

**COLLOQUIALISM AND SLANG- A STUDY OF IT'S USAGE  
IN THE PAST AND RECENT TIMES**

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**ABSTRACT**

Colloquialism is everyday language; easy to understand and communicate in all contexts. It is derived from the word *colloquiam* meaning “speaking together”. Slang is a style used by a specific group of people in a specific context. This paper aims at identifying some common and uncommon terms of Colloquialism and Slang that have been used in the past and in the recent years. They have a huge impact on the language used by the commons and the official authorities. A lot of colloquialism has been traced in literature and various writings of great people. A short study is done to identify the changes that have taken place in the present world. It is revealed that a lot of change has come over the spellings and many terms even forgotten. Man is at liberty to communicate the way he wants. But along with that liberty has come the problem of misspelling and contracted forms. Technology cannot be blamed because, it is the responsibility of the learner to study a language with all its true forms and rules; failing which results in bad impressions in formal places.

**KEY WORDS**

Colloquialism, Slang, Formal English, Colloquial English.

**INTRODUCTION**

Language is essential for communication. The best usage of any language shows the efficiency to convey intended information to any person or a group of people. It requires great skill to use a lot of phrases or idioms while speaking. Whereas, these days, especially in the current scenario, a lot of efficiency is bent upon how to decipher commonly used contracted forms and colloquial terms. Along with the development of colloquialism, the world has got updated with the new trend of spellings that has a close acquaintance with pronunciation.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

The social networking sites have less priority over the standardized usage of either English spelling or slang. A person is proficient, if he/she is able to speak or write without grammatical errors. These errors have excluded the spelling errors, in the recent years. They are hushed under homophones and are being accepted without a feeling of guilt in the inability to spell correctly. “look” is spelled as “luk”, “come” is cum”, “have” is reduced to “hv”, “Thank You” is “TQ”, “Don’t Know” is “Donno”, “Why” is reduced to “Y”, “Great” is “Gr8”. This sort of improper spellings or ignoring the correct spellings are due to laziness without thinking of the remarks that an educator would give them. Youngsters hold pride in framing such unstandardized spellings. They think it is creativity and ignore the alarms of official and formal language.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **COLLOQUIALISM AND FORMAL LANGUAGE**

Colloquialism is a linguistic style for facilitating casual communication in this fast-paced life. This kind of a communicating style has fast spread and has gained popularity in all social networking sites. It does not mean a non-standard dialect or slang but an expression that has come to the convenience of typing and informal communication. It has entered all people’s life ranging from top officials or higher authorities to the layman’s communication. There is difference between formal communication and colloquial communication. Colloquial communication is not discourteous; however, it depends on the intention and the terminological conventions. Formal communication is commonly found in legal and business correspondences, formal letters and the like. It is easy to recognize whether a piece of writing is Formal or Colloquial. Formal English is standard and does not keep changing much. Colloquial English keeps changing more often and varies according to region, time and social groups.

Below is a comparison between Formal English and Colloquial English. When a person is happy and pleased to receive some help, he says, “*It pleases me*” or “*I find it delightful*”. This is Formal English. Whereas in Colloquial English, he says, “*It’s good*”.

Colloquial terms can be words, phrases or aphorisms.

### **Words:**

For instance, some say

Similarly, *Truck and Lorry,*

*Coke and Soda,*

*Hall and Living room.*

### **Phrases:**

Some common colloquial phrases used by the British are

*She'll be right.* (Everything will be fine)

*Pass the Buck-* Shift the responsibility

*Eat my Dust-* Fail/Fall behind in competition with someone

*Eat my Hat-* To say something that cannot happen.

### **Aphorisms:**

Aphorisms are wise statements using simple language.

*There's more than one way to skin a cat* - there's more than one way of achieving one's aim.

*Put your money where your mouth is-* Let action support your statement.

*I wasn't born yesterday-* Cannot be cheated or fooled easily.

## **COLLOQUIALISM IN LITERATURE**

Colloquialism is used by writers to establish characters and an image of them in the readers mind. It is used to create a very realistic background, thoughts of the characters and to make the readers live the character throughout the reading period. Many writers have used colloquialism in their writings and have become successful.

James Joyce, *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man*. “*Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo*”. The words, *Moocow* and *Tuckoo* are used as colloquial speech patterns of an adult while talking to an infant. It is to develop strong sense of the infant's perception while seeing or hearing the scene.

“*Birding in winter involves a lot of long car rides. (I saw Elvis a lot, so I didn't mind spending time with Stephen on weekends.) One morning I got around to begging Stephen to tell me about himself. He turned out to be much better at talking when he was driving the*

car". This is an extract from Nell Zink's *The Wallcreeper*, a description by a character named Tiff. The character Tiff describes her feelings about spending time with her husband who is always committed to birdwatching. Even during weekends, he goes birdwatching without minding his wife or her requests. The highlighted words are the colloquial terms that enable the reader to easily connect with the character.

Such uses of Colloquialism in writings have helped writers to reveal the culture and the group the characters belonged to. Colloquial terms are not just evidences of the language types used by a particular group of people, but has paved way for a better understanding of language, and preserving the culture and aestheticism of the past.

## **SLANG**

Slang is a nature of language that is very informal and more often restricted to a common group of people. Since they are informal, they can be brought under the colloquial category. For instance, the following are some of them that are most commonly used by the British. Slangs were used in the past eras also. The Victorian and the Shakespearean period had a lot of slangs used in speaking and writing. Most of them are forgotten now and can be traced only in the writings of the authors of early periods. Technology has favoured people in tracing the past. The considerable growth in the Research industry can also be dedicated to the efficient technological support provided in recent years.

