actually use words, and publish the most common usage (Aitchison 2013: 5; Horobin 2016: 43, 68). According to the *Telegraph*, people protested when the *Oxford English Dictionary* listed the usage of the word “literally” as “nearly literally” (Rojas 2012). The definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is this:

*colloq.* Used to indicate that some (frequently conventional) metaphorical or hyperbolic expression is to be taken in the strongest admissible sense: ‘virtually, as good as’; (also) ‘completely, utterly, absolutely’. Now one of the most common uses, although often considered irregular in Standard English since it reverses the original sense of *literally* (‘not figuratively or metaphorically’)



The *Telegraph* does not mention that the entry is labelled colloquial or the fact that it is often considered irregular in Standard English. They fail to mention that the *OED* lists the first usage in this sense to be from 1769, and that the new meaning was added to the *OED* two years before this newspaper article was published. Horobin suggests that the *Telegraph* deliberately leaves out parts of the *OED* entry, such as the fact that this use of “literally” is colloquial, in order to engage people. If the public read the full entry in the *OED*, they might just find it more reasonable (Horobin 2016: 42-43).

Furthest afield on the descriptive side of the prescriptivism-descriptivism continuum are the American structuralist linguists Bloomfield and Fries. Bloomfield (1935: 22) thought it strange that non-linguists would care about such matters as the difference between ‘ain’t’ and ‘am not’. He was perplexed by why non-linguists devoted futile time and energy on discussing things they were not trained to know anything about (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 6). Fries went even further, seeing prescription and traditional school grammar as equal and unscientific. In a book on English syntax, *The Structure of English* (1957), he rejected established linguistic terms such as ‘verb’, ‘noun’ and ‘adjective’. Milroy and Milroy use Bloomfield and Fries as examples of how some linguists are perhaps too descriptive in their approach (2012: 6).

### 2.3.3 Authorities

Hall observed in 1950 that when people are confused and insecure after being corrected on their speech or writing, people consult “authorities” like dictionaries, grammars or certain trusted individuals to find out what is correct (Hall 1950: 1-2). He writes that while one might disagree with said authority, it is easier to comply with it to avoid further embarrassment. He further notes that it gets problematic when “authorities” disagree. Hall’s disregard for these “authorities” as being authoritarian is evident from his use of quotation marks. Hall writes that linguists are the real authorities on information about language, and that they are less likely to throw one into an emotional tailspin than the aforementioned “authorities” (Hall 1950: 2).

Further, he justifies the linguists' position as authorities, noting how long they have studied language and what they have found.

Horobin classifies the authorities that people look to in order to confirm correct use of language: dictionaries, academies, usage guides, sources (examples of usage by famous authors etc), logic and etymology (Horobin 2016: 39-66). Discussing each supposed authority, he explains why none of them are legitimate for determining linguistic correctness in English, because no single body regulates English.

Milroy and Milroy claim that the attitudes of linguists have little or no effect on the general public, who continue to look to dictionaries, grammars and handbooks as authorities on 'correct' usage. Further, they note that when dictionaries highlight their descriptive nature by removing notes such as "colloquial" and "slang", the public react negatively (2012: 4).

Milroy and Milroy do not explicitly name linguists as authorities. However, they qualify the linguist as an authority by comparing them to other scientists with authority in their field, in order to explain why evaluating any linguistic form as good or bad is irrational:

It would be absurd for a zoologist to classify animals in terms of their 'ugliness' or 'friendliness' rather than their membership of genera, etc.; it is equally absurd for the linguist to rule out study of some particular aspect of language use because he or she has some negative attitude to it.

(Milroy and Milroy 2012: 5)

## 2.4 Standard English

There is much debate about what the concept of Standard English actually means.

In *Dialect, Language, Nation* (1966) Haugen coined the much discussed notion "Standard English". The idea in Haugen's article is that what is agreed upon by the general population as acceptable is standardised. A series of processes that a linguistic unit goes through in order to become accepted or standardised is given. These processes clearly illustrate that standardisation is by no means controlled by an organ of people, as the popular literature tends to indicate. It is an organic and natural process, controlled by no one in particular.

Trudgill is one of the researchers who has arguably done the most research on what Standard English is. He defines Standard English as a variety of English which is generally used in print, and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations (Trudgill 2000: 5-6).

Many definitions of Standard English note that it is used by ‘educated people’. It is not clear whether people choose to define Standard English as the language of the educated, or whether people who are educated choose to speak and write Standard English. The association between educated people and Standard English might be why people often think that lexicographers control what is standard and not.

Several sociolinguists have pointed out that this hierarchy has socioeconomic negative consequences. non-standard English users’ place at the bottom of a socioeconomic hierarchy is continually reinforced, in contrast with the educated people (Armstrong and Mackenzie 2013: 5). Speaking and writing Standard English has been correlated with having better career options, which in turn reinforces a class system in the UK (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 2). Case in point, the Queen is often perceived to have the ‘most standard’ language of everyone in Great Britain, and the BBC is second on the list.

Standard English is sometimes described as the English used by the people who top a social hierarchy, and at other times as the average English that most people use, regardless of class. Sociolinguists such as Trudgill point out that if Standard English is an average of all speakers in the UK, it would reflect a more colloquial variety, for example Estuary English, because most people do not speak like employees of the BBC (Trudgill 2000: 194).

It is common to think that whoever uses non-standard English, the “wrong” pronunciation or grammar, should be refused employment on the grounds of that alone. What the people who think so do not consider is that the majority of their fellow citizens commit such “mistakes”. As such, discrimination on the basis of linguistic grounds is accepted in society (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 2). In turn, linguistic discrimination is used to hide other types of discrimination, against lower classes or minority speakers (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 3).

### 2.4.1 Accent, dialect, variety and language

In non-linguist forums, the terms ‘accent’ and ‘dialect’ are often used interchangeably. Language, on the other hand, is always about the variety spoken within one or several countries. In linguistics, an accent refers exclusively to pronunciation, whereas a dialect includes pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Horobin 2016: 106; Trudgill 2000: 5). A variety is a neutral term used by linguists to avoid specifying what kind of language they are talking about. This is a convenient way to show the linguist’s disinterest in the social and political aspects of these terms, something which is further discussed in section 5.6 below.

One area can have several dialects, and those dialects tend to overlap with another dialect in a neighbouring area. As such, dialects are on a continuum. This continuum is not related to geographical borders, as they are social parameters and not linguistic ones. The same problem is encountered when defining language, the difference between language and dialect is not as clear-cut as one might think (Trudgill 2000: 3). Some neighbouring countries, such as Finland and Sweden, have little understanding of each other’s national language, despite their close geographical proximity, because their languages have evolved from different linguistic origins. Finnish is usually classified as an Uralic language, which is similar to neither Russian nor Swedish, even though they are adjacent geographically. Other neighbouring countries, such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark have mutual understanding of each other’s languages, as they come from the same North-Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Technically, if one disregards politics and takes a purely linguistic perspective, one could view Norwegian, Swedish and Danish as dialects of a shared Scandinavian language (Trudgill 2000: 4). Haugen (1966: 922) illustrates that the arbitrariness of the difference becomes even more apparent when comparing the English languages, or shall we say dialects. Further, New York English and Scouse are both dialects of English, but the separation between them being dialects of American English and British English (which some insist on calling English English) is of great importance to many non-linguists. There is a saying in linguistics, often attributed to Max Weinreich, that “a language is a dialect with an army and a navy” (Melchers and Shaw: 2011: 12). This clearly illustrates the arbitrariness of separating between dialect and language. In his often quoted essay *Dialect, Language, Nation* (1966), Haugen remarks that sociolinguists have found that

to non-linguists, however, the difference between language and dialect is very important as it is tied up with a sense of social belonging and prestige (1966: 927).

Studies of non-linguists' perceptions of accents show that regional accents can often give people positive associations, whereas regional grammars are almost always viewed negatively. Accents are usually specifically associated with a geographical location, whereas discussions of dialect frequently confuse regional and social factors (Horobin 2016: 107-108).

So-called unacceptable usage and low-status varieties certainly persist despite being publically stigmatised (Ryan: 1979 in Milroy and Milroy 2012: 15) However, it is impossible to rely on speakers' reports of their own usage or of their attitudes to usage, because it has proven to be unreliable. Speakers tend to report using the form they think is the socially acceptable one, rather than the one they actually use (Labov 1966 and 1972 in Milroy and Milroy 2012: 15).

#### 2.4.2 Non-standard English

Non-standard English is any variety, spoken or written, which is not encompassed in the Standard definition. As stated above in section 2.4, Standard English is a much discussed and complicated term, and so non-standard English is naturally a complex term as well.

One prominent aspect of the debate on non-standard English is that it is often confused with informal usage. It is quite possible to speak informally using Standard English, and it is possible to use a formal register when speaking a regional dialect (Horobin 2016: 108). However, non-linguists often struggle to see the difference and tend to view non-standard English as inherently informal (Trudgill 1999: 119). The result is that people associate it with low prestige, deem it unimportant and somehow second to Standard English. This becomes problematic when most of the population in Britain speak something that does not resemble Standard English. Most of the population also model speech on writing, and see it as a mistake when speech breaks with norms of writing. They also ascribe more prestige to writing than speech. This issue will be discussed further below.

Modern English dialects are frequently viewed as socially inferior to Standard English (Horobin 2016: 104). An example that linguists frequently use to illustrate that the grammar

of non-standard varieties is not necessarily simplified is the second person plural “yous, youse, y’all”, a helpful way of distinguishing between the second person pronoun plural and singular. There is no such option in Standard English (Horobin 2016: 111; Milroy and Milroy 2012: 12-13). Language guardians always consider non-standard usage (and sometimes even standard colloquialisms) to arise from the perversity of speakers or from cognitive deficiency (an inability to learn what is “correct”) (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 21).

Milroy and Milroy claim that non-standard English is “almost by definition spoken” (2012: 60). As their *Authority in Language* was originally published in 1985, Milroy and Milroy have yet to write about computer mediated communication (hereafter referred to as CMC), which very often uses non-standard constructions. Whether this usage is associated with spoken non-standard English and thus given low prestige is not clear. It is fair to assume that in some social spheres CMC is frowned upon, whereas in others it is widely accepted.

Language guardians perceive non-standard English grammar as incorrect, and attribute it to incompetence in the speaker (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 21). On the rare occasion they acknowledge that speaking and writing are different, they tend to express concern about a speaker’s ability to write in a different way than they speak. They can also deem some linguistic changes as acceptable while listing other equally accepted changes as negative (Aitchison 2013: 5).

### 2.4.3 Electronic discourse

At the start of the 21st century not all professors of English were in agreement about whether textspeak was a lazy contortion of language or a naturally developed non-standard variety. Writing in the *Guardian* in 2002, John Sutherland, a professor of English at the University College of London described ‘textspeak’ (early CMC) as:

(...) bleak, bald, sad shorthand. Drab shrinktalk... Linguistically it’s all pig’s ear... It masks dyslexia, poor spelling and mental laziness. Texting is penmanship for illiterates.

(Sutherland 2002, App. 1: 168, Horobin 2008: 120 and Crystal 2008: 13)

This example is popular with sociolinguists, noted by both Horobin and Crystal. It is however not a common view amongst academics, and it is worth noting that Sutherland is a professor of English literature, not linguistics. (See sections 4.3.2 and 4.5.3 below for other articles by academics in the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* respectively. Presentations of the articles concerning Sutherland and a discussion are found in sections 4.3.5, 4.5.4 and 5.3 ).

David Crystal has been one of the main advocates against the view presented by Sutherland. Crystal has written a whole book, *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8* (2008), and countless text snippets in all sorts of publications, arguing that textspeak shows evidence of high literacy. Crystal notes that it is difficult to document changes in computer-mediated communication, as it is growing and evolving very fast. He has begun to publish anything he writes on the topic for magazines etc. on his website, highlighting the issue that CMC evolves so fast that any extensive research or book about it is likely to be outdated by the time it is published. This is largely the case with *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8*, in which he considers touch screens on mobile phones to be a brief trend. It can be argued that touch screens' enabling of QWERTY keyboards on mobile phones revolutionised CMC, making Crystal's book outdated in a matter of a few years. The CMC users' ability to construct sentences employing a number of advanced processes can be likened to how hieroglyphs were constructed. Examples of the techniques used in "Texting" and other forms of CMC are acronyms, abbreviations and using the speech-sounds of numbers (such as "ate" into "8"). Understanding and being able to combine all these processes simultaneously illustrates how highly "literate" text speakers (or rather text speak-writers) are (Crystal: 2008: 7-9).

#### 2.4.4 Writing and Speech

According to Milroy and Milroy, there has been a tendency to evaluate spoken language on written language, deeming a linguistic form incorrect when it differs from norms respected in written constructions (2012: 47). Popular media articles about the misuse of language tend to disregard this difference, rarely noting whether they are writing about written or spoken English. It is common to write "say" in place of "write", something which illustrates how

these methods of communication are mixed. Spoken language is seen as less prestigious because it breaks with norms observed in writing. The more prestigious spoken English dialects, such as Estuary English and RP, have a grammar closely resembling written Standard English grammar. Dialects that tend to be associated with low prestige often have a grammar quite different from written Standard English, such as Northern English dialects. A few examples of typical non-standard grammar that occurs in Northern English (and an abundance of other non-standard grammars) is double or multiple negation, such as in the sentence “I didn’t do nothing to do nobody” and concord which differs from the one in Standard English, such as “she be nice” (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 53). Melchers and Shaw point out that referring to this type of concord as “switched concord” suggests that the concord used in Standard English is somehow more superior, which it is not. Although different grammars are largely viewed as “unacceptable” to non-linguists, it appears that differing pronunciation from what is perceived as standard goes by unnoticed. Because people tend to dislike the grammar of spoken non-standard varieties, they become associated with low prestige and in turn even with laziness and stupidity, simply because they do not follow the norms of written Standard English grammar.

There is a lot more variation in spoken than written English, because the development of it is less strictly coded. Therefore, spoken language change is more fluid than that of written language. The changes in speech often result in changes in writing norms over time, but non-linguists tend to view writing as more prestigious and original (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 47). Variation has been seen as something negative, more or less since Jonathan Swift’s proposal to regulate the change of language in 1712. While people do tend to respect and even like accents (the pronunciation), they often express dislike of the non-standard grammar used in such non-standard varieties. Clearly, many non-linguists do not understand that non-standard grammar is just as natural as non-standard pronunciation, or accents. When one evaluates spoken English based on norms in writing, one disregards the nature of spoken language as more dynamic than the written. When speaking in an informal setting, it is perfectly common and natural to use different syntax and incomplete sentences. The ideology of standardisation present in writing is a lot less prevalent in speech, which was fairly recently observed, documented and codified (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 51-52). Since most recordings of the English spoken language have been studied after the 1960s, it is only recently that the major differences between spoken and written language have been noticed (Milroy and



Milroy 2012: 52). Rather than acknowledging that they are different, many non-linguists will claim that spoken English is often “wrong” when it breaks with the conventions of writing.

However, speech and writing are completely different mediums, and therefore it is only natural that they are different. In writing, the mediator is not usually present when the message is received, and so it is more important to make the message as clear as possible, because the mediator will not be there to rectify misunderstandings when the message is received. In speaking, the mediator and the receiver of the communication are both present. That means that it is easier to explain misunderstandings and one can reply much faster (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 54-55). This might be why computer-mediated chatting and text messages in the last decade have taken on a more oral form. With the restructuring of text messages to speech-bubbles in computer-mediated communication, the dialogue on a whole is more like speech. The users treat it as such, typically writing in short incomplete sentences rather than long informative elaborations.

#### 2.4.5 Different definitions of grammar

Many non-linguists appear to have a very different idea of what grammar is than linguists. It is often viewed as a set of rules, such as not splitting infinitives, never beginning a sentence with a conjunction, never ending a sentence in a preposition and avoiding multiple negation.

For linguists, grammar is the set of rules that speakers of a language follow when they speak. This means that grammar decides what is a possible construction, on both word- and sentence level (Bauer 1998: 77). Horobin has an even simpler definition, calling grammar a set of rules which organise words into meaningful units (Horobin 2016: 90).

Many sociolinguists stress the point that non-linguists frequently use arguments such as Latin grammar rules, mathematical logic and etymology to defend their opinions on correct usage (Horobin 2016: 93, Hitchings 2011: 12, Aitchison 2013: 10, Cheshire 1998: 114, Milroy and Milroy 2012: 15). Milroy and Milroy give several examples of how the common public misunderstand what grammar entails, and what the consequences of this misunderstanding is:

For many years I have been disgusted with the bad grammar used by school-leavers and teachers too sometimes, but recently on the lunchtime news, when a secretary, who had just started work with a firm, was interviewed her first words were: ‘I looked up and seen two men’ etc. It’s unbelievable to think, with so many young people out of work, that she could get such a job, but perhaps ‘I seen’ and ‘I done’ etc., is the usual grammar nowadays for office staff and business training colleges.

(‘Have Went’; Saintfield, N. Ireland in Milroy and Milroy 2012: 31).

Milroy and Milroy note that while the person behind this statement portrays themselves as a guardian of language, it is unlikely that they fully realise the potential function of their comment (2012: 32). Not only does this person not understand the nature of grammar, ultimately, they tie “bad grammar”, in speech, to being unfit for employment. According to Milroy and Milroy, making such a connection is worryingly common. This is an idea which has been popular since Swift’s *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712). The standardisation of language, making specific forms acceptable and others unacceptable, is a process that leads to the stigma of non-standard grammar. The difference between non-linguists and linguists’ definitions of grammar is further reflected on in section 5.6 below.

## 2.5 The Complaint Tradition

Jonathan Swift’s *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712) is often considered the start of The Complaint Tradition. A complaint today is that literacy is in decline. However common, this is a false claim, as mass literacy has mushroomed along with mass education (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 29). Since printing began, literacy among the public has been growing. The possibility of printing made written language more codified, and as a result a universal consciousness of a ‘correct’ English spread with literacy. This consciousness ensured that the public learned to look to the relatively standardised channel for written correctness, despite the fact that spoken English continued to

change. The result was the birth of what Milroy and Milroy refer to as “the ideology of standardisation” (2012: 29).

The Complaint Tradition has changed little since 1712 (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 29). The fearsome messages they publish have enormous social, educational and political implications. Their complaints cannot be countered with the purely linguistic argument that all languages and varieties are grammatically structured systems, because the complainers and the linguists stand on different grounds, not seeing each other’s arguments as valid. According to the language guardians, their arguments using logic and Latin grammar do not need to be further justified, correctness is assumed to be obviously correct, and alternative forms, variations, are perceived as obviously incorrect (Milroy 2002: 20).

The writers in the complaint tradition see linguists’ acceptance of variation in English as permissive, and they tend to equal linguistic permissiveness with moral permissiveness. They see descriptive linguistics as false and even describe it as dangerous. For Simon (introduced above in section 2.3) the acceptance of linguistic variation is “a benighted and despicable catering to mass ignorance under the supposed aegis of democracy” (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 8; Simon 1980: 37).

John Simon and John Honey are amongst the language guardians that are most often referred to in the sociolinguistic theory describing the complaint tradition. Their excerpts from various British newspapers are often quoted by sociolinguists. These quotes usually predict the doom of English, because of the way young people write or speak English. Sometimes they call linguists heretics, and accuse them of being “against” Standard English (Milroy 1999: 20; Milroy and Milroy 2012: 7-8; Honey: 1997; Simon: 1980).

Typically, complaints are rooted in a grammar rule prescribed in the 18th century. Examples of this is complaining about the wrongful use of ‘different from’ versus ‘different to’, writing or saying ‘you and me’ instead of ‘you and I’, never splitting an infinitive and the rule that one should never end a sentence on a preposition (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 28). Generally, language guardians feel a strong compulsion to choose one form over another as the correct one, and disallow other possibilities (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 14-15). There is a perplexing discrepancy between the guardians’ acceptance of accents and variation in vocabulary and their intolerance variation in non-standard writing and speech.

Milroy and Milroy remark that during history, several complainers have shown more humility and understanding of language’s nature than they do today. Johnson of Johnson’s

Dictionary is amongst the complainers who have realised this. Although he believes it would be beneficial, he realises that stopping linguistic change is not possible (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 29). Another noteworthy historical complainer is George Orwell. He had a seemingly valid complaint, worrying about the function of communication in society. He illustrates his understanding of the difference between spoken and written language, worrying about the gap between them (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 36). However, these days most linguists agree that language is an organic being that will shape itself the way it needs to naturally with people's help, whether they realise it or not. People will always naturally strive to achieve clear communication, even if they are not always aware of it. Such is the nature of language. This is one of the main arguments below in chapter 5, as it is a persistent worry in several of the prescriptive newspaper articles.

### 2.5.1 Characteristics of complaints

Hall presents examples of typical worries that the general public have about language. One example is of whether pronouncing 'forehead' to rhyme with 'horrid' is careless and sloppy. He writes that to a linguist, this is simply a development, not corruption of language. In another example, he asks whether English and French are more civilised than "the savage tongues of the Eskimo and Hottentot", to which he replies that all languages are different but equal in standing. Another example he uses is the complaint about 'nice' being used in place of 'kind' when it should mean 'silly' (Hall 1950: 3-4; OED.com). This worry is a good example of how most of these worries cease over time, most people today would not know that 'nice' used to mean 'silly'. It is uncertain why some of these examples remain complaints today, when others have been forgotten. Sociolinguists have not identified a correlation between the complaints that remain and the ones that die. All that is known is that some developments in language lead to complaints, and other developments do not.

Milroy and Milroy classify the complaints of language guardians into two kinds: Type 1 complaints are directed at errors in spoken or written language, not distinguishing between the two (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 31). There is only one way of speaking and/or writing English correctly, secondly, deviations from Standard English are illiterate and

barbaric, as non-standard forms are irregular and “perversely deviant”. Thirdly, when people deviate from Standard English it is right to discriminate them because they are stupid, ignorant, lazy or morally degenerate (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 33).

Type 2 complaints accept standardisation in the written channel, but are concerned with clarity, effectiveness, morality and honesty in the public use of the Standard language (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 31). Type 2 complaints are related to morals. The assumption behind these complaints is that one set of abstract linguistic rules (in phonology, spelling, grammar and lexicon) is inherently superior to some other abstract set (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 33).

Aitchison and others have noted that the language guardians often irrationally use Latin grammar to defend their correctness (Aitchison 2013: 3). They also have an unjustified preference for written language forms over spoken ones.

Aitchison entertains several of the language guardians’ views. She asks whether it could be true that English is faltering due to lack of maintenance, if we should make a campaign for Real English, and if language change is inevitable, would anything good come from attempting to halt it? Lastly, she asks if it is possible to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ changes, and eliminate the bad ones.

Andersson and Trudgill have dedicated a whole book, *Bad Language*, to explaining to language guardians that their complaints of sloppiness, bad language, carelessness and misuse are not only futile, but unnecessary to worry about. Words, pronunciation and grammar are picked apart, addressing features about these concepts that make people upset (Andersson and Trudgill 1992: 13). An example of a complaint that several linguistic researchers point to is the changing definition of ‘literally’, which is now often used metaphorically in the sense of ‘figuratively’ (Horobin 2016: 42).

Both Aitchison, Horobin and Andersson and Trudgill neutrally present the worries given by language guardians, explaining and arguing for why the worries are futile and meaningless. They present the problems as if they might be legitimate worries, appealing to the logical sense of a non-linguist reader. Then they counter those worries with highly valid arguments, in order to persuade non-linguist readers who started reading with a false impression made by language guardians. However, the language guardians’ arguments are nearly always illogical, and so it easy for the guardians to disregard the linguists’ valid arguments. As is shown below in for example the article “In praise of dialect democracy”

(App. 2: 2), the language guardians tend to consider the linguist's information to be personal opinions (see section 4.5.1 for a full presentation and interpretation of this article).

### 2.5.2 Complainers and replies

People who can be considered writers within the complaint tradition have been referred to in different ways over the years. They are called 'Language Guardians', 'Shamans' (Bolinger 1980: 1) and 'Mavens' (Pinker 1994), a taxonomy referred to and elaborated by Cotter (2010: 189) and in Milroy and Milroy (2012: 10). "Grammar nazi" is a common modern colloquial term for a person who is overly keen to correct other people's linguistic mistakes, often used online. Sociolinguists often call them 'language guardians' because they tend to establish themselves as the saviouring voice to stop language change. Horobin aptly renames them "usage police" (Horobin 2016: 67). This new term better encompasses the sort of "mistakes" the 'usage police' tend to correct, which are far from just grammatical, and certainly has nothing to do with actual political Nazi ideology. The term "usage police" allows the inclusion of complaints about pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary and grammar. Below in chapter 4 yet another modern term is revealed as highly common in the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph*, namely 'pedant'. This term is used by both the complainers and the descriptive writers in the articles perused for this study, suggesting that it is a neutral term. 'Pedant' allows the complainers to see themselves as meticulous and be proud of it, whereas the descriptivists can complain that the pedants care too much about details.

In *Bad Language*, Andersson and Trudgill make a reply to the complainers. It is in response to the claim that linguists do not care about what they should care about, made in Philip Howard's book *The State of Language* (1984). *Bad Language* was written in order to explain the nature of what people call bad language, and that there is no valid reason for calling particular linguistic constructions or vocabulary bad or good (Andersson and Trudgill 1992: 8-9). Andersson and Trudgill write that linguists do not care about whether people's vocabularies are smaller than before, whether English is changing faster or whether English is getting better or worse. The two linguists deem these questions as either impossible to answer, trivial, or both (Andersson and Trudgill 1992: 6). Linguists and complainers do not agree

about what the study of linguistics should involve, and sharp remarks such as these are in evidence on both sides of the debate. The negative tone used by both sides does not contribute to narrowing the discrepancy of linguistic knowledge between linguists and non-linguists.

As aforementioned, in 1998 Bauer and Trudgill published *Language Myths*, a collection of essays dispelling commonly held beliefs that non-linguists have about language. The following chapters will explore whether their messages reached the public through the *Telegraph* or the *Guardian*.

### 3. Materials and methodology

The material selected as the focus of this research is from two newspapers, the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph*. Specifically, the basis of the research is the newspapers' free, online material. Furthermore, the focus is on articles published later than the year 2000. This time span is chosen because *Language Myths*, where linguists remark that the public is uninformed, was published in 1998.

Using the method described below in sections 3.3 and 3.4, this thesis aims to outline and briefly present what has been published on the topics linguistics, English language change and linguistic correctness between the years 2000 and 2018 in the respective online free newspapers. Given such a large scope, only the essential information from each article is compiled and analysed. The method described below in this chapter allows filing essential information from each article, and labelling it according to the categories and scale described in section 3.4 below.

Compiling and categorising the article's essentials in this manner enables the research to be presented and compared in a number of ways, as done below in chapter 4

One of the main aims of the method used here is to find out if colloquial and scientific books about linguistics and the nature of language change are mentioned in the compiled online newspaper articles. There have been many attempts by linguists and others since to write colloquial books about the nature of language and language change, but whether they have been discussed or presented in online newspapers, arguably making them reasonably accessible to the public, will be surveyed. It is one thing for a popular science linguistic book to be published, it is another for it to actually be noticed and read by the public. This is interesting because if that is the case, the information in the books can influence both journalists who write these articles and non-linguists who read online newspapers. Whether linguists themselves have been able to publish colloquial articles about language in the newspapers is another related aspect which will be looked into.



## 3.1 Materials

### 3.1.1 The newspapers

The material selected to give a valid representation of British media is found in two newspapers. The *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* were chosen for the convenience of analysing written material published free of charge online, and because they are traditionally considered to be fairly different, both ideologically and politically. The *Telegraph* is considered a fairly conservative right wing newspaper, whereas the *Guardian* is considered a more liberal left wing newspaper. The *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* both have a range of free articles online, something which makes them accessible to the general public. The *Guardian* has an open policy, which means that all material published online is free, the reader can choose whether to make a monetary contribution or not. On the *Telegraph*'s website, one has to create an account to read articles, and a non-paying user can only read one full "premium" article each week. Despite this apparent limitation, only one such premium article was encountered during the compilation of relevant articles from the *Telegraph*.<sup>1</sup>

The articles have been found by searching for specific keywords. Articles that concern language change (lexicography included), language complaints, linguistic correctness or that in other ways use terminology from the linguistic field were assessed. The scope thus includes articles about language change with and without complaints, of a prescriptive or descriptive tone. Some articles are informative texts about linguistics as a scientific field, written in a more or less colloquial tone. Articles dismissing attitudes of linguistic correctness are relevant because they are a natural counterbalance to the articles in favour of correctness. Articles, complaints or descriptive accounts of American influence on English are also considered a part of language change within the UK. However, articles not concerning the UK, such as American complaints, have been excluded, given the geocentric scope of this study. Non-complaining, descriptive articles about language in general (not necessarily language change) are included if they comment on the prescriptive ideology. It is consequential for the scope of the search to consider the polar opposite to the complaining prescriptive articles, to

---

<sup>1</sup> "Let girls be called girls - female pupils were just that, last time I checked" by Rosa Silverman, 22. Nov 2017 (App. 2: 63)

reflect both sides of the descriptive/prescriptive spectrum equally. The scale will be explained in further detail below in section 3.3.2.

Articles about languages other than English, language learning, and American language change are not considered relevant and will not be included. An exception to this is complaints about or explanations of the influence of other languages (such as American) on British English, these are considered relevant. Articles about rhetorics and discourse are also excluded. Complaints or appraisals of foreign English speakers' competency in English are also considered extraneous, not because they are not important but because this thesis cannot cover all types of linguistic complaints addressed in these two newspapers. In order to specify the scope as much as possible, it is convenient to draw the line at complaints by and about English speakers in the UK. Some articles have been deemed irrelevant to the scope because they are about people, not language. Examples of these are an interview with the prescriptivist Lynne Truss, obituaries of linguists and complaints about the way politicians speak. The latter kind of article is not considered relevant for the scope of this research, because they tend to be complaints about people disguised as linguistic complaints.

An interview with Noam Chomsky which may seem nonessential at first glance was included. This is because Chomsky is such a central figure to linguistics that any mention of his linguistic work in the newspapers is interesting in itself; it provides information about linguistics to the general public. If an article is about Chomsky, Crystal, Pinker, or another linguist, it nearly always details specific information about the nature of language, as these texts expose the general public to linguistics as a science. The Chomsky interview in question is also relevant because it contains attitudes and views on English in general. Some articles have been considered relevant because they use the word 'linguist' in the traditional sense or in new ways. Initial findings show that several articles use 'linguists' where it appears that 'bilinguals' would be a more fitting term. The *Guardian* has several obituaries of linguists under the category 'linguistics'. While it is interesting in itself that the newspaper publishes obituaries about relatively unknown professors, the obituaries themselves are not deemed relevant as articles in this study, because they are about people who happen to be linguists, not about linguistics, attitudes or language change.

The articles found relevant according to the specifics given above are sorted into spreadsheets, the specifics of which are given in sections 3.2 and 3.3 below. These spreadsheets are included as appendices, therefore this study is a mix of quantitative and

qualitative. The most significant findings, the articles that set themselves apart by being highly descriptive, prescriptive or otherwise different, will be discussed in detail below in chapter 4. The significant findings are marked in bold in the spreadsheets.

In order to access a full article on the *Telegraph*'s website one has to create an account, but one does not have to pay. Paid content is excluded from this study because it is not as accessible to the general public as free content. With a free *Telegraph* account one can access one premium article each week. Because only one such article was found (see footnote above in this section), this did not become a matter worth addressing in closer detail. Very few of the articles accessed in the *Telegraph* have a comment section, which is why comments are rarely taken into account. Where comments are available, the most popular one will be included. In articles from the *Guardian* the most upvoted comment is noted, along with how many upvotes it has.

### 3.1.2 Linguistics in the newspapers

Supplementing the articles from the two newspapers are linguistic books mentioned in the articles, and articles by linguists in the newspapers. A factor in gauging the reliability of the two newspapers' linguistic information is finding out whether and how articles by linguists and books about linguistics are featured. Any mention or review of a book in a newspaper article is taken note of in the spreadsheets. In the findings it is discussed whether the views and information in the books are presented in the articles as scientific accounts, or whether a layman interprets and evaluates the validity of the linguistic theory in the books. The tone in which linguists and authors who write about linguistics are described is also evaluated. If an article by a linguist with no other author is published, this reflects the newspapers' high esteem of the linguist as a valid and reliable source of information about language. As doctors are valued as valid informative sources on medicine, linguists should be valued as sources on information about linguistics, this has however not been the case in the past, as Trudgill and others have noted several times. Whether this trend has now changed will be surveyed by the presence of linguists and their books in the newspapers. David Crystal, Noam Chomsky and Simon Horobin are examples of linguists that recur with more or less elaborate mention in

several of the newspaper articles. The references to linguists and linguistic information is a recurring theme, presented and interpreted in chapter 4, and discussed in chapter 5.

Examples of the sociolinguistic books that have been presented are *How English Became English* (2016) by Simon Horobin, which was reviewed in an article in the *Telegraph*. His *Does Spelling Matter?* (2013) has also been brought up in at least one article. Books mentioned that appear to be of a descriptive nature but are not written by linguists are *The Etymologicon* (2011) by Mark Forsyth, *For Who the Bell Tolls: One Man's Quest for Grammatical Perfection* (2013) by David Marsh and *Mother Tongue* (1991) by Bill Bryson.

Prescriptive books are also often mentioned in the articles. Whether they are presented neutrally, criticised or praised in comparison with the descriptive books will be assessed. Examples of such books are *Gwynne's Grammar: The Ultimate Introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English* (2012), Lynne Truss' *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* (2003) and *The Girl's Like Spaghetti: Why, You Can't Manage Without Apostrophes!* (2007). In addition, several dictionaries are often referred to as if they were prescriptive, when in fact they note in their introductions that they observe usage of English and do not prescribe it. The main example of this is the Oxford English Dictionary and various references to 'Fowler' or 'Fowler's', meaning Henry W. Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926). It is rarely specified in the articles which edition is referred to, something which is strange seeing as the editions range from 1926 to *Oxford Dictionary* editor Robert Burchfield's publication of "Fowler's" in 1996. Although Fowler often mocked certain prescriptivist rules, he has ultimately been labelled a prescriptivist. One of his frequently recited observations on the matter of prescriptivism and descriptivism is:

The English-speaking world may be divided into (1) those who neither know nor care what a split infinitive is; (2) those who do not know, but care very much; (3) those who know & condemn; (4) those who know & approve; & (5) those who know & distinguish. . . . Those who neither know nor care are the vast majority, & are a happy folk, to be envied by most of the minority classes.

(Fowler 1926: 558)

This quote appears in several of the compiled newspaper articles. It describes the nature of the debate between descriptivism and prescriptivism, and the triviality of the debate to those who do not care.

### 3.1.3 Online sources and lay-person linguistic influencers

Supplementing sociolinguistic material has been included in the study because it is referred to in relevant newspaper articles. These sources are both by linguists and by language-enthusiastic non-linguists. One example of the linguistic kind is the English professor Geoffrey Pullum's blog *Language Log*, a blog with topics such as 'Prescriptivist Poppcock', alerting the reader to what Pullum thinks about prescriptivism.

Comedian Stephen Fry is referred to in several articles, he is therefore amongst those who represent the non-linguist counterpart of the complaint tradition. One of the articles (App. 1: 4) refers to an entry on Stephen Fry's website called *Don't Mind Your Language*. Stephen Fry is an English comedian who falls under the category of people who are not linguists, but who take a keen interest in language and utter their opinions about it in the media. They act as non-academic counterweight to language guardians, who are not linguists either. Fry is referred to in at least two of the newspaper articles, and he is an influential person who often voices his opinions on English. He is debatably a credible source for information about linguistics, as the former host of the TV quiz show *QI*, which has always prided itself on being a trustworthy, fact-checking source of updated information. His long blog entry *Don't mind your language* is about what Fry refers to as 'pedantry', how people complain about what is the natural development of English. The blog entry is presented further under Livingstone's article in section 4.3.4 below.

Interestingly, Sandi Toksvig, another comedian and Fry's replacement as the host of *QI*, wrote an article in the *Telegraph* reflecting similar positive attitudes toward language change and acceptance of non-standard experimentation with English. In the discussion it is reflected on whether these non-linguist 'intellectual' celebrities' articles on linguistic correctness can be more influential on the attitudes of general public than those of linguists and journalists. This article is further presented in section 4.5.5 below.

### 3.2 Data collection

The crux of this approach to data collection lies in avoiding a subjective selection of articles and other materials. It is paramount that the process of finding articles is designed in such a way that they find relevant material, but avoid only selecting material that supports hypotheses. In order to achieve this, a specific way of searching for articles has been formulated.

Considering the *Telegraph*'s search engine is a custom search powered by Google, it yields a wider range of results than the *Guardian*. Searching for the word 'linguistics', for example, yields approximately 4000 results, but only the 10 first pages are available to browse in the search window. Therefore, in cases where the *Telegraph* yields a cumbersome amount of results, the relevant articles appearing on the first 10 pages of results (sorted by relevance) are assessed. In the *Guardian* comparatively, a search for the term 'linguistics' only yields 201 results. The *Guardian*'s search results tend to be more relevant, as they are categorised under the label 'linguistics' by editors in the newspaper, not an automatic Google algorithm. An equivalent category has not been found in the *Telegraph*. The keywords which were used to search for relevant articles were:

- ❖ Linguistics
- ❖ Language
- ❖ Language change
- ❖ Linguistic correctness
- ❖ Standard English
- ❖ Grammar nazi
- ❖ Pedant

In addition to the articles found using the search words above, links to other relevant articles that appeared within articles were also pursued. The *Telegraph*'s search engine often yields results linking to the website *The Telegraph - Bookshop*, where one can buy books. Despite being descriptive accounts of books related to linguistics, these results are disregarded, as they are not articles about books.

Many of the articles were found several times through different search words and links, something which demonstrates the irrelevance of the precise manner in which each article was found. Therefore, which search word or link yielded which article is not considered relevant and is thus not included in the spreadsheets.

In addition to a category called ‘linguistics’, the *Guardian* has a column called *Mind Your Language*. This column has 273 entries, not all of which are considered relevant within the scope given above. Therefore it was possible within the scope of this study to peruse the entire column in search for relevant articles. The column has the heading “The editors of the *Guardian* style guide write about language usage and abuse”, which suggested that several of these articles would be applicable to the research.

The *Telegraph* has no columns or categories dedicated to linguistics, grammar or language. The articles appear under different categories such as science and education, but it is not possible to search for articles within these categories.

It is not assumed that the public perusing the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* have found the articles in the same manner that the researcher has. People are not likely to have searched for ‘linguistics’ or ‘language change’ in the respective newspapers’ search engines, looking for information on linguistics. They are more likely to have read the articles as they stumbled across them, presumably when they were published and naturally available on the frontpage of the newspaper, or found by links in similar articles. It is, however, necessary for the researcher to use the search engine in order to find the relevant articles.

### 3.3 Research design

#### 3.3.1 Data collection: The appendices

The main method used in this thesis is filing the articles from the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* into two spreadsheets, found in the appendices. In order for the study to be cross qualified/quantified the appendices need to contain a copious amount of summarised but

relevant information. The spreadsheets' columns are described below, from the leftmost column towards the right:

- ❖ #: A designated number has been given to each article in order to make a system for referring to them. App. 1: 1 refers to the first article, 1, in appendix 1, the *Guardian*.
- ❖ *Title*: The title of the article.
- ❖ *Date published*: The date the article was published.
- ❖ *Topic*: One or several topics the article concerns, see section 3.3.3 below.
- ❖ *Author/role*: The author(s) of the article and their role if it is relevant or noted.
- ❖ *Descriptive-prescriptive scale*: A gauge of the articles' stance on a scale ranging from descriptive to prescriptive (or off the scale), see the following section 3.3.2 for more details.
- ❖ *Summary/description/quote*: Summary of the article's main features, a description of the article, and/or a quote which reflects the content of the article.
- ❖ *Link*: A hyperlink to the article on the newspaper's website.
- ❖ *Comments*: The most upvoted comment where comments are available, and how many upvotes it has.
- ❖ *Date last accessed*: The date the article was last accessed by the researcher.

Any information in either of these columns which was considered significant during the compilation of the articles is highlighted in bold. However, not all the bold information has been considered equally significant once the compilation was complete. What is presented in chapter 4 is the most significant of the information highlighted in bold in the respective appendices. The number assigned to each article has no hierarchical meaning and is used solely to make referring to and navigating in the document as simple as possible and to make a system for referring to the articles. The articles are sorted by topic in order to be able to compare what sort of topics occur in the two newspapers, whether they are the same topics, or whether the newspapers have different focuses. Further description of the topics are given below in section 3.4.4. The summary includes one or several quotes that epitomises the attitude and/or the type of information in the article. It may also contain a short sentence by the researcher, describing the content of the article. The latter is typical for the scientific, descriptive articles with no particular tone or attitude.



The spreadsheets have been made by using Google Sheets, in order to create diagrams, charts and tables depicting the quantifiable information statistically. Afterwards the information from the sheets was transferred to a normal text document, in order to create two extensive but readable A4 Appendices, one for each compilation of online newspaper articles. The order of the articles is from descriptive at the top to prescriptive at the bottom. They are not ordered from most descriptive to most prescriptive within each category on the scale. (The topmost article within the descriptive group of articles is not necessarily more descriptive than the ones further below in the descriptive range). Both appendices range from ‘Descriptive’, to ‘Mostly descriptive’, ‘Mostly prescriptive’ and lastly ‘Prescriptive’. However, the *Telegraph* has the ‘Appearing descriptive, prescriptive attitude’ category at the top, The *Guardian* (App. 1), having none of the first category, starts with ‘descriptive’. The articles were sorted in this order because the descriptive/prescriptive scale is considered the most important aspect of the articles.

When an article is referred to in the thesis, appendix 1 or 2 as well as the article number (from the first column, ‘#’) in the appendix will be given. If for example the first article in the *Guardian* appendix is discussed, it will be noted as App. 1: 1. Similarly if the first article in the *Telegraph* appendix is discussed, App. 2: 1 will be the reference.

### 3.3.2 The descriptive-prescriptive scale

The scale on which the articles are assessed has six degrees. The articles are placed into a category depending on the prescriptive or descriptive nature of their information and their tone. This scale aims to measure to which degree the articles are considered reliable information by linguists. A descriptive article closely resembles the way in which linguists write about linguistics, whereas a prescriptive one does not. Prescriptive articles often contain information that is simply not valid, or they contain a person’s opinions. The categories on the scale have been defined as follows:

1. *Descriptive*: The article has a descriptive tone with scientific information supported by linguistic research, sources mentioned or not. No opinions given, nor the author's appraisal of the information.

2. *Mostly descriptive*: The article is mostly descriptive in tone and information, but has either some unscientific information, an unreliable source or personal opinion.

3. *Mostly prescriptive*: The article is of a prescriptive nature but mentions or supports descriptivism in some sense. The article is more prescriptive than it is descriptive.

4. *Prescriptive*: The article has a prescriptive nature, is coloured by a personal opinion and/or unsupported facts or political/ideological views. Typical complaints are an example of this category.

Another category next to the scale was created and is shown below. It was based on the hypothesis that some articles would not fit on the spectrum, for example in the event that journalists would give the impression to be of a descriptive ideology, but have an underlying tone of prescriptive attitude. After the compiling of data from articles was done it became evident that this category was exceedingly rare, with only two articles, both from the *Telegraph*. These two articles (App. 2: 1 and 2) will be presented and discussed in sections 4.5.1 and 5 below.

*Off-scale: Appearing descriptive with underlying prescriptive attitude*: The article appears descriptive at first, by for example noting that language change is natural and expected. Despite this, the article voices opinions on language change and/or gives false information about linguistics.

### 3.3.3 Categorisation of topics

The articles are classified into certain topics in the spreadsheets. The topics are broad categories defining the articles loosely. The value of this system is to be able to compare what topics are prevalent in each newspaper, as well as being able to compare what linguistic topics they focus on. One article can fall under several categories. For the convenience of searching for them in the appendices, the categories are marked with #, marking them as topics and separating them from normal text. The categories are as follows:

- ❖ *#Book*: The article is about or mentions one or several books about language change, linguistics, prescriptive or descriptive grammar. It can be a book review, reference or other mention of a book related to language change, linguistic complaints or linguistics in general.
- ❖ *#Language change (General)*: The article is about language change in general, morphological change, semantic change or other. This category sometimes entails complaints and comments about language not viewed as ‘language change’ by the writer (or person whose opinions are given).
- ❖ *#Language change (CMC)*: The article is about language change and/or complaint related to computer-mediated communication. This category entails any colloquial term that might be used about an electronic English variety, such as text-speak, textese, leet speak, SMS-language, etc.
- ❖ *#Language change (Speech)*: The article is about spoken language change. This entails change in pronunciation and can be about accents, dialects or correctness concerning speech.
- ❖ *#Lexicography*: The article is about language change on a word level. Most of these articles are about new entries in dictionaries.

- ❖ *#Grammar*: The article is about grammar-related language change. This can also include articles which use the word ‘grammar’ to refer to linguistic concepts that are not actually within the linguistic scope of grammar. However, articles about correct grammar which do not mention grammar specifically or for example refer to terms such as ‘grammar nazi’, are placed in the *#Correctness* category.
- ❖ *#Correctness*: The article is about linguistic correctness, written or spoken. Articles with a specific reference to grammatical correctness will be placed in the the *#Grammar* category.
- ❖ *#Standardisation*: The article is about standardisation, and/or explicitly mentions Standard English as a term, ‘the Standard’, ‘standardisation’, “Standard English” etc.
- ❖ *#Prescriptivism*: The article is about prescriptivism, it may or may not mention the term itself.
- ❖ *#Descriptivism*: The article is about descriptivism, it may or may not mention the term itself.
- ❖ *#Linguistic information*: The article gives information about anything within the scientific field of linguistics. Examples of articles that fit into this category are articles about a study by linguists, informative articles on language change or the nature of language or about a linguist and their work.

### 3.3.4 Approach to presentation, interpretation and discussion of findings

The most significant highlighted information in bold from the appendices is presented and interpreted in chapter 4. With such copious amounts of information to analyse, it is practical to present and interpret in one section, rather than separate the two. The interpretation does lean towards being a discussion, seeing as so many articles are presented, it is practical to keep presentation, interpretation and to some extent discussion in one place for each article. A

logical set of divisions for each newspaper was created, in order to make these presentations comparable. Each division is a group of articles that have similar features, giving an impression of how each newspaper presented this type of linguistic information. Some articles fit into several groups, and are therefore referred to where it is useful. The parameters of each group is briefly explained in a topical sentence before the actual presentation of articles.

The discussion that follows in chapter 5 is a reflection on some of the common themes that arose from the findings, and relates them to the sociolinguistic literature presented in chapter 2.

### 3.4 Validity and reliability

The findings in this study cannot be generalised as an overview of how British media present linguistics. It is the beginning of and provides tools for a larger analysis. The results can also give indications which can be hypotheses to be tested on a larger scale with further similar studies. The articles presented in the findings are considered sample case studies, giving some insight into how the newspapers treat linguistics as a whole.

#### 3.4.1 Validity and limitations of material

Whether the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* fairly represent the information given by the English media to the public is debatable. Having asked that, one can also wonder whether these two newspapers are deemed trustworthy by the general public, and if they are, one can ask whether the information presented actually influences people's knowledge and opinions about language change and linguistic correctness.

Using different and more extensive methods of searching may have yielded more relevant results in the *Telegraph*, but within the method which was used here, a sample size of 109 was considered sufficient to be representative. The list of keywords used to search for articles was expanded several times during the research in order to find a suitable amount of

relevant results on the *Telegraph* website. As very few new articles resurfaced toward the end of the search, it is plausible that most of the relevant articles in existence were compiled.

### 3.4.2 Validity of method

To avoid researcher biases it is adamant that this study surveys a large sample of articles, and has specific criteria for which articles are deemed relevant. A quantitative sample of articles makes the likelihood of a bias behind the researcher's choices less prevalent.

The fact that it was easier to find relevant articles in the *Guardian*, may suggest that the public are also more likely to stumble across that type of articles while browsing the *Guardian*. Articles older than the year 2010 were rarely found within the parameters of the search described above in section 3.2, which could have implications for the result of the study. This factor needs to be taken into account when comparing the newspapers' descriptive-prescriptive development over time. It is possible that the amount of comparatively older articles in the *Telegraph* have an influence on the result. However, one also has to consider whether more older articles were found because more used to be published, or because the method of searching is more likely to yield older results on the *Telegraph's* website.

