Chapter 7

1. Variation in English. Answers will vary considerably, depending on the dialect of the student. Transcriptions are given in two sample dialects: Dialect A is the one represented in the original question and Dialect B is another American English dialect.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Word | Transcriptions | | Word | Transcriptions | |
|  | Dialect A | Dialect B |  | Dialect A | Dialect B |
| a. horse | [hɔrs] | [hors] | hoarse | [hors] | [hors] |
| b. morning | [mɔrnɪŋ̃] | [mornɪŋ̃] | mourning | [mɔrnɪŋ̃] | [mornɪŋ̃] |
| c. for | [fɔr] | [for] | four | [for] | [for] |
| d. ice | [ʌɪs] | [aɪs] | eyes | [aɪz] | [aɪz] |
| e. knife | [nʌɪf] | [naɪf] | knives | [naɪvz] | [naɪvz] |
| f. mute | [mjut] | [mjut] | nude | [njud] | [nud] |
| g. din | [dɪ̃n] | [dɪ̃n] | den | [dɛ̃n] | [dɛ̃n] |
| h. hog | [hɔg] | [hag] | hot | [hat] | [hat] |
| i. marry | [mæri] | [mɛri] | Mary | [meri] | [mɛri] |
| j. merry | [mɛri] | [mɛri] | marry | [mæri] | [mɛri] |
| k. rot | [rat] | [rat] | wrought | [rɔt] | [rat] |
| l. lease | [lis] | [lis] | grease (v.) | [griz] | [gris] |
| m. what | [ʍʌt] | [wʌt] | watt | [wat] | [wat] |
| n. ant | [æ̃nt] | [æ̃nt] | aunt | [ãnt] | [æ̃nt] |
| o. creek | [kʰrɪk] | [kʰrik] | creak | [kʰrik] | [kʰrik] |

2. A. Cameroon English Pidgin and Standard American English.

Some Similarities: Many of the words in the CEP passage are derived from English words, such as tok “talk,” gud “good,” nuus “news.” The word order seems to be SVO, as in English: mek yi rud tret “make his road straight.” CEP has prepositional phrases, as English does: bifo you fes “before your face.”

Some Differences: Some of the words in CEP are taken from the language of Cameroon rather than English, for example, nchinda, which means “prophet.” In CEP, the word yi indicates possession (God yi nchinda—“God’s prophet”), while in SAE either ’s or a PP with of is used. Many sounds of SAE do not exist in CEP: for example, SAE th ([ð]) is d in CEP (di—the), and the word-final r of SAE is deleted in CEP (weh—“where”). Also, the cluster str is simplified in CEP to tr in the word tret (“straight”). The SAE indefinite article a is replaced by som in CEP.

B. Tok Pisin derivations.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Tok Pisin | Gloss | Answer |
| taim bilong kol | winter | time belong cold |
| pinga bilong fut | toe | finger belong foot |
| hamas krismas yu gat? | how old are you? | how much Christmas you got? |
| kukim long paia | barbeque | cook them long fire |
| sapos | if | suppose |
| haus moni | bank | house money |
| kamup | arrive | come up |
| tasol | only | that’s all |
| olgeta | all | all together |
| solwara | sea | salt water |
| haus sik | hospital | house sick |
| handet yia | century | hundred year |

3. American slang. Answers will vary quite a bit depending on the students’ dialect and age. Note that in the answers given below, part (1) answers whether or not the word or phrase still exists with an idiomatic meaning. For example, pipe layer no longer has an idiomatic meaning, so the answer to part (1) for that item is no, even though the word still has its literal sense.

all out (completely): (1) Yes; (3) All out still means “completely” but is more restricted in use; the phrase all out the best does not occur in modern speech. Phrases like go all out are common, but all out occurs only with a small set of verbs (go, play, run).

to have apartments to let (be an idiot): (1) No; (2) the lights are on but nobody’s home; there’s nothing upstairs; not playing with a full deck.

been there (experienced): (1) Yes.

belly-button (navel): (1) Yes.

berkeleys (a woman’s breasts): (1) No; (2) knockers, tits, boobs.

bitch (offensive name for a woman): (1) Yes; (3) but whore is more offensive than bitch now; bitch can even be used as a term of endearment, usually between close girlfriends.

once in a blue moon (seldom): (1) Yes.