Using different methods of searching one would be able to find more articles, but a sample size of 172 from the *Guardian* and 109 from the *Telegraph* is considered a sufficient amount to be representative. It is also important to have a fixed searching method, in order to avoid biases in relation to the selection of articles. One would presumably have been able to find more relevant articles using different searching techniques (such as searching the dedicated archives), but within the time and space used here, the search was limited to the results found in the search engines on each newspaper's front page.

### 3.4.3 Hypotheses

Before the compilation process started, a few hypotheses were developed. The first assumption was that some articles would differentiate themselves as particularly prescriptive or descriptive, something which was proven to be true.

A main research question which is tested is whether the articles have become more descriptive in recent years, as more information about the nature of language has been made accessible to the general public. A factor which marks high descriptiveness is the presence of linguists in each newspaper. More articles about and by linguists are seen as indicators of high descriptiveness. Articles written *by* linguists are assumed to be most descriptive, closely followed by articles *about* linguists, then articles with about linguistic information. (The latter group is assumably less reliable if no linguists are cited as the source of the information).

If the date of publishing and the descriptive-prescriptive scale show no or little correlation, that in itself is interesting and will be discussed. Possible implications of the correlation or disassociation between the dates and the descriptive/prescriptive scale will also be reflected on.

An initial hypothesis which is tested further is that unreliable articles with low validity and no sources or citations will tend to have no author, suggesting that journalists do not want their name associated with these unreliable articles. It is studied whether this is indeed a tendency, and whether this tendency has changed with time.

Whether the newspapers differ in these aspects will also be assessed, and their consistency in descriptive-prescriptive stance over time will be accounted for.

## 4. Presentation and interpretation of findings

### 4.1 General findings

172 articles were compiled from the *Guardian*, and 109 from the *Telegraph*. The findings are presented below in four separate sections, one general and one significant for each newspaper. Sections 4.2 and 4.3 present and interpret the *Guardian* appendix (1), and sections 4.4 and 4.5 present and interpret the *Telegraph* appendix (2). The figures demonstrating the quantifiable findings are numbered according to which the chapter they appear in, which newspaper appendix and which chronological number within the chapter. ‘Figure 4.1.1’ denotes chapter 4, appendix 1, figure 1. The second *Guardian* figure is called ‘4.1.2’, and so on. Similarly, the *Telegraph* figures are labelled ‘4.2.1’, meaning chapter 4, appendix 2, figure 1.

The main reason that there are considerably fewer articles compiled from the *Telegraph* is that the newspaper lacked specific columns and categories related to relevant topics. In the *Guardian*, one full highly relevant blog was searched through, making relevant articles highly accessible within the parameters of the search. In the *Telegraph*, a search for the keywords described in section 3.3 above was the only way to find relevant articles (as well as following links within those articles).

There is an overwhelming tendency for journalists, prescriptivists, descriptivists, and readers to refer to themselves or others who are preoccupied with grammar, spelling and linguistic correctness as ‘pedants’. In several cases they are also referred to as ‘purists’ or ‘linguistic purists’. Simon Horobin’s term ‘usage police’ does not appear to occur in any of the articles compiled for Appendix 1 or 2, but Kory Stamper’s term ‘usage commentator’ in “Who ruined English: Brits or Yanks?” (App. 1: 9, presented below in section 4.3.4) is similar and perhaps an even more accurate characterisation. The term ‘grammar nazi’ only appears a couple of times. In the *Guardian* it is once in a headline “Confessions of a reformed grammar nazi” (App. 1: 8) and once in a parentheses, complaining about the use of the term itself and that “it’s wrong to dismiss grammatical accuracy as pedantry”, in the article “Good grammar saves lives – and rescues friendships” (App. 1: 141). In the *Telegraph* compilation it occurs 6



times, and many of these mentions are discussions of the usage of the term itself. It occurs in one headline, “The only thing worse than a grammar nazi is an anti-grammar nazi” (App. 2: 88). ‘Pedant’ or ‘pedantry’ occurs once or more in at least 12 articles in the *Guardian*. Of these, 3 are in headlines. There are also four mentions of pedants or pedantry amongst the comments (each of which was the top rated comment for the article), including one username: “UnashamedPedant”. The *Telegraph* journalists are also fond of this term, it occurs in 5 headlines and once or more in at least 9 separate articles. It is plausible that instances of pedantry missed the scrutiny of the researcher in the myriad of text perused while compiling articles, as it was very common. Because of the human nature of the compilation method used here, there is reason to believe that ‘pedant’ is even more prevalent than what is noted.

The phrases “Mind Your Language” or “Don’t Mind Your Language” are also recurring themes. “Mind your language” is the title of a column (blog) in the *Guardian*, and there are several similar headlines such as “Mind your slanguage and don’t be an erk YOLO” (App. 1: 14), an article in favour of acknowledging slang as language change. Stephen Fry’s blog entry referred to in Josephine Livingstone’s *Telegraph* article “Spelling it out: is it time English speakers loosened up?” (App. 1: 4) is also called “Don’t Mind Your Language”, so it apparent that this is a common phrase.

#### 4.2 General quantitative findings in the *Guardian*

This section is a presentation of general quantitative findings in the *Guardian* appendix (1). Specific findings, presentations of groups of similar articles which can be considered trends in the compilation, will be presented and interpreted in the next section, 4.3.

The 172 relevant articles found and compiled from the *Guardian* showed the following distribution on the descriptive/prescriptive scale: 73 were classified as descriptive, 41 mostly descriptive, 24 as mostly prescriptive, 34 were placed within the prescriptive category. The off-scale category ‘Appearing descriptive with prescriptive attitude’ proved to be non-existent in the *Guardian* compilation, and is therefore not present in figure 4.1.

The distribution of prescriptivism and descriptivism in the *Guardian* is illustrated in the following chart:

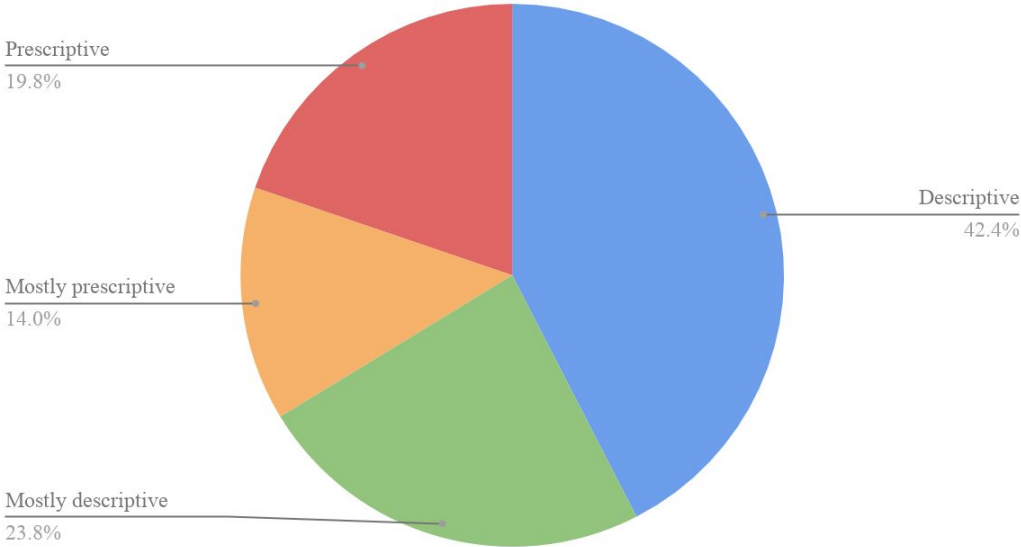


Figure 4.1.1: Distribution between descriptive and prescriptive articles in the *Guardian*

Figure 4.1.1 shows that descriptive and mostly descriptive articles make up 66,2% of the articles, whereas the prescriptive and mostly prescriptive articles account for 33,8%. This means that the *Guardian* compilation is 32,4% more descriptive than prescriptive, something which supports the general perception of the *Guardian* as a fairly liberal newspaper. (For a full comparison between the newspapers, see section 4.6 below).

The articles compiled from the *Guardian* (Appendix 1) are written by fewer authors, meaning that several of the authors, mainly those writing in the “Mind your language” blog, recur often. David Marsh have written most articles with 43, Gary Nunn has 15, Andy Bodle has 9 and Alison Flood has 5. Several other authors have between 2 and 4 articles in Appendix 1, whereas some only have one article in the compilation.

The distribution of topics in the *Guardian* articles are as follows:

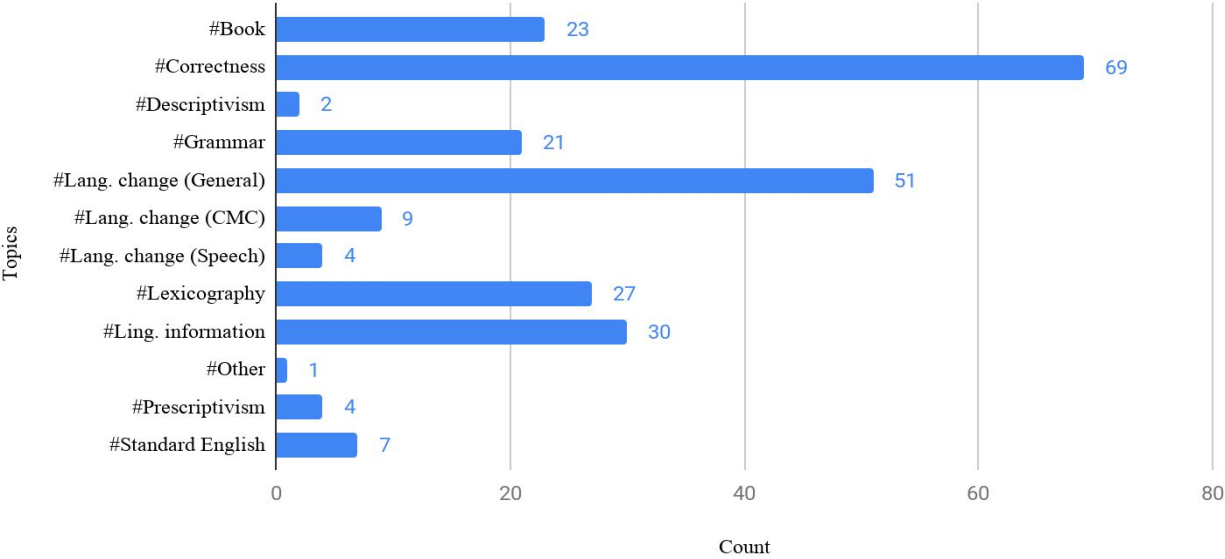


Figure 4.1.2 Distribution of topics in the *Guardian*

‘#Correctness’ is by far the most prevalent category, with 69 occurrences, ‘#Language change (General)’ is the second most common category with 51 occurrences. These are often interrelated, an article could for example be about the refusal to accept that language change is natural, often in a context where someone insists that correctness in a prescriptivist sense is valid. However, even though the concepts ‘descriptivism’ and ‘prescriptivism’ are often discussed, figure 4.1.2 shows that the specific terms were infrequently used. The respective occurrences of these categories two and four times indicates that terms so frequently used when discussing correctness in linguistic theory do not appear to be established terminology amongst journalists in the *Guardian*. This lack of terminology is perhaps surprising seen in contrast to the 30 occurrences of articles labelled ‘#Linguistic information’, a category indicating that an article contains information about linguistics as a field of research.

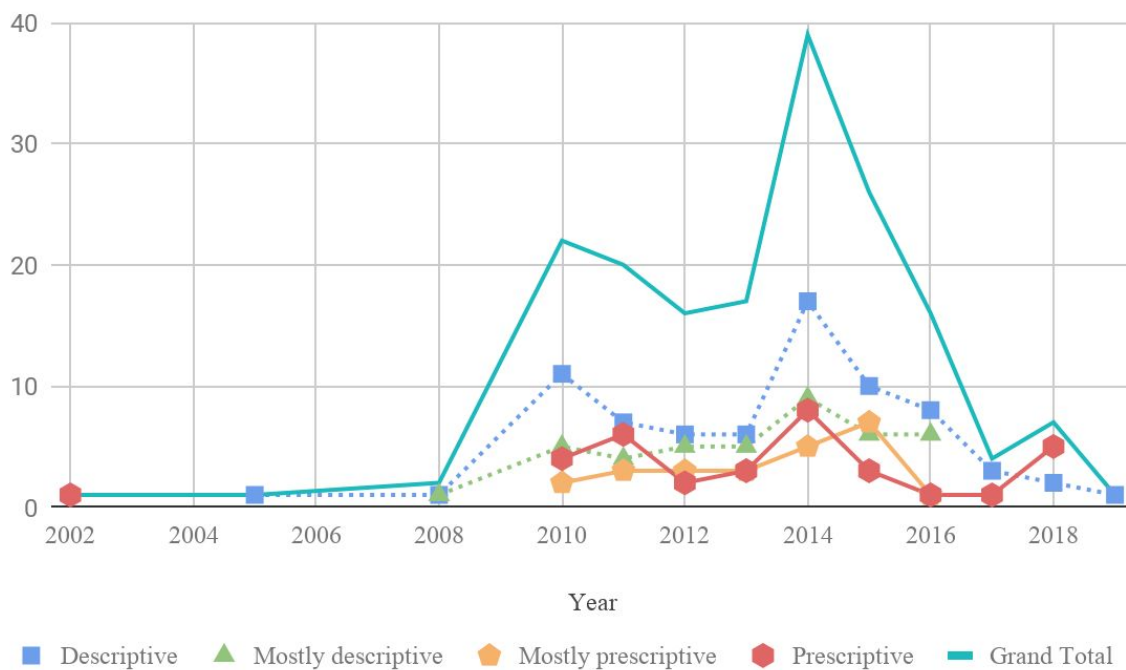


Figure 4.1.3 Timeline showing the distribution of descriptive-prescriptive articles in the Guardian per year between 2002 and february 2019.

Figure 4.1.3 illustrates how many articles were compiled from each year, and their descriptive-prescriptive distribution, using the data from appendix 1. The descriptive graph reflects what was found in figure 4.1.1 above, namely that most of the articles are descriptive. Figure 4.1.3 further shows that descriptivism was most prevalent in nearly all years, whereas mostly descriptive, mostly prescriptive and prescriptive have a more haphazard distribution. The finding of 5 prescriptive articles and 2 descriptive articles in 2018 may not be a valid illustration, seeing as 7 articles is a very small sample. This is also true for 2017, with 4 descriptive articles and 1 prescriptive, therefore this illustration cannot be considered a valid representation of descriptivism-prescriptivism after 2017. One possible interpretation of this result is that a different method of searching may have yielded more relevant recent articles. It is also possible that the *Guardian* started writing less about linguistics or about different linguistic topics that are not relevant for this study after 2016. Because the rest of the graph shows an all over higher prevalence of descriptivism, the graph in 2017 can be seen as a mild indicator of the same trend in this year, but more samples would have to be collected to

confirm this. 2019 is present in the graph, but as the compilation process was finished in february 2019, the graph for this year is obviously not an accurate representation of 2019.

Perhaps the most significant finding illustrated in figure 4.1.3 is the vast number of articles from 2014, namely 39 in total. Moreover, very few articles published before 2010 and after 2016 were compiled. Why this uneven distribution has occurred is not readily apparent. While the *Guardian* may have programmed their search engine to favour more recent results and articles before 2010 are more easily found in an archive, that does not explain the high prevalence of articles in 2014, nor the low count after 2016.

A factor that may have had an influence on the grand total graph is David Marsh's career as the style editor of the *Guardian*, which lasted from 1999 to 2016. One possible explanation for the prevalence of 2014 is that Marsh, having published his descriptive grammar book *For Who the Bell Tolls - One Man's Quest for Grammatical Perfection* in 2013, was especially interested in linguistic correctness at this point in time. Looking carefully at the grand total graph, one can see that this is perfectly plausible, as the graph makes a rather abrupt ascent in 2013, peaking in 2014 with most relevant articles compiled and highest descriptiveness at any point at the same time. Marsh, as the style editor of the *Guardian*, naturally wrote about an abundance of topics related to language from 1999 to 2016. However, the topics he wrote about in 2013 and 2014, often marked as excerpts from his book *For Who the Bell Tolls* (2013), appear to be language topics that coincide with the topics that are within the scope of this research. In other years Marsh might have had a tendency to write about other topics related to language, that happened not to be relevant within this thesis and therefore was not compiled.

17 of the articles in 2014 were descriptive, 9 mostly descriptive, whereas only 8 were prescriptive and 5 mostly prescriptive. This is the biggest divergence at any point in time between the four graphs. Although the descriptive graph is nearly always higher, they tend to be much closer and more haphazardly distributed in other years. The high descriptiveness of 2014 coincides with the descriptive theme of *For Who the Bell Tolls*.

After 2016 the grand total graph plummets, something which coincides with Marsh's retirement from the *Guardian*. As he is the author of so many of the articles considered relevant, it is fairly likely that his retirement is a causal factor in the lack of relevant articles after this point. It is possible that the crossing of the descriptive and prescriptive graphs between 2017 and 2018 is due to Marsh's retirement, but as mentioned before, a sample of 7

articles is not enough to establish a causal correlation. Two authors occur twice and as such had a high influence on the graph for 2018. Jonathan Bouquet wrote two prescriptive articles, and Alison Flood wrote one descriptive and one prescriptive. Flood's prescriptive article is prescriptive because the 'word of the year' was based on political issues, not the word that actually occurred the most, something which does not mean that the journalist herself is of a prescriptive ideology, rather that the information she writes about is prescriptive. Bouquet on the other hand, has a decidedly prescriptive attitude. Both his articles in 2018 are complaints about misuse of terms. The first article, "May I have a word about... tropes, chops and malaprops" (App. 1: 169) is about the use of 'trope' where Bouquet feels 'topos' would be more appropriate. The other, "May I have a word... about using nouns as verbs" (App. 1: 148) starts with the lead paragraph "From 'juniorisation' to 'dogfooding': abandon hope all ye who enter here". These articles clearly illustrate Bouquet's belief that language change is negative. He appears to believe that the growing usage of nouns as verbs that he has witnessed is highly negative for language, indicated by the phrase "abandon hope all ye who enters here". He also does not understand that how people use a word changes the meaning of that word, meaning is not fixed. Interestingly, these articles are filed under the topics/headings "The shifting patterns of English" and "Linguistics", something which gives Bouquet's articles a false air of legitimacy. Seeing as the *Guardian* has other topical headings such as "Opinion", it is perhaps odd that these articles are not filed as that.

#### 4.3 Significant findings in the *Guardian*

This section presents the most significant articles found in the *Guardian*, and why they were considered significant. The articles are grouped together where it is natural, as for example the findings of articles about books and linguists. The citations indicate which appendix and which number from the # column in each appendix an article is taken from. Information considered significant has been highlighted in bold during the compilation of the articles. Information that might be in bold are recounts of original text (identified by “ “) in the summary column, the author, title, most upvoted comment or explanatory information by the researcher in the summary column. The following paragraphs detail some of the findings

selected from the bold text in Appendix 1. Articles that are of a particularly descriptive or prescriptive nature would typically be marked by bold. Articles related to linguistics, by a linguist, mentioning a linguist, mentioning linguistics or using terms from the field of linguistics would also be marked as significant. The selection of articles in the findings are representative examples of articles within the categories, or case studies if you will, not an exhaustive account.

#### 4.3.1 Articles about linguistic books in the *Guardian*

Of the 23 articles categorised under ‘#Book’, 10 are descriptive or mostly descriptive articles about books not written by linguists. 9 are descriptive or mostly descriptive and mention or concern books written by linguists. One is a review of Simon Horobin’s *How English Became English* (2015) (App. 1: 2), another article mentions Horobin’s *Does Spelling Matter* (2013) (App. 1: 4). There are at least three mentions of David Crystal’s books, *The Gr8 Db8* (2008) is discussed in App. 1: 5 and App. 1: 38. “David Crystal: the story of English spelling” (App. 1: 63) is a full article written by Crystal about his own book, *Spell it Out: The Singular Story of English Spelling* (2012).

David Crystal is also briefly mentioned or cited without a specific reference to a book in seven articles, including the tribute article: “David Crystal: champion of the English language” (App. 1: 65). Other linguists are referred to fewer times in the *Guardian* compilation. Steven Pinker is the subject of one book review “The Sense of Style review - Steven Pinker’s comedy of linguistic bad manners” (App. 1: 3), and is mentioned in two other articles. (*The Sense of Style* (2014) by Pinker is also the subject of a *Telegraph* article, presented below in section 4.5.2) Geoffrey Pullum is also mentioned twice, one of these articles contains a reference to an academic paper he has written (App. 1: 46, presented in section 4.3.3 below ). The paper referred to is called “The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax” (Pullum: 1989). This is highly noteworthy, as it is the only link to an academic paper from a linguistic journal in either of the two appendices. Michael Halliday is mentioned once, in a recommendation of his book *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985), in the article “Sorry, there's no such thing as 'correct grammar” (App. 1: 98, presented in section 4.3.4

below). Whereas Crystal and Pinker have written several books that can be called accessible to the non-linguist reader, Pullum and Halliday write more traditionally academic books. The mention (and link to purchase of) Halliday's book is a prominent finding, because it is a heavily theoretical book that can be used to teach undergraduate linguistics. To recommend such a book to general public readers looking to brush up on grammar is highly uncommon, a case in point in Marsh's article "10 grammar books to read before you die of boredom" (App. 1: 1).

The following paragraphs present and interpret the most significant articles which concern books:

"10 grammar books to read before you die of boredom" (App. 1: 1) by David Marsh is considered significant because it is an article about grammar books, something which is considered interesting because it directly supplies the reader with information about language and promotes the idea that grammar books can be interesting. It also mentions linguistic terms, such as 'Standard English', 'descriptivism' and 'prescriptivism', which gives the general public an insight in linguistic terminology. The article favours a descriptive approach to grammar, promoting what Marsh classifies as descriptive grammar books:

Books about English fall into various categories, mostly offputting ones: the academic, rarely of much interest, and often incomprehensible, to the general reader; the lament for a (mythical) golden age "when everyone knew how to use grammar"; the prescriptions of Dr Grammar (do this, or you are clearly illiterate). Here are some that avoid these traps.

(Marsh 2013, App. 1: 1)

The reference to books about the "(mythical) golden age when everyone knew how to use grammar" shows that Marsh is experienced in sociolinguistic literature about language guardians, assumably having read some of Crystal's work, which he frequently makes a general reference to. Even though Marsh clearly illustrates his aversion to prescriptivism, none of the books he recommends are written by people who identify themselves as linguists. Amongst the books recommended is a book about swearing by Melissa Mohr (who has a Ph.D in English language and is thus considered a credible source on linguistics), several books by teachers, and another by Mark Forsyth, an author often mentioned by the *Guardian*,



who studied English but is not a scholar. Interestingly, Marsh also recommends a new edition of *Gwynne's Grammar*, by N.M Gwynne, a lexicographer who is largely considered a prescriptivist. “10 grammar books to read before you die of boredom” is still considered descriptive for the purposes of this study because of Marsh’s own attitude and the fact that none of Gwynne’s prescriptivist ideas are mentioned in the article itself.

“How English became English by Simon Horobin review - 'OMG' was first used 100 years ago” (App. 1: 2) is an article by Faramerz Dabhoiwala, reviewing Horobin’s *How English Became English* (2015). This article explains how Horobin, identified as an “Oxford scholar”, argues that “Modern usages that horrify linguistic purists in fact have deep historical roots”. The article names prescriptivists Lynne Truss, Simon Heffer (the *Telegraph's* style editor) and NM Gwynne as authors of books about how language is “going to the dogs”, and presents Horobin’s new book as a contrast to these. Dabhoiwala writes that Horobin is on a mission to educate the public on the history and nature of the English language. Horobin’s previous book *Does Spelling Matter* is also mentioned. Dabhoiwala also criticises parts of Horobin’s book, such as his chapter on “What the future holds for standard British English”, but none of the critique is prescriptive, therefore the article is considered descriptive. This article clearly relates the main sentiment of Horobin’s book, to educate the public, while juxtaposing Truss, Heffer and Gwynne as authors against Horobin as an “Oxford scholar” and a “serious linguist”.

“The Sense of Style review - Steven Pinker’s comedy of linguistic bad manners” (App. 1: 3) is a review by journalist Peter Conrad. He explains that Pinker writes about how people deal with the irregularities of English grammar. Conrad points out that Pinker tells the story “with a snort of amusement”, a way of indicating that Pinker himself does not take linguistic correctness very seriously. Further Conrad writes that Pinker is a psycholinguist who teaches at Harvard, and is “nest-foulingly vitriolic about the obfuscations of academic prose”, indicating that Pinker is a harsh critic of the style often used in academic writing. It is perhaps ironic of Conrad to use advanced words such as “nest-foulingly”, “vitriolic” and “obfuscations” when describing someone’s critique of the convolution of academic vocabulary. Conrad illustrates that he understands the idea behind Pinker’s book, to ridicule the snobbery behind linguistic judgement. He writes that Pinker warn the reader “against the righteous authoritarianism of those who turn conventions into commandments”, naming Lynne Truss and John Simon (introduced in sections 2.3.1 and 2.5 above) as examples of

these people. Pinker's *The Sense of Style* will be revisited in the *Telegraph* article "The 51 most commonly misused words and phrases - do you get these wrong?" (App. 2: 70) below in section 4.5.2, a radically different article about the same book.

Only one article about a book is classified as prescriptive. In the article "That's the Way It Crumbles: The American Conquest of English by Matthew Engel – review" (App. 1: 152). Tim Adams describes the history of the influences between English and American fairly accurately, yet the article presents American and British English as languages in battle, not naturally influencing one another. This is a typical example of how journalists sometimes exaggerate what linguists and other scientists have written, and how they sometimes assume that a linguist feels negatively or positively about an observation they have made. That American and British influence each other is an objective harmless observation, not an indication of a troubling "war" which has to be fought.

#### 4.3.2 Linguists in the *Guardian*

Five of the articles compiled from the *Guardian* were written by professors and lecturers of English and/or linguistics. These are all descriptive articles by scholars who try to explain that the linguistic pedants' worries are unfounded. These scholarly authors are rarely identified as linguists, even though most of them technically are. It may be that journalists believe that referring to them as "professor" or "scholar" will give them more credit than "linguist".

"David Crystal: the story of English spelling" (App. 1: 63) is an article written by Crystal himself about his own book, *Spell it Out: The Singular Story of English Spelling* (2012). The article appears to be a summary of the book, although the fact that it is a book is not indicated before at the very bottom of the article, where it is noted that the book is published next month. The main idea Crystal professes is that English spelling is changed by people, not various authorities.

The article "The folly of preserving English in aspic" (App. 1: 11) is written by John Mullan, a professor of English at University College London. He explains that the *Queen's English Society's* wishes to set up an "Academy of English" will not succeed, "because the language is in a constant state of flux". He explains the futile attempts by historical figures

who have attempted to preserve English, such as Jonathan Swift. He also notes that Samuel Johnson, having tried to make the first proper English dictionary in order to “fix” English, found that it was a folly: “language was in a constant state of lively mutability and could not be ‘embalmed’”.

In “#language: evolution in the digital age” (App. 1: 36), Vyvyan Evans, professor of linguistics at Bangor University, relates that “the hashtag, or # has recently been named UK children’s word of the year”. Evans finds this remarkable in two ways, because ‘#’ is not a word, and because the hashtag, developed for use in digital communication, is now being used in more traditional written domains.

“Txting is for people who can’t spell, write? Wrong” (App. 1: 37) is written by Caroline Tagg, English and applied linguistics lecturer at the University of Birmingham. She supports Crystal’s conclusion in *Txting: the Gr8 Db8* (2008), that there is no proven correlation between the use of what they call “textisms” and poor spelling and reading skills. She describes and links directly to the study behind these findings in the Wiley Online Library, called “Exploring the relationship between children's knowledge of text message abbreviations and school literacy outcomes” (Plester, Wood and Joshi 2010).

“From ‘MSM’ to ‘whilst’: the words that crossed the Atlantic in 2018” (App. 1: 54) is about “WotYs”, words that are made ‘Word of the Year’. Lynne Murphy, professor of linguistics at the University of Sussex, selects words of the year that have crossed from the UK to the US and the other way around. She explains how this exchange is natural and harmless, and that the “We’ll all talk like Americans soon” myth is untrue, because the exchange of words is mutual.

#### 4.3.3 Linguistic information in the *Guardian*

Of the 30 articles that are classified as linguistic information and are not written by linguists, the following are the most significant ones. “Interview: My bright idea: English is on the up but one day will die out” (App. 1: 33) by Robert McCrum is an interview with linguist Nicholas Ostler. Ostler has concluded in his book that English will die out at some point, something the journalist calls a “provocative conclusion which will bring hope to the French

and dismay to many American linguistic patriots”. While McCrum does note that the death of English will happen over hundreds of years, he does not appear to understand that this is likely a too slow death to provoke anyone. If English was to die out, it would not be overnight, and no one would miss it, because they would have gradually evolved to speak something that is not English. McCrum does mention that Ostler is the leader of the *Foundation for Endangered Languages*, which aims to bring awareness to the death of languages. Although he does not write it explicitly, McCrum’s questions to Ostler suggest that Ostler’s linguistic conclusions about the death of English may be biased by his role in the *Foundation for Endangered Languages*. This does not mean that McCrum supports the idea that language death is as natural and inevitable as language change, the objective view many linguists hold on this matter.

The linguist Geoffrey Pullum has been noted briefly but remarkably noted by the *Guardian*. In the article “Whiteout: new Scottish thesaurus has 421 words for snow” (App. 1: 46) Alison Flood takes note of Pullum’s paper “The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax” (1989), providing a link to the full academic paper. Flood does not discuss the paper, but by providing the full link she effectively brings an academic linguistic article from a 1989 edition of the journal “Natural Language and Linguistic Theory” to the *Guardian*’s readers in 2015, making linguistic theory highly available to the general public. Pullum has larger presence in the *Telegraph*, see section 4.5.2 below. The topic of the paper is also interesting with regards to this thesis, as it happens to be about a myth commonly believed by non-linguists, namely that the eskimos have an inordinate amount of words for ‘snow’. The myth itself is not relevant, but it is a good example of the type of thing non-linguists believe about language. It could easily have been an essay in *Language Myths* (1998), which presents precisely that type of essays, albeit in a slightly more colloquial language.

“David Crystal: champion of the English language” (App. 1: 65) is interesting because it is a tribute to Crystal’s career as a linguist who tries to educate the common public on linguistics. The journalist, Michael Rosen, writes that Crystal has produced books, articles, TV programmes and interviews for 30 years in an attempt to explain people the nature of language. This article is in many ways exactly the kind of colloquial informative piece on linguistics that the sociolinguists referred to above in chapter 2 were seeking.

There are a few articles where linguistic terms are used in ways that differ from the way linguists use them. One such article is the article “Natural born linguists: what drives

multi-language speakers?” (App. 1: 114). The article interviews several multilingual people about their experiences with multilingualism. This article is interesting because of its use of the word ‘linguist’ as a synonym for ‘multilingual speaker’. A glimpse into the OED shows that this usage of ‘linguist’ is an established one, its first registered usage dated to 1582.

#### 4.3.4 Criticism of the complaint tradition in the *Guardian*

There are several articles that are considered significant because they directly criticise prescriptivism and linguistic correctness. While they are not typically addressed to specific persons, they can be viewed as general replies addressing anyone adhering to the arguments of the complaint tradition (see section 2.5 above for a summary of the tradition).

In the article “Sorry, there's no such thing as 'correct grammar'” (App. 1: 98) Michael Rosen critiques prescriptivist author [Nevile] Martin Gwynne, and also overtly criticises the *Telegraph*:

It may have stirred a few loins down at the Telegraph but the arrival at Selfridges of Martin Gwynne, author of Gwynne's Grammar, to give grammar lessons, doesn't seem to have made waves elsewhere.

(Rosen 2012, App. 1: 98)

What Rosen appears to mean by this is that the *Telegraph* strongly supports Gwynne’s new grammar lessons at the shopping centre *Selfridges*, implying that Rosen (and the *Guardian*) do not support the lessons. The words “stirred a few loins down at the *Telegraph*” is marked as a hyperlink in the article. However, clicking the link sends the reader to a general ‘Opinion’ page on the *Telegraph*’s website, making it appear as though the original article it linked to has disappeared (although it has probably only been moved in a reorganising of the *Telegraph*’s website). The essence of “Sorry, there’s no such thing as ‘correct grammar’” (App. 1: 98) is Rosen’s implication that the *Telegraph* journalists are more inclined to favour the prescriptive author N.M Gwynne and his book *Gwynne’s Grammar* (2012). Rosen

explains the nature of grammar, mentions the term ‘Standard English’ and describes some of the misunderstandings and complications surrounding the term:

If we are serious about enabling those who want to acquire what we have called standard English then first we should be honest about change and its lack of encoded rules. Then, together with them, we should look closely at how such people's speech and writing diverges from the kind of English that they would like to acquire.

(Rosen 2012, App. 1: 98)

Rosen illustrates that he understands how the term ‘Standard English’ has been construed, that grammar is innate and that the type of grammar lessons Gwynne promotes do not make for effective learning. Finally he explains that people’s combined usage decides what is ‘correct’, and recommends MAK Halliday’s *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, providing a link where one can purchase it. The article is classified as mostly descriptive because it is classified as an opinion by the *Guardian*, not as linguistic fact. The mention of Halliday’s book is interesting because it is by far the most advanced theoretical book about the field of linguistics presented in either of the appendices compiled for this study.

David Marsh’s article “The pedants' revolt: lament for a golden age of grammar that never existed” (App. 1: 28) is a description of the debate between descriptivists and prescriptivists. Marsh explains what descriptivism and prescriptivism means, and that language change is natural. He also explains that linguists agree that linguistics is inherently descriptive:

For at least 50 years almost all academic linguistics has been descriptive, concerning itself with how language is structured and used without passing judgment on what is right or wrong. Lexicographers, similarly, work by establishing that a word is in use with a particular meaning. If it does, they will put it in the dictionary and ignore the howls of protest from those who think this is providing respectable cover for the barbarians who want to wreck our beautiful language.

(Marsh 2014, App. 1: 28)

It appears that this article is Marsh's way of telling the readers that linguists and lexicographers, the professionals when it comes to language, are in agreement when it comes to linguistics' inherent descriptiveness, where the public tend to argue about whether it should be prescriptive or descriptive (without using the terms). He also defends the public's lack of knowledge on the topic:

For their part, academics have a pretty poor record of explaining descriptive linguistics to the public and can come across as aloof and arrogant. (There are exceptions, such as the great David Crystal).

(Marsh 2014, App. 1: 28)

Although it is not clear which aloof and arrogant explanations by linguists Marsh is referring to here, it could be seen as a reply to the complaint made by Bauer, Trudgill et al. in *Language Myths* (1998). While prescriptivists often have an intolerant tone and seem arrogant, Marsh places some of the blame with the linguists, pointing out that they are not contributing to a healthy debate. He argues that the prescriptivists and the academics cannot stop arguing because both sides are unwilling to listen to the other, and both express themselves in an arrogant manner. At the bottom of the article it is noted that it is an edited extract from *For Who the Bell Tolls*, David Marsh's book which had recently been published at the time. It is also noted that one can buy tickets for a debate between Marsh and N.M Gwynne, the author of *Gwynne's Grammar*.

"Confessions of a reformed grammar nazi" (App. 1: 8) is a self-scrutiny into writer Rosie Driffil's own linguistic pedantry. She reflects on how she feels when she finds and points out other people's mistakes in writing and how she felt when she was at the receiving end of grammar "nazism". She writes that she now thinks one should give people the benefit of the doubt before jumping to conclusions about their lack of education when spotting spelling and grammar errors. This article is fairly different from other critiques of language guardians, as it is self-criticism.

Several people who work with language but are not linguists have written articles in the *Guardian* promoting descriptivism. One is an American lexicographer in Merriam-Webster, Kory Stamper. Her articles are labelled under the headings 'Opinion',

‘Language’ and ‘Literacy’ by the *Guardian*, but her stance is decidedly descriptive. The first article she wrote for the *Guardian* was “A plea for syntactical sanity on US National Grammar Day” (App. 1: 103). The article is about the US National Grammar Day, and why she as a lexicographer loves and hates it. She explains how people she knows spend this day criticising anyone who has made an error in writing in various mean ways:

You may think you are some great Batman of Apostrophes, flitting through the dark aisles of the Piggly-Wiggly, bringing truth and justice to tormented signs everywhere! But in reality, you are a jerk who has defaced a sign that some poor kid, or some poor non-native English speaker, or some educated and beleaguered mom who is working her second job of the day, spent time making.

(Stamper 2013, App. 1: 103)

Stamper explains that this type of behaviour, such as drawing apostrophes on signs where they are missing, does not educate people. On the contrary, it shames them, reminding Stamper of a professor who shamed her publicly in lectures when she was learning Latin. She admits that she herself has felt “the delicious schadenfreude” in catching an expert at making a grammar mistake, but argues that the smugness of people who correct grammar is not helpful in the teaching of grammar, and that this National Grammar Day they should refrain from bullying people by gloating publicly about their mistakes.

Stamper’s other article in the *Guardian* appendix is “Who ruined English: Brits or Yanks?” (App. 1: 9), she opposes Tim Adams’ attitude in the review of *The American Conquest of English* (App. 1: 152, see section 4.3.1 above). Stamper explains a key aspect of etymology: “Linguists call the idea that a word’s current meaning need be tied to the meaning of its root “etymological fallacy”, pointing out that etymology does not mean that just because a word used to mean something that does not mean that the original was more correct, etymology simply records different usages of words and their semantic meaning. Stamper writes about the verbing of nouns, the “new” figurative meaning of ‘literally’ (which was recorded and complained about by “usage commentators” in 1922), and finally she dismisses the complaint that American English is ruining British English. She presents different historical and modern complaints concerning American influence on British English, and explains that:



Each dialect will absorb vocabulary from the other harmlessly. If you won't believe an American lexicographer, then perhaps you'll believe the very British Steven Poole, who made the same point in his *Guardian* column of 13 May.

(Stamper 2013: App. 1: 9)

Stamper links to colleague Poole's article about the harmlessness of American influence in order to calm readers who would suggest that Stamper's Americanness makes her biased in the matter.

Kory Stamper's term "usage commentator" is yet another term denoting people who complain about language, which is perhaps an even more accurate description of language change complainers than Horobin's term "usage police", mentioned above in section 2.5.2, Complainers and replies. Through her explanation of etymology, the usage of terms such as 'language mavens' (coined by Steven Pinker in 1994, see section 2.5 above) and her historical account of complainers, Stamper illustrates that she is well-versed in the literature on the complaint tradition.

The article Stamper refers to above is "Americanisms are often closer to home than we imagine" (App. 1: 10) by Steven Poole. As Stamper notes, Poole agrees that there is no reason for British people to dislike 'Americanisms'. He addresses complaints by a playwright called Mark Ravenhill, who has complained that the *Guardian* uses Americanisms. Poole explains that many of the words the British call Americanisms were first used in British, and he calls the dislike people have for Americanisms a linguistic prejudice.

In an article called "Spelling it out: is it time English speakers loosened up?" (App. 1: 4) Josephine Livingstone writes that spelling English is very difficult, and uses Simon Horobin's texts to argue that the focus on correct spelling is too prominent, particularly addressing the issue that bad spelling is connected with low intelligence and morale by many people. This false connection is perhaps the most important myth for linguists to abolish from the common public's minds, noted above in sections 2.3, 2.4, 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.5, 2.5 and 2.5.1 by several linguists. The connection between low morale/intelligence and non-standard ('bad' language) is the frustration which appears to have fuelled Milroy and Milroy's book *Authority*

*in Language: Investigating Standard English* (1985), see chapter 5 below for more on this topic.

Another person Livingstone refers to in her article is not a linguist, but a comedian who she argues is an influential ('big') pedant. Even Stephen Fry "will concede that it is in rather poor taste to emphasise the form of something as fluid as language over its function". She writes. In the blog entry she refers and links to, appropriately called "Don't Mind Your Language" (2008) Stephen Fry laments the people who call themselves language guardians, calling them 'pedants'. He disowns them, writing that he himself has "outgrown that silly approach to language". Fry writes about Lynne Truss, the well-known prescriptivist author so frequently referred to in both newspaper compilations. He criticises people who dislike verbs being turned into nouns, calling them "dense and deaf to language development". He cites Shakespeare's usage as examples of nouns that are now perfectly common verbs (tabled and chaired), using the same examples sociolinguists often do when arguing against language guardians. Fry presents several of the pedants' main arguments, such as complaints that certain verbified nouns are ugly, and he concludes that it is only ugly because it is new and not to their liking. He compares it to how anything new is considered ugly, such as Picasso, Stravinsky and Eliot, and before them Monet, Mahler and Baudelaire. He explains that pedants argue that their complaining is for the sake of clarity in language, another claim he dismisses as nearly always false. Fry argues that people are capable of adjusting their language according to context, something that has to do with style, not with correctness. The choosing of linguistic style is likened to choosing what to wear, he argues that people know that they should not wear what they wear at home to a job interview, just as their linguistic style is different at home than at work. A comparison Fry repeats several times is that having rules that disallow language change is like the rules for dogs in the Kennel Club: "They think they're guardians of language. They're no more guardians of language than the Kennel Club is the guardian of dogkind". By this he means that the rules the self-proclaimed guardians of language cling to are historically outdated and unreasonable, as the rules the Kennel Club judges dogs by. Fry signs off with the words "Until the next time, fellow linguists, thank you and goodbye", calling himself a linguist. Fry is assumably alluding to the 'user of language' definition of 'linguist', something which is further discussed in chapter 5. He cites a few linguists in this blog entry, adding some credibility to what could have been discredited as a personal opinion. It appears that Stephen Fry is someone people look to as an authority on

correctness, noted not only by himself in the blogpost pedants are disappointed that he has abandoned them:

I hate that, and I particularly hate the fact that so many of these pedants assume that I'm on their side. When asked to join in a "let's persuade this supermarket chain to get rid of their 'five items or less' sign" I never join in.

(Fry 2008)

In addition to Livingstone's referral to Stephen Fry as an outspoken figure against pedantry and his own experience with pedants viewing him as an authority, he is referred to in two articles from the *Telegraph* compilation, something which indicates that he is regarded a noteworthy figure with valid opinions and comments on linguistic correctness by these article authors as well. Interestingly, the *Telegraph* articles which mention Fry are prescriptive. These will be accounted for in detail below in the *Telegraph* below in section 4.5.3.

While Fry is referred and linked to, another comedian has written an article on linguistic correctness in the *Guardian*. The comedian and self-proclaimed pedant David Mitchell has written the article "Snakes are evil, but save your venom for the self-appointed language police" (App. 1: 90). A noteworthy fact that makes Mitchell's views on this matter fairly credible is that he is quoted by Simon Horobin in his book *Does Spelling Matter* (2013: 229). The core of Mitchell's musings on linguistic pedantry in Horobin's book and this *Guardian* article is that that he enjoys correctness on a personal level, but that upholding it is not a matter of importance. In "Snakes are evil, but save your venom for the self-appointed language police" (App. 1: 90), Mitchell draws a parallel between scientists claiming that the world needs venomous snakes (which he dislikes but understands), and the *Queen's English Society's* claim that there is a need for an English academy, a body to 'sit in judgment' and help set 'an accepted standard of good English'. Mitchell contends that such an academy is unnecessary and worthless, and he makes the highly valid point that there is no authority for such a body to adhere to (just as noted by many linguists in response to such claims, see section 2.3.3 above). However, what most annoys Mitchell about the idea of an English academy to preserve the language is that they misunderstand the point of linguistic pedantry:

It's no fun prissily adhering to grammatical rules if it's mandatory. This academy wishes to turn something I have chosen to do – an attitude by which I define myself – into something I'm forced to do, along with everyone else. That's like making everyone support Manchester United.

(Mitchell 2010, App. 1: 90)

David Mitchell is a fairly famous person in the UK, and by defining himself as a pedant yet proclaiming that linguistic correctness is something one chooses to adhere to, he may contribute to influencing readers who regard him as an authority on the matter. Fry, Mitchell and other famous people who identify with pedantry yet defy prescriptivism can have a considerable influence on the general reader who identify themselves as pedants, but it is not possible to estimate the reach of their influence within the parameters of this study.

#### 4.3.5 Particularly prescriptive articles in the *Guardian*

A few articles amongst the prescriptive ones separate themselves from the rest. In the article “Cn u txt?” (App. 1: 168) from 2002 the professor John Sutherland writes about CMC, or texting, as he calls it. This marks the only time in either compilation that a professor criticises CMC, and in effect criticises a specific part of language change. The article is very short, and fairly ironically it has a typographical error in the lead paragraph: “John Sutherland asks what texting is doing tot he English language - and finds it all a bit :-(” The article being from 2002, it is strange that “tot he” has not been edited to “to the”. Further, the article is not divided into the paragraphs the *Guardian* articles typically uses. It is one large, untidy block of text, making it difficult to read. Furthermore, this very article was criticised by Crystal in a *Guardian* article in 2008. It may well be that the article has been left in its original state in as a way of the *Guardian* to mark that such views do not belong to a *Guardian* journalist. What makes this even more interesting, is that in a *Telegraph* article from 2015 Sutherland appears to have changed his mind. “English language is changing faster than ever, research reveals” (App. 2: 19) is a descriptive article about the evolvment of CMC, and it is presented further below in section 4.5.4.

Another prescriptive article is interesting because it is written by the former editor of the *New Scientist*, someone one would expect to take a scientific objective stance. “There are lots of bacteria, but there is only one genetic code” (App. 1: 162) is written by Bernard Dixon, the former editor of the *New Scientist*. He is quick to show that while he claims to understand that connotations of words and expressions change over time, he does not understand that meanings caused by misunderstands, ignorance or error are also natural and harmless. An example he uses is common amongst prescriptivists, the usage of the word ‘disinterested’ to be synonymous with ‘uninterested’, where he and many other pedants feel that the older usage of ‘disinterested’ in the sense of ‘impartial’ is the only correct usage. Dixon delves deeper into his ignorance in about what he calls “illiteracy”:

In times past, illiterate misuse of language would have been marginalised by the perpetuation of literate writing and speech, encouraged by the teaching of conventional English grammar in schools. Is the reverse now happening? Is illiteracy becoming a driver of what passes for literacy? And how are teachers coping? Do they still explain the important difference between "who" and "whom", which newspapers and other media increasingly ignore? Why are even the editors of scientific journals adopting fashionable but incorrect usages?

(Dixon 2013, App. 1: 162)

He does not make the usual typical prescriptive claim that there was a golden age where everyone knew how to spell (as for example Lynne Truss often writes), instead he claims that there was an age when people who “misused language” would have been discriminated by the people who used “literate” writing and speech. This is no doubt a description of the dichotomy between so-called “educated” users of language and non-standard users, marking the non-standard varieties as not even valid of being called language, illiterate. What is worse is that he appears to think that this belittling of people who used language in a less educated way was a good practice. Dixon’s ancient views on correctness are alarming, especially as he was the editor of the scientific journal at one point (from 1969 to 1979).

The top rated comment on this article is simply “Language changes over time. Get over it”, with 5 upvotes. This shows that at least six readers invalidate Dixon’s concerns, and understand that all language change is natural.

In the article “CIA, NSA and MI5: why our intelligence agencies aren't so smart” (App. 1: 119) journalist Adam Lewis draws the questionable conclusion that because the organisations mentioned in the headline have grammatical errors on their websites, their workers are unintelligent. Further Lewis mentions statistics which indicate how incorrect grammar and spelling give companies a bad reputation. The sources he provides appear unreliable, such as a study by the online grammar company *Grammarly*. The first dubious point about this is that the link is not to the supposed study, but to the company’s website. Secondly, a study performed by a website which bases its profits on performing a spell-checking service on whether grammar mistakes influence companies negatively is highly unreliable. In writing this article, Lewis supports and promotes the idea that the ability to spell correctly is closely associated with traits such as intelligence. This article is hard evidence for the existence of the alarming attitudes to linguistic correctness that concern Milroy and Milroy, frequently referred to above in chapter 2.

The article “English spellings don’t match the sounds they are supposed to represent. It’s time to change” (App. 1: 145) is written by Stephen Linstead, who is the chair of *The English Spelling Society*. In the article he complains about how difficult English spelling is, and how little it has changed since the 15th century. He feels that early lexicographers did little to “match spellings with the sounds they were supposed to represent”. Further he claims that as a forward thinking nation, the UK should have more innovation in spelling.