boss (master): (1) Yes; (3) boss can also mean “nice” as in dude, the iPhone 5 is boss.

bread (employment): (1) Yes; (3) Bread as a slang term now refers to money rather than employment.

claim (steal): (1) No; (2) rip off, cop, lift, jack.

cut dirt (escape): (1) No; (2) skip out, fly the coop, make a break for it.

dog cheap (of little worth): (1) No; (2) dirt cheap, peanuts, diddly, squat.

funeral (business): (1) Yes; (3) Funeral still has an idiomatic sense in phrases like It’s your funeral, but instead of just meaning “it’s your business,” it means “it’s your business, but you’re making a mistake.”

to get over (seduce, fascinate): (1) Yes; (3) This now means “recover from” as in I’ll get over it.

groovy (settled, limited): (1) Yes; (3) “really good, great”; in modern slang usage, it is sometimes used jokingly and regarded as archaic (old slang).

grub (food): (1) Yes.

head (toilet, nautical use): (1) Yes; (3) No longer restricted to nautical use.

hook (marry): (1) Yes; (2) hitch (as in get hitched); (3) It occurs in the phrase hook up which means “to have sex with (outside of marriage).”

hump (spoil): (1) Yes; (3) “have or simulate sexual intercourse.”

hush money (blackmail): (1) Yes.

itch (be sexually excited): (1) Yes.

jam (sweetheart): (1) No; (2) baby, squeeze; (3) “unmoving traffic formation”; jam is now also a verb meaning “go, leave, split.”

leg bags (stockings): (1) No; (2) nylons, hose, tights.

to lie low (bide time): (1) Yes.

to lift a leg on (have sexual intercourse): (1) No; (2) get laid, get it on, do it, knock boots, bump uglies.

looby (a fool): (1) No; (2) dork.

malady of France (syphilis): (1) No; (2) clap, VD.

nix (nothing): (1) Yes; (3) This can mean “nothing” or just “no” (a ­negative command or answer).

noddle (the head): (1) No; (2) noodle, noggin, cabeza.

old (money): (1) No; (2) bread, dough, bucks, moolah, cash.

to pill (talk platitudes): (1) Yes; (3) There is no slang expression that we know of that even comes close to the interpretation given. However, there is a slang noun pill, “someone who is hard to get along with, a bother,” and the noun phrase the pill, which refers to birth control pills.

pipe layer (political intriguer, schemer): (1) No; (2) There’s no current equivalent that we know of, although one might suggest the noun politicker, the borrowed politico, or the verb phrase play politics.

poky (cramped, stuffy, stupid): (1) Yes; (3) poky (or pokey) can also mean “slow” or “jail.”

pot (quart, large sum, prize, urinal, excel): (1) Yes; (3) pot can still mean “large sum” or “communal money,” “prize,” or “urinal,” but not “quart” or “excel”; it can also mean “marijuana.”

puny (freshman): (1) Yes; (3) pejorative term meaning “small.”

puss-gentleman (effeminate): (1) No; (2) nelly, queen, fag, pussy.

4. Slang dictionary. Sample answers:

 1. OMG: Wow! (from Oh my God!)

 2. chill: cool down; stop acting excited, angry, or nervous

 3. lit: fun or exciting, usually used to describe a party; intoxicated

 4. pull an all-nighter: stay up all night studying

 5. ghost: to suddenly ignore someone on social media

 6. salty: annoyed, upset, or angry

 7. killing it: doing really well

 8. ink: a tattoo

 9. bummed (out): unhappy, depressed

10. crash: sleep in a particular place; a common aftereffect of drug intoxication

5. British–American equivalents.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| British | American |
| a. clothes peg | clothes pin |
| b. braces | suspenders |
| c. lift | elevator |
| d. pram | baby buggy/stroller |
| e. waistcoat | vest |
| f. shop assistant | clerk |
| g. sweets | candy |
| h. boot (of a car) | trunk |
| i. bobby | cop |
| j. spanner | wrench |
| k. biscuits | crackers |
| l. queue | line |
| m. torch | flashlight |
| n. underground | subway |
| o. high street | main street |
| p. crisps | potato chips |
| q. lorry | truck |
| r. holiday | vacation |
| s. tin | can |
| t. knock up | wake up |

6. Pig Latin.

A. (i) Dialect 1: Suffix [me] to any vowel-initial word.

Dialect 2: Suffix [he] to any vowel-initial word.

Dialect 3: Suffix [e] to any vowel-initial word.

(ii) Phonetic transcriptions:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Dialect 1 | Dialect 2 | Dialect 3 |
| honest | [anɪstme] | [anɪsthe] | [anɪste] |
| admire | [ædmaɪrme] | [ædmaɪrhe] | [ædmaɪre] |
| illegal | [ɪligɛlme] | [ɪligɛlhe] | [ɪligɛle] |

B. (i)   
Dialect 1: Take the onset (all initial consonants) from the first syllable of the word, add [e], and suffix the resulting syllable to the end of the word.

Dialect 2: Take only the first consonant from the first syllable of the word, add [e], and suffix the resulting syllable to the end of the word.

(ii) Phonetic transcriptions:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Dialect 1 | Dialect 2 |
| spot | [atspe] | [patse] |
| crisis | [aɪsɪskre] | [raɪsɪske] |
| scratch | [æʧskre] | [kræʧse] |

7. Other English language games.

a. /aɪ tʊk maɪ dag aʊtsaɪd/ (I took my dog outside.)

The rule is to suffix [o] to each syllable.

b. /hir ɪz ə mɔr kamplɪketəd gem/ (Here is a more complicated game.)

The rule is to suffix [li] after every syllable.

c. Mary can talk in rhyme.

The rule is to copy each word, replace the initial consonants of each copied word with [shm], or add initial [shm] if the word begins with a vowel, and suffix the newly formed word to the original.

d. Better late than never.

The rule is to copy each syllable, replace the initial consonants (if any) of each copied syllable with [p], and suffix the newly formed syllable to the original.

e. The football stadium blew down.

The rule is to insert -op- after the initial consonant(s) of each syllable, or prefix it if there is no syllable-initial consonant.

f. /kæn ju spik ðɪs kaɪnd əv ɪŋglɪʃ/ (Can you speak this kind of English?)

The rule is to insert the stressed syllable [ʌ́b] after the initial con­sonant(s) of each syllable or prefix it if there is no initial consonant.

8. Informal English.

a. Where’ve ya been today? ← Where have you been today?

Contraction of where have to where’ve.

Use of ya for you.

b. Watcha gonna do for fun? ← What are you going to do for fun? (or) What will you do for fun?

Contraction of what are you to watcha.

Substitution of less formal are going to for will.

Contraction of going to to gonna.

c. Him go to church? ← Does he go to church?

Auxiliary does is dropped.

Object pronoun him is substituted for subject pronoun he.

d. There’s four books there. ← There are four books there.

Change of copula from plural are to singular is.

Contraction of there is to there’s.

e. Who ya wanna go with? ← Who do you want to go with? (or) Whom do you want to go with? (or) With whom do you want to go?

Preposition not fronted.

Case ending on who dropped.

Auxiliary do is dropped.

Use of ya for you.

Want to contracted to wanna.

9. Jargon. Answers to this exercise will naturally vary according to the profession or trade the student chooses to represent. The jargon listed here as a sample answer is taken from the field of academic professors at the University of California, Los Angeles.

chair—the head of a department

CV—curriculum vitae, the academic résumé

AA—administrative assistant

RA—research assistant

TA—teaching assistant

post-doc (post-doctoral)—a temporary job (usually one to five years) in research or teaching for someone who has just completed a doctorate.

ATC (Advanced to Candidacy)—the level of a student who has finished all requirements for a Ph.D. except a dissertation.

ABD (All But Dissertation)—same as ATC.

sabbatical—paid leave of absence, originally after six years of teaching, i.e., the seventh year.

FTE (Full-Time Equivalency)—a full time academic position in the university.

10. Formal-colloquial translation. Here is a sample “translation” of the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. There are varying degrees of informality in style that could be used in doing this exercise.