While it is refreshing that Linstead wishes for language change and does not complain about it, he shows that he does not understand the nature of language change. He uses Noah Webster’s proposed changes as examples of how good spelling could be, arguing that if they had been implemented in full, English spelling would be far more regular and predictable. Despite his honest reflection on the *The English Spelling Society*’s inability to achieve its objectives since its founding in 1908 and his reflection on Webster’s considerable but ultimately unsuccessful impact on American spelling, he does not realise that attempts to enforce changes are not only fruitless but unnecessary. He suggests that change is more likely to happen now that there is “growing evidence of traditional spelling’s economic and social costs and the enormous flow of ideas across the English-speaking world via the internet”, but he does not present data to support these supposed costs. An obstacle to spelling change that Linstead describes is that English is spoken in many independent countries. This opinion suggests that he aims for the same fixed rules of spelling for all Englishes. He acknowledges

that this is difficult, and he suggests the establishment of an “International English Spelling Congress” as a solution, where all countries could contribute to the changing of spelling. He hopes that using this congress, the alternative spelling system would gain acceptance by people and eventually replace other spellings. While Linstead shows that he understands quite a few aspects of language change, he does not understand the consequences of them. English would never change in such a way that its users did not understand each other as he worries, this simply goes against the nature of language evolution, as Aitchison and others have argued (see section 2.1 above).

The article “Chatrooms and social websites encourage bad spelling, says study” (App. 1: 149) is considered highly prescriptive and is a particularly interesting case. The *Guardian* appears to distance itself from the article by marking it as “This article is more than 8 years old” highlighted in yellow, insinuating that this information may be outdated. There is also no author, it is attributed to “Press Association”. At first the article makes the claim that “research suggests that Internet chatrooms and social networking sites are encouraging children to spell words incorrectly”, not providing any information about the research in question. It continues with presenting a paper published by the *English Spelling Society*, which reportedly concludes that “the internet has revolutionised the English language, and made misspelling the norm”. The paper, misleadingly referred to as both a study and a report on different occasions, concludes that because there is supposedly a general attitude online that one does not need to correct mistakes or conform to regular spelling rules, it means that young people do not know how to spell correctly anymore. The article then reveals that this paper was published by Lucy Jones “a former student at Manchester University”, which does not provide any information about Jones’ qualifications to perform such a study. The article briefly mentions the method used (a survey involving a sample of 18-24 year-olds), and concludes that:

The majority believed that unconventional spellings are used on the internet because it is faster and has become the norm. More than one in five (22%) said they would not be confident in writing an important email without referring to a dictionary or spell checker.

(Press Association 2010, App. 1: 149)

While this information is may be valid, Jones and the *English Spelling Society* make the mistake of presuming that caring about spelling is important, and they neglect that spell checker is a useful modern tool, not providing a good argument against using it. The article ends with a quote by Jack Bovill, the chair of the *English Spelling Society*:

Accurate spelling is of the utmost importance, but from this most recent survey we can conclude that the unprecedented reach and scale of the internet has given rise to new social practices and it is now an agent in spelling change.

(Bovill in Press Association 2010, App. 1: 149)

Bovill is probably correct in assuming that the internet influences spelling, but as most language guardians he is unwilling to understand that English spelling will and should change, and that if the internet contributes to this process, then that is natural and not something to be feared. What Bovill refers to as “accurate spelling” is is not clear, but this quote shows that he defies variation, suggesting that there is always one single correct way of spelling. This is another archetypal language guardian attitude, one that contributes to the frowning upon variant spelling, which in turn supports the discrimination of non-standard English varieties.

In the article “Modern tribes: the grammar pedant” (App. 1: 167) one might be inclined to think that columnist Catherine Bennett is joking when she laments Shakespeare for his “poor grammar”:

I don’t care what Shakespeare wrote, his grammar was appalling. It’s a mystery to me, the respect for a man capable of writing, “Who would’s’t thou serve?” I always shout out whom if there are children in the audience – it makes my skin crawl to hear actors repeating his howlers.

(Bennett 2015, App. 1: 167)

Bennett thus establishes her position as a classical language guardian. She lists all the common “errors” that sociolinguists have noted is typical for the complaint tradition to care about: using ‘disinterested’ in the sense of ‘uninterested’, ‘less’ in the sense of ‘fewer’ and she complains about the greengrocer’s apostrophe. She writes that “anyone



capable of that kind of outrage ought to be gagged, imprisoned and banned from writing, as well as summarily dismissed”. She not only makes the conclusion that people who write grammatical errors are intelligent, but explicitly writes that they ought to be punished, and later she complains that people complain about her being pedantic. She appears to perceive herself as a martyr, forced to withstand critique in order to save English from incorrectness.

#### 4.3.6 David Marsh and “Mind your language”

David Marsh was the style editor of the *Guardian* from 1999 to 2016. While he corrected and instructed his colleagues in the *Guardian*’s style guide, he also wrote articles about correctness itself, using terms such as prescriptivism and descriptivism. 6 of these articles have a small note at the very end, remarking that they are edited extracts from *For Who the Bell Tolls: One Man’s Quest for Grammatical Perfection* (2013), a book by David Marsh. The article, called “The pedants’ revolt: lament for a golden age of grammar that never existed” (App. 1: 28), mentions the terms descriptivism and prescriptivism, and gives a summary of the debate between the two. The title presents one of the main complaints found among prescriptivists, the claim that there was a time when grammar was more consistent, and more people could spell and write correctly.

A few of the articles on the blog are compilations of readers’ opinions about a language-related topic. David Marsh tends to supply his expert opinion in a more or less descriptive manner. Sometimes the readers have written to him complaining about a specific usage in the paper (such as the usage of square brackets). Marsh publishes their opinion and either supports it or explains why the reader is wrong. One such article is “Trop de Trope” (App. 1: 112), where a reader complains about the “increasing and persistent misuse of the word trope”. Marsh calls the complaint “eloquent and persuasive”, and presents the entire complaint by the reader, including the sentence:

So, can you explain your increasing use and misuse of this word? Please do not reply that 'this is becoming common usage.' It is not. It is still a rarely used word that most people do not understand and never use in ordinary speech.

(Unnamed reader 2011, App. 1: 112)

Marsh refers to the definitions given in Collins dictionary and Oxford Dictionaries online, writing that the use of trope as a theme or topic, which the reader complains about, is established (indicating that the dictionaries do indeed record usage, not that they are prescriptive sources of truth as many readers tend to think). However, Marsh acknowledges the validity of the complaint on different grounds; his colleague journalists should refrain from using words many readers may not understand, and they should refrain from overusing particular words.

A recurring find in the comment section of the articles on the “Mind your language” blog, is readers commenting on how they feel about articles. One example is the 34 times upvoted comment “best.article.ever” in response to the article “Never mind the hyperbolics. Please can I have some less?” (App. 1: 150). The article in question is about the growing misuse of hyperbole in writing. Aside from being a hyperbolic joke, this and other comments can be perceived as sarcastic ways of informing Marsh and his colleagues of the “Mind your language” blog that such information is uninteresting. Another similar example of this is the comment “Very interesting article, thank you” on the article “I don’t sanction this misuse of 'sanction” (App. 1: 139). The abundance of similar examples as well as the occasional overt complaint that such articles are boring, signals that many readers of “Mind your language” (or at least many of those who comment) find information about correctness uninteresting, yet still read and engage with the articles. Marsh is often praised, as in the comment “I love it that people like David Marsh exist, let alone try their best to hold the line. It gives modest pedants like me some hope that all is not lost.” (10 upvotes, “Playing Russian roulette with a Mexican wave of capital crimes”, App. 1: 117) and the most upvoted comment on the article “The British style'? 'The American way?' They are not so different” (App. 1: 131):

Thanks for that Dave, my dear old thing. Been banging on about this to my students for a decade or more and I concur with almost everything you say. But (you knew there was one coming)... You cite, as the so-called American way (...)

(‘Eastbournian’ 2011, Most upvoted comment, App. 1: 131)

The reader assumes that what Marsh has written is ultimately correct, not part of the style guide. She or he also thinks it is important for an “authority” like Marsh to alert people to the correct form, and that he does a good job. However, as language guardians often do, the reader has one thing with which they disagree, and they even point that out themselves, with “you knew there was one coming”. This comment is a archetypical comment by a language guardian.

The discussion concerning the usage of ‘who’ or ‘whom’ is an example of an argument between style editor David Marsh and his readers. In the article “Ask not for who the bell tolls” (App. 1: 157), Marsh publishes several of the complaints made by readers, then concludes that the *Guardian* journalists should be able to get the distinction between who and whom right, explaining which pronoun is used in which setting. He does, however, make a point about the difference between spoken and written English:

It's true that when they speak most people don't use "whom", and with good reason: it would make them sound like pompous twerps ("to whom do I owe the pleasure?"). Written English, however, is a different matter – and not just because people write angry letters when you get it wrong.

(Marsh 2011, App. 1: 157)

The distinction between writing and speech is rarely highlighted in the *Guardian* (or indeed in the *Telegraph*). The mention above is a glimpse into the nuances that make David Marsh a largely descriptive writer, despite his occupation which concerns prescribing to a set style guide. When he prescribes usage he usually notes that the rules he gives are guidelines he enforces as a newspaper editor. They are the style guide *Guardian* journalists should follow in order to make the *Guardian* writing consistent, not rules of correct English that should be followed by English users in general, and certainly not rules one should consider adhering to in speech.

The article “Here's one that someone else thought of earlier” (App. 1: 132) is a particularly interesting case with regard to this thesis. With the lead paragraph “A confession: I am planning to steal from the *Telegraph* style guide”, Marsh reflects on the content of the

*Telegraph* style guide, and mentions that the previous week he and Simon Heffer, style editor of the *Telegraph*, had an “enjoyable public debate”. He presents parts of the *Telegraph* style guide, mostly in a joking tone: “(the guide retains an odd fascination with the long-deceased Queen Mother, telling us in three different places what title to use for her)”. The article may leave the reader with the impression that Marsh mocks Heffer and the *Telegraph* style guide.

David Marsh appears to have used his position as style editor of the *Guardian* to promote his book, *For Who the Bell Tolls* (2013). As mentioned before, 6 extracts of the book have been edited and published as articles. The debates between Marsh and N.M Gwynne and Marsh and Simon Heffer are likely to have been part of the campaign to promote the book.

#### 4.3.7 Articles concerning the Telegraph in the Guardian

There are several articles compiled from the *Guardian* which critique the *Telegraph*. Mostly these articles concern an email from Simon Heffer (then associate editor of *The Daily Telegraph*) to his colleagues, rebuking them for their, in the words of *Guardian* journalist Martin Shovel, “linguistic slovenliness and ignorance”. In the article “Convince or persuade: is there really a difference?” (App. 1: 19) Shovel explains that Heffer takes the same stance towards his colleagues as he does in his book *Strictly English* (2010), where he asserts that “rules in language are made by logic, not by a democratic vote”. Shovel describes how this is an archaic view of language, and he invokes David Crystal and ‘Geoff’ Pullum as “distinguished modern linguists” the reader should look to if they doubt the truth of the linguistic democracy. Their names link to articles on two different websites where Crystal and Pullum critique Heffer’s book *Strictly English*. Pullum’s article is not available for non-subscribers, but Crystal notes in his article that “The problem with people who want to impose their linguistic tastes on others is that they never do so consistently” (Crystal 2010). Crystal remarks that Heffer’s prescriptive rules for English are inconsistent, and that he even breaks many of them himself. Shovel takes especial notice of Heffer’s acclaimed “marked difference” between the meanings of the words ‘convince’ and ‘persuade’. Despite having read plenty of books on English usage, he was not aware of this supposed difference. He has searched for an account of the distinction in various reference books, and at last came across it

in several books citing etymology as an argument for the different meanings of ‘convince’ and ‘persuade’. One of the people who explained it was Bill Bryson, indicating that the author of travel books and other curiosa has authority on the subject of linguistic correctness. Shovel also cites various dictionaries on the subject, at last concluding with the OED, which marks that the use of ‘convince’ with an infinitive, something previously claimed to be an error, is “well established”. Shovel returns to Heffer’s argumentation, declaring that

Heffer's logical approach draws a blank. He is mistaken, however, if he thinks the alternative, linguistic democracy, ends in a linguistic free-for-all. In fact, given the inconsistent evidence I have uncovered, I would argue that the wisdom of crowds has been vindicated because it has replaced pernicky – and inconsistent – distinctions with clarity.

(Shovel 2011, App. 1: 19)

The presentation of the various authorities’ stance on the difference between ‘convince’ and ‘persuade’, concluding in the disintegration of Heffer’s argument relates the nature of language change to *Guardian* readers in a rational manner. By not arrogantly dismissing Heffer’s logical approach but explaining throughout the article how it is mistaken, Shovel might be able to convince or persuade readers who support Heffer’s opinions.

Shovel describes the nature of etymology and language change in the final paragraph of the article:

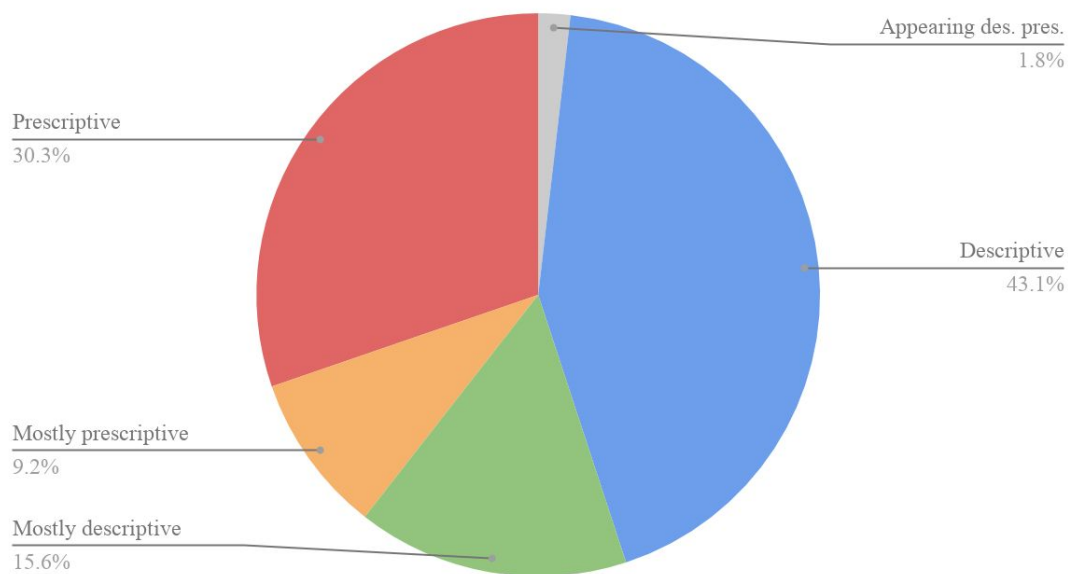
The linguistic battlefield is heaped with ancient carcasses, so it is vital to focus our efforts on the living. There comes a moment when you have to accept that some usages are dying or dead.

(Shovel 2011: App. 1: 19)

By comparing usages of language to a battlefield, Shovel illustrates that one cannot awaken a dead usage, and trying to is pointless. The comparison stops there, as usages are not killed abruptly as soldiers in a battlefield. Nevertheless, this image provides the reader with an understanding of the futility in attempting to preserve outdated usage.

#### 4.4 General quantitative findings in the *Telegraph*

110 articles were found and compiled from the *Telegraph*. 33 have been classified as prescriptive, 10 as mostly prescriptive, 17 as mostly descriptive, 47 as descriptive and 2 articles have been placed in the off-scale category, appearing descriptive but with a prescriptive attitude.



*Figure 4.2.1: Illustration of the distribution between descriptive and prescriptive articles in the Telegraph.*

Although the *Guardian* is more descriptive than the *Telegraph*, the *Telegraph* is still more descriptive than it is prescriptive. It is 41,3 % prescriptive, and 58,7% descriptive, making it 17,4% more descriptive than prescriptive. (For a full comparison between the newspapers, see section 4.6 below).

Interestingly, ‘none/agency’ is the most often recurring “author” in the *Telegraph* article compilation, with 13 occurrences. Of the named authors who occur several times,

Christopher Howse is most often, with only 4 occurrences. This means that the articles in the *Telegraph* are written by a larger variety of authors than the ones in the *Guardian*.

The distribution of the topics the *Telegraph* articles are divided into is shown in figure 4.2.2:

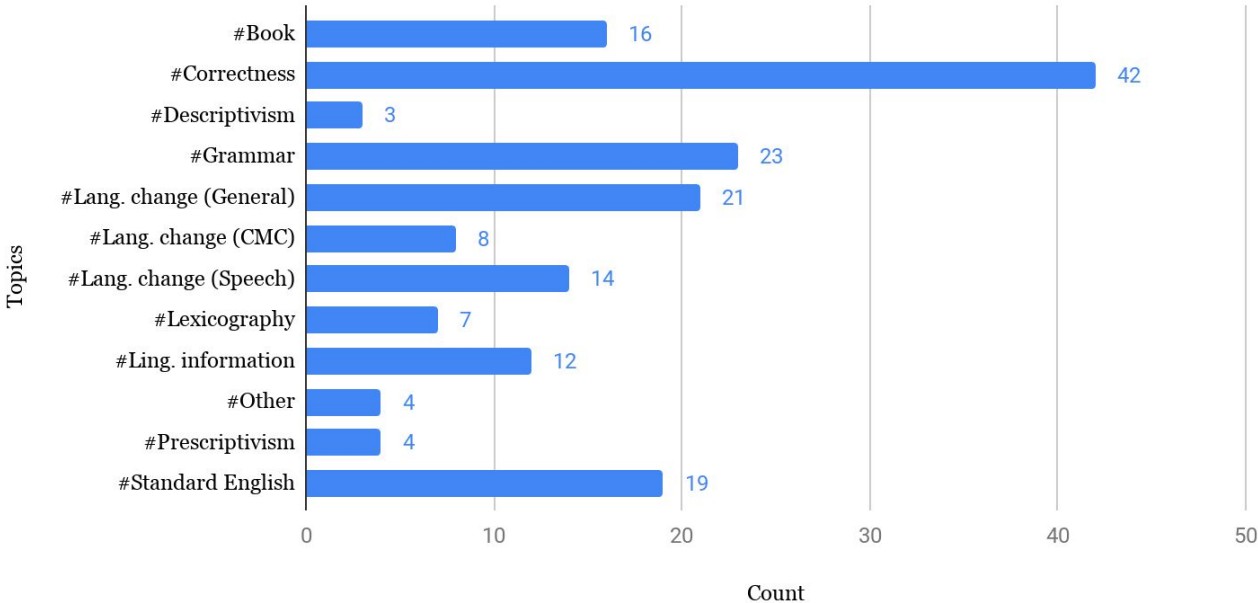
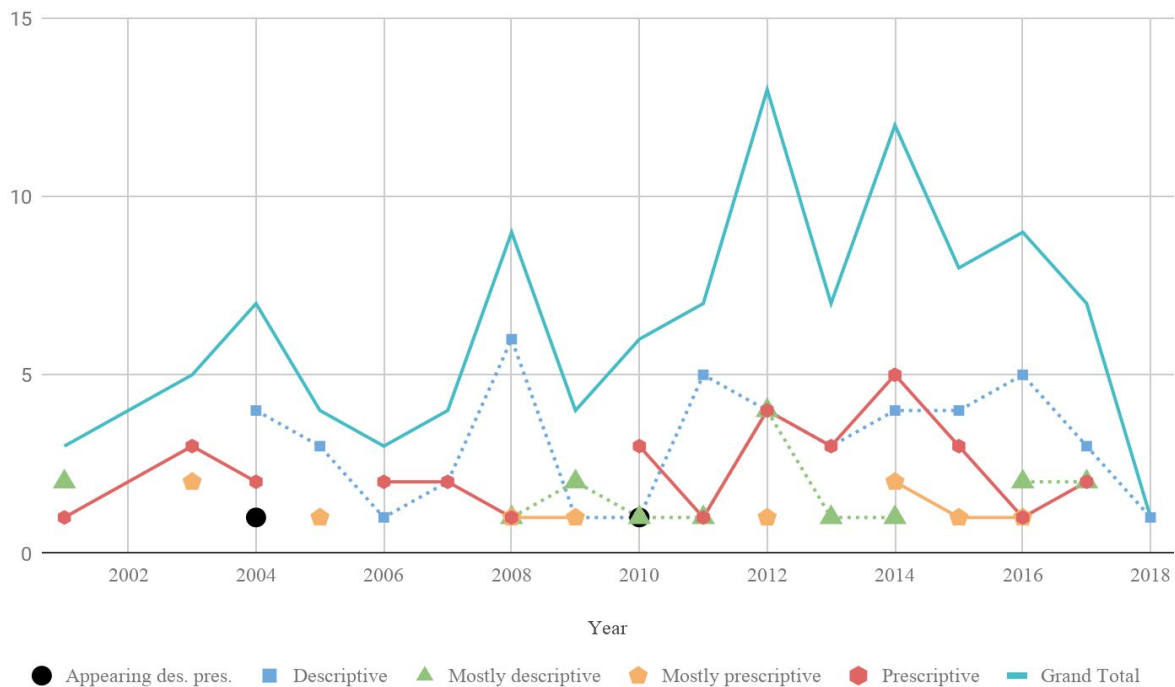


Figure 4.2.2: Distribution of categories in the Telegraph articles

‘#Correctness’ is the most common category (as in the *Guardian*) with 42 occurrences. The next most prevalent category is ‘#Grammar’, with 23 occurrences. These categories are closely related, as complaints about correctness often concern grammar. As mentioned in the explanation of the topics, above in section 3.4.3, the #Correctness category often concerns what non-linguists view as grammar but actually is not. If all articles with instances of the word ‘grammar’ somewhere in the text had been labelled as #Grammar, this category would have been vast. This is why it made more sense to distribute articles with non-linguist grammar conception into #Correctness. The articles in the *Telegraph* are labelled under categories not related to language, often classified as ‘Science’ or ‘Education’. Oddly, several of the articles are categorised as “Thinking Man”, a column under the ‘Lifestyle: Men’ section of the newspaper. It is natural to assume that this categorisation means that there is something masculine about these articles, but it is not apparent what these masculine features are.



*Figure 4.2.3: Timeline of the distribution of descriptive-prescriptive scale per year between 2000 and 2018*

Figure 4.2.3 shows the correlation between how many articles have been compiled from each year and their descriptive-prescriptive distribution. Compared with the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph* shows a more even dispersion of articles per year, peaking in 2012 with 13 articles. There is no strong correlation between earlier years and higher amount of prescriptive articles, the distribution appears to be fairly haphazard. One exception is 2008, which saw 6 out of 9 articles classified as descriptive. It is however likely that this has happened randomly, a sample of 9 articles is nowhere near enough to indicate a significant factor. 40 of 110 articles found in the *Telegraph* were published between 2001 and 2010. However, 9 of these 40 articles are from 2008, so the early 2000s are not as well-represented. A conclusion that can be drawn from figure 4.2.3 is that there appears to be no significant correlation between earlier/more recent publishing dates and descriptivism or prescriptivism.



#### 4.5 Significant findings in the *Telegraph*

The following sections describe the findings that were considered the most significant from Appendix 2, the summary of articles compiled from the *Telegraph*. The information considered significant was highlighted in bold text during the compilation, using the same criteria mentioned in the significant findings of the *Guardian* appendix, see section 4.3 above.

##### 4.5.1 Articles in the appearing descriptive, prescriptive attitude category

Two of the articles found in the *Telegraph* were sorted into the category ‘Appearing descriptive, prescriptive attitude’ (abbreviated ‘Appearing des. pres’ in Figure 4.2.1 above). One of these articles, called “Simon Heffer: The Corrections” (App. 2: 1) is by Simon Heffer, the editor who was responsible for overseeing the *Telegraph* style guide until 2011. In this article, Heffer details how he has a background of studying English and that he understands that language change is natural. Yet he concludes that “There is one, and only one, correct way of writing English”, a statement which clarifies that Heffer is intolerant to variation, and labours under the belief that correct English is something that needs to be prescribed, not observed and described.

The other article in the ‘Appearing descriptive, prescriptive attitude’ is Jonathan Rose’s “In praise of dialect democracy” (App. 2: 2). It is a critique of David Crystal’s book *The Stories of English* (2004). At the beginning of the article the author praises Crystal for writing an interesting book about a “dusty subject”, calling him a well-informed guide. He provides linguistic information from Crystal’s book, until he claims that Crystal “yearns for that prelapsarian age when there were no dictionaries, no scolding grammarians, no standards to hem in literary creativity”. Crystal has never written that he is against dictionaries or grammar, this shows that Rose has misunderstood the basic framework of Crystal’s theory. Rose continues:

For Crystal, everything went wrong in the 18th century. Then, grammarians such as Lindley Murray and elocutionists such as Thomas Sheridan and John Walker constructed Standard English along arbitrary and class-bound lines. This was "prescriptivism" (Crystal's dirtiest word), which tried to freeze the language in place. And now, he lectures, we must "recognize that we have all been turned into linguistic automata", trapped for 200 years in "a linguistic prison-house from which, in the English-speaking world, we are just beginning to escape".

(Rose 2004, App. 2: 2)

Rose's attitude to how he interprets Crystal's writing is apparent from his characterisation of prescriptivism as "Crystal's dirtiest word", and from the use of the verb "lecture" in describing how Crystal relates his observations. These are amongst the many indicators that Rose disagrees strongly with Crystal. The first three paragraphs of this article are a fairly descriptive account of Crystal's book, the rest is a prescriptive condemnation: "Blimey. Can it be that bad? Crystal is a most prolific and erudite linguist, but surely he's too good to believe all that." With this sentence Rose illustrates that it is unclear whether he understands that linguistics is a science, something which is odd considering his estimation of Crystal as 'too good' and 'a most prolific and erudite linguist'. After this, Rose lists personal opinions on linguistics and English, apparently oblivious to the difference between his own personal views and Crystal's scientific linguistic observations. His failure to separate between personal opinion and linguistic science is firmly established in his conclusion: "Crystal's resentful attacks on standard language strike me as beating an almost-dead and very English horse". Rose's characterisation of Crystal's observations as 'resentful attacks' illustrates that he thinks that Crystal is uttering personal opinions, not scientific observations about linguistics. Interestingly, there is another article in the *Telegraph* about Crystal's *The Stories of English* (2004). It is the polar opposite of Rose's article, and because it is written by a scholar, it is presented in section 4.5.3.

#### 4.5.2 Articles about linguistic books in the *Telegraph*

There are 16 articles about books in the *Telegraph* appendix. 7 articles are descriptive, 2 are mostly descriptive, 2 mostly prescriptive and 4 are prescriptive. 1 is in the off-scale category, appearing descriptive with a prescriptive attitude (this article, “In praise of dialect democracy”, App. 2: 2, is described above in section 4.5.1). The following is a presentation and interpretation of the most significant of these 16 articles about books from the *Telegraph*. Five articles are about David Crystal’s books, two are about Steven Pinker’s books and two are about Henry Hitchings book.

On two occasions, the *Telegraph* has published one descriptive and one prescriptive article about a book. One of these books is *The Stories of English* (2004) by David Crystal. The first article is placed appearing descriptive, prescriptive attitude category, App. 2: 2, section 4.5.1. The other, App 2: 49, is written by a scholar and is thus placed in section 4.5.3. The second book with a descriptive and a prescriptive article written about it is *The Language Wars: A History of Proper English* (2011) by Henry Hitchings. The descriptive article is “The Language Wars: A History of Proper English by Henry Hitchings” (App. 2: 27, next article).

“The language police are a force for good” (App. 2: 80) is the prescriptive article. After recommending the book in the first paragraph, Charles Moore launches into an attack on it. He writes that Hitchings is amusing in most of it, but that when it comes to prescriptivists, he is no longer funny. Moore is unhappy with Hitchings’ critique of prescriptivism. Although he does admit that Hitchings is right about language change being natural and not owned by anyone, but he is critical of Hitchings “attack on people he sees as pedants”. He feels that it is unfair, describing the pedants as victims. Moore is negative to the way English is taught today:

The idea that any way of writing, spelling, punctuating or speaking is equally "valid", and that dialects, ethnic minority usage and slang are more equally valid than anything "received", "standard", or traditional. This doctrine, which is just as "prescriptive" as what it attacks, causes ignorance and confusion.

(Moore 2011: App. 2: 80)

The Language Wars: A History of Proper English by Henry Hitchings (App. 2: 27) is the descriptive article about *The Language Wars* (2011). Christopher Howser describes the book descriptively as a history of pedantry, a book chronicling the prescriptive critics who have “feared that English is going to the dogs”. What is more, Howser writes that Hitchings does not always want the reader to laugh at prescriptivists, he understands their wish to impose order. Howser quotes Hitchings’ small defense of the prescriptivists:

They may have “bogus rules, superstitions, half-baked logic”, the author writes, but “our desire to impose order on the world, which means inventing the forms of language rather than discovering them, is a creative act.

(Howser and Hitchings 2011, App. 2: 27)

Howser’s article is thus very different from Moore’s article presented above. These two articles are examples of how two journalists working for the same newspaper can have completely opposite opinions about a book. Howser understands that Hitchings is a certified linguist and that his writing is not an opinion. Moore on the other hand considers his own opinions as valid as Hitchings.

“The 51 most commonly misused words and phrases - do you get these wrong?” (App. 2: 70) is an account of Steven Pinker’s *The Sense of Style* (2014) (see section 4.3.1 for the *Guardian* article about this book). This article, by journalist Helena Horton, gives a very different impression of the book from the one given in the *Guardian* article by Conrad (“The Sense of Style review - Steven Pinker’s comedy of linguistic bad manners” (App 1: 3). Whereas Conrad explains Pinker’s mockery of linguistic correctness, Horton simply lists what she calls “Pinker’s rules and preferences”. She attempts to explain the nature of English correctness, but she contradicts herself:

In the English language, there is no definitive body governing the rules, so grammar can be up to interpretation (...) This isn't true in languages such as French, but it means that when we speak English, it's difficult to know whether we are making a mistake or using our grammar in an acceptable way.

(Horton 2015, App. 2: 70)

Horton seems to misunderstand Pinker's sentiment. She understands that English has no governing body which defines what is linguistically correct, but she appears to think that rules prescribing correctness exist. She insinuates that people are bad at following the rules because there is no authority to tell people what the rules are, and that Pinker's book is a guide to enlightening people about their linguistic mistakes. She does not understand that the "rules" are continually changing norms, summarising how people use language, rather than prescribed, fixed rules. This may be natural if she was writing about obvious mistakes that are not established usage but a misunderstanding made by one person one time. However, most of the 'mistakes' that Pinker describes are commonly used to the point where one can hardly label them as mistakes, they are more accurately called new usage. A commonly cited example Horton quotes Pinker on is the use of the word 'disinterested' in the sense of 'uninterested' (an example previously noted in section 4.3.5 and further discussed in section 5).

#### 4.5.3 Linguists in the *Telegraph*

Several of the articles in the *Telegraph* are written by linguists. As in the *Guardian*, these are descriptive, objective articles about linguistic topics. Johnston's critique of Crystal's book *The Stories of English* is also placed here, because Johnston is an English lecturer. David Crystal and Geoffrey Pullum the two linguists who occur most prominently in the *Telegraph* appendix. Crystal is mentioned most often, in 6 separate articles, two of which he has written himself. The interview "Are 'grammar Nazis' ruining the English language?" (App. 2: 3) quotes Pullum to such an extent that this article has been sorted into this section, rather than the "Linguistic information in the *Telegraph*". It is also in this section because it refers to Pullum's blog.

As noted in section 4.5.1, a linguist has written an article about Crystal's book *The Stories of English*. The article "Language and lingo" (App. 2: 49) is an article written by Freya Johnston, who is credited as a "fellow and a lecturer in English at Christ's College, Cambridge". When a scholar writes an article about another scholar's book, it can be considered even more reliable than an article by a linguist, much like a peer-review. The

reviewing linguist would critique the book if she felt it was incorrect in some sense. Johnston uses linguistic terminology such as ‘descriptive’, ‘Standard English’ and ‘non-standard English’. She colloquially describes linguistic purism as “Crystal’s bane”, and explains why Crystal dismisses linguistic purism. This article is thus radically different from the other article about *The Stories of English*, (App. 2: 2), presented above in section 4.5.1.

David Crystal has written two articles in the *Telegraph* which were collected during the compilation. The one presented here, “Mind our language” (App. 2: 9), is an article about promoting the teaching of dialects in school. Crystal explains why with the modern way of teaching English, it is vital to explain that dialects are not “uneducated English” as plenty of people will have it. To achieve this he thinks it is important to implement teaching about dialects. Crystal does not point to particular cases in which this has happened, but it is well illustrated in for example the article “Middlesbrough primary school issues list of ‘incorrect’ words” (App. 2: 85) about disallowing specific dialect words in (and outside) a primary school in order to ensure that the pupils learn “proper” English (presented and interpreted in section 4.5.6 below). Crystal’s article was written two years before the other one, which shows that his observations were overlooked as late as 2013. The article relates the story of how Standard English has emerged, and how dialects were noted as early as in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (1387). Crystal explains that in the 18th century, people began to think that language was changing too quickly, and began compiling dictionaries, which contributed to the artificial standardisation of English. Thus he abolishes the myth that English has been uniform at some point and that variation is something new. As English spreads around the world, teaching about dialects in school is important to teach children about the nature of dialects. Crystal emphasises that the point of teaching this is to enforce that discrimination against dialects is equal to racial discrimination, a point often repeated by linguists (see chapter 2).

Geoffrey Pullum is a linguistics professor at the University of Edinburgh. He also has a blog called *Language Log*, publishing his and other contributors’ views on various language related topics. The *Telegraph* article “Are grammar Nazis ruining the English language” (App. 2: 3) is an interview with the professor. With the lead paragraph, author Tim Chivers sets the tone for the article:

Split infinitives make them shudder and they'd never end a sentence with a preposition. But linguist Geoffrey Pullum has a message for all grammar pedants: you're wrong.

(Chivers 2014, App. 2: 3)

How the field of linguistics is talked about is compared to teaching biology using textbooks from 1795. What is meant by this is that a lot of what linguists have discovered over the last few centuries is ignored by non-linguists. Pullum's blog *Language Log*, is described by Chivers as "probably the most-viewed linguistics website in the world". Chivers also notes that Pullum and Huddleston's award-winning book *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002) is one of "the most respected descriptions of the rules of English in the world". The noteworthiness of Pullum's blog, the grammar book and the fact that he was in a rock'n'roll band before he became a linguist, is used to support Pullum's claim that all languages are defined by how people use language. The rules of the English language have changed a lot through the times, but that no one has deliberately changed them at any time, the rules have evolved on their own through people's usage. He writes that it is Pullum's job to identify by which rules English is used. What frustrates Pullum is that discussions about grammar curriculum has stalled centuries ago. People are not being told that grammar books should describe how people use language, and plenty of grammar books published today still prescribe rules of correctness. He points to *Gwynne's Grammar* as an example of prescriptions of odd rules that do not correlate with actual usage, such as to never split an infinitive. Pullum describes *Gwynne's Grammar*:

I've never seen a book so bad on my subject (...) It's the familiar old nonsense, modified through 200 years of rubbish, from teachers who didn't quite understand it to students who understood it less.

(Pullum in Chivers 2014, App. 2: 3)

Pullum's blog has topics called 'prescriptivist poppycock' and 'prescriptivist non-poppycock' are dedicated to the critique of prescriptivism, Chivers writes.

A quick perusal of these topics on the blog *Language Log* results in finding that the last entry within this category was in April 2018. It is called "The Economist finally comes

around". What the *Economist* has come around to is relinquishing their ban on split infinitives. In the blog entry, Pullum's colleague Goldfarb reflects on the impact of the *Economist's* decision:

While this strikes a blow for linguistic sanity, it is not an unmixed blessing. The Economist's prohibition of split infinitives within its pages has provided a steady supply of topics for blogospheric descriptivists (especially those with the initials "GKP"), who will now have to find something else to write about.

(Goldfarb 2018, *Language Log*)

As this entry is from the 26th of April 2018, it appears that *Language Log's* writers, especially Geoffrey K. Pullum, have experienced the drought in prescriptive matters to write about that they predicted. The lack of blog entries about prescriptivism after this suggests that Pullum and his colleagues considered the *Economist* the last substantial institution defending prescriptivism.

Pullum's blog *Language Log* is also described in the *Telegraph* article "When it comes to grammar one man's rule is another man's guideline" (App. 2: 65), written by Robert Colvile, the same journalist who argued against enforcing a prescriptivist list of incorrect words in "Middlesbrough primary school issues list of 'incorrect' words" (App. 2: 85). Colvile describes the *Language Log's* 'section' "Prescriptivist Poppycock": "Its contributors defend Tesco's use of language, or the splitting of the infinitive, as perfectly acceptable and long-established alternatives to the ascendant usage". Colvile mentions the correction of signs with wrongful use of apostrophe, Lynne Truss' *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* (2003) and the complaint that the UK is lacking a body to act as language police like the french *Académie Française*. (An example of this complaint is Linstead's wish in the *Guardian* article "English spellings don't match the sounds they are supposed to represent. It's time to change" (App. 1: 145), presented in section 4.3.5 above). Colvile reflects on the fact that he himself feels annoyed with linguistic errors, and admits that he is hypocritical, because he cares more about some mistakes than others.



#### 4.5.4 Linguistic information in the *Telegraph*

Many of the articles providing linguistic information in the *Telegraph* are scientific articles, labelled under headings such as ‘science news’. These articles tend to feature specific studies, detailing professors and universities behind them. There are several articles in which linguistic concepts are misunderstood, a representative selection of these is also presented here.

As noted in section 4.3.5, Professor John Sutherland appears to have changed his mind about CMC between 2002 and 2015. “English language is changing faster than ever, research reveals” (App. 2: 19) is a descriptive article about the development of English language, focusing on a study on social media language. The article has no particular author, but it presents Professor John Sutherland as the “English language expert” who was commissioned to lead this study, which marked the launch of the Samsung Galaxy S6 phone. The fact that Samsung hired Sutherland to lead a study on CMC is ironic if one considers the fact that the only instance found of an academic who has written a negative piece on CMC in all the articles compiled for this thesis, is John Sutherland. The article in question is the ranting lament about the idiocy of texting, in “Cn u txt?” (App. 1: 168) presented in section 4.3.5 above.

The article “Traditional English spellings could be killed off by internet, says language expert” (App. 2: 31) appears to be about a linguist who is against CMC at first glance. However, it soon becomes clear that the article is about David Crystal and his prediction that English spelling will change, influenced by the internet. The journalist’s choice of the words “killed off” insinuates that this will be a brutal and quick process, but that is not what Crystal has said. Despite the misleading headline, the article is a rather descriptive account of Crystal’s views on the teaching of traditional spelling and the development of CMC.

An example an article describing a study follows under the colloquial headline: “Glaswegian and Brummie accents sound more stupid” (App. 2: 41). The headline can be described as a “clickbait”, alluring the reader by childishly calling accents ‘stupid’. The

article, written by Andrew Hough, is about a meta-study in which a sociolinguist reviewed several studies on attitudes to accents. Hough writes:

In her research, Dr Snell reviewed several studies on dialects, which concluded that “non-standard” accents such as those from Glasgow or Birmingham “consistently rated low for traits like intelligence, competence, confidence and leadership”.

(Hough 2011, App. 2: 41)

Hough’s marking of ‘non-standard’ with quotation marks indicates for the reader that this is the sociolinguistic term for such “accents”. Interestingly from a linguist’s point of view, Hough uses ‘accent’ seemingly as a synonym for ‘dialect’, in this instance and several other places in the article. It is not clear whether the researcher separated between this distinction. However, given the general consensus on the definitions for these terms within the field of linguistics, there is reason to think that Snell distinguished between the terms. The journalist does not link to the actual meta-study nor describe it as a meta-study, but he links to Snell’s Twitter profile. This arguably makes sociolinguistics more accessible for the non-linguist reader, as Twitter is an unacademic platform consisting of shorter texts that would assumably be less dense in information, thus more comfortable to read. Further Hough notes that Snell’s study was recently published in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* and that it was featured “on Monday on a BBC Radio 4 documentary narrated by Stephen Fry”. The mentioning of these two facts within one sentence gives the reader one academic and one colloquial way to peruse the study, one which would require dense reading and one where one would not have to read at all. Hough describes the Fry’s presence in the documentary:

Fry lamented how over the past 30 years RP, or the “quintessential sound of the BBC”, had almost disappeared. “Not that I am in any position to pretend any natural identification with the lower orders, sounding as I do. It is obvious that mine is the unmistakable voice of a ‘toff’,” the British actor told listeners. “But I didn’t always sound like this. No, I used to sound a lot posher.”

(Hough 2011, App. 2: 41)

This is interesting for two reasons. First, it appears that Fry is not the “narrator” of the documentary, but rather is in a capacity of radio host or something equivalent. It is also noted in the article that Snell “says” several things, indicating that she was interviewed by Fry, this context was not made clear earlier in the article. Secondly, the use of the word ‘lament’ here is interesting, because it indicates that Fry is negative to the fading of the RP accent. As previously noted in section 4.3.4, Fry is not for prescriptivism and made this clear on his blog in 2008, the article described here is from 2011. Furthermore, Fry’s choice of words do not indicate that he has a negative stance to the fading of his own accent. It may just be that he is making the observation that that the quintessential sound of the BBC is changing, not “lamenting” it. It is quite possible that Hough has misperceived Fry’s attitude as a negative one. Despite Hough’s strange manner of describing the study and the documentary, this article has been classified as descriptive. This is because the information the article refers to is clearly of a descriptive nature. Hough’s inability to relate the information descriptively may be caused by his journalist background, he may have tried to make the article more appealing to readers by referring to the researcher’s Twitter account, indicating that Fry is lamenting the decline of RP and by using the decidedly provocative ‘clickbait’ headline “Glaswegian and Brummie accents ‘sound more stupid’”.

“Texting is fostering bad grammar and spelling, researchers claim” (App. 2: 79) appears to be an attempt at conveying linguistic information, but the lack of author, source and references in the article makes the article and indeed the study appear unreliable. The only researcher specifically mentioned is referred to as “a former undergraduate student in communications”. If the researcher, known as Mr Cingel, has continued his education after being an undergraduate in a field not related to grammar, the unknown author of the article has failed to mention it. The lack of education alone suggests that Mr Cingel is not qualified to make judgments on students’ grammar abilities. Furthermore, there is no link to the study itself or description of research method used in the study, so the reader is unable to check the validity of it without extensive online searching. The lack of author in this article may further suggest that there is an unwillingness to take credit for writing about study with low validity and reliability. “Texting is fostering bad grammar and spelling, researchers claim” (App. 2: 79) is further undermined by the next article which does convey accurate linguistic information, and which was published two months later.

“Text speak does not affect children’s use of grammar: study” (App. 2: 7) is an article by a woman identified as ‘Medical Editor’, Rebecca Smith, and it describes a study using a scientific vocabulary with sentences such as:

There was no evidence of any significant relationships between poor grammar in text messages and their understanding of written or spoken grammar.

(Smith, App. 2: 7)

this is in juxtaposition with the unscientific, colloquial language used in “Glawegian and Brummie accents ‘sound more stupid’” (App. 2: 41) described above. In addition to the scientific jargon, the article includes a summary of the research design, mentions the professor was in charge of the study, gives a few brief comments from her, and names the conference at which the journalist saw a presentation of the study. All these details make this article the polar opposite to the lack of information in the other article, “Texting is fostering bad grammar and spelling, researchers claim” (App. 2: 79). It is perhaps curious that the same newspaper chooses to publish two so contradictory articles, especially within such a short period of time.

#### 4.5.5 Criticism of the complaint tradition in the *Telegraph*

Several of the criticisms toward the complaint tradition have already been presented in the sections above. The most critical article to the complaint tradition in the *Telegraph* compilation is the interview with Geoffrey Pullum, “Are grammar nazis ruining the English language?” (App. 2: 3), see section 4.5.3 above for an account. The descriptive reviews of Crystal and Hitchings’ books can also be considered critiques of the complaint tradition. (Respectively found in, in section 4.5.3, App. 2: 49 and section 4.5.2. App. 2: 27) The replies in the following section, 4.5.6, are also criticisms of prescriptivism. (“Be careful if you’re offered a hottie to warm the bed” App. 2: 38, and “A ban on on playground slang? Not bloody likely!” App. 2: 37).

Equivalent to David Mitchell's article in the *Guardian*, a famous non-linguist has written an article criticising prescriptivism in the *Telegraph*. Writer, actress, television presenter and political activist Sandi Toksvig has written "Sandi Toksvig finds linguistic treasures in the Urban Dictionary" (App. 2: 17). She dismisses the complaint tradition's notions in the same tone as David Mitchell in his *Guardian* article and Stephen Fry in his blogpost (see section 4.3.4 above). Toksvig relates the story of how she was scolded by a woman for "allowing the BBC to ruin the English language". She reflects on what might have been the motivation behind the reproach, making a polite mockery of the woman:

The gist of what she wanted, I think, was for us all to speak as she did, but the truth is that the English language has never been either preserved in aspic or one person's preserve. It has ever been evolving.

(Toksvig 2011, App. 2: 17)

It is interesting that Toksvig uses the phrase 'preserve in aspic', as it is the same phrase used in the *Guardian* article "The folly of preserving English in aspic" (App. 1: 11) by English professor John Mullan (see section 4.3.2 above). Mullan describes Johnson's conclusion after attempting to 'fix' language: "Language is in a constant state of lively mutability and could not be 'embalmed'". It may well be that Toksvig is referring to Mullan's account of Johnson's work, considering that she uses the word 'aspic' precisely as Mullan does. The point is that Toksvig appears to refer to a famous example of someone who tried to fix English but realised that it was fruitless, through the words of a qualified expert within the field of linguistics, John Mullan. This shows that Toksvig is acquainted with sociolinguistic theory on language change, just as her comedian colleagues Stephen Fry and David Mitchell.

#### 4.5.6 Particularly prescriptive articles and replies in the *Telegraph*

A few particularly prescriptive people recur with high frequency in both the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph*, in stark opposition to the descriptive occurrences of linguists in the papers, Crystal is the only person close to being mentioned as often. Perhaps the most prevalent prescriptivist

author is Lynne Truss, author of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* (2003). She is often critiqued by descriptivists, but she has also written one article herself, in the *Telegraph*.

In the *Telegraph* article “Lynne Truss: Stop the apostrophe catastrophe!” (App. 2: 94) Truss is given an outlet for her frustrations concerning the correct use of the apostrophe in an article of her own. At the top of the article the tone is set with an illustrating photograph of a frustrated woman holding her hands over her ears, with the caption “Make it stop! Sloppy punctuation is a pain”. Truss begins the article by describing examples in which speakers on the radio “mispronounce” different words, such as ‘sedentary’. She claims that in these settings, a pedant such as herself would automatically correct the speaker. She dramatically writes that since publishing her book, she has spent four years listening to the woes of pedants, calling their stories “heartbreaking”:

Can this terrible state of affairs be allowed to continue? What can be done? In my public persona of "Queen of Punctuation", I am popularly supposed to be the sort of person who regularly upbraids the illiterate, but I honestly never point out mistakes in a manner to cause hurt feelings.

I just die inside, quietly.

(Truss 2007, App. 2: 94)

With her book *The Girl's Like Spaghetti* (2007), a children’s book about correct use of apostrophes, Truss “hopes to encourage the next generation of ‘punctuation pedants’” to use apostrophes correctly. She continues with more examples of people’s mistakes, using words to mean something different than what the “*Concise Oxford*” says. She has thought a lot about whether it is wrong or right to not correct people’s “mistakes”, because she does not want to be perceived as mean. The catalyst behind her reflections is the publication of her new book *The Girl's Like Spaghetti* (2007).

The articles yielded by searching for the keyword ‘Standard English’ in the *Telegraph* search engine have a tendency to be highly prescriptive, more so than other search words. Several of these articles reveal alarmingly archaic attitudes. 5 such articles addressed news that schools had banned specific words and constructions. The article “Middlesbrough primary school issues list of 'incorrect' words” (App. 2: 85) describes the changes

implemented by the school's head teacher, explaining that parents have been instructed to correct their children at home if they use any of the prohibited words, in speech or in writing. The author of the article, Hannah Furness, does not offer any opinion as to whether what the school is doing is wrong or right but simply describes the teacher's arguments. The teacher, known as Mrs Walker, reports that she has experienced a decline in spelling or grammar with children reading less for pleasure:

We are going to teach them the rules. If they decide not to use these rules with friends that is fine, but I want them to know that when they are filling in application forms and speaking in a formal situation they should use standard English.