*When a group of people wants to break away from another group and form their own country (which they should have the right to do), they’ve got to say clearly what motivated the separation, if they’ve got any respect for the opinion of the rest of the world.*

11. Cockney rhyming slang.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A  Rhyming Slang | B  Word |
| a. drip dry | cry |
| b. in the mood | food |
| c. insects and ants | pants |
| d. orchestra stalls | balls |
| e. Oxford scholar | dollar |
| f. strike me dead | bread |
| g. ship in full sail | ale |

Constructed rhyming slang. Sample answers:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| h. chair | cut your hair |
| i. house | dirty louse |
| j. coat | around the moat |
| k. eggs | eat the dregs |
| l. pencil | window sill |

12. Euphemisms.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A (Euphemism) | B (Meaning) |
| a. Montezuma’s revenge | diarrhea |
| b. joy stick | penis |
| c. friggin’ | fuckin’ |
| d. ethnic cleansing | genocide |
| e. French letter (old) | condom |
| f. diddle oneself | masturbate |
| g. holy of holies | vagina |
| h. spend a penny (British) | urinate |
| i. ladies’ cloak room | women’s toilet |
| j. knock off (from 1919) | kill |
| k. vertically challenged | short |
| l. hand in one’s dinner pail | die |
| m. sanitation engineer | garbage collector |
| n. downsize | fire |
| o. peace keeping | waging war |

13. Words which resemble derogatory words. To argue against this statement, the student could note that there is nothing about the phonemes that a word is made up of that makes it derogatory or racist, so the fact that niggardly shares several phonemes with nigger does not mean that the negative connotations of nigger carry over to niggardly. The word niggardly has an entirely independent meaning that has nothing to do with race. Would we wish to ban the use of words such as bigger and niggle that also share phonemes in common with nigger? To defend the statement, the student would appeal to social sensitivity and the fact that niggardly is not a common word and might easily be mistaken for an offensive word. This shows an awareness that language and culture are intermixed and inseparable on the social level, though the language faculty itself is fundamentally biological.

14. Waitron and waitperson. Answers will vary. A Google search retrieved 119,000 hits for waitron and 205,000 hits for waitperson. Thus, it appears that the latter is slightly more popular. Also, they both appear in the Merriam Webster online dictionary (http://www.merriam-webster.com/). The gender-specific word waitress generated 65 million hits and waiter retrieved 53,200,000. Clearly, waitress and waiter are used significantly more than waitron and waitperson, at least online. In light of the high frequency of these words, it may be that neither of the proposed replacements will succeed in gaining a foothold. An interesting alternative might be to consider whether waiter might be becoming a gender-neutral term. A Google search for the phrase “she is a waiter” retrieved 11.5 million hits, significantly more than either waitron or waitperson. “He is a waiter” returned 15 million hits. My prediction, then, is that waiter will become the gender-neutral term for a waiter or waitress.

A different point of view is available from the Google N-gram Viewer, which reports statistical results in print in books: Occurrences are: Waiter = 45/million (words) in 1940; 25/million in 2000. Waitress = 1/million in 1940; 17/million in 2000. Wait person = 0 in 1940; .00012/million in 2000. Waitron = 0 in 1940; .00026/million in 2000. As in all scientific endeavors—and sociolinguistics is science—results at first often conflict, and their significance and ramifications must be weighed carefully.

15. Tok Pisin. Answers will vary.

16. Language game.

Cogito ergo sum.

foreplay

Veni, vidi, vici.

graffiti

ignoramus

rigor mortis (Morris was a cat used in TV advertising in the past.)

feliz navidad (Spanish for “merry Christmas”)

Veni, vidi, vici.

libido

haute cuisine

L’etat, c’est moi

intoxication

ex post facto

Answers for new examples will vary. For instance, bite the mullet, from bite the bullet, meaning “eat your fish.”

17. Newspeak. Answers will vary. It is unlikely that Newspeak would achieve its goal. Human languages permit virtually infinite creativity regardless of the content of their lexicons. Thousands of traditional languages are still in use in rapidly modernizing societies, despite the fact that, until recently, their lexicons did not include words for many of the objects or concepts of modern life.

18. Nameless concepts. Answers will vary. What this notion misses is that the concepts humans can entertain are not limited by the words in their lexicons. As long as there is syntax (and/or morphology), words can be combined, and an infinite number of new concepts can be conceived and discussed. New words can also be invented or borrowed to name such “nameless” concepts.

19. Gender and lexical choice. Answers will vary. One observation commonly made is that women use uncommon color terms such as mauve or beige more frequently then men. Men tend to use more “four-letter” words than women, especially ones that denigrate women.

20. *Research project:* Banned languages. Answers will vary. For example, Macedonian was once banned in Greece.