(Walker in Furness 2013, App. 2: 85)

It is apparent from the article that Walker has a very fixed idea about what Standard English is. Furness reports that Walker believes that “an increase in social networking and texting, as well as spending time around the dialect and broad accents of friends and family in Middlesbrough” has had an effect on the supposed low standard of writing and speech at the school. Walker claims that she is enforcing the rules for the good of the pupils, because other people may discriminate against them if they speak and write non-standard English. She has noticed that pupils have been struggling to separate between “Standard English and the English of the street”. It is apparent that Walker believes that non-standard English is inherently informal, a common error made by non-linguists. Furness writes that the pupils as well as their parents have welcomed the change, reciting a parent who indicates that having a good upbringing with an accent involves learning how to speak “correctly”. Thus, this parent appears to be discriminating against her own accent, by indicating that it is improper and somehow secondary to Standard English, which she perceives as proper and prestigious.

The article “Be careful if you're offered a hottie to warm the bed” (App. 2: 38) by Robert Colvile is a descriptive critique and reply to Mrs Walker, the head teacher of Sacred Heart Primary School in the article “Middlesbrough primary school issues list of 'incorrect' words” (App. 2: 85). Colvile is quick to raise the point that “the sky has failed to fall in” after Walker's request to her pupils to moderate their speech. He writes that a few years ago, Walker would have been accused of cultural discrimination with her proposal to impose

“proper” English. In saying this he suggests that there has been a focus on the discrimination of non-standard varieties in the past, but that the focus has since decreased. Colvile writes that speaking RP, something he equates with Walker’s notion of “proper English” has become unfavourable with the BBC, and so Walker should not worry about her pupils’ accents. Still, he suggests that the children would benefit from adjusting their speech somewhat, to closer resemble that of standard English, which according to Colvile now has a broader definition “than chanting ‘the rain in Spain’”. It is unclear from this whether Colvile realises that Standard English is not an accent and therefore does not have a specific pronunciation, but there is evidence to suggest that he does not. He appears to believe that RP used to correlate with Standard English but that they have since drifted apart (see section 2.4 above for more about Standard English, dialects and accents).

Colvile, as Hough in “Glaswegian and Brummie accents sound more stupid” (App. 2: 41, see section 4.5.4) fails to distinguish between the terms ‘accent’ and ‘dialect’. Mrs Walker has not asked only asked her students to modify their accent (their pronunciation), but their grammar and spelling, meaning that she imposes on their dialect, not their accent. This is merely a matter of linguistic terminology, and does not take away from the seriousness of the discrimination Mrs Walker has inflicted upon her students.

There are also two articles about the about the ban of slang in another primary school, Sheffield Springs Academy, in 2012 (“A ban on on playground slang? Not bloody likely!” App. 2: 37, and “Pupils banned from using slang in school”, App. 2. 75). A presentation of these two would be very similar to the two previous articles about the ban on slang and is as such considered redundant, but they are worth mentioning to address the fact that this was not a single occurrence, but something which happened in at least two schools in 2012 and 2013, provoking descriptivist replies both times.

The last article about schools banning slang is “Cosby backs school’s ban on street slang” (App. 2: 84). The article by Julie Henry is from 2004, and a response to it has not appeared within the parameters of the search. Henry writes that “the leading black American comedian” Bill Cosby supports a campaign which bans British schoolchildren “from speaking patois in the classroom in an attempt to improve their poor academic performance”. She describes the campaign as part of a government pilot programme teaching the students that patois is only appropriate in certain contexts. The head teacher of the school, Gary Phillips,



says that all the schools' pupils use south London slang, further he notes that he sometimes sees this as an act of defiance.

However, exams require standard English - full stop - and if you don't say it, you can't write it. It is not about leaving patois at the school gate but we do have a big push on using appropriate language at appropriate times. We will pull pupils up constantly when it does not have a place.

(Phillips in Henry 2004, App. 2: 84)

Many of the details given in this article are striking to read. The fact that the author uses Bill Cosby as an inspirational African American figure is strange from a modern perspective, but was natural in 2004 before the sexual assault allegations against him surfaced. What is more serious is the notion that pupils who speak non-standard English should have their variety called “inappropriate” for various contexts. Phillips labours under the illusion that he is simply making the students fit for working life, but what he is really doing is enforcing the discrimination of non-standard Englishes. In order to illustrate why this is so wrong one could compare it to racism. Should Phillips encourage racism in school because the students may experience it later in life? Obviously the answer is no, rather he should hope that the “real world” aspires to become less racist, just as one should hope that discrimination of non-standard Englishes in working life is ended. The ban mentioned in the article is precisely the type of discrimination Milroy and Milroy refer to in *Authority in Language* (2012), the systemised undermining minorities and other non-standard English speakers through linguistics. A case frequently mentioned by sociolinguists concerning the discrimination of non-standard English speakers in school the school system is the American “Black English Trial” in Ann Arbor in Michigan in 1979. A group of parents of minority speakers won in court against their children’s school, criticising authorities for not taking into account the children’s linguistic barriers. The case ultimately proved that African American Vernacular English has a consistent grammar just as Standard English does (Milroy and Milroy 2012: 96-97).

Several of the articles written by people identifying themselves as grammar purists have a leading paragraph describing the author in the third person, such as the article “A

pedant like me doesn't need fulsome praise" (App. 2: 93). The lead paragraph in this article is "Snivelling subjunctive bore Michael Deacon was amused to find three Facebook groups dedicated to his denigration", and the article is written by Michael Deacon. The decidedly negative characterisation of Deacon as a 'snivelling subjunctive bore' in an article written by himself makes this use of third person particularly interesting. A closer look at the content of the article reveals that Deacon has written it himself, assumably as a way of mimicking his critics:

I often carry a copy of *Troublesome Words*, Bill Bryson's guide to English usage. I do this not only to swot up on the subjunctive, like the snivelling bore I am, but to revel in the howler on the book's back cover: a quote from a review declaring that Bryson "deserves fulsome praise".

(Deacon 2010, App. 2: 93)

The article is not actually about the three facebook groups dedicated to his name, as the lead paragraph suggests. While Deacon presents some of his praisers and critics briefly, he uses most of the article to express what makes him a pedant, as well as mocking those who mock him by pretending to take them seriously.

Despite several mentions of style editor Simon Heffer and general references to the *Telegraph* in the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph* has not replied to or mentioned the *Guardian* or their style editor, David Marsh in any of the articles compiled in Appendix 2. Nor is the debate between Marsh and Heffer mentioned in any of the articles in the compilation.

#### 4.6 Comparison of the newspapers

As table 5.1 below shows, the *Guardian* appendix is more descriptive in sum. In spite of this, the *Telegraph* appendix yielded slightly more fully descriptive articles than the *Guardian*. This can be explained by the fact that the *Telegraph* has more scientific descriptive articles, whereas the *Guardian* has a tendency for articles by opinionated journalists who lament

prescriptivism, such as David Marsh. These articles have a larger tendency to be mostly descriptive, coloured by for example personal opinion.

<b>Scale:</b>	<b>The <i>Guardian</i>:</b>	<b>The <i>Telegraph</i>:</b>
Descriptive:	42.4%	43.1%
Mostly descriptive:	23.8%	15.6%
Sum of descriptivism:	66.2%	58.7%

*Table 5.1 Distribution of descriptivism compared*

The *Telegraph*, a newspaper which is considered politically conservative, was proven to be more often prescriptive than the *Guardian*. This is illustrated in table 5.2 below. The *Guardian* also has a much more even distribution between the categories prescriptive, mostly prescriptive and mostly descriptive, where the *Telegraph* have larger fully descriptive and prescriptive categories. This also suggests that the *Telegraph* is more conservative, having more articles that are polar opposites, where the *Guardian* have more articles in the middle ground categories, mostly descriptive and mostly prescriptive. These articles are naturally less rigidly descriptive or prescriptive.

<b>Scale:</b>	<b>The <i>Guardian</i>:</b>	<b>The <i>Telegraph</i>:</b>
Prescriptive:	19.8%	30.3%
Mostly prescriptive:	14%	9.2%
Appearing des. pres:	0%	1.8%
Sum of prescriptivism:	33.8%	41.3%

*Table 5.2 Distribution of prescriptivism compared*

## 5. Discussion

This chapter addresses the research questions asked in section 3.4.3 above, and discusses a few points that are central to these questions.

### 5.1 Where the descriptivism-prescriptivism debate stands today

As shown in figures 4.1.3 and 4.2.3, there is no significant correlation between more recent articles and higher descriptiveness. This means that it does not appear as though the newspapers have taken a more linguistic-scientific stance over time. However, another interpretation of these results is possible. The low amount of articles compiled from recent years may be interpreted as a sign that the debate has ended. In the last few years the articles heavily promoting prescriptivism are few, and it would appear as though the articles promoting descriptivism and explaining the difference have won. This conclusion is supported by Geoffrey Pullum and his colleagues writing the *Language Log* blog. An contributor to the blog concluded that the *Economist's* acknowledgement of the split infinitive as acceptable was the end to material for bloggers who complain about prescriptivism in April 2018.

### 5.2 Linguistics' presence in the newspapers

The *Telegraph* tends to have more scientific linguistic articles about studies, whereas the *Guardian* writes more colloquially about the topic and often classifies professionals' observations as 'opinion'. This is ironic, considering that the *Telegraph* is all over more prescriptive, which in itself is unscientific.

The interviews with linguists Geoffrey Pullum, Noam Chomsky, David Crystal and Daniel Everett show that linguistics as a field is taken seriously by the newspapers to some extent. Crystal occurs in nine separate articles in the *Guardian*, two of which he has written himself. Crystal has also written two articles in the *Telegraph* appendix, and is mentioned in six (one of these is a critique, see section 4.5.1 above). Geoffrey Pullum is the most mentioned linguist after Crystal, with two mentions in the *Guardian* (one of which is a reference to an academic paper, see section 4.3.4 above), and a full interview about the nature of linguistics in the *Telegraph*. However, none of the authors behind essays in the book *Language Myths*, who critiqued the lack of information about linguistics in media, (see chapter 1 above), were found in any of the two newspapers. As stated in the introduction, the essays in the book are about various myths non-linguists believe about language. The only linguists named in the comprehensive summary of sociolinguistic theory in chapter 2 who occur in the newspaper articles are Horobin, Pullum, Pinker and Crystal, none of whom have written any of the essays in *Language Myths*. This is perhaps curious, considering that so many of the linguists cited in chapter 2 have written essays in the book. In addition to the editors Bauer and Trudgill, who naturally have essays in it, this list includes both of the Milroys, Preston, Niedzielski, Andersson and Aitchison. It is puzzling that none of these sociolinguists, including Bauer and Trudgill, have one single mention in any articles in either of the appendices, when they are the ones who complained about the lack of linguistic information in the media. Whether they have made a conscious effort to publish anything accessible to the general public besides *Language Myths* is unknown.

### 5.3 Descriptive-prescriptive consistency

The *Telegraph*'s most prescriptive articles are usually more prescriptive than the prescriptive articles in the *Guardian*. They entertain more controversial views, such as banning slang in schools, and generally write more fiercely about what they deem incorrect English. The *Guardian* more often mocks prescriptivists (including the *Telegraph*). Neither of the newspapers are notably consistent in their descriptive- or prescriptiveness. Most journalists tend to keep to one side of the spectrum, although they have on occasion drifted toward the

other, none of these instances stand out as significant. What is considered significant is when a professor changes stance from highly prescriptive to highly descriptive. Such is the case of John Sutherland, the professor who wrote a prescriptive rant in 2002 (App. 1: 168) and who was behind the Samsung-funded research on CMC in 2015 (App. 2: 19). However interesting this finding is, it marks itself as a fascinating case study of a conservative academic who was enlightened to the harmlessness of CMC, not a trend which indicates anything.

A correlation between articles with unreliable information and lack of author was found in both newspapers. Since the year 2000 the general public have become better able to access information about anything using the internet, and so it is easier to be critical to fake news. This also means that the journalists have to be better at citing their sources. Examples of unreliable articles without authors are the ones that claim CMC is negative for children in some sense. It is very easy to find several articles that claim the opposite, and these articles nearly always cite more reliable studies and provide more information about the validity of the method used in the studies they cite.

## 5.4 Misconceptions about linguistics

### 5.4.1 Myth 1: Speaking and writing bad English makes you a bad person

The belief that spelling mistakes and speaking non-standard varieties is associated with being lazy, stupid and criminal is prevalent in several articles. Two of the most blatant examples of this attitude documented are in articles from the *Guardian* “There are lots of bacteria, but there is only one genetic code” (App. 1: 162) and “CIA, NSA and MI5: why our intelligence agencies aren't so smart” (App. 1: 119). Both these authors, one of which is a former *New Scientist* editor, make the connection between low intelligence and linguistic mistakes. There are also several articles about schools which have banned particular words or full dialects, actions which suggest that the people behind are behind these negative linguistic attitudes. Fortunately, the bans are also challenged in several articles. While there are plenty of articles criticising various aspects of linguistic pedantry, none of them pinpoint or address the specific

consequences of pedantic attitudes. The ban on slang for example has not been compared to discrimination on racial grounds, as sociolinguists often do. Even though several articles link bad spelling with stupidity, none of the critiques, not even David Crystal, specifically address and criticise this view. Although several article authors express an understanding that language changes and tell people to accept it, they do not name or challenge these repercussions of the negative linguistic attitudes. Often the discussion is simply about whether “bad spelling” is acceptable. There is one archaic view which has been defeated, namely the association of CMC with bad spelling habits. While there are several articles suggesting this link, they are all lacking in credible sources, whereas the articles which oppose this view have salient sources.

Milroy and Milroy’s main concern in *Authority in Language* is not necessarily the fact that prescriptivists prescribe language, but rather the consequences of the prescription. Believers of prescriptivism tend to associate ‘bad language’ with low morale, criminality, laziness and lack of intelligence. This concern cannot be stressed enough, and is therefore a theme which is returned to throughout this thesis. Documenting the prevalence of this type of attitude is the first step in confronting it and changing it.

#### 5.4.2 Myth 2: Literacy is in decline

Many non-linguists express worries about English changing in such a way that people will struggle to understand each other, such as Linstead’s worries in “English spellings don’t match the sounds they are supposed to represent. It’s time to change” (App. 1: 145). He cites various studies, amongst them he quotes the conclusion of a study found in the *British Journal of Psychology*:

Children from a majority of European countries become accurate and fluent in foundation level reading before the end of the first school year ... The rate of development in English is more than twice as slow.

(*British Journal of Psychology* in Linstead 2014, App. 1: 145)

When presenting such studies of “the decline of literacy”, Linstead and others often draw general conclusions that the scientists may not have done. There is for example not necessarily a correlation between the difficulty of the English spelling system and British pupils’ tardiness in learning it, a number of other factors, for example styles of teaching, could be causing their slow progress. Scientists often despair at people and journalists’ inability to express how difficult it is to prove a causal correlation. Journalists tend to write in a much more polarised fashion than scientists. They often write that scientists “claim” the observations they have made, and based on this they tend to draw rather imprecise general conclusions about science. This is something one always has to consider when reading journalist’s articles about science. It is challenging to achieve high validity and reliability in proving causal correlations between two factors, as it requires the isolation of the variables to rule out possible confounding variables. Even when such a relationship is produced from a study, it only indicates that there may be a causal relationship. Any one study is simply an indicator, not a conclusion of causality. Media nearly always fails to explain that it takes a multitude of studies using different methodologies to support an indication. Journalists scarcely ever discuss a study’s validity and reliability, rarely even presenting the method used.

Back to the study Linstead mentions, it is not necessarily important for young school children to know how to spell accurately. If people were to accept more variation in spelling as correct instead of fixing spelling to as little variation as possible, it would also be easier to spell “correctly”. One of the techniques that tend to enable children to learn how to write earlier is ‘phonics’, learning to write using speech sounds, with phonemic spelling. One of the supposed drawbacks of this method is that children learn to spell “properly” a little later, but there is no reason why small children should be able to spell perfectly, so this is hardly a matter of concern. In fact, several studies show that children use their spelling mistakes to investigate and learn about the structure of language (Barton 2007: 154-155).

#### 5.4.3 Myth 3: English is doomed and/or dying

As noted in section 4.3.3 above in the interpretation of the article “Interview: My Bright idea: English is on the up but one day it will die out” (App. 1: 33), language death is natural. This



means that unnatural preservation of language can rarely be compared to, for example, the unnatural preservation of an animal species. Animals may be part of an ecosystem influencing each other with their existence, but there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case for languages. As languages change inherently according to the needs of the humans who use them, the death of a language will very rarely be caused by one problematic factor. There are of course exceptions to this, as with the forced assimilation of specific cultural groups. An example is the forced “Norwegianisation” of the Sami people which has been unsuccessfully attempted over the last few centuries. The Sami people have prevailed, but this could have resulted in extermination of their language, which would have been an “unnatural” language death. The repression of indigenous people’s languages can be likened to the repression of non-standard Englishes. Small languages and non-standard varieties have in common that they are often associated with low prestige, and in turn they can be associated with low intelligence, laziness and bad morale, as noted abundantly in chapter 2 above. The *Foundation for Endangered Languages* can be useful if they focus on opposing the discrimination against these groups on linguistic grounds, rather than try and halt the possible slow death of English. The preservation of any particular part of English, such as the testament behind the *Queen’s English Society*, are especially wasteful, as these efforts are not only futile but unnecessary and worthless. The slow, natural change of English constructions, spelling and grammar does not compare with the discrimination against non-standard English varieties’ grammar and syntax. English will not abruptly pass away as is suggested by the journalists of articles such as “Interview: My Bright idea: English is on the up but one day it will die out” (App. 1: 33), it will morph into something else with the influence of other languages, and “die” so slowly that no one will or should notice or mourn. The fact that language death and change is usually natural is not noted in any of the articles studied here, and appears to be something the journalists need to be taught. A finding which may indicate something about prescriptivism’s standing in society is the mention of the *English Spelling Society* and the *Queen’s English Society*. A measurement of these and similar organisations’ prominence would be an indicator of how prominent prescriptivist attitudes are.

## 5.5 Reflexive pedants

Several of the self-proclaimed pedants in the articles acknowledge that people's feelings are hurt by their corrections, and that this is something they consider in deciding whether or not to correct people's mistakes. Lynne Truss is one of the many prescriptivist pedants whom ponder whether they should correct people for the sake of the better good, sacrificing their own likability for the sake of the "important war" on incorrectness. However, Truss and the other pedants rarely reflect on whether their corrections help people learn, nor on whether the "mistakes" they point out are actually problematic. In the article "Lynne Truss: Stop the apostrophe catastrophe!" (App. 2: 94) she also illustrates that she does not separate between making written and spoken mistakes, something which shows that she has a deeply polarised view on linguistic correctness. This suggests that Truss thinks spoken English should follow the rules of written grammar. The article "Confessions of a reformed grammar nazi" (App. 1: 8) is one of the few instances of pedants who have taken this personal reflection further. Rosie Driffil writes that she has realised that correcting people is unhelpful and hurtful. The meanness of correctness is also pointed to by Stephen Fry in his blog entry, who also speaks of himself as an enlightened former pedant.

## 5.6 On different terms

As was stated in chapter 2 above, non-linguists have a tendency to use linguistic terminology differently than linguists, they operate on different terms when it comes to terminology.

The usage of the term 'linguist' to denote both a user of language and an educated expert in the structure of languages is interesting, as it is unusual for scientists and lay-people within a field to go by the same term. This may contribute to the entitlement some people feel to view their opinions on language as facts, such as Rose in his critique of David Crystal's book *The Stories of English* (2004), in the article "In praise of dialect democracy" (App. 2: 2).

The term ‘philologist’ may be used to separate between non-linguists and linguists, but this term does not include all types of linguists.

Two linguistic terms which have been used differently by several journalists are the terms ‘accent’ and ‘dialect’. These two are often used as synonyms, something which was noted in section 2.4.1 above. This usage may be widespread, but using them as synonyms where a researcher has referred exclusively to one of them is an example of “misuse” that actually does lead to confusion, as the complaint tradition so often argues. Although dictionaries are not authorities on linguistic correctness, it is worth noting that while the term ‘linguist’ as a user of language has been observed as a widespread usage by the OED, ‘accent’ has so far not been noted as a commonly used synonym for ‘dialect’. It may be as with the case of ‘disinterested’ becoming synonymous with ‘uninterested’ or ‘literally’ to mean ‘figuratively’, misunderstandings which were eventually widely enough used to be recorded by dictionaries.

The term “grammar” is used in a much wider context by non-linguists. It appears to encompass any system in language. However, the rigidity of grammar itself is wider to linguists than non-linguists. The common public tend to see grammar as a set of invariable rules, where linguists tend to simply observe its changing parameters. More importantly, they identify non-standard grammar as incorrect or unacceptable grammar. Crystal writes that children in school ought to be taught grammar of different dialects in articles such as “Mind our language” (App. 2: 9). It is likely that he wants to alert children to the fact that grammars in all sorts of languages, dialects are equal, and none are less acceptable than others. This is very often misunderstood by journalists, who complain that Crystal wants to burden the pupils with cramming the specifics of an innumerable amount of grammars. The equality between dialect and language is the reason linguists use the term “variety” to denote either of these. It is a neutral term which sets the politics of whether a variety is a dialect or a language aside. What Crystal means is that children should learn that the grammars of for example Singlish or Northern English dialects are by no means less superior than that of Standard English. The only reason Standard English grammar still prevails as the one used in schools can be likened to the reasons why the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* use set style guides. To have a consistent system is beneficial for teaching, and it is in human nature to search for set patterns. As Howser writes that Hinchings notes in his book *The Language Wars* (Cited in App. 2: 27, see section 2.5.2 above), the need for order is why some people feel so strongly about the

consistency of language. What is more, one cannot simply decide over night that all grammars are acceptable in formal writing, because people collectively make and change the rules of grammar. It is an organic process which is not easily influenced by deliberate efforts, as several historical language guardians have experienced.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to document the prevalence of prescriptive and descriptive attitudes in the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* between 2000 and 2018. Additionally, the presence of linguistics in the newspapers, especially the topics language change and correctness, was documented. What inspired both of these inquiries were two books, *Language Myths* (1998) edited by Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill and *Authority in Language* (2012) by Lesley Milroy and the late James Milroy. In these books several linguists expressed a worry that the general public's miscomprehension of the nature of linguistics is causing people to justify discrimination of non-standard Englishes. In documenting attitudes concerning prescriptivism, descriptivism, correctness and language change, this thesis showed how prevalent these attitudes were in the two newspapers.

The fact that English language change is natural has reached many journalists. The degree in which they understand the process is variable, but an uplifting amount of articles are informative pieces about various aspects of linguistics. Especially with regard to articles about CMC, these findings strongly suggest that journalists write what linguists such as David Crystal profess. The negative and misinformed articles about CMC are all older and/or lack credibility in a number of ways. The need for people to understand the nature of English is also apparent, and there is a steady flow of articles concerning colloquial books on English, from both linguists and non-linguists. Contributing to this are also the articles by self-confessed pedants, both famous and unknown, who reflect on the nature of linguistic pedantry and its implications.

A correlation between recent articles and higher descriptiveness does not appear to exist. The opposing views presented in the different articles about Crystal and Pinker's books (*The Stories of English* App. 2: 2 presented in section 4.5.1 above and App. 2: 49, presented in section 4.5.3 above) and the various negative and positive articles about CMC show that the newspapers do not have a set predetermined stance on these matters. This is also supported by the fact that they post articles by prescriptivists and articles critiquing them, most prominently noted in articles by and about Lynne Truss, the prescriptive author of the book *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* (2003).

However, the lower number of articles about linguistic correctness and language change in more recent years suggest that journalists write less about it. This can be interpreted as a sign that the debate has ended, and descriptivism has won. This view is supported by Geoffrey Pullum and his colleagues on the blog *Language Log*, where prescriptivism was considered defeated in April 2018, with the *Economist's* acceptance of the split infinitive. Further investigation into other parts of British media can be done to see if prescriptivism really is defeated.

Even if descriptivism appears to have won the debate in instances where correctness is discussed, this does not mean that the consequences of correctness, the wish for lack of variation in English, has been defeated. The lack of prescriptive (and descriptive) articles in recent years may mean that the media have tired of the debate, but the discrimination on linguistic grounds still needs to be challenged. People who write about prescriptivism in the media rarely discuss the deeper repercussions of linguistic correctness, namely the justified critique of non-standard Englishes, which were addressed in *Authority in Language* by Milroy and Milroy.

This thesis not only maps the prevalence of prescriptivist attitudes, but reveals that the consequences of them is not discussed in these two newspapers. While the association of criminality and stupidity with incorrect grammar is drawn by prescriptivists, it is not acknowledged and defied in the criticisms of linguistic pedantry. It is apparent that the parallel between prescriptivism and linguistic discrimination that sociolinguists stress has not come across in these articles.

## 6.1 Outlook

It would be possible to broaden this research by using different methods and looking at different media channels. It would be interesting to compare what people believe about language change and the nature of linguistics, to check whether they are influenced by what the media writes about it. One could look into what their opinions and beliefs are influenced by, where they learnt what they know and whether they believe themselves to be authorities on information about language. However, people's attitudes and perceptions of language

change are challenging to measure and document. A well-designed survey questionnaire or interview could be a fruitful method to investigate attitudes.

An adequately reliable way to conduct further research would be methodological triangulation. One could use several methods in addition to the corpus of compiled articles listed here, for example a survey and interview. It would be fruitful to use an indirect approach, telling the participants that the research is about another topic in order to avoid social desirability and acquiescence biases in their responses.

Keeping in mind that that several sociolinguists, amongst them Horobin, have complained that non-linguists ascribe correctness to various authorities (see section 2.3.3 above), it would be interesting to find out if the supposed decline of prescriptivism has changed which authorities the general public view as authorities on information about language, for example whether it is still common to view dictionaries as authorities. In addition to measuring the influence of the authorities mentioned above in section 2.3.3, one could look at the influence of celebrities on people's attitude to linguistic correctness. A small sample of this possible influence is provided here, in the presentation of linguistic pedantry texts by the comedians Stephen Fry and David Mitchell below in section 4.3.2 and by Sandi Toksvig below in section 4.5.3. It would be interesting to find out to which extent celebrities who write about linguistic pedantry have an influence on the general population's attitude to it. Such a study could find out if people consider linguists credible authorities on information related to language, and whether they view journalists and/or celebrities as more, less or equally credible sources on linguistic information.

This thesis provides a framework and lays the foundation for the invaluable substantial process of documenting prescriptivist attitudes in the media in the UK, something which has not been done in the field of linguistics. It is of vital importance to record the prevalence of these attitudes, because prescriptivism marks and gives name to the discrimination of non-standard varieties. Mapping prescriptivism is the first step towards increasing knowledge about the nature of correctness and language change. Enlightening the common public to the nature of linguistics is important because it is the lack of such knowledge that feeds linguistic discrimination.

## Bibliography

Aitchison, Jean. 1978. *Linguistics*. 2nd ed. London: Hodder Headline.

Aitchison, Jean. 1998. "Myth 3: The Media are Ruining English". In Bauer, Laurie, and Peter Trudgill (eds.). *Language Myths*. London: Penguin Books. pp. 15-22.

Aitchison, Jean. 2013. *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [First published in 1981, London: Fontana Press].

Andersson, Lars-Gunnar, and Peter Trudgill. 1992. *Bad Language*. London: Penguin Books.

Armstrong, Nigel, and Ian Mackenzie. 2013. *Standardization, Ideology and Linguistics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Bauer, Laurie, and Peter Trudgill (eds.). 1998. *Language Myths*. London: Penguin Books.

Bex, Tony and Richard J. Watts. 1999. *Standard English: The Widening Debate*. London: Routledge.

Bloomfield, Leonard. 1933. *Language*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Bolinger, Dwight. 1980. *Language - The Loaded Weapon: The Use and Abuse of Language Today*. New York: Routledge [Reissued 2014].

Bryson, Bill. 1991. *Mother Tongue*. London: Penguin Books.

Cheshire, Jenny. 1998. "Myth 14: Double Negatives are Illogical". In Bauer, Laurie, and Peter Trudgill (eds.). *Language Myths*. London: Penguin Books. Pp. 113-122.



Cotter, Colleen. 2010. *News Talk: Investigating the Language of Journalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, David. 2004. *The Stories of English*. New York: The Overlook Press.

Crystal, David. 2008. *Txting: The Gr8 Db8*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Crystal, David. 2010. 'Strictly English: the Correct Way to Write... and Why it Matters.' *NewStatesman*. 14 October 2010. Accessed 28 March 2019.  
<<https://www.newstatesman.com/books/2010/10/english-heffer-sentence>>.

Crystal, David. 2012. *Spell it Out: The Singular Story of English Spelling*. London: Profile Books LTD.

Forsyth, Mark. 2011. *The Etymologicon: A Circular Stroll Through the Hidden Connections of the English Language*. London: Icon Books.

Fowler, Henry W. 1926. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fries, Charles C. 1957. *The Structure of English*. London: Longman.

Fry, Stephen. 2008. "Don't Mind Your Language". *Stephenfry.com* 4. Nov 2008. Accessed 22. Jan 2019.  
<<http://www.stephenfry.com/2008/11/dont-mind-your-language%E2%80%A6/>>.

Garret, Peter. 2007. "Language Attitudes". In Llamas, Carmen, Louise Mullaney and Peter Stockwell (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge. pp. 116-121.

Garrett, Peter. 2010. *Attitudes to Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Hall, Robert A. 1950. *Leave your Language Alone!* New York: Linguistica.
- Halliday, Michael. 1985. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold
- Haugen Einar. 1966. "Dialect, Language, Nation." *American Anthropologist New Series*, vol. 68, no. 4. pp. 922-935.
- Haugen, Einar, et al. 1997. *Language and Its Ecology: Essays in Memory of Einar Haugen*. Boston: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Hitchings, Henry. 2011. *The Language Wars: A History of Proper English*. London: John Murray.
- Honey, John. 1997. *Language is Power: The Story of Standard English and its Enemies*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Horobin, Simon. 2013. *Does Spelling Matter?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Horobin, Simon. 2016. *How English Became English: A Short History of a Global Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huddleston, Rodney, and Geoffrey K. Pullum. 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huddleston, Rodney, and Geoffrey K. Pullum 2005. *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Janicki, Karol. 2010. "Lay People's Language Problems." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 1, no. 20. pp. 73-94.

- Llamas, Carmen, Louise Mullaney and Peter Stockwell (eds.). 2007. *The Routledge Companion to Sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge.
- Marsh, David. 2013. *For Who the Bell Tolls: One Man's Quest for Grammatical Perfection*. London: Guardian Faber.
- Melchers, Gunnel and Philip Shaw. 2011. *World Englishes*. 2nd ed. London: Hodder Education.
- Milroy, James. 1999. "The Consequences of Standardisation in Descriptive Linguistics". In Bex, Tony, and Richard J. Watts. (eds.). *Standard English: The Widening Debate*. London: Routledge. pp. 19-39.
- Milroy, James, and Lesley Milroy. 2012. *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*. London: Routledge.
- Milroy, Lesley. 1998. "Myth 12: Bad Grammar is Slovenly". In Bauer, Laurie, and Peter Trudgill (eds.). *Language Myths*. London: Penguin Books. pp. 94-102.
- Montgomery, Michael. 1998. "Myth 9: In the Appalachians They Speak like Shakespeare". In Bauer, Laurie, and Peter Trudgill (eds.). *Language Myths*. London: Penguin Books. pp. 66-76.
- Niedzielski, Nancy A, and Dennis R. Preston. 2000. *Folk Linguistics*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Oxford English Dictionary *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. 2018. <[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)> Accessed 23 October 2018.
- Plester, Beverly, Clare Wood and Puja Joshi. 2010. "Exploring the relationship between children's knowledge of text message abbreviations and school literacy outcomes" *Wiley*

*Online Library*. '23 Dec 2010. Accessed 28. March 2019.

<<https://doi.org/10.1348/026151008X320507>>.

Pullum, Geoffrey. 1989. "The great Eskimo vocabulary hoax". *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* vol 7 by Kluwer Academic Publishers. pp. 275-281.

Pullum, Geoffrey. *Language Log*. 2008-2018. Accessed 15. August 2018.

<<http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/>>.

Rojas, John Paul Ford. 2012. "Meaning of 'literally' shrinking away". *Telegraph.co.uk* 12. March 2012. Accessed 01. October 2018

<<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/9137930/Meaning-of-literally-shrinking-away.html>>.

Simon, John. 1980. "The Corruption of English". In Michaels, Leonard, and Christopher Ricks (eds.). *The State of the Language*. London: University of California Press. pp. 35-42.

Swift, Jonathan. 1712. "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue". 2nd ed. London: Benj. Tooke.

Trudgill, Peter. 1999. "Standard English: What it isn't". In Bex, Tony, and Richard J. Watts. (eds.). *Standard English: The Widening Debate*. London: Routledge. pp. 117-128.

Trudgill, Peter. 2009. *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*. 4th ed. London: Penguin Books.

Truss, Lynne. 2003. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. London: Profile Books.

Truss, Lynne. 2007. *The Girl's Like Spaghetti: Why, You Can't Manage Without Apostrophes!* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons

## Appendix 1: Summary of articles compiled from the *Guardian*

For details about the spreadsheet, see section 3.3.1 in the thesis

The descriptive-prescriptive scale is presented in section 3.2.3

The topics are described in section 3.3.3

#	Title	Date published	Topic(s)	Author /role	Descriptive-prescriptive scale	Summary/description/quote	Link	Comments	Date last accessed
1	<b>10 grammar books to read before you die of boredom</b>	13.12.2013	#Book, #Descriptivism, #Grammar, #Standard English	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	Recommendation of descriptive interesting grammar books: "Books about English fall into various categories, mostly offputting ones: the academic, rarely of much interest, and often incomprehensible, to the general reader; the lament for a (mythical) golden age "when everyone knew how to use grammar"; the prescriptions of Dr Grammar (do this, or you are clearly illiterate). Here are some that avoid these traps:" "As the nation turned off, I stayed tuned, and I'm glad I did, as this book is a refreshing change from the didactic and pedantic, recognising that we all use grammar and that non-standard forms are as valid as Standard English."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/dec/13/mind-your-language-books-of-the-year">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/dec/13/mind-your-language-books-of-the-year</a>	Most upvoted: (18)"Ah, but we all know now why amazon is so cheap or haven't you read your Guardian?" (In reply to comment about books being cheaper on Amazon"	29.04.2019
2	<b>How English became</b>	31.03.2016	#Book, #Descriptivism	Faramerz Dabhoiwala (historian and senior research	Descriptive	<b>Complains about popular prescriptive language books in introduction</b> "But Horobin is also on a laudable and more interesting mission – to educate the wider public. Like David Crystal, Henry Hitchings,	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/31/ho">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/31/ho</a>	Most upvoted: (17) by user 'UnashamedPedant' commenting on "Like any up-to-date media don, though, he doesn't mention it in the	22.04.2019

	<b>English by Simon Horobin</b> review - 'OMG' was first used 100 years ago			scholar at Princeton University)		Mark Forsyth, and a host of other learned and witty authors before him, he has set himself the dual task of explaining why our linguistic standards are arbitrary and changeable and why we are nonetheless so invested in upholding them."	<a href="#">w-english-became-english-simon-horobin-review</a>	book, he himself tweets: you can follow him @SCPHorobin." "In the spirit of the book under review I shall refrain from saying that it is wrong, but that comma after "though" does disturb the sentence and make it difficult to read. It makes it seem as though the "though" is an adverb qualifying the previous clause, whereas on closer scrutiny it is obviously intended as a conjunction introducing the following clause. Good punctuation is a courtesy towards one's readers."	
3	The Sense of Style review – Steven Pinker's comedy of linguistic bad manners	15.09.2014	#Book, #Language change (General), #Correctness	Peter Conrad	Descriptive	Book review of <b>Steven Pinker's</b> <i>A Sense of Style</i> . Language guardians referred to as pedants. <b>Mention of Lynne Truss and John Simon</b> . Descriptive account of correctness: "Steven Pinker tells the story, with a snort of amusement, in his brainy, funny account of the messes we make when trying to cope with the irregularity and irrationality of English grammar" (...) "Was Lynne Truss joking when she hoped that misusers of the apostrophe would be “struck by lightning, hacked up on the spot, and buried in an unmarked grave”? The bilious American critic John Simon apparently meant it when he likened linguistic criminals to “slave traders, child molesters, and the guards at Nazi death camps”."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/sep/15/sense-of-style-review-steven-pinker-linguistics">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/sep/15/sense-of-style-review-steven-pinker-linguistics</a>	Most upvoted comment: (13) "Yep - so it is quite correct to say 'we shall'. And quite a hilarious howler for Pinker to have made (assuming that the reviewer is reporting it correctly)." in reply to "Since he was speaking in the second person" Wasn't he speaking in the first person?"	12.04.2019
4	Spelling it out: is	28.10.2014	#Book, #Language	Josephine Livingstone	Descriptive	<b>Refers to Horobin's Does Spelling Matter and Stephen Fry</b> (as the descriptive voice of a pedant) In some ways prescriptivism about	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/ed">https://www.theguardian.com/ed</a>	Most upvoted comment: (13) "Completely agree that memory does not equal intelligence.	31.03.2019

	it time English speakers loosened up?		change (General)			spelling is falling out of fashion. Today, even the biggest pedants (I'm looking at you, Stephen Fry) will concede that it is in rather poor taste to emphasise the form of something as fluid as language over its function. But when it comes to the classroom, a lot of that understanding flies out the window. Children just have to learn how to spell – like it or lump it. (...) Spelling has taken on a kind of special status in English: good spelling equates to high intelligence. This assumption, Horobin argues, is a red herring: good spelling is simply a matter of memorisation.	<a href="http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/oct/28/asp-spelling-language-learning-english">ucation/2014/oct/28/asp-spelling-language-learning-english</a>	However, a language (or a dialect, creole, etc) exists because a group of people has agreed that certain words (in a given verbal or written form) will describe their existence and objects, feelings and experiences in that existence. If I went to France and asked for 'froomaysh' rather than 'froh-marge' in a shop I could hardly complain that I was not understood. Spelling words in the "accepted" way is not a frippery. It is a courtesy to your audience and ensures that your message is interpreted as it was intended."	
5	2b or not 2b?	05.07.2008	#Book, #Linguistic information, #Language change (CMC)	David Crystal	Descriptive	David Crystal's presentation of his own book, <i>Txtng: The Gr8 Db8</i> . <b>Reference to John Sutherland.</b> "Despite doom-laden prophecies, texting has not been the disaster for language many feared, argues linguistics professor David Crystal. On the contrary, it improves children's writing and spelling"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jul/05/saturdayreview-sfeatures.guardianreview">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jul/05/saturdayreview-sfeatures.guardianreview</a>	Comments not allowed	02.05.2019
6	Word criminal? The web will sentence you	29.08.2014	#Correctness	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Descriptive	"Here are the current funniest ways the web is telling us to mind our language. One of the things the internet is really good at is telling us we're wrong. If you're a word criminal, the web will sentence you."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/aug/29/mind-your-language-word-criminal-">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/aug/29/mind-your-language-word-criminal-</a>	Most upvoted comment: (12) I once saw a flyer advertising a show by the "hilarious" Joe Pasquale, which was fair enough I suppose.	26.02.2019

						<a href="#">the-web-w ill-sentenc e-you</a>			
7	It's what you have to say, not how you say it	27.11.2015	#Correctness	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Descriptive	Article about the difference between writing and speech "But the way I write and the way I talk are completely separate. I speak, in cheeky Medway parlance, like a right old Renee. It used to be a source of unavoidable embarrassment, but I'm not apologising for it any more. I'm owning it. When I talk, my negatives come in doubles and I don't even attempt to lapse out of my colloquial comfort zone. "I ain't never doing that again 'cos the other way's much more better" would be, in my speaking vernacular, perfectly acceptable. Since I moved out of Medway, people often attempt to correct me when I speak like this. But I generally ignore them. This is how I stay true to my tribe."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/nov/27/its-what-you-have-to-say-not-how-you-say-it">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/nov/27/its-what-you-have-to-say-not-how-you-say-it</a>	Most upvoted comment: (0) "I love you without knowing what to say. I love you on all sides, in all directions, throughout, all over the place, backwards and forwards, here there and everywhere, so I love you because I know not any other way than this, and that is: Where I does not exist, nor you, I can turn you with my concerns, issues or, questions for directions, you challenge me into being a better person, I am your biggest fan, I promise to honour and support you always thru illogicality and inconsistency, thru forgetfulness and my retentive mental capacity of a goldfish, forever and always rewriting with my beloved Thesaurus. What's another word for Thesaurus? There is a beauty in common sense."	21.02.2019
8	Confessions of a reformed grammar nazi	14.11.2014	#Correctness, #Grammar	Rosie Driffill	Descriptive	<b>(Self)-critique of correctness attitude:</b> "Language pedants should ask themselves what really drives them in their policing efforts: genuine concern for sliding standards or a sinisterly hidden form of one-upmanship? (...) People's reactions to poor use of grammar are manifold: quiet smugness, mock derision, actual derision, outrage and on-the-spot correction (usually accompanied by derision	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/nov/14/mind-your-language-gra">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/nov/14/mind-your-language-gra</a>	Most upvoted comment: (25) I work as an editor so I'm obliged to be a grammar fascist. Off duty, though, although I have to bite my knuckles on a regular basis, I try to let solecisms pass — unless it's someone berating immigrants for their poor grasp of English.	22.04.2019



						or a cursory tut for your troubles) probably constitute the most common."	<a href="#">mmar-nazi#comments</a>	If you make the slightest mistake when you're on that road, you deserve what's coming to you. (I'm now very nervous that I might have let a howler through quality control. Ah, screw it.)	
9	Who ruined English: Brits or Yanks?	23.08.2013	#Correctness, #Language change (General)	Kory Stamper (lexicographer and editor at Merriam-Webster)	Descriptive	Article by <b>Merriam-Webster lexicographer ('literally' mentioned)</b> : "Lexical jingoists like to cast blame for supposed perversions of usage and meaning. The reality is that English is a flexible friend"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/23/who-ruined-english-brits-yanks">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/23/who-ruined-english-brits-yanks</a>	Most upvoted comment: (27) "Literally" to mean the opposite of literally isn't bad English so much as it is plain stupid.	12.02.2019
10	Americanisms are often closer to home than we imagine	13.05.2013	#Correctness, #Language change (General)	Steven Poole	Descriptive	Referred to in article "Who ruined English: Brits or Yanks" A testy tweet from Mark Ravenhill is the latest manifestation of the British tendency to see Americanisms where there are none	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/may/13/americanisms-closer-to-home-imagined">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/may/13/americanisms-closer-to-home-imagined</a>	Most upvoted comment: (13) My favorite false Americanism is on this list: soccer. As our American ambassador Philip Breedon has reminded you good folks over in Englandland, soccer is a fine English word we Americans have kindly preserved for you. Oftentimes we Americans have been obligated to remind you of English words we have kept from passing.	12.02.2019
11	The folly of preserving English in aspic	07.06.2010	#Correctness, #Language change (General)	John Mullan (Professor of English University College London)	Descriptive	"Do you care about the English language? If you do, you might be heartened to hear that the Queen's English Society is to set up an Academy of English. It will pronounce on correct usage and protect the language from innovations and corruptions. Surely anyone who has privately lamented rogue apostrophes, the use of "disinterested" to mean	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/2010/jun/07/folly-of-embalming-english">https://www.theguardian.com/science/2010/jun/07/folly-of-embalming-english</a>	Comments not allowed	14.04.2019

						"uninterested", or the demise of the subjunctive, will feel a little happier? (...) But the Academy will not work. It took Samuel Johnson, the greatest of all champions of the English language, to point out why. Ruminating on the nine years he had spent writing the first proper English dictionary, he recalled how he had set out "to fix our language". But he had found that this was folly: language was in a constant state of lively mutability and could not be "embalmed"."	<a href="#">sh-language</a>		
12	In praise of Ambrose Bierce : still witty and wise after 100 years	28.10.2011	#Book	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	Account of historical book about language: "In some ways, Bierce was born too soon: many of his aphorisms would have made wonderful tweets."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/oct/28/mind-your-language-ambrose-bierce">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/oct/28/mind-your-language-ambrose-bierce</a>	Most upvoted comment: (0) Telephone, n. An invention of the devil which abrogates some of the advantages of making a disagreeable person keep his distance. Wonder what he'd say about the internet ...	27.02.2019
13	Horticultural pornography' – pictures of nice gardens or offensive	30.04.2014	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	Addressing reader's complaint about usage of the word 'porn' "A reader has taken the Guardian to task for using terms such as "food porn", "property porn", and most recently (in a preview of the BBC television series British Gardens in Time) "horticultural pornography"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/apr/30/mind-your-language-horticultural-pornography">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/apr/30/mind-your-language-horticultural-pornography</a>	Most upvoted comment: "Let me say first of all that I agree with the old hat and unfunny bit. "Property porn" and the like may have sounded witty and original for about two minutes 10 years ago, but have long since become tedious through overuse." Bang on. It's SO boring. Stop it.	26.02.2019

	language?								
14	Mind your slang, and don't be an erk. YOLO	28.03.2014	#Correctness	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Descriptive	"Slang should be celebrated, not condemned. It enriches our language – from bloomers to booty, from cool to ceebs, and from doing a Lohan to LOLZ (...) Those who sneer at the defacement of our language probably litter their sentences with old-school slang that was once considered intensely irritating yooof talk."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/mar/28/mind-your-language-slang#comments">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/mar/28/mind-your-language-slang#comments</a>	Most upvoted comment: (10) I would suggest it should be on the proviso anyone who says "Yolo" is sterilized, but as far as i can see people say "yolo" before doing something which is likely to end up sterilizing them anyway.	26.02.2019
15	In defence of 'basically'	07.11.2013	#Correctness	Steven Poole	Descriptive	Article about ' <b>usage police</b> ' "Should you ever begin a sentence with an adverb? Basically, there's nothing wrong with it. Oops: I have just committed a wordcrime heinous to some sensitive souls. The popularity of "basically", especially among young English-speakers, sorely offends older ears, including those attached to the head of Harris Academy in Upper Norwood."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/07/in-defence-of-basically-steven-poole">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/07/in-defence-of-basically-steven-poole</a>	Most upvoted comment: (38) "Basically" is a pre-emptive concession that what is to come is a simplification - "like", "basically", "sort of", "kind of", these all perform the function of taking the edge of a sentence, reducing it's strength. And lots of people, especially young people, do this in every day language because they lack confidence in what they are saying and want to be interpreted charitably by their interlocutors. The issue is confidence, not poor grammar.	26.02.2019
16	On staycation I scoffed some browesome	23.11.2012	#Language change (General)	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Descriptive	Portmanteau words can be fabtastic, and Shakespeare would approve – so chillax	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/nov/23/staycation-bra">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/nov/23/staycation-bra</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) Just because you've written about the use of language doesn't mean it has to read like you've strained for hours with a thesaurus at your side. Your eagerness to impress has made this virtually unreadable. No	26.02.2019

	spagbol with a spork						<a href="#">wesome-spagbol-min-d-your-language</a>	rhythm, no precision, just annoying affectation at every turn. You obviously care about words. Try and think about about communication.	
17	Literally – the much misused word of the moment	29.01.2012	#Language change (General)	Ben Masters	Descriptive	"It's like literally so misoverused. But whereas Jamie Redknapp gets the word nonsensically wrong, writers such as James Joyce knew exactly what they were doing with it"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/jan/29/literally-a-much-misused-word">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/jan/29/literally-a-much-misused-word</a>	Most upvoted comment: (149) Shit.	26.02.2019
18	An omission of collective nouns	06.06.2011	#Language change (General)	Lee Gale	Descriptive	"Collective nouns are treated no differently from any other word," explains Catherine Soanes, head of online dictionaries at Oxford University Press. "We would need evidence of genuine use in our databases before we would consider adding them to one of our dictionaries. This is why there aren't dictionary entries for the majority of the nouns, like a murder of crows. There's no genuine evidence of use. They are just linguistic curiosities.""	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/jun/06/mind-your-language-collective-nouns">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/jun/06/mind-your-language-collective-nouns</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) Pedantry Corner: The figure of speech referred to in this article is the "noun of association". These examples are not collective nouns, or at least, they are only a subset of the much wider range of collective nouns, which is more typically represented by words such as "group", "team", "party", "collection", "battalion" or any other noun that is used with "of" to describe an aggregation of items. While I recognise that I should get a life, this is an article about the fulfilling use of the language available to us as English speakers, so it should be correct.	27.02.2019

19	Convince or persuade: is there really a difference?	11.02.2011	#Language change (General)	Martin Shovel	Descriptive	"Last summer Simon Heffer, associate editor of the Daily Telegraph, fired off an email rebuking his colleagues for their linguistic slovenliness and ignorance. He took them to task on a number of counts, including inconsistencies, malapropisms, confused homophones, Americanisms and grammatical errors. (...) This is the line taken by Heffer in his recent book, <i>Strictly English</i> , where he asserts that "rules in language are made by logic, not by a democratic vote". But this view of how language evolves is anachronistic; things have changed a great deal since the prescriptivism of Chalkie White's day. Take a look at these reviews of Heffer's book by a couple of distinguished modern linguists – David Crystal and Geoff Pullum – if you have any doubts.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/feb/11/mind-your-language-convince-persuade">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/feb/11/mind-your-language-convince-persuade</a>	Most upvoted comment: (5) Persuasive argument, but I'm not convinced...	27.02.2019
20	This figure of speech isn't dead – it's just resting	20.12.2010	#Language change (General)	Martin Shovel	Descriptive	"Language has changed a great deal since Orwell wrote his essay; the gap between spoken and written language narrows with each passing day. The Plain English Campaign's condemnation of the commonplace metaphor betrays a lack of sensitivity to the poetry and evocative power of everyday language. To get the best out of words you have to love them, not distrust them. And when it comes to rules about good English it's vital to use your personal and aesthetic judgment to respond to their spirit rather than their letter. Orwell encapsulated this spirit perfectly in his final rule: "Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.""	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/20/plain-english-metaphors-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/20/plain-english-metaphors-mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (2) Metaphors be with you!	27.02.2019

21	Chavs, sluts and the war of words	18.07.2011	#Language change (General)	Pete Langman	Descriptive	"As new words are coined, old ones evolve by stepping out of the dictionary and back into oral culture"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/jul/18/language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/jul/18/language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (4) Oh Alexander and Rich - that's his point exactly. Do read beyond the first two paragraphs, dears. And Rich, your apostrophe, comma and hyphen misuse would certainly benefit from the feathery touch of the sub-editor. I love the potency of these words, and the debate they create. As for words whose meanings have changed over time, I love awful (full of awe, great!) and manufacture (make by hand). And I am most looking forward to seeing what happens to 'slut'. If she makes it out of that box, that is.	27.02.2019
22	There's nowt wrong with slang	08.10.2010	#Language change (General), #Correctness, #Standard English	Belinda Webb	Descriptive	Article defends slang as a natural part of language change, mention of standard English. "That epitome of Hampstead luvviness, Emma Thompson, has apparently started a campaign against the use of "sloppy slang" and "street talk". It follows a visit to her old school, Camden High for Girls. (...) I am not saying that slang is a substitute for "standard" English, but should be recognised and capitalised upon for what it is – a love of communication and an inventiveness of speech that continues to make English one of the most interesting languages."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/oct/08/emma-thompson-slang">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/oct/08/emma-thompson-slang</a>	Most upvoted comment: (24) The question is whether or not the children in question can switch from 'slang' to a more formal English so that they can perhaps, be understood by anybody who speaks english or get a job in an interview? If they can switch then yes, they are clever and it is to their credit. However if they cannot then they are condemned to a life of only being understood in their neighbourhood and will not pass their English exams.	27.02.2019
23	Begging the question	24.05.2010	#Language change (General), #Correctness	David Marsh (former)	Descriptive	<b>"How much should we fight for a correct English usage that no one actually seems to use?"</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) To use the word of the moment, I beg you not to give up the fight on this one. It really isn't the	25.04.2019

				Guardian editor)		<a href="http://your-language/2010/may/24/begging-the-question-mind-your-language/comments">your-language/2010/may/24/begging-the-question-mind-your-language/comments</a>	<p>case that no-one uses "to beg the question" in its proper sense - philosophers do it all the time. I've just counted how many times it's used in my Doctoral thesis, and got 53 matches. Analysis of whether or not arguments are question-begging is one of the core techniques in philosophy. When I completed my thesis in 1987, I had never heard the phrase misused, and certainly didn't need to explain its proper use; any potential reader would either know it, or realising they didn't know it, would look it up. Now that everyone thinks it just means "to do anything at all with a question", practically every section of the work would appear baffling to most readers just because of that point of English. I am far from a dyed-in-the-wool conservative about linguistic change, and happily stand up to those who try to impose shibboleths about splitting infinitives, the less/fewer distinction, or starting sentences with conjunctions. But which usages are worth defending can't just be a matter of democratic vote - the expressive power of the language must be defended. If a lot of people started using</p>	
--	--	--	--	------------------	--	--	---	--

								<p>"hydrogen sulphide" to mean any old bad smell, no doubt 99% of its use in Guardian articles would be misuse. But you wouldn't just give up and say that that was what hydrogen sulphide meant, because that would undermine the communication of Chemists. The same should go for philosophers, and indeed anyone who cares for the validity of arguments. HuwL has it right. If Guardian commentators, (who surely should be as sensitive to begged questions as are philosophers), started using the term correctly, the sheer usefulness of the concept in defending from error and charlatanism should soon make the correct meaning more current. And just to prove that the correct use is far from moribund, a colleague in my 6th-form college maths faculty office interrupted me while I was typing this, and we had a conversation in which he pointed out that the usual "curved table" illustration of General Relativity was question-begging because it required the assumption of gravity "at right-angles" to the curved universe to explain the</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



								curved paths that were supposed to constitute gravity inside the universe! No-one uses it? My foot!	
24	Trolls: where do they come from?	19.04. 2012	#Language change (General), #Lexicography	Andy Bodle	Descriptive	Discussion of the new meaning of 'troll' "There's one problem. According to a vocal minority of veteran internet users, we've got the wrong word. Troll, they say, does not mean bully, and trolling does not mean harassment. And the evidence seems to back them up."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/apr/19/trolls-where-come-from">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/apr/19/trolls-where-come-from</a>	Most upvoted comment: (9) MoveAnyMountain was a classic example of a troll around these parts. Weapons grade trolling at times. Very impressive.	26.02. 2019
25	What Britain's county dialects can tell us about the national character	02.04. 2014	#Lexicography	Adam Jacot de Boinod	Descriptive	"Take a linguistic tour – a holus-bolus fidge-fadge, if you will – around some of Britain's most charming forgotten words. When I examined the wonderful collection of glossaries of county dialects I realised just how monastic was the zeal with which the Victorian lexicographers went about their compiling."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/mind-your-language/2014/apr/02/what-british-dialects-tell-us-about-national-character">https://www.theguardian.com/education/mind-your-language/2014/apr/02/what-british-dialects-tell-us-about-national-character</a>	Most upvoted comment: (23) This is a fantastic article. What fun to read, well done. Great and a real pleasure on an otherwise hard working day for me. I always remember my father once pointing out to me that in Cornwall, our county, there is huge interest in the reconstructing and keeping alive the Cornish language, yet almost no interest in researching dialect. This may partly be because it is seen as 'slow', yet it is actually the dialect words which are really resonant and wonderful, and which emerge from lived experience over generations. It is a great pity it is not treasured as much as the Cornish language. I was amazed at a meeting once in the village hall close to a local election where	26.02. 2019

								all three party hopefuls had huge difficulty in understanding local people speak, particularly one, with a particularly robust Cornish accent. It is a real pity when our representatives cannot talk the local lingo! Again, what fun to read, well done. And forget the eternal sour misery guts in the blog who find any reason to scorn but are rare to delight.	
26	Words are stupid, words are fun	07.10.2013	#Lexicography	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	"As words fall in and out of fashion, new ones enter the language. But some, such as autonaut, chassimover and pupamotor, failed to reach the assembly line" <b>Edited extract from For Who the Bell Tolls</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/oct/07/mind-your-language-words">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/oct/07/mind-your-language-words</a>	Most upvoted comment: (29) My I add my earnest contrafibularities.	26.02.2019
27	In praise of ... the oxymoron	29.06.2012	#Linguistic information	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Descriptive	"In terms of linguistic devices, it sits above alliteration: it's rarer and trickier to use and identify. Its paradoxical qualities are loved by everyone from Oscar Wilde to the GCSE English student."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/jun/29/mind-your-language-oxymorons">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/jun/29/mind-your-language-oxymorons</a>	Most upvoted comment: (2) I think one of the main attractions of the oxymoron is how that word is pronounced. Oh, and please don't do this: They reach creative crescendo. You can reach the peak of a crescendo, but not a crescendo itself. A crescendo starts quiet and gets louder, a dynamic process. A crescendo isn't reached; it is moved through. I'll get my coat.	26.02.2019

28	<b>The pedants' revolt: lament for a golden age of grammar that never existed</b>	14.02.2014	#Linguistic information, #Book	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	<b>Edited extract from <i>For Who the Bell Tolls</i>:</b> "As the grammar wars rumble on, can the <b>prescriptivists and the descriptivists</b> ever be friends? It seems unlikely (...) This brings me to the descriptive v prescriptive argument. For at least 50 years almost all academic linguistics has been descriptive, concerning itself with how language is structured and used without passing judgment on what is right or wrong."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/feb/14/mind-your-language-grammar-wars">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/feb/14/mind-your-language-grammar-wars</a>	Most upvoted comment: (26) Grsmmar is very like artistic technique, just in a different mediium. Some writers can ignore the rules or invent their own and still create something elegant and beautiful. Others can have impeccable grammar but produce something artlessly flat or ugly. But it is probably a good idea for writers to know roughly what it is they are meant to be doing, if only so we recognise our mistakes when we make them.	26.04.2019
29	Diminix are forever: the joys of Quirky English	23.12.2011	#Linguistic information, #Grammar, #Book	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	<b>Suggests that most linguists can't write well "Published in 1962 and long out of print, it's an authoritative but hugely entertaining introduction to the study of English and a reminder that linguists once combined scholarship with the ability to write well (a tradition that perhaps only David Crystal, who studied under Quirk, continues today)."</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/dec/23/mind-your-language-random-ph-quirk">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/dec/23/mind-your-language-random-ph-quirk</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) I found this article SO funny--I've heard some really casual bidding amongst my elderly ladyfriends (I'm 91 sort of the mother superior of the group) but never anything as downright cute and kittenish as the bridge bidding above. And men participating?? Know what I think? This quoted bridge foursome was a bit tiddly when they played that game. When we say "Would you review the bidding please?" lately we sometimes add when bidding has been rather dramatic--"with inflections please"--a bridge joke. Think I'll try that "one trumpet" on my club next time we meet. I plan to include reference to	26.02.2019

								above--have a blog on the pop culture of sociable bridge at <a href="http://bridgetable.net">http://bridgetable.net</a> -- I think I'm the only person in the whole damned US of A who believes the pop culture of bridge is worthy of study! Plenty of books and blogs about SERIOUS COMPETITIVE bridge, nothing about the phenomenon of millions of women (mostly) who play bridge for decades--unto death seems like.	
30	8 pronunciation errors that made the English language what it is today	11.03.2014	#Language change (General)	David Shariatmadari	Descriptive	<b>Descriptive colloquial account of how language has changed (with linguistic terminology)</b> "There are bound to be things we've read or are vaguely familiar with, but not able to pronounce as we are supposed to. The term "supposed" opens up a whole different debate, of course. Error is the engine of language change, and today's mistake could be tomorrow's vigorously defended norm. There are lots of wonderful examples of alternative pronunciations or missteps that have become standard usage. Here are some of my favourites, complete with fancy technical names."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/11/pronunciation-errors-english-language">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/11/pronunciation-errors-english-language</a>	Most upvoted: (329) Fascinating! Thanks for all this.	24.01.2019
31	Phables and fauxhawks: the linguistic secrets of a	29.05.2015	#Language change (General)	Alison Crutchley	Descriptive	Methods for blending words, linguistic terms compounding, derivation, conversion	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2015/may/29/phables-and-fauxhawks-the-linguistic-s">https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2015/may/29/phables-and-fauxhawks-the-linguistic-s</a>	Most upvoted comment: (18) Portmantno - an attempted neologism that will never catch on	25.01.2019

	good blended word					<a href="#">ecrets-of-a-good-blended-word</a>		
32	Should the Americanisation (or Americanization) of English worry us?	24.07.2017	#Language change (General)	Rebecca Rideal (historian, former TV producer)	Descriptive	"(...)modern anxieties about 'corruption' say a lot about our times " <b>Cites David Crystal</b> , on language change  <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/24/worry-americanisation-english-linguists">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/24/worry-americanisation-english-linguists</a>	Most upvoted: (90) "Yes, we should. My niece calls her little finger her 'pinkie' as a result of watching Barney the Dinosaur as a child. In rural Ireland I meet families whose children have American accents that they have learned from satellite television. I review the English in scientific papers for Spanish friends of mine, and they often include a mix of British and American English (e.g. humour in one sentence, color in another), primarily because Microsoft Office auto-corrects to American English on their machines. People now say "do the math" rather than "do the maths". I could go on :) All pedantry I know, but I just don't like it..."	23.01.2019
33	Interview: My bright idea: English is on the up but one day	31.10.2010	#Language change (General)	Robert McCrum	Descriptive	<b>Interview with linguist Nicholar Ostler:</b> "Although spoken by vast numbers worldwide, the English language is doomed to die out, says a celebrated linguist" (...) "You run the Foundation for Endangered Languages. What does that do?" "Half the world's languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers and these seem to be losing the speakers they have. The point of the foundation is to raise this as a matter of concern and to bring people who are  <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/oct/31/nicholas-ostler-my-bright-idea">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/oct/31/nicholas-ostler-my-bright-idea</a>	Comments not allowed	13.02.2019

	will die out					concerned with these languages together, so they can learn from each other."			
34	From the archive, 31 May 1924: A good word for slang	31.05.2010	#Language change (General)	Our London staff	Descriptive	Historical article republished in favour of slang	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/jun/02/archive-galsworthy-on-expression">https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/jun/02/archive-galsworthy-on-expression</a>	Comments not allowed	14.02.2019
35	Essentially, spoken words are awesome	19.09.2014	#Language change (General)	Jessica Brown	Descriptive	"The Spoken British National Corpus recently released initial findings from a small pilot of its study into the words most characteristic of the decade so far."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/sep/19/essentially-spoken-words-are-awesome">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/sep/19/essentially-spoken-words-are-awesome</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) Sadly the press release gave no details of words used to describe content-free bollocks cobbled together to fill space in newspapers using zero scientific methodology ('most characteristic words', anyone?). 'Study' finds that Chelsea fans are better lovers than northerners. 'Study' highlights links between movie preferences and dandruff. How zeitgeisty is your lunch? 'Study' helps office workers calculate.	25.02.2019
36	#language: evolution in the digital age	26.06.2015	#Language change (CMC)	<b>Vyvan Evans (professor of linguistics at Bangor University)</b>	Descriptive	# Children's word of the year, used to put emphasis on a word.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2015/jun/26/hashtag-language-evolution">https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2015/jun/26/hashtag-language-evolution</a>	Most upvoted comment: (2) Long critical but academic critique: "Isn't it just punctuation, like the question-mark or exclamation mark? You append it to a word to influence the inflection and interpretation of the word - a marker of emphasis. (...)	25.01.2019

						<a href="#">n-digital-age</a>	Linguistic change is much less grand than it's popularly held to be"		
37	Txting is for people who can't spell, write? Wrong	07.11.2014	#Language change (CMC)	Caroline Tagg (English and applied linguistics lecturer)	Descriptive	Children who use 'textisms' have greater phonological awareness, according to research that exposes some of the myths about language and social media	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/nov/07/mind-your-language-textisms">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/nov/07/mind-your-language-textisms</a>	Most upvoted comment: (7) to quote XKCD.... Imagine if all the kids in the UK started kicking footballs to and forth, wherever they walked. Would they then be crap at football because they had practised an imperfect technique? It's a long way from dumbing down, it's elitism to say so and there's no reason to other than "I am smart and I can write properly, so if you don't write properly you must not be smart". I also want to point out that English is a mongrel, constantly evolving language. We can't exactly be too precious about our German/Latin/French/Celtic mix being inconsistent? It's not as if literature is under threat is it? Will we never have another Shakespeare now? Who will pen such phrases as "Villian, I have done thy mother"? Will there never be another James Joyce who will draft us such eloquence as "My little f**k bird", and "An arse full of farts?". Creativity in writing has seldom to do with the grammar and spelling and much more about the construction of prose. No one	22.02.2019

							cares if an architect sucks at interior decorating. With regards to the post-cards etc. You wouldn't need to cherry pick to find plenty more examples, the telegram necessitated abbreviations and respellings. Even a telegram to Winston Churchill in 1917 contained OMG. And finally, its the year 2014, you would think that we would be able to say "Oh, I assumed that this would be negative, but now I have seen scientific evidence to the contrary that I should re-evaluate my ideas". It's becoming fairly widespread that constantly writing improves writing skill and there's just a bastion of "well in my day we were lucky to have a box" mentality that refuses to accept it.		
38	<b>the Guardian's style guide editor on ... putting the fears around textin</b>	14.09.2014	#Language change (CMC), #Book	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	<b>Style guide editor reflects on the Guardian's history of writing about CMC</b> "Every minute, the world's mobile phone users send more than 15 million text messages. There is no evidence that any of them have forgotten how to write"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/14/style-guide-editor-texting-fears-historical-context">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/14/style-guide-editor-texting-fears-historical-context</a>	Most upvoted comment: (14) Is this article from 2001?	25.02.2019



	g into historical context								
39	Younger Scots slowly losing distinctive burr, say linguists	19.07.2015	#Language change (Speech)	Press Association (none)	Descriptive	The distinctive rolling “r” in Scottish accents is being lost, according to experts. Experts' universities, method and some names mentioned.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jul/19/younger-scots-losing-distinctive-burr-say-linguists">https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jul/19/younger-scots-losing-distinctive-burr-say-linguists</a>	Most upvoted: (52) In fact the rolling 'r' has always been regional - it was always less prevalent in some parts of Scotland because (contrary to media portrayals) not all Scots sound like Glaswegians.	25.01.2019
40	Marjorie og margarine? How the BBC taught us to talk proper	07.06.2016	#Language change (Speech)	Stephen Moss	Descriptive	The committee staggered on, but it was never quite the same again. Happily, language proved too slippery to be pinned down by a group of largely upper-class writers and critics from the south of England. They were pronouncing on English as they spoke it, but there were many equally valid linguistic approaches elsewhere in the UK.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/shortcuts/2016/jun/07/marjorie-or-margarine-how-the-bbc-taught-us-to-talk-proper">https://www.theguardian.com/education/shortcuts/2016/jun/07/marjerie-or-marg-arin-e-how-the-bbc-taught-us-to-talk-proper</a>	Most upvoted: (23) "On the margarine question: an old joke is that the pronunciation committee came to the Solomonic decision that it should be pronounced with a hard 'g' in the autumn and winter and a soft one in the warmer months."	24.01.2019
41	War of the words: the global conflict that helped shape	26.09.2014	#Language change (General), #Book	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Descriptive	"The Word at War: World War Two in 100 Phrases is by Philip Gooden and Peter Lewis, who brought us the fascinating Idiomantics – a thrill-a-page tour of international idioms."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/sep/26/mind-your-lan">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/sep/26/mind-your-lan</a>	Most upvoted comment: (23) I long for the day the "Keep Calm" crap finally dies off	25.02.2019

	our language					<a href="#">guage-war-words</a>			
42	Journey to the center of the global English debate	21.11.2014	#Language change (General), #Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	"In the case of proper nouns, we now follow the spelling used in the relevant local variety of English (normally British, American or Australian). Examples: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Defense, Labor Day, One World Trade Center, Australian Labor party. Why the change? Well, the old argument that "the Guardian is a British newspaper so we use British spellings" has served us well but no longer holds; we remain a British newspaper but one with many more readers outside the UK, especially in the United States."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/nov/21/mind-your-language-center-or-center">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/nov/21/mind-your-language-center-or-center</a>	Most upvoted comment: (25) Harrumph; this bloody newspaper should never have left Manchester in the first place. C P Scott would be turning over in his grave with all these wimpy compromises that are now happening.	22.02.2019
43	Bring chaos theory to English language teaching	05.07.2011	#Language change (General), #Correctness, #Grammar, #Linguistic information	Maurice Claypole (Pedagogical editor of <i>LinguaServ</i> e)	Descriptive	"By relying on grammar rules in class, learners are in danger of becoming detached from the dynamism of spoken language (...) The objective is not to tame the chaos of language but to encourage learners to appreciate the dynamic qualities inherent in its use."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jul/05/teaching-english-fractal-grammar-claypole">https://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jul/05/teaching-english-fractal-grammar-claypole</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) Look, Mush, I don't think the semi-literate baboons who write copy for the big M have any place in what is quite a reasonable article. If they'd thought for an instant about how true their slogan is because of its use of a continuous form of the verb to love, they wouldn't have gone ahead and used it. "Yes, yes, you're loving it now but you won't be when you're doubled over with severe stomach cramps in about 4 hours time."	13.02.2019
44	Lickety splits: two nation	26.11.2010	#Language change (General), #Correctness,	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	"Your journalists are increasingly using ugly Americanisms, presumably in the belief that it is 'edgy' and trendy to do so. Recent examples include pony up, mojo, sledding, duke it out, brownstones and suck, many of which are	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-langu">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-langu</a>	Most upvoted comment: (38) StOckwell, that's complete bollocks. The British speak British English and the Americans speak American	21.02.2019

	s divide d by a comm on langua ge		#Prescriptivis m			quite meaningless to me. If your journalists are unable to write in British English, then maybe you could provide a glossary [* see below] of American slang for your fuddy-duddy British readers like me?	<a href="http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/nov/26/americanisms-english-mind-your-language">http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/nov/26/americanisms-english-mind-your-language</a>	English. There's also Australian English, Mexican Spanish and Quebecois French, to name a few other similar cases. Regional slang, colloquialisms and spelling are a vital part of cultural language differences, but they do not a separate language make. [Anglophonic] Americans, Brits, Aussies, Canadians, New Zealanders et al. all speak English, full stop. If you think otherwise you're either delusional or simply a bitter crank who likes to stir up teapot-tempests on message boards. Cheers, -- A British-educated American now working as an editor in Australia	
45	Croma rty may have gone, but now we have Spangl ish	04.10. 2012	#Language change (General), #Linguistic information	Simon Jenkins	Descriptive	Mention of <b>David Crystal</b> . The death of dialect and creation of new ones is natural "Dialect is a language that cannot speak its name, because it is so hard to define. Is Danish a dialect of Norwegian, or the other way round? What of northern Irish and southern Gaelic?" (...) "We can record and study how people speak, delighting in the idiosyncrasy. Linguistics is a branch of archaeology, reading cultural DNA deep into the past."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/oct/04/cromarty-gone-now-have-spanish">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/oct/04/cromarty-gone-now-have-spanish</a>	Most upvoted comment: (37) Interestingly as a working class Geordie I have no trouble understanding Glaswegians, Yorkshire folk, Scousers and probably even your accent Mr. Jenkins. Why is it that only the English middle class seem to have comprehension problems with the dialects and accents of the British working class? Please explain bonny lad. As for your comment about Euskara (Basque) I do hope that it doesn't colour reader's views about the wonderful recuperation of a language	13.02. 2019

								which Franco's fascist regime tried to wipe out. In just over 30 years Basques are well on the way to saving their language and it is now normal for children to be brought up in a bilingual society.	
46	White out: new Scottish thesaurus has 421 words for snow	23.09.2015	#Lexicography	Alison Flood (Guardian books reporter)	Descriptive	Launch of new Scottish thesaurus lists 421 words for snow. <b>Mention of Geoffrey Pullum's academic paper "The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax"</b> .	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/23/scots-thesaurus-reveals-421-words-for-snow">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/23/scots-thesaurus-reveals-421-words-for-snow</a>	Most upvoted: (32) Does it include 'awferfecsake' every time BBC weather warn of snow on high ground? A Scottish Oct to Apr constant.	25.03.2019
47	From bovver to budgie smugglers: the latest entries to the OED	07.07.2016	#Lexicography	Mark Tran	Descriptive	"“Perhaps surprisingly, many of these abbreviations for common (and not so common) phrases predate the worldwide web, with the Usenet newsgroup communities of the late 1980s and early 1990s providing most of our earliest citations,” writes Dent on an OED blog."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/jul/07/from-bovver-to-budgie-smugglers-the-latest-entries-to-the-oed">https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/jul/07/from-bovver-to-budgie-smugglers-the-latest-entries-to-the-oed</a>	Comments not allowed	24.01.2019
48	Oxford Dictionaries halts search for most	24.08.2016	#Lexicography	Alison Flood (Guardian books reporter)	Descriptive	It was intended to be a lighthearted quest to find the least popular word in the English language, but only a day after it launched, Oxford Dictionaries has ended its search following “severe misuse” of the feature by visitors to their website.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/aug/26/oxford-dictionaries-halts-search-for-most">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/aug/26/oxford-dictionaries-halts-search-for-most</a>	Most upvoted (90): "everyone is such a fucking dickhead these days."	24.01.2019

	dislike d word after 'severe misuse '						<a href="#">most-dislik ed-word-af ter-severe- misuse</a>		
49	Yolo! How do they choose new words for the Oxford Englis h Dictio nary?	12.09. 2016	#Lexicography	Chitra Ramaswa my	Descriptive	Squee, gender-fluid and moobs have been added to the OED. How do the experts decide which words deserve to be included? And what might be added next year?	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/shortcuts/2016/sep/12/yolo-new-words-oxford-english-dictionary">https://ww w.theguard ian.com/sc ience/short cuts/2016/ sep/12/yol o-new-wor ds-oxford- english-dic tionary</a>	Most upvotes (15) "No one uses YOLO any more. Apart from sad mums and dads trying to be 'down with the kids'."	24.01. 2019
50	Oxford Dictio naries add 'clickti vism' and 'hatera de' as new words for angry times	24.02. 2017	#Lexicography	Danuta Kean (Guardian, no title)	Descriptive	Lexicographer saying 'aquafaba' sounds nice to language nerds/lexicographers, but number of occurrences is the only factor for being included in OED	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/feb/24/oxford-dictionaries-add-clicktivism-and-haterade-as-new-words-for-angry-times">https://ww w.theguard ian.com/bo oks/2017/f eb/24/oxfo rd-dictiona ries-add-cl icktivism-a nd-haterad e-as-new- words-for- angry-time s</a>	Most upvoted (30): "These are all perfectly cromulent words." One reply stands out: "I came here to see if some old curmudgeon was posting complaints about the language changing, and here you are, and you even managed to throw in a moan about the Oxford Dictionary, as if they were making these words up, rather than recording their usage. It's good to see that some things never change." "I don't need a dictionary to tell me about my own language. That's what's	24.01. 2019

								great about being English. I can never be wrong." (21 upvotes)	
51	Youth quake' named 2017 word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries	15.12. 2017	#Lexicography	Sian Cain (Guardian Books site editor)	Descriptive	"Youthquake", defined as "a significant cultural, political, or social change arising from the actions or influence of young people", has been selected by Oxford Dictionaries as the 2017 word of the year.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/dec/15/youthquake-named-2017-word-of-the-year-by-oxford-dictionaries">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/dec/15/youthquake-named-2017-word-of-the-year-by-oxford-dictionaries</a>	Most upvoted (126): That is literally the first time I have encountered the word "youthquake". Time for me to retire gracefully with a gin and tectonic.	24.01. 2019
52	Oxford Dictionary asks teenagers to explain modern slang	19.09. 2018	#Lexicography	Alison Flood (Guardian books reporter)	Descriptive	Neutrally describing that the "venerable" OED is asking teenagers for slang. Quote by OED editor	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/19/oed-appeals-to-teenagers-to-help-it-understand-slang-dictionary">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/19/oed-appeals-to-teenagers-to-help-it-understand-slang-dictionary</a>	Most upvoted (79) "Someone tell OED about Urban Dictionary please."	24.01. 2019
53	Toxic' beats 'gamm on' and 'cakeism' to win Oxford Dictio	15.11. 2018	#Lexicography	Alison Flood (Guardian books reporter)	Descriptive	Toxic' chosen because it was most used to describe topics of the year. New meaning of toxic. Guardian columnist	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/15/toxic-oxford-dictionaries-word-of-2018">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/15/toxic-oxford-dictionaries-word-of-2018</a>	Comments not allowed	02.01. 2019

	naries' word of 2018								
54	From 'MSM' to 'whilst': the words that crossed the Atlantic in 2018	02.01.2019	#Lexicography	Lynne Murphy (professor of linguistics at Uni. of Sussex, two articles in the Guardian as of January 2019)	Descriptive	A <b>linguistics professor</b> colloquially explains how American and British borrow words from each other. Explains why the <b>myth</b> that British is turning into American is wrong. Classified by the Guardian as an <b>opinion</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/02/us-britain-msm-whilst-words-2018-english">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/02/us-britain-msm-whilst-words-2018-english</a>	Most upvoted comment: "You can take your 'woke' and shove it right up your dictionary corner."	17.01.2019
55	Word search: Beginning with endings	14.09.2010	#Lexicography	Chris Tribble	Descriptive	A look at which words have occurred most in <i>the Guardian</i> "Looking at the ends of words lets us investigate word classes and provides a very different view of things"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/sep/14/chris-tribble-wordsearch-word-ending">https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/sep/14/chris-tribble-wordsearch-word-ending</a>	Comments not allowed	14.02.2019
56	Word search: who said what?	08.04.2010	#Lexicography	Chris Tribble	Descriptive	A look at which words have occurred most in <i>the Guardian</i> , past forms of verbs	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/apr/08/language-linguistics">https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/apr/08/language-linguistics</a>	Comments not allowed	14.02.2019
57	The meaning of 'moot'	16.01.2015	#Lexicography	David Marsh (former	Descriptive	"If the past tense of take is took, why shouldn't the past tense of meet be moot? ("They moot by moonlight.") Sadly it isn't, but moot remains a lovely and versatile word,	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-">https://www.theguardian.com/m</a> <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-">edia/mind-</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) 'Mute point'? Unspeakable.	22.02.2019

	is a moot point – which ever variety of English you speak			Guardian editor)		equally at home as noun, adjective or verb – and with contrasting meanings, depending on which side of the Atlantic you are using it."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language-moot-point">your-language/2015/jan/16/mind-your-language-moot-point</a>		
58	2014, have a word with yourself	23.12.2014	#Lexicography	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Descriptive	Can you sum up an entire year in just one word? The dictionaries do – but their methods are precise. Oxford Dictionaries, for example, collate 150m words from various sources into a database. This data is then analysed by editors to track and verify new and emerging word trends.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/dec/23/2014-have-a-word-with-yourself">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/dec/23/2014-have-a-word-with-yourself</a>	Most upvoted comment: (8) Bird is THE word	22.02.2019
59	In praise of the C-word	11.07.2016	#Lexicography	Rachel Braier	Descriptive	"It seems that modern usage of the word has deviated far from its original root for describing female genitalia. As keen as we are to use the word as a reprimand, an insult, a term of endearment, a noun, an adjective or a verb, it seems slightly too crude to use it to describe one's nether regions."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/jul/11/in-praise-of-the-c-word">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/jul/11/in-praise-of-the-c-word</a>	Most upvoted comment: (214) It's the last swear word left. Use it sparingly or soon we'll be out!	21.02.2019
60	How new words are born	04.02.2016	#Lexicography, #Linguistic information	Andy Bodle	Descriptive	"As dictionary publishers never tire of reminding us, our language is growing. Not content with the million or so words they already have at their disposal, English speakers are adding new ones at the rate of around 1,000 a year. Recent dictionary debutants include blog, grok, crowdfunding,	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/feb/04/english-neologism">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/feb/04/english-neologism</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) Gellman got quark from Joyce (who quite likely picked it out of the air or formed it by distortion of some other word). 'Three quarks for muster Mark.' (Finnegans Wake)	21.02.2019



						hackathon, airball, e-marketing, sudoku, twerk and Brexit."	<a href="#">sms-new-words</a>		
61	Do syllables exist?	25.06.2014	#Linguistic information	Josephine Livingstone	Descriptive	<b>Information about linguistics (phonetics and phonology):</b> Discussion of whether the syllable exists	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jun/25/english-do-syllables-exist-linguists">https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jun/25/english-do-syllables-exist-linguists</a>	Comments not allowed	12.02.2019
62	Relatively speaking: do our words influence how we think?	29.01.2014	#Linguistic information	Josephine Livingstone	Descriptive	Information about the <b>Sapir Whorf hypothesis</b> : "The principle of linguistic relativity is sometimes called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, or Whorfianism, after the linguist who made it famous, Benjamin Lee Whorf."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jan/29/how-words-influence-thought">https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jan/29/how-words-influence-thought</a>	Most upvoted comment: (6)"John McWhorter also has a book coming out soon called: "The Language Hoax: Why the World Looks the Same in Any Language". By the way..... One of my bleary countrymen turned to another and said: "They sound like they're angry all the time, don't they? Speaking that language all day must do something to your brain." Hmmm, this seems more like basic linguistic prejudice than linguistic relativism. There's no such thing as an "angry" language, this leans more towards language aesthetics and cross-language speech perception - which is often tainted by socio-political aspects and obsolete cultural stereotypes. The perception of German as harsh, angry, and aggressive has a very flimsy	12.02.2019

								basis in linguistics, but there is 20th century history propping up this perception. So-called "harsh" sounds to the English-speaking ear tend to be uvulars, which German doesn't have in abundance and pharyngeals, which German lacks altogether. also some "nice" sounding languages have them (French has uvulars for example). Basically, the concept of an "angry German language" is as linguistically sound as the concept of a "time-less Hopi language".	
63	David Crystal: the story of English spelling	23.08.2012	#Linguistic information, #Book	<b>David Crystal</b>	Descriptive	Article about <i>Spell it Out: The Singular Story of English Spelling</i> "The internet is allowing more people to influence spelling than ever before. People are voting with their fingers"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/aug/23/david-crystal-story-english-spelling">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/aug/23/david-crystal-story-english-spelling</a>	Most upvoted comment: (9) One thing I first noticed about 10-12 years ago as a particular 'new' characteristic of spoken English seems to have caught on and moved to the written form, that being the misuse of 'of' instead of 'have'. Where people once would have said cudda, wudda, shudda or could've, would've, should've (depending upon context, area, social class, etc), the spoken form shifting to a pronounced 'v' sound that somehow became equated with the 'v' sound in 'of', giving could of, would of, should of. Looking at BTL comments and blogs, this has become quite mainstream even in written English, despite the	13.04.2019

								fact that it's nonsense (not least because it places 'of' in a verb form).	
64	From the archive, 10 March 1975: The man who collected dialects	10.03.2011	#Linguistic information	None	Descriptive	Historical article re-published about Orton, professor who collected English dialects	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2011/mar/10/archive-man-who-collected-dialects">https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2011/mar/10/archive-man-who-collected-dialects</a>	Comments not allowed	13.02.2019
65	David Crystal: champion of the English language	13.12.2010	#Linguistic information	Michael Rosen	Descriptive	"For more than 30 years the linguist has been offering us rich gems of information about how we speak and write"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/13/david-crystal-champion-english-language">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/13/david-crystal-champion-english-language</a>	<b>Most upvoted comment (by author)</b> "Dear me, cicatricella, point-scoring and missing the point so soon on a thread? Yes, you may say that the job of linguistics is 'to describe', but a) linguists are hired by governments all over the world to provide prescriptive materials for them - especially in education - and so it becomes such linguists' job to research and present norms, b) some linguists who might claim they are descriptivists are accused by others of being prescriptive. So, as you know much better than me, there are some who think, for example, that generative linguistics is neo-prescriptive. But hey, why	20.04.19

								enjoy the fact that David is being celebrated here, when you can spend a few seconds going in for a bit of anonymous online insulting? ps it wasn't a 'profile.'" in response to "I'm a great fan of David Crystal, but I wish they'd actually found someone who knows something about linguistics to write this profile. Is it the job of linguists to describe or prescribe the language? To describe. There is no 'struggle'. To imagine that there might be is to betray a deep and depressing ignorance of what linguists do and what linguistic science is. Nothing new, sadly.	
66	Set course	28.05.2005	#Linguistic information	David Williams	Descriptive	About studying linguistics. " <b>Linguistics has long been home to the greatest nature-nurture debate going.</b> What proportion of language is innate and what proportion of it is learned from scratch by every child is a question that remains unresolved, despite 50 years of intense argument."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/money/2005/may/28/careers.postgraduate2">https://www.theguardian.com/money/2005/may/28/careers.postgraduate2</a>	Comments not allowed	14.02.2019
67	Back to prep school	15.01.2016	#Linguistic information	Andy Bodle	Descriptive	"In the world of language, it's the nouns, verbs and adjectives that Hoover up the attention; they get to wear fancy prefixes and suffixes, and are given Important Capital Letters in book, film and song titles. Meanwhile, the workhorse word classes – conjunctions, pronouns, determiners and prepositions – fill the gaps, unfeted and unloved. They don't do anything flashy, but	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/jan/15/back-to-prep-school#comments">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/jan/15/back-to-prep-school#comments</a>	Most upvoted comment: (11) I enjoyed reading that. Thank you.	21.02.2019

						without them, communication would fall apart."			
68	Waiting with bated breath to learn how idioms took flight	18.09.2015	#Linguistic information	Jessica Brown	Descriptive	At the end of your tether because you are treated as a dog's body? Falconry and the sea are two rich sources of English expressions	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/sep/18/waiting-with-bated-breath-to-learn-how-idioms-took-flight">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/sep/18/waiting-with-bated-breath-to-learn-how-idioms-took-flight</a>	Most upvoted comment: (11) Wrong. Bated breath means you are holding your breath in anticipation, not out of breath and panting from exertion. OED website: "A shortened form of abated (Middle English), meaning 'reduced, lessened'. The idea behind the phrase with bated breath is that the anxiety or excitement you experience while waiting for something to happen is so great that you almost stop breathing."	21.02.2019
69	Oi, you – yes, youse lot – I'm talking to you, y'all	05.06.2015	#Linguistic information	Rachel Braier	Descriptive	"Although some regional dialects retain the distinction, most English speakers have to make do with using 'you' to mean one person or many"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jun/05/oi-you-yes-youse-lot-im-talking-to-you-yall">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jun/05/oi-you-yes-youse-lot-im-talking-to-you-yall</a>	Most upvoted comment: (3) Do your children have names? :) You could just say "Get your shoes on, (name) X, you too (name) Y, the pair of you, hurry up." "Ye, thee and a bucket of three" is all too complicated and wasting of time, isn't it? A personal name doesn't get affected by regional dialect, although it might just be the lazy tongue of "too many syllables" within a name, in which case shorten it (nickname) to something endearing and easy to speak	21.02.2019
70	Interview: Game of Thrones	16.02.2015	#Linguistic information	Mark Smith	Descriptive	<b>Interview with a linguist</b> about inventing a language	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (16) I've already mastered fluent Hodor and expect to graduate to one of the more challenging GoT languages any day now	22.02.2019

	es' Dothra ki: meet the man who invented a language						<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jul/17/two-whoppers-junior-please-with-has-hes-brown-on-the-side">age/2015/f eb/16/gam e-of-throne s-dothraki- david-j-pet erson-inve nted-langu age</a>		
71	Two Whoppers Junior, please. With hashes brown on the side	17.07. 2015	#Linguistic information, #Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Descriptive	"The plurals of compound nouns – nouns (strictly noun phrases) made up of more than one word – is a surprisingly controversial subject. You just have to innocently tweet, say, that you think the plural of attorney general should be attorney generals, rather than attorneys general, and you can expect to be told, as I was this week, “you’re so wrong on this one it hurts”."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jul/17/two-whoppers-junior-please-with-has-hes-brown-on-the-side">https://ww w.theguard ian.com/m edia/mind- your-langu age/2015/j ul/17/two- whoppers-j unior-pleas e-with-has hes-brown -on-the-sid e</a>	Most upvoted comment: (25) I own two Kamas Sutra.	21.02. 2019
72	Why has the lexical approach been so long in coming?	26.03. 2013	#Linguistic information, #Grammar	Leo Salivan	Descriptive	<b>Critique against not using (corpus) linguistic research in teaching, cognitive linguistic also credited:</b> "Deliberately written in a non-academic, teacher-friendly style, Lewis's 1993 volume was an attempt to introduce fascinating insights from corpus linguistics into the classroom practice."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/mar/26/lexical-approach-revolution">https://ww w.theguard ian.com/ed ucation/20 13/mar/26/ leixical-ap proach-rev olution</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) As a writer and a writer of one of the few textbooks grounded in the lexical approach (Innovations, Heinle Cengage), I think Pete West is directing blame at the wrong place. Certainly, publishers are conservative and want to get the most out of their investment, but to do that they need to persuade governments, school directors and teachers to	13.02. 2019

							<p>buy their books. It is - I am sad to say - largely these groups that have been slow to accept the lexical approach not publishers per se. For example, government policy round the world tends towards earlier learning yet at the same time can have at its core a building block grammar syllabus to which publishers must adhere if they want their books adopted. Teacher training (if there is any) continues to marginalize the importance of lexis and emphasize the importance of a very narrow view of grammar (as anyone who's done a cert type course will probably testify). Finally, we have our own experience of language learning which was generally words plus grammar rules to combat which might also account for (maybe) limited numbers of writers who want and are able to construct a usable syllabus and material within a lexical approach. It's just very very difficult to break these barriers down, but I would suggest the publisher is pretty much the last of these barriers and it's more like a finishing tape.</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---	--

73	Tell it to mi duck, love	21.03.2010	#Linguistic information, #Language change (Speech)	Ian McMillan	Descriptive	"Linguistic variations are a great pleasure. (...) Official definitions are slippery fish, of course, but Wikipedia describes an isogloss as "the geographical boundary of a certain linguistic feature, such as the pronunciation of a vowel, the meaning of a word, or use of some syntactic feature"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/mar/21/language-derby-shire-barns-ley-pronunciation-dialect">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/mar/21/language-derby-shire-barns-ley-pronunciation-dialect</a>	Most upvoted comment (0): "Mardy mardy mustard, can't eat your custard...."	14.02.2019
74	Sexist language: it's every man for him or herself	18.10.2013	#Book, #Language change (General)	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive	Extract from book: "For Who the Bell Tolls: One Man's Quest for Grammatical Perfection" (published by Guardian Faber) There is nothing wrong with the singular 'they' ( <b>quotes old examples of usage</b> , Lewis Carroll, Shakespeare etc), defensive for women in roles commonly referred to with male pronouns (firemen have become firefighters) "As long ago as 1911, the American writer Ambrose Bierce, in his satirical The Devil's Dictionary, objected to Miss – "a title with which we brand unmarried women to indicate that they are in the market" – and proposed that for consistency there should be a title for the unmarried man: "I venture to suggest Mush, abbreviate to Mh." We may have to wait a while longer for "Mh", but Ms, which I recall being greeted with ridicule when it started to catch on in the 1960s and 70s, is now well established." (...) ""You" gradually squeezed these words out to become standard for singular as well as plural, and no great anguish seems to have been caused, even in Yorkshire. There is no reason why something similar should not happen to "they". Singular "they" is much less clumsy than "he or she",	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/oct/18/mind-your-language-sexism">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/oct/18/mind-your-language-sexism</a>	Most Upvoted comment: (69 "I never understand the objection to singular they. It does the job perfectly, and adds to the richness of the language. I can't stand the use of 'he' as gender neutral, because clearly it's not. In American writing I've seen 'she' used as a generic pronoun, which solves nothing whatsoever and feels very artificial. Singular they, all the way!"	31.01.2019



						and does not consign half the human race to subservience by calling women "he"."			
75	Some vulgarities are well worth a butcher's	26.02. 2012	#Book, #Correctness, #Linguistic information, #Standard English	Robert McCrum	Mostly descriptive	About Julie Coleman's <i>The Life of Slang</i> , 'Linguistic conservatives' do not like slang. Reference to Standard English, various English professors, language is neither bad nor good "(...) Slang flourishes in the no man's land between the written and the spoken. To recognise the vigour and vitality of slang might be to concede that English is a linguistic pickpocket whose home is decorated with stolen goods. Others compare it to a vacuum cleaner, omnivorously sucking up linguistic debris. English is, and always has been, a language of the street not the academy, and for the many not the few. Ever since the Norman conquest imposed French language and culture on the Anglo-Saxon state, English has flourished underground and on the margins. Slang is the expression of this unofficial life. Maddeningly, for linguistic conservatives, with English, as William Empson puts it, "the undergrowth is part of the language, and listed in the OED"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/feb/26/slang-julie-coleman-robert-mccrum">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/feb/26/slang-julie-coleman-robert-mccrum</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) Oh dear I can't agree Dylanwolf. James Kelman's work would be significantly weakened without the use of strong expletives.	13.02. 2019
76	If punctuation marks were people	07.08. 2015	#Book, #Correctness, #Linguistic information	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Mostly descriptive	Describing punctuation as people, inspired by book: "In her recent book, <i>Between You &amp; Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen</i> , Mary Norris, who writes for the New Yorker, does something groundbreaking with punctuation. She makes it interesting."The square brackets are the pedants who just wish you'd speak with more clarity (...) Call them OCD if you want to, but they need to report what you said with clarity. And when you didn't say what they wanted you to say, or exactly how they expected you to say it, they get picky. They insert [square] brackets, to differentiate from	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/aug/07/if-punctuation-marks-were-people">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/aug/07/if-punctuation-marks-were-people</a>	Most upvoted comment: (43) I blame the parentheses.	21.02. 2019

						the pedestrian but curvy parenthesis, to indicate that they've inserted this word on your behalf because you've clearly never learned English properly and need all the help you can get, what?"			
77	Is it time we agreed on a gender-neutral singular pronoun?	30.01.2015	#Language change (General)	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Mostly descriptive	" <b>Language, like life, feels easier to deal with if we arrange it into binaries: Wrong/right;</b> Gay/straight; Labour/Conservative. Terms lurking between the two poles are often unfairly maligned." (...) "For those now considering commenting to suggest that there's a perfectly fine existing neutral pronoun – "they" – remember that pronouns must match both gender and number. So in the case of single individuals, it's grammatically inaccurate."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jan/30/is-it-time-we-agreed-on-a-gender-neutral-singular-pronoun">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jan/30/is-it-time-we-agreed-on-a-gender-neutral-singular-pronoun</a>	<b>Most upvoted comment: (59)</b> <b>If "they" is being used as a gender neutral pronoun it is not being used as a plural and the grammatical objection to it strikes me as weak, particularly since it's been used for that purpose for centuries. I don't object to a new word if that's what's wanted but "they" is not the grammatical horror that some people insist.</b>	31.01.2019
78	So, Waters tones – no apostrophe? Hey, no catastrophe	12.01.2012	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive	"The fact is that the way retailers choose to punctuate their name is a mess and certain to remain so. You have the "what's an apostrophe?" camp, of which the market leader is Tesco (colloquially known, ironically, as "Tesco's"); you may have noticed their line of boys toys."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/12/waterstones-apostrophe-no-catastrophe">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/12/waterstones-apostrophe-no-catastrophe</a>	Most upvoted comment: (38) The next International Apostrophe Day will be on Friday 17 August - Im counting the day's...	26.02.2019
79	Weather coverage brings misery and chaos to our	23.12.2010	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive	Article about complaint from reader: "Today's bad weather seems to have bought out the worst in your writers: sloppy language, exaggeration, you name it, the Guardian does it." (...) I accept the point made by these readers, but (having done the task on many occasions) I also sympathise with the hapless reporters given the job of conjuring up 400 words on the weather, day after day, when	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/23/weather-snow-">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/23/weat</a> <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/23/weat">her-snow-</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) My bad-weather bugbear is treacherous. From the OED: treacherous 1. guilty of or involving treachery. 2. (of the weather, ice, the memory etc.) not to be relied on; likely to fail or give way. It's not a synonym for dangerous, or (worse)	27.02.2019

	readers					often there has been little change and, to be honest, not much to report."	<a href="#">mind-your-language</a>	slippery. I'm sick of hearing "it's treacherous out there", "those pavements are treacherous", "it was a treacherous journey". Hurrumph.	
80	Something lacking in the trouser department?	26.08.2010	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive	<b>Prescriptivism</b> mentioned: "One of the joys of language is that sometimes it is the little things that trigger the most intense debate. Such as one little word: "no". Or, more accurately, the difference between trousers and no trousers. (...) . But let's not get too <b>prescriptive</b> about it: both phrases will have their adherents, and you should use whichever pleases you more.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/aug/26/all-mouth-and-trousers-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/aug/26/all-mouth-and-trousers-mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (0) I could care less.... wait.... I mean I couldn't care less.	27.02.2019
81	Eats, shoots and leaves you confused	09.12.2011	#Correctness, #Book	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive	"Can You Eat, Shoot & Leave?, by Clare Dignall, is described as the 'only official workbook' for Lynne Truss's bestseller and contains many dubious rulings – but also plenty of helpful stuff (...) Dignall wisely says of the Oxford comma "the choice is yours", and she is not as prescriptive as she seems – although it is a bit confusing to learn all the rules, do the exercises and complete the "punctuation workout", only to be told at the end: "Punctuation is, when push comes to shove, subjective." If only she'd said that sooner."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/dec/09/eats-shoots-leaves-confused-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/dec/09/eats-shoots-leaves-confused-mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (2) Is it Dignall who's being absurd here, or convention? How do we fix convention when the convention is silly? But what is the convention? I can't find a pattern in those examples. I refuse to buy the book to find out.	26.02.2019
82	If it were done when 'tis done, then	08.08.2011	#Correctness, #Grammar	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive	Complaints about the Guardian's lack of using the subjunctive: "Fowler noted that the subjunctive was most likely to be found in formal writing or speech but was "seldom obligatory". Some writers seem to get away without it, but then some people get away with murder. (...) As with the hyper-corrective	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/aug/08/min">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/aug/08/min</a>	Most upvoted comment: (18) Anecdotally, I'm not sure that Americans "get" the subjunctive better than the British do and, as exhibit 1, I give you Jim Morrison saying, "If I was to say to you" in Light	27.02.2019