21. Abbreviated English.

A. Translations.

a. Clinton **is** in Bulgaria this week.

b. An old man **has** found a rare coin.

c. Bush has hired his wife as secretary.

d. The pope has died in the Vatican.

B. Distinguishing features of AE.

Some distinguishing features include the obligatory omission of the copula (forms of to be), indefinite and definite articles, and possessive pronouns, and the use of present tense to have a perfective interpretation rather than the typical habitual one.

C. Other contexts (answers may vary).

Recipes and journals exhibit similar—but not identical—abbreviated forms. Recipes are generally series of orders, so there is a dropped (but implied) second-person subject with concomitant verb agreement (place flour in bowl; stir thoroughly, mix with water . . .). It would not be incorrect to say that the auxiliary should is also dropped ((you) (should) place flour in bowl). Notice that determiners can also be dropped in recipes, as with (the) bowl above.

Journal and diary writing may feature a dropped (but implied) first-person subject (went to office early—wrote memo to self—came home on bus, etc.) As with recipes, articles may be dropped (went to (the) office early) in journal writing; and in both genres, some third-person pronouns may be omitted (mix (it) with water). However, recipes and journal writing do not feature the simple present with perfective interpretation, which is typical of newspaper headlines.

Challenge exercises:

D. The time reference in the Clinton example is present; for the other three, the time reference is past.

E. Statives tend to get a present-tense interpretation; eventives tend to get a perfective interpretation.

22. Euphemisms in daytime soaps. Answers will vary.

23. That’s not a language, it’s a dialect. Answers will vary. Here is one possible retort: It’s interesting that you use dialect in that way because linguists actually use it differently. I’ve heard a lot of people use dialect to refer to languages that don’t have much social prestige, like indigenous languages or languages without writing systems. But I learned that all languages are equally languages, whether or not they have social prestige or are spoken by a group of people that are politically under-represented, or are written, etc. There is no language that is just a dialect. Linguists use the word dialect to mean something different, namely, a language variety. For example, English has many dialects: the dialect spoken in Southern California is different from the dialect spoken in Massachusetts, but they are both varieties of English and can be called dialects of American English. What you are speaking right now, for example, is a dialect.

24. Preserving linguistic diversity. Answers will vary. Sample answer: A society can act to preserve linguistic diversity by promoting multiple language use. This can be done by setting up cultural/language centers that also act as social clubs. The society might also promote the use of nonstandard languages by strengthening economic and social ties with countries in which the nonstandard languages are spoken. Giving equal political weight to the nonstandard languages is another way to promote multiple language use. In this way, the nonstandard language is seen as an important tool in interacting in the community at its highest level, that of the government. Here are three additional possible ways to encourage endangered language use in a community: 1. Set up low-cost or free target language immersion preschools; 2. Allow foreign language credit for fluency in the target language at a high school or college level; 3. Have an annual poetry writing contest in the target language. Have real prizes and public reading of the poems and awarding of the prizes.

25. Ebonics in the classroom. Answers will vary. Possible arguments in favor of the use of Ebonics in the classroom include that the use of Ebonics in a classroom would make the students who are speakers of this variety feel more respected and comfortable and this promotes an atmosphere of learning and more open communication between the students and the teachers. Another argument is that teaching important subjects like geography or science in the students’ native dialect may help them learn those subjects more readily. Possible arguments against the use of Ebonics in the classroom include that encouraging the use of a non-prestige variety of English could actually hurt speakers of this variety in the future, limiting their advancement academically and stymying their career potential. The idea here is that it is better for the students who are speakers of Ebonics to become bi-dialectal and learn the standard English dialect for use in school and professionally.

26. The use of Karen in Myanmar. Answers will vary.

27. Pygmalion. Answers will vary. Professor Henry Higgins would benefit from an introductory linguistics class. His notion that only foreigners who have been explicitly taught the rules of English can speak it well is clearly coming from a notion of prescriptive grammar. His claim that “the English do not know how to speak their own language” would be laughable to a linguist. All native speakers of a language can speak their language! Henry Higgins, in addition to being a prescriptivist, seems to think that some dialects of a language are less prestigious than others. It is likely that he thinks everyone should speak the “proper” way, i.e., using the prestige dialect. He seems to judge use of other dialects of English as a lack of knowledge of the language—rather than knowledge of another language variety.