	'twere well it were done correctly					misuse of whom instead of who, however, using the subjunctive wrongly is worse than not using it at all."	<a href="#">d-your-language-subjunctive-mood</a>	My Fire. When my band used to cover this, I refused to sing this line and replaced it with "If I were to say to you." Before each rendition of the song, I would always point this out. To be fair, it generated befuddled looks most of the time, except on one occasion in a boozier in Muswell Hill when a bloke who was about 60 started clapping really loudly and said something like, "It's about time rock stars paid attention to grammar." Personally, it was lack of attention to the subjunctive that contributed to Jim Morrison's early demise imo.	
83	Think hyphens aren't controversial? Think again	04.04.2011	#Language change (General)	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive	About the usage of hyphen. Rodney Huddleston's <i>Introduction to the Grammar of English</i> quoted. "The change aroused some controversy in the US; it is surprising how people can become attached to such a little thing as a hyphen. McIntyre noted that "in Britain, where they are apparently able to take these things with less commotion", @guardianstyle (me) had tweeted: "Early reaction to that #apstyle about-turn on email: 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.' " (the Guardian dropped the hyphen from email in March 2000.)"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/apr/04/language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/apr/04/language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) Wasn't that long ago that standard UK English required "to-day" and "to-morrow".	27.02.2019
84	Why trans is in but	30.06.2010	#Language change (General)	Roz Kaveney	Mostly descriptive	Linguistics referred to as a battlefield, strange use of the term 'linguistics': "To outsiders, debates over the language of transgender may	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/">https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/</a>	Most upvoted comment: So what should I base my opinion of "cis" on, AmritS? Your assertive authority? The simple	27.02.2019

	tranny is out					<p>seem trivial. In fact, says Roz Kaveney, linguistics is a vital battlefield"</p>	<p><a href="#">2010/jun/30/trans-language-transgender</a></p>	<p>fact is that "tranny" was deemed an insult because some used it as such; I merely applied the same idea to "cis". That it is a lazy construction, with an even lazier justification, also has something to do with my antipathy toward the word. When someone tells you "it's extremely offensive", then perhaps it behooves to stop and wonder why? Perhaps people perceive it as similar to "breeder"? I'm sure you'd agree that's quite an insult! It's not anecdotal that one prominent transgender-oriented blog does use "cis" as an insult. As I am not their advertising manager, I will refrain from saying which blog it is. They and I also have a relationship best described as "adversarial", so I'm disinclined to provide them with any free advertising. I don't recall claiming "the whole truth or reality". You have me at an advantage: I don't know what that might be! I truthfully stated my experience; and I described my opinion as best I could. I'm glad you haven't quit the humorous and sagacious world of radfeminism because of people like me. Perhaps others have abandoned that territory</p>	
--	---------------	--	--	--	--	---	---	---	--

								because of people like you? :-) By the way, your angry riposte would be clearer if you had spelled out "equals"; in some contexts, it's an assignment, not a test of arithmetical or algebraic equality. And we are discussing the English language! You also construct an astonishing, and very confusing, sentence in your vexed paragraph to polystyrene. I fail to see how polystyrene denied anyone anything. Perhaps you could explain, hopefully in a calmer manner, how she did so? She explained her experiences, and wondered if they were pertinent. That's a different ball game to what you accuse her of.	
85	Sarah Palin, the refuting Republican, has a point	03.12.2010	#Language change (General), #Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive	"Among the star Guardian and Observer writers who have contributed to the latest edition of Guardian Style are Ben Goldacre (" 'Scientists claim' is a neon marker for rubbish journalism written by someone who doesn't understand the process of science"), Simon Hattenstone ("I'm not really a stickler for language, but the abuse of 'enormity' and 'disinterested' drives me mad"), and Marina Hyde, who makes a plea for tolerance: "Even in this hymn book to linguistic probity, might I make a case for occasional rule-breaking?"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/03/guardian-style-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/03/guardian-style-mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) People at work can't quote anyone in reports without saying that someone "stated" something; again "said" will do. I've never heard a joke that begins "this bloke goes into a pub and the barman states ...".	27.02.2019
86	Why grammar isn't	21.03.2014	#Grammar	Jessica Brown	Mostly descriptive	"Despite its reputation, Grammar is colourful and fascinating. Now experts report a renewed interest in the subject (...) Instead of	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/m">https://www.theguardian.com/m</a>	Most upvoted comment: (20) The joy and the point of good grammar is that it should serve	26.02.2019

	cool – and why that may be about to change					explanations and advice, grammatical errors are often corrected with scorn and ancient rules. This can project a sense of inadequacy that isn't conducive to learning, and perpetuates the misconception that grammar is black and white, right or wrong."	<a href="https://www.mind-your-language.com/2014/mar/21/mind-your-language-grammar">edia/mind-your-language/2014/mar/21/mind-your-language-grammar</a>	both clarity and subtlety. There is a tendency for people to use poor grammar as a means of obfuscation and ambiguity, which, for obvious reasons, is a tactic much favoured by politicians and others with an agenda. Like it or not (and a lot of grammatically-challenged people do not), our ability with language gives an impression of our wider mental abilities and attitudes. Good grammar says something positive about a person. It's also, like, hella fun. I apologise unreservedly for that last sentence.	
87	Language: The Cultural Tool by Daniel Everett – review	15.03.2012	#Book, #Grammar, #Linguistic information	Tim Radford	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	<b>Debate of universal grammar</b> between Chomsky, Pinker and Everett "If there is some deep structure that underpins all 7,000 human languages – a universal grammar or language acquisition device or language instinct, already hard-wired in the human brain at birth – Pirahã seems to be an exception."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/mar/15/language-cultural-daniel-everett-review">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/mar/15/language-cultural-daniel-everett-review</a>	Most upvoted comment: (5) Radford asks the key questions. Unfortunately, there are some answers to these questions, and they do not favor Everett. "Is recursion really the thing, as Chomsky claims, that makes the difference between the pragmatic social communication of great apes and the infinitely resourceful language of humans?" Yes, Chomsky says something vaguely like this, but what he means is completely misunderstood by Everett. When Chomsky talks about recursion, he is talking about any kind of phrase structure whatsoever: noun phrases, verb	13.02.2019

							<p>phrases, prepositional phrases, amnd so on. Languages differ in exactly what phrase structures they allow, but they don't differ in the basic fact of having phrases in the first place. Chomsky thinks that this feature might be exclusively human. Everett persistently misinterprets Chomsky as singling out subordinate clauses (and possessors of possessors) - maybe because Chomsky used that as an example of recursion. But it was intended as just one example of many, Everett's been corrected on this point many times, but it doesn't seem to make any difference. I guess the new book just repeats this bizarre misinterpretation of Chomsky, because without it Piraha wouldn't come off as an exception to anything at all. Which brings me to the next question... "Is Pirahã really such an exception?" No. The supposedly weird features of Piraha are found in many other languages across the globe. "Does the number of pronouns in a language really correlate inversely with a culture's technological advance?" No, no one's claimed this and there is no reason to think this. "Do words for colour really provide</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



								an index of the way a language has advanced?" No, and there is no reason to think this either. There is also no reason to even think that Piraha is particularly deficient in color words.	
88	The joy of text	05.07.2008	#Book, #Language change (CMC), #Standard English	Lynne Truss and Will Self	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Two prescriptivists on texting. Mention of 'Standard English' "We pedants are supposed to hate texting, but we don't. We are in love with effective communication, and there's nothing more effective than sending a message direct from your phone to someone else's, sometimes from the hairdresser's (which I mention for a reason). "I CANT BELIEVE U PUT APOSTROPHE IN HAIRDRESSERS," a friend texted me recently (he obviously had a bit of time on his hands, too). "Oh, I felt the apostrophe was required," I texted back, happily - in both upper and lower case, with regular spacing, and a comma after "Oh"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jul/05/saturdayreview-sfeatures.guardianreview1">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jul/05/saturdayreview-sfeatures.guardianreview1</a>	Comments not allowed	25.04.2019
89	Simply English: An A-Z of Avoidable Errors review – a welcome visit from the gramm	18.05.2014	#Book, #Prescriptivism	Ben East	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	The Observer: Critique of Heffer's book, "Thankfully, Heffer's point isn't that language can't evolve" The book "has the air of a particularly annoying school lesson" and points out that he is wrong, but ultimately thinks the book is good.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/may/18/simply-english-review-grammar-simon-heffer">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/may/18/simply-english-review-grammar-simon-heffer</a>	Most upvoted (4): "Re: Canutishly. The legend is that King Knut sat by the incoming tide to prove to his sycophantic followers that he was NOT almighty."	23.01.2019

	ar police								
90	Snakes are evil, but save your venom for the self-ap pointe d langua ge police	13.06. 2010	#Correctness	David Mitchell	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	"The world needs snakes more than it needs apostrophes. (...) Meanwhile there's no counterbalancing evidence that correctly applied apostrophes keep comma numbers down, or that the grocer's ones encourage pesky hyphens. Misuse or omission of the apostrophe seldom confuses meaning and its extinction would do no real harm and is probably inevitable. (...) The Queen's English Society (to which my knee-jerk response is: "No she isn't. Doesn't everyone say she's mainly German?") takes a different view. It's decided that English needs an academy so that it can compete with less successful languages such as French and Italian. "We do desperately need some form of moderating body to set an accepted standard of good English," it says, while the academy's founder, Martin Estinel, a 71-year-old who claims still to use the word "gay" to mean "happy", declares: "At the moment, anything goes... Let's have a body to sit in judgment."But what most annoys about the scheme is that it completely misses the point of linguistic pedantry. It's no fun prissily adhering to grammatical rules if it's mandatory. This academy wishes to turn something I have chosen to do – an attitude by which I define myself – into something I'm forced to do, along with everyone else. That's like making everyone support Manchester United. It's the blandly didactic product of priggish, literal, two-dimensional thinking. They should be saving snakes, not the fifth syllable of	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jun/13/david-mitchell-comment-is-free">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jun/13/david-mitchell-comment-is-free</a>	Most upvoted comment (0, no comments have upvotes, article publishing before upvoting was available?) language is very flexible... I always liked the one where you can get 11 'hads' in a row ..... Smith narrowly beats Jones in the final English exam. Jones is agrieved and enquires why. He is told that Smith gained an extra mark in the following way - 'Smith, where Jones had had 'had', had had 'had had', 'had had' had had the examiners' approval.	14.04. 2019

						deteriorate, which isn't going to keep vermin under control in any paddy fields.			
91	Capital letters out, swear words in: one journalist's legacy	01.08.2016	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	"The brief given me was, broadly, to stop people calling the paper "the Grauniad". Or, since this professional suicide mission was always unlikely to succeed, at least give them less reason to do so. I have been, in the words of one English professor, "the man responsible for the spelling mistakes in the Guardian". It's a living. Was a living."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/aug/01/capital-letters-out-swear-words-in-one-journalists-legacy">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/aug/01/capital-letters-out-swear-words-in-one-journalists-legacy</a>	Most upvoted comment: (71) "You'll be missed. Enjoy your retirement."	21.02.2019
92	Moms: As American as motherhood and apple pie	18.03.2016	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	British readers of the Guardian sometimes complain about the "Americanisms" that find their way into the paper. (Often this term simply refers to a word they don't like, which may or may not emanate from the other side of the Atlantic.) This blogpost, however, concerns an example of the opposite phenomenon. Let's call it a "Britishism".	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/mar/18/moms-as-american-as-motherhood-and-apple-pie">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/mar/18/moms-as-american-as-motherhood-and-apple-pie</a>	Most upvoted comment: (455) "Surely your British readers know that Americans use the word 'mom'." We do, and we like to correct you every time we hear you use it.	21.02.2019
93	Quotations "within quotations": the Russian doll of	04.03.2016	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	"(...) (Opinions vary as to which of these usages is "American"; my inbox suggests that this term is employed by British readers to describe whichever aspect of style they don't happen to like.)"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/mar/04/quotations-within-quotations-the-russian-doll-">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/mar/04/quotations-within-quotations-the-russian-doll-</a>	Most upvoted comment: (14) I love in depth discussions of arcane subjects, I feel strangely uplifted!	21.02.2019

	punctuation'					<a href="#">of-punctuation</a>			
94	Economics jargon promotes a deficit in understanding	14.08.2015	#Correctness	James Gingell	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Complaint about how journalists [Telegraph reporters] fail to 'translate' economics: "(...)whenever I see or hear journalists or politicians discussing a particularly important social science – economics – I just don't see them making the same efforts of jargon removal and technical translation. Whether it's discussion of debt, or the argument for austerity, it's hard to find good economics communication, where the language is rinsed free of jargon."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/aug/14/economics-jargon-promotes-a-deficit-in-understanding">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/aug/14/economics-jargon-promotes-a-deficit-in-understanding</a>	Most upvoted comment: (16) Good article. I like how it explores the 'why' of the issue. Science communication has grown because scientists want people to know what they do and for publicly funded science we have a duty to inform the public about what we are doing. Economics (particularly when used by politicians) on the other hand is intentionally obfuscatory. It helps when pushing policies to use unknown (or even vague) terms and meaningless comparisons to household budgets.	21.02.2019
95	Using 'literally' metaphorically is literally spreading like wildfire	24.10.2014	#Correctness	Adam Lewis	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	"Mark Twain, F Scott Fitzgerald and James Joyce all did it. (HW Fowler disapproved.) Should 'literally' be used to mean its opposite?"Dictionaries are merely reflections of language, intended to capture words that reach a critical mass of usage by the population. (...) The OED describes its purpose as the following: "The Oxford English Dictionary is not an arbiter of proper usage, despite its widespread reputation to the contrary ... Its content should be viewed as an objective reflection of English language usage, not a subjective collection of usage 'dos' and 'don'ts'."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/oct/24/mind-your-language-literally">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/oct/24/mind-your-language-literally</a>	Most upvoted comment: (4) Oh come on - have you ever read 'Ulysses'? Joyce is mocking Bloom when he writes that Bloom thought that Mozart was: "the acme of first class music as such, literally knocking everything else into a cocked hat." 'Ulysses' is 'literally' an encyclopedia of bad writing, grammatical solecisms, rhetorical nonsense and literary hot-air. That's one of the reasons why it's so funny. The notion that Joyce 'sanctioned' anything is bizarre - he was the greatest linguistic	21.02.2019

								anarchist who has ever lived - literally!	
96	If you've got 'another thing coming', you've got another think coming	18.11.2014	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	"All this seemed uncontroversial until I tweeted the following simple extract from the Guardian style guide: If you think the expression is "you've got another thing coming", then you have misheard the expression "you've got another think coming". The reaction resembled the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and – from some, but by no means all, of @guardianstyle's 53,000 followers – acceptance. In fact some people did not get beyond the first stage, refusing to accept that there could be any possible alternative to "another thing coming". I've not witnessed such polarised opinion on an arcane linguistic issue since the debate over "all mouth and (no) trousers"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/nov/18/mind-your-language-another-think">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/nov/18/mind-your-language-another-think</a>	Most upvoted comment: (39) Definitely "think". One of those mis-heard mis-spoken phrases that drive me nuts. Like "could of".	22.02.2019
97	Let's eat Grandma! How to use, and not use the comma	04.09.2014	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Article on the use of comma. Extract from <i>For Who the Bell Tolls</i> by David Marsh	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/sep/04/mind-your-language-commas">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/sep/04/mind-your-language-commas</a>	Most upvoted comment: (74) Grammar: the difference between knowing your shit and knowing you're shit.	26.02.2019
98	Sorry, there's no such thing as 'correc	02.03.2012	#Correctness, #Grammar, #Linguistic information, #Book, #Standard English	Michael Rosen	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	<b>The Guardian indicating The Telegraph are more taken with conservative grammar,</b> mention of linguists, Standard English, Halliday's <i>An Introduction to Functional Grammar</i> . "Martin Gwynne may have fun telling people the rules of grammar, but language is owned and controlled by	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/mar/02/no-correct-gra">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/mar/02/no-correct-gra</a>	Most upvoted comment: (128) Whether you like it or not people who use grammar correctly come across as better educated than those who do not. It might be quite 'liberating' to decide that	17.04.2019

	t gramm ar'					everybody" (...) "It may have stirred a few loins down at the Telegraph but the arrival at Selfridges of Martin Gwynne, author of Gwynne's Grammar, to give grammar lessons, doesn't seem to have made waves elsewhere." (...) "Whereas linguists are agreed that language has grammar, what they can't agree on is how to describe it. So, while there is a minimum agreement that language is a system with parts that function in relation to each other, there is no universal agreement on how the parts and the functions should be analysed and described, nor indeed if they should be described as some kind of self-sealed system or whether they should always be described in terms of the users, ie those who "utter" the language, and those who "receive" it (speakers and listeners, writers and readers etc)."	<a href="#">mmar-mart in-gwynne</a>	grammar is 'hey, whatever we say it is' but it won't do people any favours. Innit.	
99	It's time to challe nge the notion that there is only one way to speak Englis h	31.12. 2013	#Correctness, #Standard English, #Linguistic information, #Book	Harry Ritchie	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	<b>About linguistic correctness and the lack of linguistics in popular media:</b> (Description and critique of Steven Pinker and Noam Chomsky's ideas) "Did you see that great documentary on linguistics the other night? What about that terrific series on Radio 4 about the Indo-European language family tree? Or that news report on language extinction? It is strange that none of those programmes happened, or has ever happened: it's not as if language is an arcane subject. Just as puzzling is the conspicuous lack of a properly informed book about language – either our own or language in general." (Book: <i>English for the Natives: Discover the Grammar You Don't Know You Know</i> "	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/dec/31/one-way-speak-english-standard-speak-british-linguistics-chomsky">https://ww w.theguard ian.com/bo oks/2013/d ec/31/one- way-speak -english-st andard-spo ken-british -linguistics -chomsky</a>	<b>Most upvoted comment: (102):</b> The double unfairness of this article, saying Chhomsky is proved wrong, and blaming him for the low status of non-standard language, makes your whole thesis untenable. I certainly won't be reading or recommending your book if this sloppy essay is anything to go by. Fallacy No1. You say: "Children learn language just as they learn all their other skills, by experience. The case against Chomsky is conclusive. The new empirical "connectionist" school and the various branches of cognitive linguistics have brought the subject back to	12.02. 2019

							<p>scientific principles. Linguistics has undergone a revolution in the last 20 years, and Chomsky has been dethroned." Yet any survey of the literature on linguistics over the past 20 years shows nothing of the sort. Certainly counter-hypotheses of Chomsky's model have emerged and have been thrashed out, but C's original points still stand and have never been "proved wrong" as you so simplistically state. The argument is still on, and for my money Chomsky's still right that there exists a language faculty in active operation during the years of first language acquisition. What's the evidence for your general Fallacy No2. In what possible sense is Chomsky to blame for the lower prestige of non-standard varieties of language? This reduced status for users of non-standard forms has always been there, and no amount of theorising in linguistics is ever likely to change that. The acceptance or otherwise of non-standard forms is a sociological issue, and nothing to do with Chomsky or his influence within linguistics. You make the senseless charge that "the</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

							<p>discipline has been hunting for unicorns while neglecting many key areas of language. There is still little research being carried out on, for example, environmental influences on children's language acquisition." But there are literally thousands of studies on this field, both in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. Why have you never seen them? Do you want some citations to be getting on with? Getting back to your example, quoted from The Scotsman. The candidate who said "we done that" is showing that he is unable or unwilling to do "code-switching", moving from his home dialect to the standard variety. The interviewer/employer may well use such dialect forms himself, but judges that the candidate is unaware of the difference and expects employees to be at home in the standard form of the language. Most people use some non-standard forms in their home environment, but the standard form exists to communicate in a much wider arena than on your street. I notice your article is written 100% in standard English, with correct grammar. Why didn't</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---	--



								you write it in your own home dialect? Too restricting, innit? I'm afraid to say that you, sir, are merely a linguo-troll, a kind of Chimpsky to Noam's Chomsky.	
100	As a grammarian contrarian, I love opposites. But what about alternyms?	15.05.2015	#Grammar	Adam Lewis	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	I propose a new category of opposites – to garner enough support for a day that celebrates the grammarians' contrarians in all their glory	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/may/15/grammarians-contrarian-alternyms">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/may/15/grammarians-contrarian-alternyms</a>	Most upvoted comment: (2) Not quite a contronym, but I've always taken issue with the American usage of "I could care less" where we Brits state, free from sarcasm, "I couldn't care less." In context we mean the same thing by these phrases ("I consider this thing totally unimportant"), so I cannot understand how the first, contrary variant evolved.	21.02.2019
101	Subire as hacks slash word length: getting the skinny on thinner nyms	04.12.2014	#Grammar	Andy Bodle	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Description of an English non-standard variety noticed by the author, dubbed 'Headlines'	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/dec/04/sub-ire-as-hacks-slash-word-length-getting-the-skinny-on-thinner-nyms">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/dec/04/sub-ire-as-hacks-slash-word-length-getting-the-skinny-on-thinner-nyms</a>	Most upvoted comment: (10) Remember a headline in the FT that ran: Leaks reveal Israelis offered major concessions in search of peace. Which got you reading simply because it sounds so unlikely, but turns out it meant Israelis were offered concessions by the Palestinians. Problem with headline writing is you're so preoccupied with condensing you completely lose sight of whether it makes sense or actually says the opposite of what you intend. Sometimes good English is the better option. The example quoted:	22.02.2019

								“Miliband in attack on Rangers tycoon” would be simpler and shorter if you said “Miliband attacks Rangers tycoon” Of course they also give rise to hilarity intentionally or not, my all-time favourite being the immortal headline announcing Soviet spy Klaus Fuchs' defection to Russia: Atom spy Fuchs off to Russia	
102	Why grammar lessons should be renamed ‘understanding language’	11.07.2014	#Grammar	Jessica Brown	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	"Some of the country’s <b>most eminent linguists</b> came together for English Grammar Day, presented by UCL and Oxford University in association with the British Library, last week. With talks from grammarians including David Crystal and Dick Hudson, the event served as a crash course in the history, prevalence and importance of grammar. The main focus, however, was on the problems with how grammar is taught in schools. (...) David Crystal says I am part of the “last of a lost generation” who didn’t learn proper grammar. But with the UK now emerging from this grammar lull, a detritus of lingering grammar myths and unconfident “lost generation” teachers are left behind. This combination isn’t conducive to children learning grammar, and often means teachers are unwittingly teaching incorrect things."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/jul/11/mind-your-language-grammar-day">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/jul/11/mind-your-language-grammar-day</a>	Most upvoted comment:(5) As Fowler once put it: regarding the split infinitive, there are four sorts of people. The first know what a split infinitive is and feel that it matters a lot, the second know what a split infinitive is but think that it's not very important. The third group don't know what a split infinitive is but are convinced it's very important. Finally, the fourth group don't know what a split infinitive is and couldn't care less as it allows them to happily get on with their lives.	26.02.2019
103	A plea for syntactical sanity on US	04.03.2013	#Grammar #Correctness	Kory Stamper (lexicographer and editor at	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Refers to ' <b>language maven' William Safire</b> "But I also hate <b>National Grammar Day</b> , because it ends up being less a celebration of the weirdness of English and more an annual conclave of the "peeververein" (as gentleman-copyeditor John E McIntyre so	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/mar/04/plea-">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/mar/04/plea-</a>	Most upvoted comment: (19) Still, though, as they say, grammar is the difference between knowing your shit and knowing you're shit.	13.02.2019

	National Grammar Day			<b>Merriam-Webster)</b>		eloquently calls them). I have a friend – well, a "friend" – who, every 4 March, marches forth into a variety of local stores with a black marker and corrects the signage in the name of "good grammar". Grocer's apostrophes are scribbled out, misspellings fixed, and good lord the corybantic orgy of less/fewer corrections. This friend also printed up a bunch of stickers one year that read: "Fixed that for you. Happy National Grammar Day." (...) "Vigilante peeving does nothing to actually educate people. What it does instead is shame them and make them feel bad about how they speak, write, and even think. Believe me, you cannot shame a person into good grammar." (...) "When you work for the dictionary, people mind their grammatical p's and q's around you out of fear. "Oh," someone will titter, "I hope I don't make any grammar mistakes when I'm talking to you!" I understand the impulse to say this – shit, I'm talking to an expert – but it casts a pall on the conversation, because I know the other person is worried I'm going to start smirking at some point during the conversation and they won't know what they did wrong."	<a href="http://sanity-national-grammar-day">sanity-national-grammar-day</a>		
104	Pedants make right royal mess of the English language	02.03.2015	#Language change (General)	Bloomfield, Lynch, Brooke, Carlson, Kirton, <b>Reverend</b> Canon, Wilkinson	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Ridiculing "King for a day" and other the Guardian articles by 'grammar pedants' "Burchfield in Fowler's Modern English Usage says: "It begins to look as if the use of an indefinite third person is now passing unnoticed by standard speakers (except those trained in traditional grammar)." Yet if we are to protect (until King Alastair's much-to-be-hoped-for accession) what remains of the Queen's English, then it is precisely that training, leavened with common	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/mar/02/pedants-royal-mess-english-language-alastair-stewart">https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/mar/02/pedants-royal-mess-english-language-alastair-stewart</a>	Comments not allowed	31.01.2019

						sense, which will best equip us for the task." "(...) you are pissing into the wind of change that has filled the sails of this seafaring language for over a thousand years(...)"			
105	Expressing ourselves in uncertain terms	04.03.2015	#Language change (General)	Gilbert, Mackinnon, Wray, Banner	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	<b>Compilation of complaints in response to complaints from readers of the Guardian to writers in the Guardian.</b> Location of the complaint writers are given (why?). Some responses are descriptive, others prescriptive, but all except one acknowledges and accept language change. (Last comment prescriptive, "(...) It's such a shame the UK greeting card industry and retailers more generally choose to Americanise this (...)") (Some of the articles they reply to are not about English)	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/mar/04/expressing-ourselves-in-uncertain-terms">https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/mar/04/expressing-ourselves-in-uncertain-terms</a>	Comments not allowed	31.01.2019
106	This place ain't what it used to be – the politics of geographical names	30.09.2016	#Language change (General)	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Article about the changing of place names "(...)Scholars' Walk or Scholars Walk? A Cambridge council spokesperson rued the day the authority followed a "bureaucratic guideline" to cut apostrophes from place names for "clarity". It led to the prospect of the city's Scholars' Walk becoming grammatically incorrect – although literally quite apt. The council later revoked the decision and apostrophes were restored. Phew."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/sep/30/this-place-aint-what-it-used-to-be-the-politics-of-geographical-names">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/sep/30/this-place-aint-what-it-used-to-be-the-politics-of-geographical-names</a>	Most upvoted comment: (16) Can I suggest another, possibly dyslexic, change of nomenclature? The Untied Kingdom?	21.02.2019
107	Why I wish I'd kept my Welsh accent	09.07.2014	#Language change (Speech)	Stephen Moss	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Comparison of 'accentism' to racism: "According to Alexander Baratta, an <b>English lecturer at Manchester University's school of education</b> , "accentism" – the pressure on people with regional accents to switch to something closer to received pronunciation – is the last taboo. He likens it to racism, arguing that "people make snap judgments based on accents", and that in an effort to fit	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/09/welsh-accent-accentism-rp">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/09/welsh-accent-accentism-rp</a>	Most upvoted comment: 64): I sound like Scarlett Johansson. Very embarrassing for a Norwich man in his late fifties.	12.02.2019

						in, many of us modify the way we speak, with potentially dire psychological consequences."			
108	You don't like being called 'guys'? Come on, people !	10.06. 2016	#Language change (General), #Lexicography	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	" "Guys" is one of those words that I believed had changed over time. Apparently not. It's a "non-inclusive term". I thought it had progressed to a gender-neutral (and therefore inclusive) collective noun. That was, until a #WordsAtWork campaign, launched by the Australian Diversity Council, caused a stir last week. It warns against using "guys" or "girls" in the workplace, lest offence is taken. Australian commentators, to use a formal term oft employed down under, lost their shit. (...) Professor Deborah Cameron, a feminist linguist at the University of Oxford, said : "If women want to be addressed as 'guys', I'm not going to tell them they're betraying the feminist cause. (Particularly if the alternative is being addressed as 'babes' and 'dolls'.) In language, as in life, you do your best with whatever you've got." "	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/jan/10/you-dont-like-being-called-guys-com-e-on-people">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/jan/10/you-dont-like-being-called-guys-com-e-on-people</a>	Most upvoted comment: (55) Identity politics is a bunch of arse.	21.02. 2019
109	Can you really sum up a whole year in one word?	01.01. 2016	#Lexicography	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Binge-watch, identity, ism, sharing economy, welcome culture, even an emoji ... little things can say a lot	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/jan/01/can-you-really-sum-up-a-whole-year-in-one-word">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/jan/01/can-you-really-sum-up-a-whole-year-in-one-word</a>	Most upvoted comment: (10) Shite	21.02. 2019
110	Michael Gove and	10.05. 2013	#Linguistic information, #Correctness, #Grammar,	Michael Rosen	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Explains what <b>grammar</b> is to <b>school minister Michael Gove</b> : "If you want to see more children fail to acquire Standard English, go	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfr">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfr</a>	Most upvoted comment: (228) I think the wrong Michael has the ministerial job!	12.02. 2019

	'correct grammar': let me explain this slowly		#Standard English			ahead with your programme of primary school grammar tests"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2012/mar/25/daniel-everett-human-language-piraha">ee/2013/mav/10/michael-gove-grammar</a>		
111	Interview: Daniel Everett: 'There is no such thing as universal grammar'	25.03.2012	#Linguistic information, #Grammar	Robert McCrum	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	Linguist studied Piraha people and concluded that there is no universal grammar. "There are two claims, the first is that universal grammar doesn't seem to work, there doesn't seem to be much evidence for that. And what can we put in its place? A complex interplay of factors, of which culture, the values human beings share, plays a major role in structuring the way that we talk and the things that we talk about. "Your theories about the origins of language differ from Noam Chomsky's idea of universal grammar." "My view of language could hardly be further from Chomsky's. I try not to attack or to say intemperate things in the book, in spite of his attacks (on me). I don't want to come across as someone who's got a personal axe to grind. These are conclusions that I have reached after 30 years of work, and I think Chomsky is absolutely wrong about his most important claims, and I have tried to make my case with evidence."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2012/mar/25/daniel-everett-human-language-piraha">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2012/mar/25/daniel-everett-human-language-piraha</a>	Most upvoted comment: (22) Mr Everett has been making this argument since 1983. Since that time, he has done good work, but it is the work of an anthropologist not a linguist. Linguistics has changed a great deal since then and the endless abstract gymnastics of Chomsky's universal grammar - in which the answers were expected to emerge from the blackboard - have dwindled into insignificance. Everett's argument is simply out of date, as is the target of his argument and his academic discipline. Modern linguistics is now a branch of Cognitive Science with the brain as its central focus. It has become clear that the fundamental cognitive 'ingredients' of language, have been co-opted from other brain processes. For example: recursion is now thought to arise from how the brain processes visual information (objects containing objects	13.02.2019

								containing objects - see Michael C. Corballis et al). Sadly this rather ruins Everett's argument. Not because Chomsky was right, but because language is an emergent property of the human brain. As the structure of the brain is inherent, language is also inherent. One day, the FMRI scanner may be as redundant as Chomsky's blackboard. But right now, this is where linguistics is at and Everett's 'revelation' will be met with yawns.	
112	Trop de trope	29.09. 2011	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	"A reader complains, eloquently and persuasively, about the "persistent and increasing misuse of a word in your newspaper: the word trope"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/sep/29/mind-your-language-buzzword-trope">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/sep/29/mind-your-language-buzzword-trope</a>	Most upvoted comment: (2) I suspect tvtropes is responsible for a lot of this.	27.02. 2019
113	Obama wants to 'de-escalate' but I will be de-happified	07.03. 2014	#Language change (General)	Andy Bodle	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	"It's an ugly word for an ugly state of affairs. Surely English can do better. How about 'descalate'?"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/mar/07/obama-de-escalate-min">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/mar/07/obama-de-escalate-min</a>	Most upvoted comment: It's fairly clear what it's getting at: situations, tensions and crises have a tendency to escalate; de-escalation simply describes the reverse process. No, it doesn't describe the opposite (which would be when something lessens or is made to lessen), it describes something	26.02. 2019

	if we can't de-accelerate use of this word						<a href="#">d-your-language</a>	that is no longer increasing, which isn't the same at all. It's used as if it meant to lessen, admittedly, but that doesn't make it so. The ugliest word around is, in my opinion, the disgusting "obligated". Why Americans can't use the lovely and simpler "obliged" I don't know (they used to: think of "much obliged, ma'am" by someone from the southern US). Worse still, it's spreading on this side of the pond, too. Hideous, hideous word.	
114	Natural born linguists: what drives multilingual speakers?	05.09.2013	#Other	Martin Williams	Mostly descriptive (opinion)	<b>'linguist' used about 'multilingual speaker'</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/sep/05/multilingual-speakers-language-learning">https://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/sep/05/multilingual-speakers-language-learning</a>	Most upvoted comment (2): Alex Rowlands said: "I'm an only child and I used to have long summers in Greece and Japan trying to play with the other kids, but none of them spoke any English at that age. It struck me how nice would it be to be able to talk to anybody in the world, regardless of what language they spoke." Actually, wanting to make a quite similar dream true, in what was then an obscure province of the Russian Empire, a Jewish kid named L.L.Zamenhof started to think how to build an interlanguage as a resource to be used when necessary and as an element of our common humanness. After many years of hard work, when he was	12.02.2019



								already a 28 years old medical doctor, his First Book on the new language was published (1887). Since then, the idea keeps alive. Probably, the proportion of polyglots among the members of the global Esperanto speaking community is much bigger than that in the general population.	
115	George Orwell, human resources and the English language	03.07.2015	#Correctness	James Gingell	Mostly prescriptive	Complaint about a type of language: "In particular, Orwell would have utterly despised the language that HR people use. In his excellent essay Politics and the English Language (where he began the thought that ended with Newspeak), Orwell railed against the language crimes committed by politicians."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jul/03/george-orwell-human-resources-and-the-english-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jul/03/george-orwell-human-resources-and-the-english-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (108) I've always said that I'd rather sweep the streets than work in HR. Not that there's anything wrong with being a street sweeper. You're providing an important public service, but it's heavy work and you get paid far less than those in HR - people who aren't really there to look after employees at all. No matter how much their scripted dialogue suggests otherwise, they are there to look out for their employer's interests, not yours.	21.02.2019
116	Go on, admit it. There's nothing wrong with the	13.05.2015	#Correctness	Toby Chasseaud	Mostly prescriptive	Complaint about journalists usage of the word 'admit' instead of 'said'	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/may/13/admit-confessions-dictionary-definition-pres">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/may/13/admit-confessions-dictionary-definition-pres</a>	Most upvoted comment: (15) If we're getting rid of annoying words, how about "reveal" used to describe something that was never a secret in the first place and that nobody cares about anyway.	22.02.2019

	word 'said'						<a href="#">s-newspapers</a>		
117	Playing Russian roulette with a Mexican wave of capital crimes	07.12.2014	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	I may be “the Guardian’s god of grammar”, according to Private Eye magazine, but that doesn’t make me infallible. A couple of things I admit to getting wrong in our style guide: Mexican wave and Russian roulette. Or, as the guide had it until recently, “mexican wave” and “russian roulette”.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/07/playing-russian-roulette-with-mexican-wave-of-capital-crimes">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/07/playing-russian-roulette-with-mexican-wave-of-capital-crimes</a>	Most upvoted comment: (10) I love it that people like David Marsh exist, let alone try their best to hold the line. It gives modest pedants like me some hope that all is not lost.	22.02.2019
118	At last, a book that tells you exactly where to stick your apostrophe	04.12.2015	#Correctness, #Book	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	Mention of <i>Eats, Shoots &amp; Leaves</i> : "Griffin, rightly, describes “attributive fucking apostrophes” as a murky area – is it farmer’s market, farmers’ market, or farmers market? – and concludes wisely: “See that fence over there? Take a nice comfy seat on it with me and watch them fight it out. The important thing is to know the meaning of each one, and remember, it’s just a fucking apostrophe.” "	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/dec/04/at-last-a-book-that-tells-you-exactly-where-to-stick-your-apostrophe">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/dec/04/at-last-a-book-t-hat-tells-you-exactly-where-to-stick-your-apostrophe</a>	Most upvoted comment: (110) "since the 1970's ". In a piece about apostrophes, here's an interesting use; why do so many people use an apostrophe in places like this? There's no question of possession, nor of omission of one or several letters, so what does the apostrophe indicate? I think that one can perfectly well write "the 1970s", to mean the decade that started in 1970. But maybe I am missing something? Thanks in advance for any sensible comments.	21.02.2019
119	CIA, NSA and MI5: why our	04.03.2015	#Correctness, #Grammar	Adam Lewis	Mostly prescriptive	<b>Lists statistics of how incorrect grammar and spelling gives a bad reputation to companies and people. Headline connects bad grammar with low intelligence.</b> "It’s futile to nitpick intelligence agencies’ web content in search of trivial errors, however	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/</a>	Most upvoted comment: (4) Poppycock! Software is not the answer. Relying on software to check our grammar is the problem, not the solution. Doing so makes us blasé about	30.04.2019

	intelligence agencies aren't so smart					comparable it may be to combing cellphone records for traces of suspicious activity. But refreshing irony aside, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests spelling and grammar have measurable effects on perceptions of credibility, quality and importance – traits that ought to be essential for agencies charged with protecting our safety and security."	<a href="http://mar/04/cia-nsa-mi5-intelligence-agencies">mar/04/cia-nsa-mi5-intelligence-agencies</a>	the grammar we use (I don't need to get it right, the machine will do that for me). The answer is to get writers to take responsibility for proof checking their own work, and getting subs and proof readers to do their job properly. In the same way, satnavs are producing travellers who cannot read a map or remember routes. We are deskilling ourselves and making teaching more difficult.	
120	Why there are too many women doctors, women MPs, and women bosses	17.10.2014	#Correctness, #Language change (General)	Maddie York	Mostly prescriptive	"'Woman' is not an acceptable adjective, any more than 'lady' once was. Let's eradicate this misuse and give language a nudge in the right direction (...) The language we use in the paper should not only reflect contemporary usage but give it a nudge in the right direction if it slips. the Guardian style guide is right to instruct journalists to write "female", and the Telegraph and others should rethink all those recent headlines, but there are sociolinguistic justifications beyond the grammatical."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/oct/17/women-doctors-women-bishops-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/oct/17/women-doctors-women-bishops-mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (23) As long as the best man gets the job, i can see no problem,	25.02.2019
121	If you can't use an apostrophe, you don't know	16.08.2013	#Correctness, #Linguistic information, #Book	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	Edited extract from <i>For Who the Bell Tolls</i> : "It's easy to smirk at the "greengrocer's apostrophe" – the shop that uses an apostrophe to indicate a plural ("pea's"), often omitting one when it is actually required ("new seasons asparagus") – but a small trader worried about where the next delivery of purple sprouting broccoli is coming from has got more excuse	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/aug/16/mind-your-lan">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/aug/16/mind-your-lan</a>	Most upvoted comment: (105) Greengrocer's actually know what to do with them, they just like trolling grammar nerds.	21.02.2019

	your shit					than a huge multinational business that makes a profit of £1bn a year."	<a href="#">guage-apostrophe</a>		
122	What's your mother's maiden name? It's none of your business	14.10.2015	#Language change (General)	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	"An interesting debate was launched on Twitter when @KenSmith asked whether it was about time we dropped "maiden name" for the gender-neutral "birth name". The tweet said: "Maiden has a ghostly cargo of Victorian sexual anxiety.""	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/oct/14/whats-your-mothers-maiden-name-its-none-of-your-business">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/oct/14/whats-your-mothers-maiden-name-its-none-of-your-business</a>	Most upvoted comment: (66) Does it really matter? We seem to be obsessed with worrying about the tiniest things these days.	21.02.2019
123	Here's my offer. I'm giving you sight of the horrors of corporate jargon	07.10.2014	#Language change (General)	Richard Lloyd	Mostly prescriptive	"Journalism is hardly immune to mangled language, although at least the intention is mostly to abbreviate rather than obfuscate."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/oct/07/mind-your-language-corporate-jargon">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/oct/07/mind-your-language-corporate-jargon</a>	Most upvoted comment: (3) "Granularity" instead of "detail" really sets my teeth on edge. "We're going to drill down into the data at a greater level of granularity". No you're not: you're going to look at the data in more detail.	25.02.2019
124	Man up, come off it, jel and aww ... the Facebook	16.10.2015	#Language change (CMC)	Rachel Braier	Mostly prescriptive	Suggestions to new Facebook 'reactions': "Readers of this blog will probably be aware that Facebook is trialling six new words to add to its standard "like" button. If they pass muster, these "reactions" and their accompanying emojis could transform our communication on social media and revolutionise the way we respond to photos of our friends' lunch and videos of skateboarding	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/oct/16/man-up-come-off-it-jel-and-aww-the-facebook">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/oct/16/man-up-come-off-it-jel-and-aww-the-facebook</a>	Most upvoted comment: (18) 'Getting all snuggly with my love and watching a bit of Easties with a glass or two of red ' There's only one response ...fuck right off	21.02.2019

	emojis we really need					cats. I may need a “mind blown” emoji to get my head around this."	<a href="#">d-aww-the-facebook-emojis-we-really-need</a>		
125	Allow me to explain why we don't need words like 'mansplain'	12.02.2015	#Lexicography	Liz Cookman	Mostly prescriptive	Critique of the portmanteau 'mansplain'	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/feb/12/allow-me-to-explain-why-we-dont-need-words-like-mansplain">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/feb/12/allow-me-to-explain-why-we-dont-need-words-like-mansplain</a>	Most upvoted comment: (38) YES. My mantra has always been that 'a dickhead is a dickhead', regardless of gender, race, age, anything. The current wave of feminism seems to relish this childish, reductive attitude and is frequently caricaturish in its insistence of denigrating and blaming MEN and MALENESS for everything, and for innately mistrusting and despising them. A woman saying catty, bitchy things to and about men does not make them 'empowered' or 'strong', it makes them a bitch. Men being dickheads makes them a dickhead. We all do it, we're all nasty, condescending and ignorant at times; leave gender out of it.	22.02.2019
126	Frankenwords: they're alive! But for how long?	05.02.2016	#Lexicography, #Language change (General), #Linguistic information	Andy Bodle	Mostly prescriptive	<b>Combines information about linguistics with personal opinion</b> "Swooshtika, flashpacking, moobs, swaption: English is awash with new portmanteaus. But what determines whether yours will be a buzzword, or a bum word? (...) So what determines which coinages will endure? Linguists Constantine Lignos and Hilary Prichard of the University of Pennsylvania identified some of the factors at work in 2015."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/feb/05/frankenwords-portmanteau-blend-words">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2016/feb/05/frankenwords-portmanteau-blend-words</a>	Most upvoted comment: (5) Among other terms that failed to endure are squirearchy (1796)... Squirearchy isn't a word I use every day, but it occurs in print every so often. Even searching this site gives 69 references in the last few years.	21.02.2019

127	A factoid is not a small fact. Fact	17.01. 2014	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	"As with literally, which currently has two meanings ("literally" and "figuratively"), there is some confusion about what you mean when you use the word "factoid" because a second, albeit related, meaning has crept in – and perhaps even supplanted the original."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/jan/17/mind-your-language-factoids">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/jan/17/mind-your-language-factoids</a>	Most upvoted comment: (16) There was a ridiculous "factoid" on Steve Wright's show yesterday: "It would take a year to spend a night in every hotel room in Las Vegas." So Las Vegas has only 365 hotel rooms, does it?	26.02. 2019
128	Stuck in amid hell with you	10.01. 2014	#Correctness	Andy Bodle	Mostly prescriptive	The word 'amid' is scarcely used at all in spoken or written English. Why, then, is it so popular with journalists?	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/jan/10/mind-your-language-amid">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/jan/10/mind-your-language-amid</a>	Most upvoted comment: this construction sneakily avoids telling us whose concern has been heightened, and when - a pet hate of mine. The passive-aggressive passive tense, used to give weight to the writers own opinion via a spurious appeal to an imaginary consensus.	26.02. 2019
129	Data are or data is?	08.07. 2012	#Correctness	Simon Rogers	Mostly prescriptive	"How do you say "data"? I only ask because it's a contentious issue. Along with split infinitives, getting this one wrong offends and delights in equal measure. And, as we write about data every day, we're either getting it very wrong or very right."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/jul/16/data-plural-singular">https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/jul/16/data-plural-singular</a>	Most upvoted comment: (7) I would say data is an uncountable noun now. "Data is" / "a piece of data". That's the way it has gone, you can't fight the current.	26.02. 2019
130	Oxford commas? Let common sense prevail	04.07. 2011	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	Fake news reported that Oxford University would stop using the Oxford comma:"The furore led many people to assume that Oxford University Press, champion of the eponymous comma, had changed sides – a typical reaction was "Are you people insane? The Oxford comma is what separates us from the animals""	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jul/04/oxford-comma-common-sense">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jul/04/oxford-comma-common-sense</a>	Most upvoted comment: (24) "Oxford Commas" is a great name for a band. Better than "Vampire Weekend". "Oxford Weekend" is really dull. But there is a lot of potential in "Vampire Commas".	27.02. 2019

131	The British style? 'The American way?' They are not so different	19.05.2011	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	"The debate about "logical punctuation" suggests two things. First, there is nothing very logical about it. As with so many aspects of language, what you use tends to be the result of a battle between what you were taught, and what you like the look of. Second, British and American English have more in common than people sometimes think. And you can quote me on that."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/may/19/mind-your-language-punctuation-quotations">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/may/19/mind-your-language-punctuation-quotations</a>	Most upvoted comment: (3) Thanks for that Dave, my dear old thing. Been banging on about this to my students for a decade or more and I concur with almost everything you say. But (you knew there was one coming)... You cite, as the so-called American way, as purportedly practised by The Graun, the sentence: "Carefree," in general, means "free from care or anxiety." I must confess the alleged "logic" baffled me - surely (and nothing, as my old biology teacher was wont to say, is surely except in Fleet Street) the "Carefree" is, in this case, being conveyed as a word rather than as part of a sentence, likewise the meaning. So the so-called English way is correct in this context. Unless I'm missing something. Elucidation s'il vous plait!	27.02.2019
132	Here's one that someone else thought of earlier	24.01.2011	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	"A confession: I am planning to steal from <b>the Telegraph</b> style guide"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/jan/24/mind-your-language-telegraph-style-guide">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/jan/24/mind-your-language-telegraph-style-guide</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) Email has no need for a hyphen: no one thinks of "electronic mail" anymore, so there's no reason to style the word so as to imply an abbreviation. It puts the writer/publication about two decades out of date. Add to that the fact that overused hyphens are intrusive and inelegant, and	27.02.2019

								"e-mail" looks like a downright perverse choice.	
133	The trouser is so now in the singular world of fashion	10.05.2013	#Language change (General)	Rachel Braier	Mostly prescriptive	"If fashion dictates that we no longer need plurals, S will be condemned to the linguistic discount bin quicker than you can say "boho-inspired-shrug"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/may/10/mind-your-language-fashion-trousers">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/may/10/mind-your-language-fashion-trousers</a>	Most upvoted comment: (12) I've never read so much bollock.	26.02.2019
134	Don't forget your teethbrush	05.07.2012	#Language change (General), #Correctness	Andy Bodle	Mostly prescriptive	"Arts minister, but art thieves. Drugs tsar, but drug dealers. When you put a noun in front of another noun, should it be singular or plural? (...) There's obviously no hard and fast rule. Why, then, do some constructions sound so wrong?"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/jul/05/mind-your-language-nouns">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/jul/05/mind-your-language-nouns</a>	Most upvoted comment: (14) Shouldn't it be "ladies' room" and "employees' lounge"?	26.02.2019
135	Move over, George Orwell – this is how to sound really clever	11.10.2013	#Lexicography	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Mostly prescriptive	"A new book lists 600 words to use if you want to impress. But when is it appropriate to deviate from plain English and indulge in sesquipedalian behaviour?"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/oct/11/mind-your-language-long-words">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/oct/11/mind-your-language-long-words</a>	Most upvoted comment:(30) Words like fuck and bollocks are big AND clever.	26.02.2019
136	Lucy Mangan: All	24.07.2010	#Grammar, #Correctness	Lucy Mangan	Mostly prescriptive	<b>"What is life if not a constant patrolling of those ever-porous mental borders between rational beliefs and irrational prejudices?"</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/lif">https://www.theguardian.com/lif</a>	Most upvoted comment: 'Less' and 'fewer' can sometimes have different meanings. 'The less	27.02.2019



	style and substance					<b>Especially ones pertaining to grammar?" (...)</b> Even if the Queen, Noam Chomsky and Stephen Fry said it was permissible to use "their" to refer to a defiantly singular, sexless something, I couldn't. It's not right, and for once its wrongness is mathematically provable. Look. 1 = 1. 1 not = 2. I crave a non-risible gender-neutral (not "it") third person sing pronoun in the way normal women my age crave babies."	<a href="http://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/jul/24/style-guide-grammar-lucy-mangan">eandstyle/mind-your-language/2010/jul/24/style-guide-grammar-lucy-mangan</a>	people know about this the better' refers to whatever 'this' is; 'The fewer people know about this the better' refers to the number of people.	
137	Guardian Style: brilliant, not controversial, and not many exclamation marks!	12.11.2010	#Language change (General)	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Mostly prescriptive	Article about the Guardian's new style guide: "Like its predecessors, the book offers guidance, to our journalists and – we hope – a wider readership, on how to use English to communicate clearly and effectively."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/nov/12/guardian-style-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/nov/12/guardian-style-mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (1) @NickDas: Whatever they were called, it's still the best single of all time. Perhaps we were thinking of the Young Rascals, another great band. Apologies. Look out for more mistakes on Tuesday, folks.	27.02.2019
138	What's the loveliest word in the English language?	25.05.2012	#Linguistic information	Harriet Powney	Mostly prescriptive	Tolkien (and others) referred to as linguist "It was the linguist JR Firth who, in 1930, coined the term phonoaesthetics to refer to the study of how words sound. I came across it recently when, 26 years later than most, I heard Marlow ask in Dennis Potter's The Singing Detective: "What's the loveliest word in the English language, officer? In the sound it makes in the mouth? In the shape it makes in the page? E-L-B-O-W.""	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/may/25/mind-your-language-loveliest-word">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/may/25/mind-your-language-loveliest-word</a>	Most upvoted comment: (17) bollocks	26.02.2019
139	I don't sanction this misuse	11.11.2014	#Correctness	David Marsh (former	Prescriptive	"With a quarter of a million words or so to play with, it might seem odd that English uses some of them several times over to mean different things. Normally, the context enables	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-">https://www.theguardian.com/m</a>	Most upvoted comment: (3) Very interesting article,thank you.	22.02.2019

	of 'sanction'			Guardian editor)		you to tell them apart and recognise the difference between, say, a curious man who is inquisitive and a curious man who has two heads, or between a conductor of an orchestra and a conductor on a bus (if such a job still exists). (...) The problem with using a word to mean its opposite is that it hinders clear communication. I don't use "literally" to mean figuratively because ultimately both words will lose any meaning. The same can be argued for using "sanction" to mean punish, rather than permit."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/mind-your-language/2014/nov/11/sanctions-mind-your-language">your-language/2014/nov/11/sanctions-mind-your-language</a>		
140	Dear work colleagues, let's stop using this clumsy phrase	30.09.2014	#Correctness	Toby Chasseaud	Prescriptive	Complaint about the use of the word 'work colleague' as opposed to just 'colleague' "A colleague is someone you work with, so why the pointless prefix?"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/mind-your-language/2014/sep/30/dear-work-colleagues-clumsy-phrase-pointless-prefix-dictionary-definition">https://www.theguardian.com/mind-your-language/2014/sep/30/dear-work-colleagues-clumsy-phrase-pointless-prefix-dictionary-definition</a>	Most upvoted comment: (51) Good luck with your campaign. I'm just off to the ATM Machine.	25.02.2019
141	Good grammar saves lives – and rescues friendships	27.06.2014	#Correctness	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Prescriptive	"It's wrong to dismiss grammatical accuracy as pedantry (or worse, Grammar Nazism) and it's wrong to undervalue a simple apostrophe. Ludicrously, local councils often do. Proposals on banning apostrophes were widely reported last year and led to uproarious protests. People – myself included – can get very attached to a teeny punctuation mark."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/mind-your-language/2014/jun/27/good-grammar-saves-lives-and-rescues">https://www.theguardian.com/mind-your-language/2014/jun/27/good-grammar-saves-lives-and-rescues</a>	Most upvoted comment (3) The photo illustrating this piece has it wrong. Scholars Lane no more needs an apostrophe than Children Lane; Pepys Lane than Smith Lane. Does the High Street belong to High?	26.02.2019

							<a href="#">ues-friends hips</a>		
142	The readers' editor on... falling into, and getting out of, the homophone trap	05.01.2014	#Correctness	Chris Elliott (Keith Kirby)	Prescriptive	<b>Letter of complaint to the Guardian (homophones):</b> "Readers chastise the Guardian in all sorts of ways. They do so downright angrily, more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger, mournfully and in a puzzled fashion. It can be painful when, as is so often the case, the reader has a point. Beyond the error that is the focus of the complaint there is often something else to be learned and even enjoyed when that point is written with a sort of wry, exasperated humour." (...) "Keith Kirby writes: "Sorry if this is tedious pedantry. I do realise accuracy in use of English is less valued than it was and that may, in the main, be a good thing ... I'm writing about homophones. There is a huge difference, for example, between 'God is immanent' and 'God is imminent'. It's important to get it right.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/05/falling-into-the-homophone-trap">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/05/falling-into-the-homophone-trap</a>	Most upvoted comment: (30) Whilst I have sympathy with Keith Kirby's point, I think the Guardian has shown great leadership with respect to homophones and other oppressed minorities than most in the mainstream media.	12.02.2019
143	How to talk posh: a rarely marvelous glossary	22.09.2014	#Correctness (pronunciation)	Steven Poole	Prescriptive	Possibly sarcastic account of how to speak in a posh way correctly: "Always — most "correct" pronunciations are unguessable from the spelling, so the uninitiated will give themselves away. Thus it is with "always", as Kingsley Amis explains in The King's English: "AWLwhizz is the thing to say if you can manage it. I never really can."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/sep/22/how-talk-posh-glossary-non-ugly">https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/sep/22/how-talk-posh-glossary-non-ugly</a>	Most upvoted comment: (59) I have an acquaintance who strives to be "posh". She sleeps in a four-poster bed (yes, really) and once said that she fell asleep as soon as her head hit the pillar. I have never worked out if this is the U way of pronouncing "pillow" or if she had actually concussed herself on the wooden upright.	12.02.2019
144	From the archive, 6 August	06.08.2013	#Correctness (pronunciation)	Miss M. C. Cobby	Prescriptive	Historical complaint article from 06/08/1938: 'As teachers we must do our best to preserve the best features of the King's English and to restrict the absorption of any element, whether from the drawing-room or from the gutter'	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2013/aug/06">https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2013/aug/06</a>	Comments not allowed	12.02.2019

	t 1938: Southerners accused of slovenly speech						<a href="#">6/english-language-slang-southerners</a>		
145	English spellings don't match the sounds they are supposed to represent. It's time to change	11.12.2014	#Grammar, #Prescriptivism	Stephen Linstead (Chair of the English Spelling Society)	Prescriptive	Article by the chair of the <b>English Spelling Society</b> on spelling reform: "An alternative approach to modernisation, being actively considered by the society in cooperation with its sister organisation the American Literacy Council, is to try to open up the question of spelling reform to a wider audience by means of an International English Spelling Congress. The congress would represent a wide range of people throughout the world broadly sympathetic to English spelling reform. Following extensive consultation and expert input, it would approve a preferred alternative to traditional spelling. The hope is that such an alternative system, if it gained sufficient acceptance in the wider English-speaking world, would run alongside traditional spelling and eventually replace it. This alternative approach may have greater chance of success than any government initiative."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/dec/11/mind-your-language-english-spelling">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/dec/11/mind-your-language-english-spelling</a>	Most upvoted comment: (15) No, English spelling is not reflective of the sounds the symbols they represent, and neither is Chinese, or a host of other languages which speakers and writers seem to have no problem with. What English spelling is representative of though is the rich and multicultural history of the language including amongst others influences from Anglo-Saxon, Norse, Celtic, French, Latin, Greek, and an admixture of a host of other languages. Anyone proposing to ethnically cleanse English of its rich historical influences is beneath contempt.	22.02.2019
146	If I were king for a day, George Orwell would	27.02.2015	#Language change (General)	Alistair Stewart (TV presenter/news anchor with OBE)	Prescriptive	Writes about all the ways he would punish people for making what he deems linguistic mistakes if he was king for a day, even referring to this as "linguistic brutality". Using George Orwell to defend his view (link to George Orwell foundation), clarity in language as an argument. "Mine – indeed, ours – is a glorious, vibrant, evolving language. But pollutants will be purged and	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/27/king-for-day-george-orwell-language-c">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/27/king-for-day-george-orwell-language-c</a>	Most upvoted comment: (11) "I think Orwell was concerned with communicating clearly, truthfully and with force. He did not regard language as a medium for the snobbish, and the verbally sclerotic, though Stewart appears to think he did."	31.01.2019

	be my language consultant					accuracy adhered to. What we see too much is the linguistic equivalent of putting tinsel across the top of the frame of a Turner. Though he was no royalist, on this broad theme George Orwell was, I think, spot on."	<a href="#">onsultant-a-lastair-stewart</a>		
147	Metrication is destroying the richness and history of the English language	25.04.2015	#Language change (General)	David Reed	Prescriptive	Letter (to the Guardian) in response to the editing of "pounds" to "kilos" in his previous letter. "You are helping destroy the richness and history of our language, inch by inch, and I will go the extra mile to stop this process – fighting yard by yard and foot by foot, I will defend every acre, every rod, pole and perch of this rich terrain."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/apr/28/metrication-destroying-richness-and-history-of-english-language">https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/apr/28/metrication-destroying-richness-and-history-of-english-language</a>	<b>Comments not allowed (because the Guardian disagrees with statement?)</b>	31.01.2019
148	May I have a word ... about using nouns as verbs	30.09.2018	#Language change (General)	Jonathan Bouquet	Prescriptive	Complaint about using nouns as verbs.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2018/sep/30/may-i-have-word-about-using-nouns-as-verbs">https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2018/sep/30/may-i-have-word-about-using-nouns-as-verbs</a>	Most upvoted: (20) "The noun does not exist that an American couldn't verb"	23.01.2019
149	Chatrooms and social websites encourage	22.11.2010	#Language change (CMC), #Correctness	Press Association (none)	Prescriptive	<b>Article with no author (and warning that it is over 8 years old) about study seemingly published by a 'former student' with Manchester University, working for the English Spelling Society:</b> "The study says: "The increasing use of variant spellings on the internet has been brought about by people	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/nov/22/internet-encourages">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/nov/22/internet-encourages</a>	<b>Comments no longer available</b>	22.04.2019

	age bad spelling, says study					typing at speed in chatrooms and on social networking sites where the general attitude is that there isn't a need to correct typos or conform to spelling rules." The report's author, Lucy Jones, a former student at Manchester University, said: "We are now witnessing the effect these linguistic variations are having on children born into the computer age with such a high level of access in and out of schools. They do not question their existence.""	<a href="#">-bad-spelling-children</a>		
150	Never mind the hyperbole. Please can I have some less?	19.06.2014	#Language change (General), #Correctness	Andy Bodle	Prescriptive	Complaint about usage of hyperbole, literally to mean figuratively as an example. "When writers overuse hyperbole, it's not just the readers who suffer – it's the language (...) One of the most recent casualties has been the word literally. Its earliest, Middle English meaning, confusingly, was literal – "of, or relating to, [alphabetical] letters"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/jun/19/mind-your-language-hyperbole">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/jun/19/mind-your-language-hyperbole</a>	Most upvoted comment: (34) best.article.ever.	26.02.2019
151	Gamm on' is a playground insult, not something to be celebrated	07.11.2018	#Lexicography	Poppy Noor	Prescriptive	"this is a celebration of oneupmanship, not of a word that meaningfully changes the discourse. By praising it, are we ignoring some of its problematic connotations?"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/07/gamm-on-playground-insult-words-of-2018">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/07/gamm-on-playground-insult-words-of-2018</a>	Comments not allowed	24.01.2019
152	That's the Way It Crumbles:	30.07.2017	#Book, #Prescriptivism	Tim Adams	Prescriptive	History of English and American influencing each other described fairly descriptively, yet in terms as if they are in battle, not naturally influencing one another.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jul/03/thats">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jul/03/thats</a>	Most upvoted: (27)"Nor 'Bathroom' ... I refuse to think that washing oneself in the Toilet Bowl is very hygienic, even though many Americans	23.01.2019

	The American Conquest of English by Matthew Engel						<a href="#">-way-it-crumbles-american-conquest-english-matthew-engel-review</a>	seem to think so. Bathrooms have baths in them, and may, or may not, have toilets as well." in reply to "I refuse to call a toilet 'restroom'. I don't find public toilets the least bit restful" (22 upvotes)	
153	Why the Guardian chose Ukip. (Rather than UKIP)	23.05.2014	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Prescriptive	Addressing UKIP's complaint about being called Ukip in the Guardian and the Telegraph "No, we don't spell it like that to annoy Nigel Farage. It's just a matter of house style (...) I doubt the Guardian has as many Ukip supporters as the Telegraph among its readers – although there's no shortage of them who like to comment below the line on our blogs – so it's not a complaint we often get."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/may/23/mind-your-language-ukip">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2014/may/23/mind-your-language-ukip</a>	Most upvoted comment: (13) Don't people pronounce VAT as Vat? I know I do.	26.02.2019
154	Basically, don't underestimate your listener	15.11.2013	#Correctness	Maddie York	Prescriptive	In response to Steven Poole's defense of 'basically': "When it comes to the word 'basically' – banned by an academy in south London – I don't have old ears. I'm not just grumpy about its usage among the young. And I'm certainly not missing any interpersonal nuance or failing to think hard enough about the semantic and social function of the word. (...) Orwell wrote: "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought." If we start becoming more tolerant of the boiling down of thought in our conversations, aren't we gradually going to just stop thinking properly?"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/nov/15/mind-your-language-basically">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/nov/15/mind-your-language-basically</a>	Most upvoted comment: (29) "We should strive for complexity of thought...". Utter rubbish. We should strive for clear and effective communication. We should try to discern the relevant and important facts from amongst the infinity of surrounding confusion and noise. "Basically" is a very good word.	26.02.2019
155	Basket case: the	01.06.2012	#Correctness	David Marsh (former	Prescriptive	"(...) Is basket case offensive? In origin, certainly – which may be why it is now mainly applied to countries and currencies	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/m">https://www.theguardian.com/m</a>	Most upvoted comment (3) Basket case is a term still used to describe the British economy	26.02.2019

	case against			Guardian editor)		rather than people. In any context, as our reader mentioned, the phrase is indeed "worn out". As lazily applied to an economy, it has lost any metaphorical power or rhetorical freshness it may once have had. That's reason enough to avoid it."	<a href="#">edia/mind-your-language/2012/jun/01/mind-your-language-basket-case</a>	in the 70s. I heard it not that long ago on BBC Radio 4's flagship Today programme. Couched in the usual "Of course Britain was a basket case in the 70s..." followed by a thank goodness Thatcher rescued us from all that! Dominic Sandbrook's highly biased account of the 70s for BBC2 took much the same worn-out road. Yet as the full force of the damage Thatcher caused our country grows ever more apparent, it would be nice if we could finally lay this ghost to rest. History is written by the winners and, all right then, the Thatcherites and monetarists won. But we've seen where this hegemony of extreme neoliberalism has got us and I believe the tide is finally turning against it. Thatcher's election in 1979 marked a sea change that continued for more than 30 years but is now, finally, thank goodness, on its last legs. The current government's attempts to shrink the state and scapegoat benefit claimants - as well as people with disabilities and others who are most vulnerable - for the mess we're in is not working. It's the final flare of the candle before it	
--	-----------------	--	--	---------------------	--	--	--	--	--



								goes out. But since this is a language blog and not an economic nor political one, may I add two further cliches I wish journalists would stop using? Could we stop referring to huge bills as "eye watering" and to a million pounds as "a cool million" Find another way to say it!	
156	We know who [Johnny] Depp is, thank you	11.11.2011	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Prescriptive	Complaints about the Guardian's use of square brackets from readers	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/nov/11/mind-your-language-square-brackets">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/nov/11/mind-your-language-square-brackets</a>	Most upvoted comment: (3) @BobbyDarin The way to do this is to call her "Sienna Miller" at first mention, then perhaps "the actor" at second mention, like this: Sienna Miller is suing the News of the World for alleged phone hacking, it was revealed today. The actor accuses the paper of ...This is elegant variation and tells anyone who may not know who she is. And from my point of view it gets rid of the horrible tabloid-style occupational list: "actor Sienna Miller". So it's easy to avoid.	27.02.2019
157	Ask not for who the bell tolls	15.08.2011	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Prescriptive	Complaints about the Guardian's use of 'who' and 'whom', and prescriptive explanation of the usage.	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/aug/15/mind-your-language-who-whom">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/aug/15/mind-your-language-who-whom</a>	Most upvoted comment: (54) Though of course, Chandler had the advantage of using a typewriter and not an online commenting platform, so his version didn't have stupid formatting and came out just as he wrote it.	27.02.2019

158	Railspeak should be terminated	26.06.2011	#Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Prescriptive	Complaint about the usage of English in trains: "Railspeak is a language with a unique syntax and vocabulary – characterised by, for example, the mandatory use of auxiliary verbs ("we do apologise"), the random deployment of redundant adjectives ("station stop", "personal belongings") and the selection of inappropriate prepositions ("journey time into London Paddington is approximately 25 minutes")."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/jun/26/railspeak-terminated-train-station-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/jun/26/railspeak-terminated-train-station-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (51) Amen	27.02.2019
159	Guardian Style digested ... by John Crace	29.11.2010	#Correctness, #Grammar	John Crace	Prescriptive	"Grammar is the set of rules followed by speakers of a language, innit? By everyone except Guardian writers, that is, so I have pulled together all the dreary grammatical stuff on commas, colons and split infinitives to the front in the hope – rather than expectation – that just one member of staff bothers to have a look before putting their complimentary copy on eBay."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/nov/29/guardian-style-digested-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/nov/29/guardian-style-digested-mind-your-language</a>	<b>Most upvoted comment:</b> @TimmMMM from Guardian Style: split infinitives "The English-speaking world may be divided into (1) those who neither know nor care what a split infinitive is; (2) those who do not know, but care very much; (3) those who know and condemn; (4) those who know and distinguish. Those who neither know nor care are the vast majority, and are happy folk, to be envied." (HW Fowler, Modern English Usage, 1926) It is perfectly acceptable, and often desirable, to sensibly split infinitives – "to boldly go" is an elegant and effective phrase – and stubbornly to resist doing so can sound pompous and awkward ("the economic precipice on which they claim perpetually to be	27.02.2019

								<b>poised") or ambiguous: "he even offered personally to guarantee the loan that the Clintons needed to buy their house " raises the question of whether the offer, or the guarantee, was personal. George Bernard Shaw got it about right after an editor tinkered with his infinitives: "I don't care if he is made to go quickly, or to quickly go – but go he must!"</b>	
160	Excuse me, but I think your modifier is dangling	04.08.2010	#Correctness, #Grammar	Liz Boulter	Prescriptive	"What is wrong is that they all contain dangling modifiers (also known as hanging or dangling participles)."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/aug/04/dangling-modifiers-hanging-participles#comments">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/aug/04/dangling-modifiers-hanging-participles#comments</a>	Most upvoted comment: (0) Dangling modifiers irk me, so thanks for this!	27.02.2019
161	That's the way to do it	17.10.2011	#Grammar, #Correctness	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Prescriptive	"Every which way but that? How to choose between 'that' and 'which', and why it matters" (...) It's normally quite easy to decide between "that" and "which" but many writers seem confused, or not bothered, about the difference; others think "which" is "correct" and have been taught it is appropriate for formal writing, an example of hypercorrection that can make their prose sound pompous."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/oct/17/mind-your-language-that-which">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/oct/17/mind-your-language-that-which</a>	Most upvoted comment: (6) I find nothing unclear about "All molecules which are drugs bind to receptors." So long as the sentence is punctuated correctly (i.e., without commas), its meaning is unambiguous. No one on earth thinks all molecules are drugs. Which can be used with restrictive clauses. Jane Austen did so, as did Dickens, Melville, Stoker, and	27.02.2019

							countless good writers. It's in the King James Bible. Non-restrictive that appears in Macbeth. Arnold Zwicky has described some of the problems with this "rule", and there's a useful history in MWDEU. The continued popularity of which-hunting probably owes at least in part to the dubious influence of Strunk and White, but not even White himself held to this unhelpful proscription. From "Death of a Pig": ...no one took the event lightly and the premature expiration of a pig is, I soon discovered, a departure which the community marks solemnly on its calendar		
162	There are lots of bacteria, but there is only one genetic code	10.01.2013	#Language change (General)	Bernard Dixon (former editor of New Scientist)	Prescriptive	<b>"Language and the connotations of words and expressions evolve over time – helpfully so, when new distinctions and subtleties arise. But meanings also change simply as a result of ignorance or error. So when, some years ago, more and more people began to say "disinterested" when they meant "uninterested", the misuse gradually became a normal meaning of that word. (...) In times past, illiterate misuse of language would have been marginalised by the perpetuation of literate writing and speech, encouraged by the teaching of conventional English grammar in schools. Is the reverse now happening? Is illiteracy becoming a driver of what passes for literacy? And how are teachers coping? Do they still explain</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/jan/10/mind-your-language-bacteria-genetic">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/jan/10/mind-your-language-bacteria-genetic</a>	Most upvoted comment: (5) Language changes over time. Get over it.	26.02.2019

						<b>the important difference between "who" and "whom", which newspapers and other media increasingly ignore? Why are even the editors of scientific journals adopting fashionable but incorrect usages?"</b>			
163	People , curb your enthusiasm	03.05. 2012	#Language change (General)	Gary Nunn (writer in Mind Your Language blog)	Prescriptive	Complaint about misuse of hyperbole "One of the things that makes language fascinating is that it's always evolving. Just sometimes, we need to intervene with that evolution, do a 180 and start a linguistic revolution. One of those times is now."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/may/03/curb-your-enthusiasm-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/may/03/curb-your-enthusiasm-mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (3) Seminal. Music writers, in particular, should stop using this word unless they're genuinely discussing a seminal work (eg Heartbreak Hotel, Kind Of Blue). People seem to think it's interchangeable with "really good". It's become so misused that anyone writing seminal who doesn't know what it means should be forced to ingest something seminal. Not nice, but they wouldn't make the mistake again.	26.02. 2019
164	Going forward, let's consign this inane phrase to history	30.08. 2011	#Language change (General)	Mark Seacombe (production editor of the Observer)	Prescriptive	Complaint about the phrase "going forward": "Going forward, let's not utter or write the superfluous, meaningless, ubiquitous "going forward"."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/aug/30/mind-your-language-going-forward">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/aug/30/mind-your-language-going-forward</a>	Most upvoted comment: (13) How funny you should blame Americans for this. I never heard this phrase until I moved to the UK. Maybe you should write about why every Brit writer blames America for every so-called "Americanism" when they should be looking in their own backyard...err, garden.	27.02. 2019
165	This craze for 'ahead of' has got to	07.03. 2011	#Language change (General)	David Marsh (former Guardian editor)	Prescriptive	"Who would have thought the humble old word "before" would become an endangered species? So far as I know, it has never done anyone any harm."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2011/</a>	Most upvoted comment: @Hannahbaby Well the blog is meant to be about use of language (and if you're not interested, why are you reading it? Do you need to get out	27.02. 2019

	stop ... before it's too late						<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/mar/07/mind-your-language-ahead-of-before">mar/07/mind-your-language-ahead-of-before</a>	more?) but I could ask the editor if I can write one about wine, women and song instead, though some might say there is plenty of that elsewhere in the Guardian.	
166	A Plea for the Queen's English? R U joking?	09.12.2010	#Language change (General)	Dan Cook	Prescriptive	"The English language is at it again. Three hundred years after Jonathan Swift issued a plea for a method of "ascertaining and fixing our language for ever", internet chatrooms and the likes of Facebook are causing a generation to break the rules in new and possibly permanent ways. According to a survey last month, two-thirds of the 18- to 24-year-olds questioned thought "variant" spellings that made it easier to type at speed were acceptable."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/09/guardian-style-exhibition-mind-your-language">https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/dec/09/guardian-style-exhibition-mind-your-language</a>	Most upvoted comment: (2) Go Henry! I suppose it's 150 years too late to ask for his number...	27.02.2019
167	Modern tribes: the grammar pedant	28.02.2015	#Grammar	Catherine Bennett (Observer columnist)	Prescriptive	Proud to be a 'grammar pedant': "Well, your teachers ought to care; it's almost as bad as saying historic for historical. I wrote to the Times about it: anyone capable of that kind of outrage ought to be gagged, imprisoned and banned from writing, as well as summarily dismissed – the same goes for people who use disinterested for uninterested (...) Because, apart from the tragic loss of a completely innocent word, which should be punishable, like any other form of murder, the abuse of language causes needless anger, hurt and offence. It's a question of good manners. Did you really just say refute? (...) I don't care what Shakespeare wrote, his grammar was appalling."	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/feb/28/grammar-pedant-modern-tribes-catherine-bennett">https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/feb/28/grammar-pedant-modern-tribes-catherine-bennett</a>	Most upvoted comment: (36) "Here here. Oops."	31.02.2019
168	Cn u txt?	11.11.2002	#Language change (CMC)	<b>John Sutherland</b>	Prescriptive	"Linguistically it's all pig's ear. Why then has texting taken off so explosively? And why here? Wood-headed educationists will point out that it's a forgiving system: it masks	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/mar/07/mind-your-language-ahead-of-before">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2</a>	Comments not allowed	30.04.2019

						dyslexia, poor spelling and mental laziness. Texting is penmanship for illiterates. Technologically, texting is the result of cordless phone meets computer. Smarter gizmos are in the pipeline. If you don't text now, it's not worth learning: in a couple of years voice recognition systems will kick in." Note: Ironic typo in headline "to the" "tot he"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/mobilephones2">002/nov/11/mobilephones2</a>		
169	May I have a word about ... tropes, chops and malaprops	04.11.2018	#Lexicography	Jonathan Bouquet	Prescriptive	Prescriptive complaint about the wrong use of the word "trope" compared to "topos"	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2018/nov/04/may-i-have-a-word-about-tropes-chops-malaprops">https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2018/nov/04/may-i-have-a-word-about-tropes-chops-malaprops</a>	<b>Most upvoted: "I keep my grump for the ones where I think we lose something important, and top of my list is 'disinterested', which used to mean a position uncontaminated by interest - in the sense used on when someone recuses themselves by "declaring an interest" - and nowadays is used as a synonym for 'uninterested', for lacking any interest in the sense of not caring." (8 upvotes)</b>	17.01.2019
170	Clive James: 'The English language is under siege from tone-deaf activists'	18.06.2016	#Language change (CMC)	Clive James ('Australia broadcaster and critic')	Prescriptive	Mentions standard language, claims Jane Austen wrote it, CMC "sounds" pressed for time, "(...) Since then, the English language, writhing and groaning in its hand-basket, has gone even farther towards hell, and perhaps now is the right moment to upgrade my campaign by observing that people who write as if they have no time for such useless stuff as grammar and punctuation are inviting you to treat them as if you have no time for such useless stuff as listening to a bore mangle our beautiful language while he declares himself important" "(...)But I admit that this is merely my opinion, not settled science. If I were	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/jun/18/clive-james-guardian-english-language-grammar-blogs-web">https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/jun/18/clive-james-guardian-english-language-grammar-blogs-web</a>	<b>Most upvoted: (112) "As is failing to distinguish between linguistic evolution and laziness" in reply to: "Ranting against idiomatic change is a rather pointless activity IMHO." (60 upvotes)</b>	24.01.2019

						advancing this opinion in the form of a tweet or comment, I could insert the acronym IMO, so proving that the standard dead white male language of Jane Austen is now being assailed not only by expansive phrases from institutions that wish to sound more important, but also by piddling abbreviations from individuals who wish to sound pressed for time."			
171	Single-use' named 2018 word of the year	07.11.2018	#Lexicography	Alison Flood (Guardian books reporter)	Prescriptive	Word of 2018 picked for political reasons/topic of the year, not actually most used	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/07/single-use-named-word-of-the-year-2018-environment-collins-dictionary">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/07/single-use-named-word-of-the-year-2018-environment-collins-dictionary</a>	Most upvoted: (53)"single-use President would be popular"	24.01.2019
172	Misinformation' picked as word of the year by Dictionary.com	26.11.2018	##Lexicography	Associated press New York	Prescriptive	Mis- deliberately chosen over dis-information to "call to action" against false information, therefore prescriptive	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/nov/26/misinformation-word-of-the-year-dictionary-com">https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/nov/26/misinformation-word-of-the-year-dictionary-com</a>	Comments not allowed	02.01.2019



## Appendix 2: Summary of articles compiled from the *Telegraph*

For details about the process of compiling the spreadsheets and a description of columns, see section 3.3.1 in the thesis.

The descriptive-prescriptive scale is presented in section 3.2.3

The topics are described in section 3.3.3

#	Title	Date published	Topic(s)	Author/role	Descriptive-prescriptive scale	Summary/description/quote	Link	Comments	Date last accessed
1	Simon Heffer: The Corrections	20.08.2010	#Grammar, #Correctness standardisation	Simon Heffer	<b>Appearing descriptive, prescriptive attitude</b>	Claims to be descriptive but prescribes that there is one, and only one, correct way of writing English. Also adds that it is unfortunate that people judge people based on how they write or speak, but that it is unavoidable. "But we have had a standard dictionary now ever since the OED was completed in 1928, and learned men, many of whom contributed to the OED, wrote grammars a century ago that settled a pattern of language that was logical and free from the danger of ambiguity. It is to these standards that I hope Strictly English is looking. Our language is to a great extent settled and codified, and to a standard that people recognise and are comfortable with."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/7956010/Simon-Heffer-The-Corrections.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/7956010/Simon-Heffer-The-Corrections.html</a>	No comments allowed	21.03.2019

2	In praise of dialect democracy	06.06.2004	#Book, #Standard English	Jonathan Rose	<b>Appearing descriptive, prescriptive attitude</b>	<b>Descriptive presentation and prescriptive critique of David Crystal's <i>The Stories of English (2004)</i>:</b> "David Crystal has a keenly felt complaint about linguistic history: it is written not only by the winners, but about them. The grand narrative of the English tongue conventionally concentrates on Standard English, with only sidelong glances at regional and ethnic dialects. Crystal wants to do what so many other historians have done over the past 40 years: refocus our attention on the hitherto "marginalised". (...) "Crystal's resentful attacks on standard language strike me as beating an almost-dead and very English horse. In Victorian Britain, "proper" English was certainly snobbish and imperialistic, but by now the pendulum has swung back to a happy midpoint between posh and non-posh. And Crystal should acknowledge that Standard American English has been a democratising force, ensuring that all ethnic groups can participate in the national discourse. Proposals to teach "Black English" are today dismissed by ambitious black parents, who remind their children that they can't write newscasts, legal briefs or corporate memoranda in dialect. So yes, we can afford to be cool about split infinitives."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/4192599/In-praise-of-dialect-democracy.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/4192599/In-praise-of-dialect-democracy.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019
3	Are 'grammar Nazis' ruining the English language?	19.03.2014	#Prescriptivism, #Descriptivism, #Grammar, #Standard English	Tom Chivers (assistant comment editor)	Descriptive	<b>Geoffrey Pullum: Linguistics is scientific and grammar nazis are wrong. "Whenever linguists point out that the rules of language can't be what the "grammar Nazis" think they are, people claim that they're saying anything goes. Not at all, says Pullum. "We grammarians who study the English language are not all bow-tie-wearing martinets, but we're also not flaming liberals who think everything should be allowed. There's a sensible middle ground where you decide what the rules of Standard English are, on the basis of close study of the way that native speakers use the language."</b>	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10692897/Are-grammar-Nazis-ruining-the-English-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10692897/Are-grammar-Nazis-ruining-the-English-language.html</a>	No comments allowed	15.04.2019

4	Emoji is Britain's fastest growing language as most popular symbol revealed	19.05.2015	#Language change (CMC)	"Agency" (none given)	Descriptive	Prescriptive observation by experts	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/11614804/Emoji-is-Britains-fastest-growing-language-as-most-popular-symbol-revealed.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/11614804/Emoji-is-Britains-fastest-growing-language-as-most-popular-symbol-revealed.html</a>	No comments allowed	02.01.2019
5	Humans may speak a universal language say scientists	12.09.2016	#Linguistic information	Sarah Knapton (Science editor)	Descriptive	Universal sounds in many languages, found by linguists	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/09/12/humans-may-speak-a-universal-language-say-scientists/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/09/12/humans-may-speak-a-universal-language-say-scientists/</a>	No comments allowed	02.01.2019
6	Language development mirrors species evolution	31.01.2008	#Linguistic information	Roger Highfield (science editor)	Descriptive	Scientific article about language development	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/3323803/Language-development-mirrors-species-evolution.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/3323803/Language-development-mirrors-species-evolution.html</a>	No comments allowed	02.01.2019
7	Text speak does not affect children's use of grammar: study	05.09.2012	#Language change (CMC)	Rebecca Smith (medical editor)	Descriptive	Study showing the exact opposite of a study a few months earlier. Article using scientific jargon.	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/9520111/Text-speak-does-not-affect-childrens-use-of-grammar-study.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/9520111/Text-speak-does-not-affect-childrens-use-of-grammar-study.html</a>	No comments allowed	16.03.2019
8	The trench talk that is now entrenched in the English language	25.11.2012	#Lexicography	Jasper Copping (former general news reporter)	Descriptive	Expert (British library) on words and phrases created as a result of WW1. "From cushy to crummy and blind spot to binge drink, a new study reveals the impact the First World War had on the English language and the words it introduced."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/9700432/The-trench-talk-that-is-now-entrenched-in-the-English-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/9700432/The-trench-talk-that-is-now-entrenched-in-the-English-language.html</a>	No comments allowed	02.01.2019

9	Mind our language	30.06.2004	#Language change (General)	David Crystal	Descriptive	<b>The history of people's feelings about dialects:</b> "Teaching dialects is a vital part of English lessons, says linguistic historian David Crystal. We are at the beginning of a new age of English language study, and all of us - teachers, children, parents - have to live with the consequences. We are witnessing a reaction against the traditional method of teaching our mother tongue. People who went to school before the 1970s will remember it well - its parsing and clause analysis, its avoidance of split infinitives, its distaste for sentences ending with prepositions. Thus was the "educated" language user differentiated from the "uneducated"."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/3341409/Mind-our-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/3341409/Mind-our-language.html</a>	No comments allowed	30.04.2019
10	North-South language divide to disappear?	04.12.2013	#Language change (Speech), #Linguistic information	Claire Carter	Descriptive	Description of linguistic study. Opinions of researchers are fairly clearly marked as opinions, and results from the study are marked as indications, not hard facts.	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/10494927/North-South-language-divide-to-disappear.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/10494927/North-South-language-divide-to-disappear.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.01.2019
11	Scientists chart how words are changing	10.10.2007	#Lexicography, #Language change (General)	Roger Highfield (science editor)	Descriptive	Scientific article about the development of words (etymology and semantics) The mentioned professors are however professors of evolutionary biology, not linguistics	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/3309950/Scientists-chart-how-words-are-changing.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/3309950/Scientists-chart-how-words-are-changing.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.01.2019
12	Revealed: the 30 most bizarre phrases in the English language	17.03.2016	#Linguistic information	Mark Molloy	Descriptive	Describes 30 odd English phrases and how they are used, citing a study by the University of Bern, mention of linguistics and creative writing professor.	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/howaboutthat/12197179/Revealed-the-30-most-bizarre-phrases-in-the-English-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/howaboutthat/12197179/Revealed-the-30-most-bizarre-phrases-in-the-English-language.html</a>	No comments allowed	01.02.2019
13	British travellers remain lazy linguists	20.11.2012	#Other	None	Descriptive	<b>The term 'linguist' used as 'user of foreign language'</b>	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/news/British-travellers-remain-lazy-linguists/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/news/British-travellers-remain-lazy-linguists/</a>	No comments allowed	07.02.2019

14	Cockney takes on a new sound	22.08.2005	#Language change (Speech)	Amy Iggulden	Descriptive	Scientific account (with various professors' professional opinion) of change in the Cockney accent	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/4197241/Cockney-takes-on-a-new-sound.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/4197241/Cockney-takes-on-a-new-sound.html</a>	No comments allowed	07.02.2019
15	Linguistic researchers begin hunt for the next 'selfie'	03.03.2014	#Lexicography	Sophie Curtis	Descriptive	'Selfie' was named Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year in 2013, beating the likes of 'twerk' and 'bitcoin' to the punch. Now researchers at Aston University are beginning work on a new project, analysing more than one billion tweets from the UK and US to uncover the next most popular word	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/twitter/10672643/Linguistic-researchers-begin-hunt-for-the-next-selfie.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/twitter/10672643/Linguistic-researchers-begin-hunt-for-the-next-selfie.html</a>	No comments allowed	07.02.2019
16	Migrant pupils' linguistic skills 'wasted' in class	23.09.2005	#Other	Liz Lightfoot (Education Correspondent)	Descriptive	<b>The term 'linguistic skills' used about 'bilingualism'</b>	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1499000/Migrant-pupils-linguistic-skills-wasted-in-class.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1499000/Migrant-pupils-linguistic-skills-wasted-in-class.html</a>	No comments allowed	07.02.2019
17	Sandi Toksvig finds linguistic treasures in the 'Urban Dictionary'	18.12.2011	#Language change (General), #Correctness	<b>Sandi Toksvig</b>	Descriptive	"Don't bleat and squabble about the evolution of the English language; instead have fun and play with it" (...) "Language is a funny old thing. The other day I was taking part in an audience Q&A when I was roundly scolded by a woman for "allowing the BBC to ruin the English language". Naturally I felt terrible as I had no idea either that it was happening or that I was responsible. She seemed particularly exercised about prepositions. "They're fired at the listener like grapeshot," she declared. "What a horrible way to go," I murmured, not entirely clear on the best line of defence. The gist of what she wanted, I think, was for us all to speak as she did, but the truth is that the English language has never been either preserved in aspic or one person's preserve. It has ever been evolving."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/sandi-toksvig/8961276/Sandi-Toksvig-finds-linguistic-treasures-in-the-Urban-Dictionary.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/sandi-toksvig/8961276/Sandi-Toksvig-finds-linguistic-treasures-in-the-Urban-Dictionary.html</a>	No comments allowed	02.05.2019
18	The decline of the gradable adverb: 'quite', 'rather' and 'fairly' are becoming	11.11.2017	#Language change (General)	Camilla Turner (Education Editor)	Descriptive	Mention of linguistic study and researcher: "He said that a possible reason for the decline of gradable adverbs is that they are now seen as a middle or an upper-class way of speaking. "There is an awareness of that...people don't want to be associated with the upper classes, so they level out their language," he said." (...) "The study, which analyses language trends over the course of the twentieth century, found that there has been a steep	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/11/11/decline-gradable-adverb-quite-rather-fairly-becoming-relic-past/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/11/11/decline-gradable-adverb-quite-rather-fairly-becoming-relic-past/</a>	No comments allowed	07.02.2019

	a relic of the past					decline in "gradable adverbs", a grammatical category of words that can be used to reduce the force of a phrase."			
19	English language is changing faster than ever, research reveals	01.05.2015	#Language change (CMC)	Agency (none given)	Descriptive	<b>John Sutherland</b> , Lord Northcliffe Professor Emeritus of Modern English Literature at University College London, said: "The Samsung Galaxy S6 Evolution of Text study provides us with a fascinating overview of how our informal language has evolved over the last 25 years and points to a future where we will see pictorial messaging in the ascendant.	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/howaboutthat/11574196/new-forms-of-social-media-terms-which-parents-do-not-understand.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/howaboutthat/11574196/new-forms-of-social-media-terms-which-parents-do-not-understand.html</a>	No comments allowed	02.05.2019
20	Language change forces dictionary update	25.03.2008	#Language change (General), #Lexicography	David Thomas	Descriptive	"A £34 million pound project to update the definitions of English words is being sped up because of the rate at which the language is changing. A 60-strong team working on the first revision of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) has spent the past decade covering just four-and-a-half letters - from M to the middle of words beginning with Q."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1582763/Language-change-forces-dictionary-update.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1582763/Language-change-forces-dictionary-update.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02.2019
21	Hunt for 100 events that shaped the English language	24.10.2010	#Language change (General)	Rebecca Lefort	Descriptive	A project to find the 100 events and places that played the most significant role in shaping the English language has been launched.	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturenews/8082737/Hunt-for-100-events-that-shaped-the-English-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturenews/8082737/Hunt-for-100-events-that-shaped-the-English-language.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02.2019
22	Dictionary of everyday words defines 'doobly' and 'embuggerance'	15.06.2008	#Lexicography	John Bingham	Descriptive	"A new dictionary explaining the difference between a "doobly", a pair of "yupes" or an everyday "embuggerance" is being compiled by experts."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2134677/Dictionary-of-everyday-words-defines-doobly-and-embuggerance.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2134677/Dictionary-of-everyday-words-defines-doobly-and-embuggerance.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02.2019
23	English will fragment into 'global dialects'	05.03.2008	#Language change (General), #Standard English	Laura Clout	Descriptive	Misspelling of the linguistic term diglossia: "The language is in effect developing along two parallel tracks, Prof Crystal said, a phenomenon called diaglossia. "These new dialects are expressing local attitudes which people feel very strongly about as a way of expressing who they are. " But at the same time it is very important that there is full international intelligibility. That is fostering the development of what once upon a time we would have called Standard English - which is used in newspapers, textbooks and the like." The lecture was held to launch the campaign for	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1580745/English-will-fragment-into-global-dialects.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1580745/English-will-fragment-into-global-dialects.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.03.2019

						The English Project, which hopes to be the world's first living museum dedicated to the history and evolution of the English language"			
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

24	Idiomatic English means Brits struggle to communicate with the world	14.12.2017	#Language change (General), #Correctness	Olivia Rudgard	Descriptive	Mostly about how Brits use idioms that foreign English speakers do not understand, but: "English as spoken by foreign countries is also developing new grammar rules which are seen as incorrect by native speakers but are valued abroad because they are logical and efficient."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/12/14/idiomatic-english-means-brits-struggle-communicate-world/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/12/14/idiomatic-english-means-brits-struggle-communicate-world/</a>	Most upvoted comment: (34) Sounds to me like a disguised anti-Brexit publication masquerading as academic research. Perhaps the foreign English speakers interviewed don't speak English as well as they	08.02.2019
----	--	------------	--	----------------	-------------	--	---	--	------------



									claim. Further, if they don't get British cultural references, perhaps they should spend more time understanding the culture of the country whose language they purport to speak. This is what I do regarding the additional	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

									languages that I speak. "Professor Jennifer Jenkins, chair of Global Englishes at the University of Southampton, says that people who speak English as a first language are bad at changing their speech to suit non-native	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---	--

								speakers, meaning they struggle to be understood." Clearly professor Jenkins doesn't get to London much. I have to simplify my English on a daily basis, so as to communicate with the many non-native	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

								speakers that I encounter in a service, retail or transport environment. Perhaps Southampton is different...	
25	Teachers told to stop stressing about split infinitives, as study finds they are now part of everyday language	24.09.2017	#Correctness, #Language change (General)	Camilla Turner (Education Editor)	Descriptive	Descriptive account of linguistic research. Language Guardians referred to as 'linguistic traditionalists'. Linguists referred to as 'language experts' (and linguists) "Splitting an infinitive and starting a sentence with “so” or “like” are all habits that any self-respecting grammar pedant would abhor. But a new study has found that conventions which prohibit such practises are so widely flouted, they have effectively become part of modern spoken English. Researchers have suggested that teachers no longer need to advise pupils against splitting infinitives or starting sentences with “so” or “like”, since they are now in common parlance." (...) "Dr Claire Dembry, principal research manager at Cambridge University Press, said: "Learners of English deserve to be taught in a way which is informed by the most up-to-date research into how the language is used in the real world." He told The Daily Telegraph that the research will re-ignite discussion between linguistic traditionalists and modernisers. "It is a big <b>debate between people who think language is a set of rules and you should resist change,</b> " he said. "They will say that in order to teach language you need a set of rules. "But laws get updated to reflect changes in society. Language	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/09/24/teachers-told-stop-stressing-split-infinitives-study-finds-now/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/09/24/teachers-told-stop-stressing-split-infinitives-study-finds-now/</a>	Most upvoted comment: (21) "My own English teacher told me that you need to know	08.02.2019

						is similar in the sense that times move on and things change, there is no point complaining and language is constantly changing.”		the rules - and then you can break them for effect. Most people break them because they don't know any better. "	
26	The 'conTROversy' over changing pronunciations	05.02.2011	#Language change (Speech)	Jasper Copping (former general news reporter)	Descriptive	Reference to language guardians as 'language purists'. To language purists they might grate, but new ways of pronouncing words are spreading in Britain thanks to the influence of US culture.	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/howaboutthat/8305645/The-conTROversy-over-changing-pronunciations.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/howaboutthat/8305645/The-conTROversy-over-changing-pronunciations.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02.2019

27	The Language Wars: A History of Proper English by Henry Hitchings	14.02. 2011	#Book, #Prescriptivism, #Descriptivism, #Language change (General)	Christopher Howse	Descriptive	" <b>The language wars</b> that <b>Hitchings</b> chronicles, mostly since the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, have sometimes been seen as a struggle between <b>prescriptivists and descriptivists</b> . "A prescriptivist dictates how people should speak and write, whereas a descriptivist avoids passing judgments and provides explanation," he notes. "Pigeonholing of this kind results in some ludicrous misrepresentations of what these writers thought." It is a breath of fresh air (if that is the right cliché) to wander the byways of language without always being nudged to laugh at prescriptivists' foolish nostrums. They may have "bogus rules, superstitions, half-baked logic", the author writes, but "our desire to impose order on the world, which means inventing the forms of language rather than discovering them, is a creative act". More than that, without rules no one could utter a sentence."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/8316091/The-Language-Wars-A-History-of-Proper-English-by-Henry-Hitchings.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/8316091/The-Language-Wars-A-History-of-Proper-English-by-Henry-Hitchings.html</a>	No comments allowed	01.05. 2019
28	English will turn into Panglish in 100 years	27.03. 2008	#Language change (General)	None	Descriptive	English as it is spoken today will have disappeared in 100 years and could be replaced by a global language called Panglish, researchers claim. (...) "Dr Suzette Haden Elgin, a retired linguist formerly at San Diego University in California, said: "I don't see any way we can know whether the result of what's going on now will be Panglish - a single English that would have dialects... or scores of wildly varying Englishes, many or most of them heading toward mutual unintelligibility." How long will it take to find out? "My guess, a wild guess, is less than 100 years." "	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1582954/English-will-turn-into-Panglish-in-100-years.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1582954/English-will-turn-into-Panglish-in-100-years.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02. 2019
29	This studied insult to our accent is loud and clear in any language	09.01. 2004	#Standard English	Alan Cochrane	Descriptive	"You may think that, as a native of Dundee, I am peculiarly sensitive about jibes regarding regional accents. And you may well be right. However, as someone who is a member of family "divided by a common language" - my wife, children and I seldom know what we're individually on about - I think the variety of tongues spoken in these islands is one of the joys of being British. But I also accept that there are language imperialists, such as those cretins who penned the letter exposed by Mr Swinney, who will always seek to impose one standard on us all."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1451233/This-studied-insult-to-our-accent-is-loud-and-clear-in-any-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1451233/This-studied-insult-to-our-accent-is-loud-and-clear-in-any-language.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019
30	BBC chief calls for more regional accents	17.01. 2008	#Language change (Speech)	Nicole Martin	Descriptive	"The director-general of the BBC called yesterday for an increase in the number of regional accents heard on the corporation's television and radio programmes."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1575790/BBC-chief-calls-for-more-regional-accents.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1575790/BBC-chief-calls-for-more-regional-accents.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019

31	Traditional English spellings could be killed off by internet, says language expert	02.01. 2009	#Linguistic information, #Language change (CMC)	Martin Beckford	Descriptive	Summary of David Crystal speaking at conference: "The advent of blogs and chatrooms has meant for the first time in centuries printed words are being widely distributed without first having been edited or proofread first, according to Professor David Crystal of the University of Wales, Bangor." (...) "However Professor Crystal - who spoke at the 20th anniversary conference of the International English Language Testing System, which is used by 6,000 organisations worldwide to gauge ability – does not believe the internet would lead to a complete breakdown in spelling rules, just the development of different rules."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/6840888/Traditional-English-spelling-s-could-be-killed-off-by-internet-says-language-expert.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/6840888/Traditional-English-spelling-s-could-be-killed-off-by-internet-says-language-expert.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.03. 2019
32	From booty to tart: 10 common slang words explained	11.04. 2014	#Lexicography, #Book	Jonathan Green	Descriptive	Descriptive account of slang words by lexicographer, labelled under 'men': "Leading slang lexicographer Jonathon Green explains the origins behind those casual little words that litter our daily vocabulary" Book: <i>Language! 500 Years of the Vulgar Tongue</i>	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/10745133/From-booty-to-tart-10-common-slang-words-explained.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/10745133/From-booty-to-tart-10-common-slang-words-explained.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019
33	From Riddle to Twittersphere : David Crystal tells the story of English in 100 words	14.10. 2011	#Book, #Linguistic information	David Crystal	Descriptive	"David Crystal set himself the challenge of covering the history of English in 100 words. He explains what his list tells us about the origins and evolution of our mother tongue – and we also invite you to get creative with our poetry competition."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/8824676/From-Riddle-to-Twittersphere-David-Crystal-tells-the-story-of-English-in-100-words.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/8824676/From-Riddle-to-Twittersphere-David-Crystal-tells-the-story-of-English-in-100-words.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019
34	How Queen's English has grown more like ours	04.12. 2006	#Language change (Speech), #Linguistic information	Neil Tweedie	Descriptive	"The findings are contained in the Journal of Phonetics, which, in addition to the Queen, addresses such topics as, "The temporal domains of accent in Finnish" and "Perceptual correlates of Cantonese tones". Jonathan Harrington, Professor of Phonetics at the University of Munich, and author of the study on the Queen, said his team had conducted a thorough acoustic analysis of all the Christmas broadcasts during her reign."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1535934/How-Queens-English-has-grown-more-like-ours.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1535934/How-Queens-English-has-grown-more-like-ours.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019

35	Pupils resort to text language in GCSE exams	07.11. 2004	#Language change (CMC), #Standard English	Julie Henry (education correspondent)	Descriptive	"Examiners have given warning that pupils are increasingly using text message language in GCSEs, the first official acknowledgment that mobile phone shorthand is undermining standard English." "Examiners found that the trend was accompanied by an increase in grammatical errors. "The weakest answers were devoid of punctuation, including the full stop, and were difficult to follow as a consequence," the report said. "Sentences were frequently too long (10 lines or more). Apostrophes were often missing and inserted into plural nouns. The usual errors with they're/their; are/our; your/you're were frequent.""	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1476038/Pupils-resort-to-text-language-in-GCSE-exams.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1476038/Pupils-resort-to-text-language-in-GCSE-exams.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019
36	Grammar lessons 'don't help children to write'	19.01. 2005	#Grammar, #Correctness	Liz Lightfoot (Education Correspondent)	Descriptive	"Teaching English grammar in schools is a waste of time because it does not improve writing skills, according to a Government-funded study published yesterday."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1481496/Grammar-lessons-dont-help-children-to-write.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1481496/Grammar-lessons-dont-help-children-to-write.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019
37	A ban on playground slang? Not bloody likely!	15.02. 2012	#Standard English, #Correctness, #Linguistic information	Christopher Howse	Descriptive	Complaint about <b>Sheffield Springs Academy's ban on slang</b> : "A child's mastery of patois should be a step towards the language that will land him or her a job."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/9084296/A-ban-on-playground-slang-Not-bloody-likely.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/9084296/A-ban-on-playground-slang-Not-bloody-likely.html</a>	No comments allowed	20.04. 2019
38	Be careful if you're offered a hottie to warm the bed	06.02. 2013	#Standard English, ##Language change (General)	Robert Colvile	Descriptive	Complaint about school banning Non-Standard words and loss of dialect in The UK "But as head of Sacred Heart Primary School in Middlesbrough, she has asked pupils to moderate their Teesside accents and spelling – to drop the “nowt” and “yous” and “gizit ’ere” – in order to improve their chances in life. What's most interesting about this story is that the sky has failed to fall in. A few years ago, Mrs Walker would have been accused of cultural discrimination – of imposing arbitrary standards of “proper” English on her poor charges."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/9852887/Be-careful-if-youre-offered-a-hottie-to-warm-the-bed.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/9852887/Be-careful-if-youre-offered-a-hottie-to-warm-the-bed.html</a>	No comments allowed	24.04. 2019



39	The top ten most unexpected words added to the online Oxford dictionary	27.08.2015	#Lexicography	Lucy Clarke-Billings	Descriptive	"The online Oxford dictionary has added 1,000 new words to its database. The latest additions have been announced, highlighting the things British people have been talking about in the summer of 2015, such as inconsiderate commuters, solidified waste and unacceptable service charges."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/11827287/The-top-ten-most-unexpected-words-added-to-the-online-Oxford-dictionary.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/11827287/The-top-ten-most-unexpected-words-added-to-the-online-Oxford-dictionary.html</a>	No comments allowed	20.02.2019
40	Glaswegian and Brummie accents 'sound more stupid'	01.08.2011	#Linguistic information	Andrew Hough	Descriptive	Meta-study of people's perceptions of different dialects: "Dr Julia Snell, a sociolinguistics lecturer, who led the latest research, said that while "everyone judges people according to their speech" these perceptions were usually based on social prejudices."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/8675120/Glaswegian-and-Brummie-accent-sound-more-stupid.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/8675120/Glaswegian-and-Brummie-accent-sound-more-stupid.html</a>	No comments allowed	28.04.2019
41	Mothering Sunday cards are using 'Mom' instead of 'Mum' as a language expert warns of Americanisation	09.03.2018	#Language change (General), #Linguistic information	Nicola Harley and Katie Morley	Descriptive	Headline says that language expert warns against Americanisation, but that is not mentioned in the article: "Mom is a popular American word and it is very interesting that the card company has decided to adopt it. "It goes against the grain as most of the language changes which are adopted in Britain are related to grammar and are more subtle. In terms of words over the last 100 years we have seen words such as cop and boss being used."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/09/mothering-sunday-cards-using-mom-instead-mum-language-expert/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/09/mothering-sunday-cards-using-mom-instead-mum-language-expert/</a>	Most upvoted comment: I lived in N America for 40 years after emigrating from the UK. 'Mum' will always remain 'mum' for me.	28.02.2019

								I spell it as I pronounce it. No 'mom' or 'mam' for me!	
42	We shouldn't be grammar Nazis	01.05.2014	#Language change (General)	Tom Payne	Descriptive	"A writer, teacher and pedant argues that we must allow language to develop"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/10801507/We-shouldnt-be-grammar-Nazis.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/10801507/We-shouldnt-be-grammar-Nazis.html</a>	No comments allowed	28.02.2019
43	The magic of metaphors	06.10.2007	#Linguistic information #Book	Robert Hanks	Descriptive	Review of Steven Pinker's <i>The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature</i> : "The fact that we language-speakers apply these rules without conscious effort suggests that we come ready equipped with a set of preconceptions – not just about physics, but about owning, being, causing and, in a later chapter, about position and direction in time and in space."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non-fictionreviews/3668369/The-magic-of-metaphors.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non-fictionreviews/3668369/The-magic-of-metaphors.html</a>		28.02.2019
44	Accidence Will Happen: the Non-Pedantic Guide to English Usage by Oliver Kamm, review: 'full of ironies'	18.02.2015	#Book, #Grammar, #Correctness	Tom Payne	Descriptive	<b>"English language sticklers should relax and give our language the freedom it needs to flourish (...) He divides commentators on language into linguists, who are goodies, and pedants, who are baddies. Linguists describe how language is at the moment; pedants prescribe how they think it should be."</b>	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/11408186/Accidence-Will-Happen-the-Non-Pedantic-Guide-to-English-Usage-by-Oliver-Kamm.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/11408186/Accidence-Will-Happen-the-Non-Pedantic-Guide-to-English-Usage-by-Oliver-Kamm.html</a>		20.02.2019

45	Sorry, pedants – but there’s nothing wrong with a split infinitive	16.04. 2016	#Correctness	Michael Deacon	Descriptive	"“For this to come from the Department for Education,” he snapped, “is unacceptable.” The offending document was “riddled with jargon, ungrammatical structures and split infinitives”. Jargon? No doubt. Ungrammatical structures? Maybe so. But split infinitives? There’s nothing wrong with splitting an infinitive, and there never has been."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2016/04/16/sorry-pedants-but-theres-nothing-wrong-with-a-split-infinitive/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2016/04/16/sorry-pedants-but-theres-nothing-wrong-with-a-split-infinitive/</a>		21.02. 2019
46	Who is right? Dictionary and academic in Twitter row over grammar rule	04.07. 2016	#Correctness, #Grammar	Mark Molloy	Descriptive	"(...) He followed up the tweet with a now-deleted message, explaining: “The singular they is an affront to grammar. Language rules are all that separates us from animals. We. Must. Stand. Firm. (...) then you're talking to the wrong dictionary—we're descriptivists. We follow language, language doesn't follow us"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/04/who-is-right-dictionary-and-academic-in-twitter-row-over-grammar/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/04/who-is-right-dictionary-and-academic-in-twitter-row-over-grammar/</a>		19.02. 2019
47	Exclamations are a mark of poor grammar? What are they thinking!	06.03. 2016	#Correctness, #Grammar	Jane Shilling	Descriptive	"Education ministers have concluded that seven-year-olds are as unhealthily addicted to exclamation points as they are to Haribo Starmix, and have decreed that in this summer’s grammar tests for primary-school pupils, sentences concluding with an exclamation point may be marked correct only if they begin with How or What. Teachers, understandably miffed by the decree, point out that children’s books are liberally sprinkled with exclamation marks."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/primaryeducation/12185473/Exclamations-are-a-mark-of-poor-grammar-What-are-they-thinking.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/primaryeducation/12185473/Exclamations-are-a-mark-of-poor-grammar-What-are-they-thinking.html</a>		20.01. 2019
48	We’re literally losing the use of our tongue	13.08. 2013	#Correctness, #Standard English	Christopher Howse	Descriptive	"Pedants are reported to be “in uproar” because the Oxford English Dictionary has added a new definition to its entry for the word literally. In a “colloquial” sense, it is “used to indicate that some (frequently conventional) metaphorical or hyperbolic expression is to be taken in the strongest admissible sense: 'virtually, as good as’; (also) 'completely, utterly, absolutely’”. Now one of the most common uses, although often considered irregular in standard English since it reverses the original sense of literally ('not figuratively or metaphorically’).”"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/10242603/Were-literally-losing-the-use-of-our-tongue.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/10242603/Were-literally-losing-the-use-of-our-tongue.html</a>		21.01. 2019
49	Language and lingo	31.05. 2004	#Book, #Language change (General), #Standard English	Freya Johnston (fellow and lecturer at Christ's	Descriptive	" <b>David Crystal's book <i>The Stories of English</i></b> has two introductions, because it has two socio-linguistic stories to tell. One is the standard account of Standard English: a medium that evolved from Anglo-Saxon beginnings through Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dr Johnson's Dictionary to arrive at the prestige, formality and received pronunciation of "Modern English". The other charts the emergence of non-standard English: the busy, flexible, everyday language, including regional dialects and	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3617931/Language-and-lingo.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3617931/Language-and-lingo.html</a>	No comments allowed	11.04. 2019

				College, Cambridge)		international idioms, slang, e-mail, internet-speak and text-messaging." (...) <b>"Purism</b> , however, is Crystal's bane. The belief that English, "the most etymologically multilingual language on earth", might somehow be purged of its corrosive foreign ingredients has a long history. In the 16th century, John Cheke hoped to recapture a mode of expression that was "unmixed and unmangled with borrowings of other tongues". Words of Latin origin should, he argued, be replaced by manly Saxon equivalents: "centurion" by "hundreder", "resurrection" by "gainrising", and so on."			
50	Teachers 'do not know enough grammar to teach new curriculum'	04.10.2013	#Grammar, #Correctness	Matthew Payton	Mostly descriptive	"An eminent linguistics professor [Bas Aarts, University College London] has attacked teachers' ability to teach grammar correctly, as they often have "no knowledge of English grammar themselves"."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10356379/Teachers-do-not-know-enough-grammar-to-teach-new-curriculum.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10356379/Teachers-do-not-know-enough-grammar-to-teach-new-curriculum.html</a>	No comments allowed	07.02.2019
51	Standards in education have been declining for years - that's why we had to make GCSEs harder	24.08.2017	#Grammar	Nick Gibb (minister for schools)	Mostly descriptive	(...) "The new English GCSEs encourage students to read a greater range of literature and there's more emphasis on spelling, punctuation and correct grammar."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/08/24/standards-education-have-declining-years-had-make-gcse-harder/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/08/24/standards-education-have-declining-years-had-make-gcse-harder/</a>	Most upvoted comment: (16) "In our brave new liberal PC world it is either racist, phobic or bigoted to give someone less	19.02.2019

								than an A as they may be offended."	
52	They': the singular pronoun that could solve sexism – but is it grammatically correct?	12.05.2016	#Linguistic information, #Correctness, #Grammar	Paul Anthony Jones	Mostly descriptive	"Last December, the internet's dictionaries announced their Words of the Year. Collins went with binge-watch. Dictionary.com went with identity. Oxford Dictionaries chose an emoji, illustrating just how far the picture-based language has come. And the American Dialect Society opted for 'singular they': namely the use of the third person plural pronoun they as a "gender-neutral singular pronoun for a known person, as a non-binary identifier". (...) Singular they has been used without issue for centuries, by some of our greatest writers and with the support of some of our most celebrated experts. It allows sentences to remain neutral without issues of sexism or discrimination, and with a succinctness and neatness that its alternatives lack. And surely a more logical solution is to update our language rules to allow us to use an existing word rather than to invent a new one, or else risk alienating half the population?"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/they-the-singular-pronoun-that-could-solve-sexism--but-is-it-gra/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/they-the-singular-pronoun-that-could-solve-sexism--but-is-it-gra/</a>		19.02.2019
53	Ungrumpy grammarian	07.06.2001	#Grammar, #Book	None	Mostly descriptive	"Fowler's views on grammar are far more permissive than many people think, and they became more relaxed as he went on. In The King's English he had called the split infinitive "an ugly thing", but in Modern English Usage he called the anti-splitters "bogy-haunted creatures" and laughed at writers who tie themselves in knots trying to avoid them. Some of his sterner warnings, like the long one against the wrong use of "otherwise", are out of date now, as Robert Burchfield points out in his extensive 1996 rewrite. But though Burchfield is right, Fowler was usually more fun. (The Oxford people spoke of Fowler's "well known light touch".)"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4723965/Ungrumpy-grammarian.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4723965/Ungrumpy-grammarian.html</a>		19.02.2019
54	Prince William's cut-glass accent is a little less polished than	04.11.2012	#Language change (Speech)	Jasper Copping (general news reporter)	Mostly descriptive	Accent described in terms like "less refined", otherwise descriptive	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/howaboutthat/9653166/Prince-Williams-cut-glass-accent-is-a-little-less-polished-than-Kate-Middletons.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/howaboutthat/9653166/Prince-Williams-cut-glass-accent-is-a-little-less-polished-than-Kate-Middletons.html</a>	No comments allowed	02.01.2019

	Kate Middleton's								
55	<b>Noam Chomsky interview</b>	06.07. 2010	#Other	Nigel Farndale	Mostly descriptive	Linguistics is a side note in this interview, but: "(...)What does Chomsky make of stories about undergraduates at British universities having to be taught grammar in their freshman years? To a linguist, one whose own literary style favours phrases such as ‘generative transformational grammar’, that must seem an abomination. ‘Yes, there is that. It is probably down to the texting culture. The use of textonyms and so on. But it is also to do with the way young people read on screen. The digital age cuts back reading and, as a consequence, young people are losing the ability to think seriously. They get distracted more easily, breaking off to check an email. Speed-reading is exactly the wrong thing to do. You have to think about what you are reading.’ He gives me his sideways look. ‘You have to ponder.’"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/7865508/Noam-Chomsky-interview.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/7865508/Noam-Chomsky-interview.html</a>	No comments allowed	01.02. 2019
56	The Queen's English: changes through the years	21.05. 2012	#Language change (Speech), #Correctness	Susie Dent (lexicographer, author and broadcaster)	Mostly descriptive	Starts with an exploration of the Queen's pronunciation changes, ends with an explanation that language change is natural even though people have always feared it. "When it comes to grammar and spelling, the modern judgment is loud and clear: English is spiralling downwards. Newspaper headlines scream of shrinking vocabularies and of text-blinded teens who can no longer write full sentences. Swearing is now sanctioned on our televisions – even, unthinkable in 1952, by the BBC, whose English had come to sit alongside the Queen’s as the model for correctness." (...) "Of all the changes to English over the past 60 years, perhaps the greatest has been its expanding multi-culturalism. English has always been a mongrel tongue, snapping up words from every continent its speakers encountered. Today, its loanwords come from within, from its own communities that are introducing their own rich vocabularies"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/the-queens-diamond-jubilee/9280753/The-Queens-English-changes-through-the-years.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/the-queens-diamond-jubilee/9280753/The-Queens-English-changes-through-the-years.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02. 2019
57	In everything we say, there is an echo of 1066	13.10. 2012	#Language change (General)	Alan Massie	Mostly descriptive	"So, if you were to begin by asking, in Monty Python style, “what have the Normans ever done for us?” you might first reply that the most enduring consequence of the Conquest is the richness of the English language, with its Anglo-Saxon base and Franco-Latin superstructure. This mixture gives us a huge vocabulary, and many words with essentially the same meaning, yet a different shade of emphasis: fatherly and paternal, for example."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/9606163/In-everything-we-say-there-is-an-echo-of-1066.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/9606163/In-everything-we-say-there-is-an-echo-of-1066.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02. 2019

58	Linguist warns Cheryl Cole not to change accent	13.04.2009	#Language change (Speech)	Ben Leach	Mostly descriptive	"The 25-year-old Geordie is set to begin elocution lessons to lose her Northern lilt - after Simon Cowell, the X Factor judge, booked her in with a Hollywood voice coach." (...) "Joan Beal, professor of English language at University of Sheffield, said Mrs Cole, of Heaton, Newcastle, should be careful she does not lose her identity. "She told The Sunday Sun in Newcastle: "In the UK, the Geordie accent is viewed very positively and studies of accents consistently show that it is considered friendly, honest, and generally attractive."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/5146038/Linguist-warns-Cheryl-Cole-not-to-change-accent.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/5146038/Linguist-warns-Cheryl-Cole-not-to-change-accent.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02.2019
59	Sats results: English standards slip	04.08.2009	#Standard English	No author (Summary of different opinions)	Mostly descriptive	"A fifth of primary school pupils are not reaching Level 4 - the standard required of the age group - in English, according to data published on Tuesday by the Department for Children, Schools and Families." (...) "Christine Blower, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) which has threatened to boycott next year's national curriculum tests, known as "Sats", if they are not scrapped said getting a true picture of primary school achievement from the results was a "very hard job." "	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/5971566/Sats-results-Fewer-primary-school-pupils-reach-English-standard.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/5971566/Sats-results-Fewer-primary-school-pupils-reach-English-standard.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019
60	Ofsted: English standards in primary schools 'too low'	15.03.2012	#Standard English	Graeme Paton (Education editor)	Mostly descriptive	"Standards of English in primary schools should be dramatically raised because too many pupils start secondary education with poor reading and writing skills, Ofsted warned today." (...) "Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said: "Both Ofsted and the government need to get the balance right between labelling pupils and their teachers as failures, and helping them improve learning."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9144266/Ofsted-English-standards-in-primary-schools-too-low.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9144266/Ofsted-English-standards-in-primary-schools-too-low.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019
61	When I didn't know owt about posh speak	05.08.2011	#Language change (Speech)	Vicki Woods	Mostly descriptive	"My fascination with Received Pronunciation stems from a traumatic encounter with Elastoplast."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/8684273/When-I-didnt-know-owt-about-posh-speak.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/8684273/When-I-didnt-know-owt-about-posh-speak.html</a>	No comments allowed	20.02.2019

62	Will Self attacks 'literary mediocrity' George Orwell	31.08. 2014	#Standard English, #Book	Telegraph Reporter s	Mostly descriptive	Complaint about George Orwell's complaints. Standard English described as 'the guttering candlelight of a Standard English frozen in time' "(...)The thrust of Self's argument is that Orwell's famous 1946 essay, 'Politics and the English Language', in which he argues for simplicity and clarity in written English, is fundamentally flawed. In the essay, Orwell encourages the use of short words and everyday English, and the avoidance of cliché. But, according to Self, who is himself famous for his baroque use of language, there is a key problem with this analysis. "Orwell and his supporters may say they're objecting to jargon and pretension," writes Self, "but underlying this are good old-fashioned prejudices against difference itself". (...) "If you want to expose the Orwellian language police for the old-fashioned authoritarian elitists they really are, you simply ask them which variant of English is more grammatically complex – Standard English or the dialect linguists call African American Vernacular English. The answer is, of course, it's the latter that offers its speakers more ways of saying more things – you feel me?"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/11066483/Will-Self-attacks-literary-mediocrity-George-Orwell.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/11066483/Will-Self-attacks-literary-mediocrity-George-Orwell.html</a>	No comments allowed	20.02. 2019
63	Let girls be called girls - female pupils were just that, last time I checked	22.11. 2017	#Language change (General)	Rosa Silverman	Mostly descriptive	<b>The only premium article in this compilation.</b> "The last time I checked, the word girl in itself was not pejorative when used to describe a female child. There's a separate - and sensible - argument to be made against addressing grown women as girls, but school pupils are by and large not grown women."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/let-girls-called-girls-female-pupils-just-last-time-checked/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/let-girls-called-girls-female-pupils-just-last-time-checked/</a>	Most upvoted comment: (20) How the hell have the sort of people who want to impose this kind of ludicrous	28.02. 2019



								us and unnecessary political correctness gone mad ever reached positions of influence?	
64	Acute accent	18.03.2001	#Language change (Speech)	None	Mostly descriptive	"Accents still matter, but for different reasons. Today, rejoicing in our multiculturalism, we are invited to take pride in our diversity and welcome the surrender of our airwaves, debating forums and public address systems to incomprehensible Brummies and Scousers."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/4260454/Acute-accent.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/4260454/Acute-accent.html</a>	No comments allowed	28.02.2019
65	When it comes to grammar, one man's rule is another man's guideline	01.09.2008	#Grammar, #Correctness	Robert Colvile	Mostly descriptive	<b>"Yet the problem is that one man's rule is another man's guideline: my colleague Peter Robins, who is something of an expert in the field of linguistic quibbling, points out that the blog Language Log has a section called "Prescriptivist Poppycock" in which its contributors defend Tesco's use of language, or the splitting of the infinitive, as perfectly acceptable and long-established alternatives to the ascendant usage."</b>	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3561848/When-it-comes-to-grammar-one-mans-rule-is-another-mans-guideline.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3561848/When-it-comes-to-grammar-one-mans-rule-is-another-mans-guideline.html</a>		09.04.2019
66	Th' sound to vanish from English language by 2066 because of multiculturalism	26.09.2016	#Language change (Speech)	Sarah Knapton (Science editor)	Mostly descriptive	Various experts (linguists, but also a 'voice coach', with a slightly prescriptive attitude) talk about change in spoken language	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/09/28/th-sound-to-vanish-from-english-language-by-2066-because-of-mult/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/09/28/th-sound-to-vanish-from-english-language-by-2066-because-of-mult/</a>	No comments allowed	02.01.2019

	sm, say linguists								
67	When do you correct someone on their misuse of language?	20.03.2014	#Correctness	Alan Tyers	Mostly prescriptive	Reflection on whether it is okay to correct people's written (and spoken) mistakes "Sorry. I had to get those off my chest somehow, and I lacked the courage to approach the people directly. But should one point these things out to people? It's really hard to do so without coming across like a bit of a git." (...) "The only conclusion I can draw is to use the principle at work when one has to tell somebody that they have bad breath: better to know now, than have them go around all day repelling people and being badly thought of."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/10709335/When-do-you-correct-someone-on-their-misuse-of-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/10709335/When-do-you-correct-someone-on-their-misuse-of-language.html</a>	No comments allowed	07.02.2019
68	Standard English in decline among teenagers	24.10.2008	#Standard English, #Grammar, #Language change (General)	Graeme Paton (Education editor)	Mostly prescriptive	"Many GCSE English students did not realise that phrases such as "get off of" and "she was stood" were grammatically incorrect. It comes amid fears that the use of social networking websites and mobile phone text messaging is undermining children's literacy skills." (...) "Dr Beth Black, author of the latest report, said: "It is possible that these less well-recognised non-standard English forms will find their way into standard English, especially given the view that teenagers are linguistic innovators who bring about change in standard dialect.""	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/3254407/Standard-English-in-decline-among-teenagers.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/3254407/Standard-English-in-decline-among-teenagers.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019
69	Should standards of grammar be maintained?	22.08.2003	#Grammar, #Correctness	Several (readers)	Mostly prescriptive	Article listing people's comments/opinions of whether correctness is important: "According to research by the Oxford English Dictionary abuse of the apostrophe has become so commonplace that it may become "acceptable". Does it matter if greengrocers put signs up offering "banana's at 70p a pound"? Or should standards of grammar be maintained? Tell us what you think."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/4189380/Should-standards-of-grammar-be-maintained.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/4189380/Should-standards-of-grammar-be-maintained.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019
70	The 51 most commonly misused words and phrases - do you get these wrong?	01.12.2015	#Book	Helena Horton	Mostly prescriptive	<b>Article says that there is no body governing English, yet it points out 'mistakes', not 'new usages'.</b> "In his latest book, "The Sense of Style," Harvard cognitive scientist and linguist Steven Pinker explores the most common words and phrases that people stumble over." (...) "In the English language, there is no definitive body governing the rules, so grammar can be up to interpretation."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/12026653/The-51-most-commonly-misused-words-and-phrases-do-you-get-these-wrong.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/12026653/The-51-most-commonly-misused-words-and-phrases-do-you-get-these-wrong.html</a>	No comments allowed	20.02.2019
71	Why are we trivialising the language	05.01.2016	#Correctness	Angela Epstein	Mostly prescriptive	"I recognise the likes of Grammar Nazi and its militant older sister, the Feminazi, for what they are: a casual abuse of language, borne of a lazy	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/society/12081134/Why-are-we-triv">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/society/12081134/Why-are-we-triv</a>		03.02.2019

	of the Holocaust?					need to provide swift riposte to anything unnecessarily officious or dogmatic. Though it doesn't make me like it any the more."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10710840/Speak-plainly-are-we-losing-the-war-against-jargon.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10710840/Speak-plainly-are-we-losing-the-war-against-jargon.html</a>		
72	Speak plainly: are we losing the war against jargon?	26.03.2014	#Correctness, #Book	John Preston	Mostly prescriptive	"One of the things that makes Gowers such an engaging figure is that he wasn't prissy, priggish or prim. As far as he was concerned, language was a living thing that was constantly changing – and this was just as it should be. Rules were essentially there to be broken. "One can no more write good English than one can compose good music by merely keeping to the rules," he wrote. What he hated above all was jargon – partly because it was impossible to understand, and partly because it demeaned people by making them feel stupid. The more monolithic bureaucracies became, Gowers felt, the more they reinforced their remoteness by using impenetrable language. He suggested three golden rules that everyone in government and business should abide by: "Be short, be simple and be human."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10710840/Speak-plainly-are-we-losing-the-war-against-jargon.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10710840/Speak-plainly-are-we-losing-the-war-against-jargon.html</a>		12.01.2019
73	How are you spelling that?	14.09.2003	#Correctness, #Grammar	Nicholas Bagnall	Mostly prescriptive	"The question is, when to go on resisting change and when to lie back and accept it. Some of us still wince, as Spiegl does, when we see what grammarians used to call a gerundive ("I don't like him smoking") where there should be a gerund (his smoking, if you don't mind), or criteria used as a singular; but we would probably all laugh at the pedant who insisted that agenda was a plural. Spiegl doesn't mention agenda, but he himself was a delightful reactionary."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3602713/How-are-you-spelling-that.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3602713/How-are-you-spelling-that.html</a>		13.01.2019
74	Texting is making English a foreign language	12.08.2009	#Language change (CMC)	Michael Deacon	Mostly prescriptive	"Still, language is in a constant state of evolution. Perhaps text speak will seem perfectly normal in 50 years' time. Perhaps there'll be a 21st-century edition of Shakespeare's collected works featuring "2B/not 2B", and the Oxford English Dictionary will define "2thless" and "1derment". Perhaps misery memoirs will be written not in prose, but as a series of increasingly downcast emoticons. But let's look on the bright side. If everyone in the world keeps texting, we'll all become as mentally stunted as each other, and so nobody will even notice that there's been a narrowing of the human attention span. Or, as it will surely become known, a10shn spn."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/6017629/Texting-is-making-English-a-foreign-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/6017629/Texting-is-making-English-a-foreign-language.html</a>		15.01.2019
75	Pupils banned from using slang in school	14.02.2012	#Correctness, #Standard English	Donna Bowater	Mostly prescriptive	Spells the name of the school differently than the other article: "Pupils at <b>Sheffield's Springs Academy</b> have been ordered to stop using slang while at school to improve their job prospects." (...) "But the MP for the area has raised concerns that the policy might pose a risk to dialects and accents"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9081943/Pupils-banned-from-using-slang-in-school.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9081943/Pupils-banned-from-using-slang-in-school.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019

76	Your view: Is grammar necessary?	17.01. 2005	#Grammar, #Correctness	Several (readers)	Mostly prescriptive	"The research, led by Prof Richard Andrews, of York University, found no evidence that grammar teaching helped pupils aged five to 16 to write more fluently or accurately. "Many young people find aspects of grammar technical and an abstraction from language itself," he said. The research is bound to anger those who argue that educational standards are declining. What do you think? We asked our readers for their opinions and a selection of those we received are published below."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1481523/Your-view-Is-grammar-necessary.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1481523/Your-view-Is-grammar-necessary.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019
77	Mind your language – it matters!	23.10. 2006	#Language change (CMC), #Grammar	John Humphreys	Prescriptive	We must safeguard grammar and clarity against texting and slang "it is not a case that language should never change, because of course it always does, but that grammar matters. One of the daftest things we have ever done in our schools was to stop teaching it to children. Academics who should have known better came up with the absurd notion that rules somehow confined children, restricted their imagination. Understanding the basic workings of grammar – even if you don't observe all the rules to the letter – can liberate. If you don't know how to construct a sentence, how can you express yourself?"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3656080/Mind-your-language-it-matters.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3656080/Mind-your-language-it-matters.html</a>	No comments allowed	22.03. 2019
78	Text-speak: language evolution or just laziness?	03.04. 2013	#Language change (CMC)	Anne Merritt (ESL teacher in South Korea)	Prescriptive	Presents study describing children's ability to separate between formal and informal language, yet disagrees and finds it problematic	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/9966117/Text-speak-language-evolution-or-just-laziness.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/9966117/Text-speak-language-evolution-or-just-laziness.html</a>	No comments allowed	02.01. 2019
79	Texting is fostering bad grammar and spelling, researchers claim	27.07. 2012	#Language change (CMC)	None	Prescriptive	One "former undergraduate in communication" referred to as researchers, no link to actual study	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9432222/Texting-is-fostering-bad-grammar-and-spelling-researchers-claim.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9432222/Texting-is-fostering-bad-grammar-and-spelling-researchers-claim.html</a>	No comments allowed	02.05. 2019

80	The language police are a force for good	30.01.2011	#Prescriptivism, #Descriptivism, #Book	Charles Moore (writes about politics)	Prescriptive	Critique of Henry Hitchings' language wars "(...) the idea that any way of writing, spelling, punctuating or speaking is equally "valid", and that dialects, ethnic minority usage and slang are more equally valid than anything "received", "standard", or traditional. This doctrine, which is just as "prescriptive" as what it attacks, causes ignorance and confusion." " Mr Hitchings eschews the rules: he can do that only because he knows them. The majority is not so lucky. The despised prescriptivists are like beat police officers in Britain today. Their job is to uphold the law in increasingly adverse circumstances."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/charlesmoore/829224/The-language-police-are-a-force-for-good.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/charlesmoore/829224/The-language-police-are-a-force-for-good.html</a>	No comments allowed	03.05.2019
81	Meaning of 'literally' shrinking away	12.03.2012	#Language change (General)	John-Paul Ford Rojas	Prescriptive	Change in meaning of 'literally' called misuse of 'literally'	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/9137930/Meaning-of-literally-shrinking-away.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/9137930/Meaning-of-literally-shrinking-away.html</a>	No comments allowed	21.01.2019
82	Standard English still has a part to play	30.06.2010	#Standard English, ##Language change (Speech)	Michael Simkins	Prescriptive	Labelled under 'personal view' "The decline of Received Pronunciation in showbiz is cause for concern, argues Michael Simkins." (...) "But, regrettably, along with the demise of RP has come a marked deterioration in the quality of our language."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/7862596/Standard-English-still-has-a-part-to-play.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/7862596/Standard-English-still-has-a-part-to-play.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019
83	Estuary English 'is destroying British drama'	31.10.2004	#Standard English, #Language change (Speech)	Chris Hastings	Prescriptive	Changing accent is referred to as 'vocal skills'/changing voice' "It is enough to have Professor Higgins spinning in his grave. A shortage of actors who can speak "posh English" is destroying the quality of British drama, according to some of the country's best-known actors." (...) "The shortage is now so severe, they warn, that some scripts have had to be rewritten to accommodate the actors' limited vocal skills. Producers also have difficulty casting parts for children who speak "properly" and have had to bypass stage schools in favour of private schools where standards of English are higher."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1475469/Estuary-English-is-destroying-British-drama.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1475469/Estuary-English-is-destroying-British-drama.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019
84	Cosby backs school's ban on street slang	04.07.2004	#Language change (Speech)	Julie Henry (education correspondent)	Prescriptive	Discrimination against patois variety: "Bill Cosby, the leading black American comedian, is backing a campaign banning British schoolchildren from speaking patois in the classroom in an attempt to improve their poor academic performance. Fears have been raised that the constant use of street slang, based on the Creole spoken in the West Indies, and the rejection of traditional English speech patterns and vocabulary is	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1466133/Cosby-backs-schools-ban-on-street-slang.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1466133/Cosby-backs-schools-ban-on-street-slang.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.04.2019

						contributing to the educational failure of black pupils, particularly boys from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds."			
85	Middlesbrough primary school issues list of 'incorrect' words	05.02.2013	#Correctness, #Standard English	Hannah Furness	Prescriptive	"Children at Sacred Heart Primary School in Middlesbrough will be corrected on their use of dialect, irregular grammar and pronunciation after they were found to have picked up bad habits."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/primaryeducation/9851236/Middlesbrough-primary-school-issues-list-of-incorrect-words.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/primaryeducation/9851236/Middlesbrough-primary-school-issues-list-of-incorrect-words.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02.2019
86	Police cautioned over loose talk	17.06.2007	#Standard English	Ben Leapman	Prescriptive	The police are told to use Standard English words rather than regional dialectal words when communicating over a new national police radio system, in order to understand each other.	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1554772/Police-cautioned-over-loose-talk.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1554772/Police-cautioned-over-loose-talk.html</a>	No comments allowed	20.02.2019
87	Waterstones drops its apostrophe	11.01.2012	#Correctness	Harry Wallop	Prescriptive	"Waterstones, the bookshop, has dropped the apostrophe in its trading name and logo, sparking outrage among some of its customers."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/9007692/Waterstones-drops-its-apostrophe.html#disqus_thread">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/9007692/Waterstones-drops-its-apostrophe.html#disqus_thread</a>	No comments allowed	20.02.2019
88	The only thing worse than a grammar nazi is an anti-grammar nazi	17.06.2014	#Correctness	Theo Merz	Prescriptive	Response to Stephen Fry. No mention of linguists. "It's easy to avoid the grammar nazis and their smug corrections if you want to. It's harder not to be seduced by the ones who say they're not interested in the difference between uninterested and disinterested"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-manning-worse-than-a-grammar-nazi-is-an-anti-grammar-nazi.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-manning-worse-than-a-grammar-nazi-is-an-anti-grammar-nazi.html</a>	No comments allowed	28.03.2019
89	Help at last for grammar pedants: iPhone app can correct text messages	16.09.2016	#Correctness	David Millward	Prescriptive	"At long last relief is at hand for grammar snobs with a new iOS app which enables users to correct offending text messages and return them to the sender."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/09/16/help-at-last-for-grammar-pedants-iphone-app-can-correct-text-messages/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/09/16/help-at-last-for-grammar-pedants-iphone-app-can-correct-text-messages/</a>	No comments allowed	25.01.2019

90	How good is your grammar?	02.05.2014	#Grammar, #Correctness	Josie Gurney-Read	Prescriptive	"Tom Hodgkinson of the Idler Academy said: "We set up the Bad Grammar Award not to sneer at mistakes made by ordinary people, but to highlight examples of political windbagery and marketing humbug. Grammatical know-how is, in a phrase made famous by The Clash, a b***** detector."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationquestions/10801950/How-good-is-your-grammar.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationquestions/10801950/How-good-is-your-grammar.html</a>	22.02.2019
91	Commas and colons: without them, we're sunk	31.05.2014	#Grammar, #Correctness	Harry Mount	Prescriptive	"Welcome to Pedants' Corner – or is it Pedant's Corner? Or perhaps just Pedants Corner? We grammar fanatics often get attacked for pedantry – by the way, I'm so easy-going that I think all three versions are fine, though I prefer the first one."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/10866299/Commas-and-colons-without-them-were-sunk.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/10866299/Commas-and-colons-without-them-were-sunk.html</a>	20.02.2019
92	Leave the apostrophe alone – it makes sense	12.01.2012	#Correctness, #Grammar	Philip Hensher	Prescriptive	"Correct usage has become more, not less important with the advent of the computer. We are all submerged by messages by email from institutions and companies, some perfectly genuine, others not. It's striking that many fraudulent "phishing" emails contain mistakes in language, misspelt words and misplaced apostrophes"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9010013/Leave-the-apostrophe-alone-it-makes-sense.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9010013/Leave-the-apostrophe-alone-it-makes-sense.html</a>	21.02.2019
93	A pedant like me doesn't need fulsome praise	23.02.2010	#Correctness	Michael Deacon	Prescriptive	"One of my colleagues says I'm a pedant. Actually, she doesn't quite say that. She says "ped-ANT", placing the stress on the wrong syllable. I would mention this to her, but I fear she's laying a trap to prove her point"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/7296974/A-pedant-like-me-doesnt-need-fulsome-praise.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/7296974/A-pedant-like-me-doesnt-need-fulsome-praise.html</a>	19.02.2019
94	<b>Lynne Truss: Stop the apostrophe catastrophe!</b>	25.10.2007	#Correctness, #Book	Lynne Truss	Prescriptive	Article about children's book about apostrophes, <i>The Girl's Like Spaghetti</i> (2007) "Can this terrible state of affairs be allowed to continue? What can be done? In my public persona of "Queen of Punctuation", I am popularly supposed to be the sort of person who regularly upbraids the illiterate, but I honestly never point out mistakes in a manner to cause hurt feelings. I just die inside, quietly."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/features/3634473/Lynne-Truss-Stop-the-apostrophe-catastrophe.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/features/3634473/Lynne-Truss-Stop-the-apostrophe-catastrophe.html</a>	23.04.2019
95	Pedants of the world, we salute you	05.02.2015	#Correctness	Christopher Howse	Prescriptive	"Have you ever shouted at the wireless when a guest on Today begins his first answer with the word so? Are you more shocked by greengrocers' use of the apostrophe than by the cost of Little Gem lettuces? Do you never have less than seven items, but sometimes fewer? Were you annoyed by my use of the word wireless just now?"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/wikipedia/11394066/Pedants-of-the-world-we-salute-you.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/wikipedia/11394066/Pedants-of-the-world-we-salute-you.html</a>	22.02.2019
96	Tesco to ditch 'ten items or less'	01.09.2008	#Correctness, #Prescriptivism	Tom Peterkin	Prescriptive	"Many have argued that the signs ought to read "ten items or fewer" instead of "ten items or less". Their argument is that the word 'fewer' should be	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2659948/Tesco-to-ditch-t">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2659948/Tesco-to-ditch-t</a>	18.02.2019

	sign after good grammar campaign					used when it refers to quantities that can be counted. 'Less', they say, should refer to quantities that cannot be counted."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/mandrake/8132378/Jemima-Khan-joins-Penelope-Keiths-campaign-for-better-English.html">en-items-or-less-sign-after-good-grammar-campaign.html</a>		
97	The apostrophe's use	08.05.2001	#Correctness	None	Prescriptive	"WELCOME as the creation of the Apostrophe Protection Society is, it will have to work vigorously if it is going to have any effect on the greengrocer's apostrophe."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/4261922/The-apostrophes-use.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/4261922/The-apostrophes-use.html</a>		15.02.2019
98	One step forward or two steps back?	06.04.2006	#Correctness, #Grammar	John Inverdale	Prescriptive	Sports journalist was corrected by his former teacher: "Brian Worthington was a brilliant teacher and a master pedant, who placed grammar and punctuation ahead of cleanliness and godliness. He was inwardly seething at my use last week of the phrase "forward planning". "What other sort of planning is there?" he wrote. "Backward? Sideways?" He described it as a solecism, typical of the slack journalism prevalent nowadays which, he added, has lost sight of where to place adjectives and adverbs in sentences. Brian, I want you to know that I sat up most of the night worrying about the line in this week's piece "is still used regularly". Is it "regularly still used"? Or "still regularly used"?"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/2334826/One-step-forward-or-two-steps-back.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/2334826/One-step-forward-or-two-steps-back.html</a>		14.02.2019
99	Revealed: Self-styled 'grammar vigilante' corrects badly punctuated shop signs in dead of night	03.04.2017	#Correctness	Harry Yorke	Prescriptive	"Wielding an 'apostrophiser' – a broom handle laden with two sponges and a number of stickers – the man has corrected tens of missing and misplaced apostrophes on shop banners across Bristol over the past 13 years."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/03/revealed-self-styled-grammar-vigilante-corrects-badly-punctuated/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/03/revealed-self-styled-grammar-vigilante-corrects-badly-punctuated/</a>		20.02.2019
100	Jemima Khan joins Penelope Keith's campaign for better English	15.11.2010	#Correctness	Tim Walker	Prescriptive	"I know this makes me a dull pedant," says the former wife of Imran Khan, "but it irks me when even clever friends misuse the word 'disinterested' when they mean 'uninterested'."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/mandrake/8132378/Jemima-Khan-joins-Penelope-Keiths-campaign-for-better-English.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/mandrake/8132378/Jemima-Khan-joins-Penelope-Keiths-campaign-for-better-English.html</a>		21.02.2019



101	Grammar crusader spends years removing repeated error 47,000 times on Wikipedia	05.02. 2015	#Correctness, #Grammar	Mark Molloy	Prescriptive	Grammar vigilante Bryan Henderson has corrected the same error on thousands of Wikipedia pages	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/11392756/Grammar-crusader-spends-years-removing-repeated-error-47000-times-on-Wikipedia.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/11392756/Grammar-crusader-spends-years-removing-repeated-error-47000-times-on-Wikipedia.html</a>		12.01. 2019
102	Civil servants can't write and read and write properly, says government adviser	04.07. 2013	#Correctness, #Grammar, #Book	Steven Swinford	Prescriptive	"Civil servants have failed to learn to "write and think properly" and should be made to repeatedly rewrite memos until they learn good grammar, a government adviser has said."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10159139/Civil-servants-cant-write-and-read-and-write-properly-says-government-adviser.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10159139/Civil-servants-cant-write-and-read-and-write-properly-says-government-adviser.html</a>		02.02. 2019
103	Pay attention: it's important!	24.11. 2003	#Book, #Correctness	Oliver Pritchett	Prescriptive	<b>"Oliver Pritchett reviews Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation by Lynne Truss"</b>	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3607194/Pay-attention-its-important.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3607194/Pay-attention-its-important.html</a>		01.02. 2019
104	Lynne Truss has a grammatical axe to grind	05.04. 2014	#Language change (General)	Lynne Truss	Prescriptive	Misunderstandings in compound nouns will be the doom of English, says Lynne Truss, author of prescriptive punctuation book	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/lynne-truss/10547372/Lynne-Truss-has-a-grammatical-axe-to-grind.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/lynne-truss/10547372/Lynne-Truss-has-a-grammatical-axe-to-grind.html</a>	No comments allowed	22.12. 2018
105	Stephen Fry corrected my 'linguistic errors' says Michael Gove	23.06. 2015	#Correctness	Agency (none given)	Prescriptive	Michael Gove (Justice Secretary) admits Stephen Fry got in contact to correct his own misdemeanours. 'His own' refers not to Fry but Gove. "(...) Asked if the word should be put on his banned list, he replied: "Yes, I think I will have to have a word with the keepers of the arc of the English language. I think operationalising is a particularly ugly construction unfitted for broadcast.""	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11693898/Michael-Gove-Stephen-Fry-took-me-to-task-over-my-linguistic-errors.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11693898/Michael-Gove-Stephen-Fry-took-me-to-task-over-my-linguistic-errors.html</a>	No comments allowed	01.02. 2019
106	Our changing language	07.07. 2003	#Language change (General)	Robert Morton	Prescriptive	Sarcastic letter to <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> about change in language use: (...) "Keep up the good work of diluting the remnants of our heritage. It's all progress after all. Who cares about the direction?"	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/3593449/Our-changing-language.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/3593449/Our-changing-language.html</a>	No comments allowed	08.02. 2019

107	Global Britain needs more linguists if we are to succeed after Brexit	12.10.2017	#Other	Nick Gibb (minister for schools)	Prescriptive	<b>The term 'linguist' used about multilingualism</b> by school minister. Author complains that not enough youth are choosing to study a foreign language, not study to become linguists'	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/10/12/global-britain-needs-linguists-succeed-brexit/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/10/12/global-britain-needs-linguists-succeed-brexit/</a>	Most upvoted comment (2): Given the younger generation's europhilia and general internationalist outlook I find the lack of interest in learning foreign languages a bit of a mystery.	07.02.2019
-----	---	------------	--------	----------------------------------	--------------	---	---	--	------------

108	Using apostrophes is 'not rocket science', says Tory MP	21.03. 2014	#Correctness	No author: comment by Brandon Lewis (conservative MP)	Prescriptive	Mr Lewis said he could not support "grammar guerrillas" who return missing apostrophes to new signs because it is an offence to deface a street sign under 1907 legislation. But he added: "We would encourage residents to defend their traditional place names."	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/10713313/Using-apostrophes-is-not-rocket-science-says-Tory-MP.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/10713313/Using-apostrophes-is-not-rocket-science-says-Tory-MP.html</a>	No comments allowed	07.02. 2019
109	Girl writes English essay in phone text shorthand	03.03. 2003	#Standard English, #Grammar, #Language change (CMC)	Ausland Cramb (Scottish correspondent)	Prescriptive	Reference to CMC as 'hieroglyphics' "Education experts warned yesterday of the potentially damaging effect on literacy of mobile phone text messaging after a pupil handed in an essay written in text shorthand. The 13-year-old girl submitted the essay to a teacher in a state secondary school in the west of Scotland and explained that she found it "easier than standard English"." (...) "Judith Gillespie, of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, said a decline in standards of grammar and written language was partly linked to the craze. "There must be rigorous efforts from all quarters of the education system to stamp out the use of texting as a form of written language so far as English study is concerned."There has been a trend in recent years to emphasise spoken English. Pupils think orally and write phonetically. You would be shocked at the numbers of senior secondary pupils who cannot distinguish between their and there. The problem is that there is a feeling in some schools that pupils' freedom of expression should not be inhibited.""	<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1423572/Girl-writes-English-essay-in-phone-text-shorthand.html">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1423572/Girl-writes-English-essay-in-phone-text-shorthand.html</a>	No comments allowed	19.02. 2019