## **SLANGS USED IN THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE**

Even Shakespeare used colloquial terms in his plays, because he had a wide knowledge about how people of his times usually conversed.

In his famous play *Romeo and Juliet*, he uses the word *Anon*, *good nurse*.

"*Anon*" meaning "*Later*". In a few other plays, he has used,

*Bed Presser* meaning, A Lazy Person (*Henry IV Part I*),

*Fancy Monger* meaning A person for whom his occupation is Love. (*As You Like It*)

*Candle Waster* meaning Burner of the midnight oil (*Much Ado About Nothing*)

## **SLANGS USED IN THE VICTORIAN ERA**

The Slangs used in the Victorian period do not sound indecent or inappropriate. They sound delightful and the use of English becomes interesting. Some of these are very uncommon now and are not easily heard or read, in the recent past. Language lovers tend to use a lot of idioms and phrases. However, this list is not commonly spoken in daily language.

*Bang Up To The Elephant*- perfectly unapproachable

*Batty- Fang-* to thrash thoroughly.

*Bow Wow Mutton*- dog meat

*Butter Upon Bacon*- too extravagant and showing off

*Church Bell*- Chatter box/ Talkative woman.

*Chuckaboo*- nickname for a close friend

*Doing The Bear*- Hugging

*Don't Sell Me A Dog*- don't lie to me.

*Gas Pipes*- tight pants

*Gigglemug*- smiling habitually all the time.

*Poke Up*- embarrassed

*Take The Egg*- to win

### **SLANGS USED COMMONLY BY THE BRITISH**

*Crack on*- To get on with something or continue doing something.

*Dapper*- Well-dressed or Well to-do

*Dear*- Expensive or a term to refer endearment (used by us Indians too)

*Dodgy*- Bad quality

*DIY*- Do it Yourself

*Fag*- A Cigarette

*Grub*- Food

*Minted*- Very wealthy

*Piece of Cake*- Very easy

**THE PRESENT SCENARIO OF ENGLISH AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**

Colloquialism and Slang have risen up to be a societal problem caused due to ignorance and it needs a serious attention. Language defines a person and his life because it is with the way a person speaks, that the society considers him respectable. His language always obtains a respectable position in the society and it assists him to achieve greater heights. Much of ignorance can be contributed to narrow mindedness towards a foreign language. Adolescents and youngsters must be willing to learn the language and its rules with earnest interest. The basics of English language is taught to the students in Schools. Young adults and Scholars at the University level, are expected to use proper standard English in conversation. However, it does not happen many of the times. Assisted learning is over with the elementary section and the imperfect memory perfects the newly found spellings. Nonetheless, such users' exposure to social networking sites are also a serious cause for damaging English pronunciation and spelling. This must be addressed in every English class by the educator and an interest must be created in the young minds to enhance their English skills.

Using incorrect spelling and language is one of the greatest maladies of the present generation. Anyone who corrects them is considered to belong to the old school of thought and is a laughing stock for not updating the recent trend of misspelled words. It is not enough to be just able to converse without fear. It takes a lot of practice to write impressively. Language is a way of life and writing is an art. The impact of slang and indecorous spellings have fallen on young minds which requires remedy. This will not improve the career of the youngsters as they will be denied of great opportunities that will be a turning point in their life. It might sound feasible to ignore the mistakes while young, but it grows to be the way of speech and sticks to the tongue even after being promoted to an adult. Failing to use the right language will mean disrespect.

In the olden days the art of writing was celebrated through well written letters containing beautiful handwritings and sophisticated language. The human brain is capable of remembering a lot of words while reading, and will help in enriching the thought of a person. But the present sad fact is that the human brain would suggest the use of Google assistant. The rise and growth of technology has proved to be a great achievement, while on the other hand it has depleted the efficiency of the brain to recollect ideas read in books. The job of the brain is made easy through words typed in the search bars, even if misspelled. Mobile phones were introduced to make communication easy and fast. But the advent of touch phones has reduced the efficiency to remember spellings. T9 dictionary suggests and fills in the words

automatically (many a time), and leaves the reader in a state of confusion. This is because sometimes wrongly spelt words lead to wrong meanings as well. For example, in the message, *Have a lovely day*, the dictionary suggests *Lonely day* instead of *Lovely day*, while texting on a T9 dictionary keyboard on an android phone. The message ends up as *Have a lonely day*.

The choice of words means a lot while expressing emotions. But with the coming of *emojis* any emotion is easy. One does not have to even think of synonyms to express anger, happiness, love, sadness in messages. Gif's, Stickers and emoji's have made communication fun but at the cost of the quality of language. It has become very difficult to find people who use idioms and phrases, jargons and sometimes people who speak in English without mixing their mother tongue. Speaking fluently without fillers does not certify a person to be strong in English. It also lies in the ability to pitch the voice and use appropriate words to convey the intended meaning. Some common WhatsApp usages are;

LOL- Laugh out Loud

ROFL- Roll on the Floor Laughing

TBH- To Be Honest

BRB- Be Right Back

TTYL- Talk To You Later

HBD- Happy Birth Day

TWT- Time Will Tell

LMK- let Me Know

FYI- For Your Information

OFC-Of Course

## **CONCLUSION**

In academic writing, colloquialism has a less prominent role. The assistance of Google and other search engines have made learning English easy. However, the learner must be advised about the correct choice of online dictionaries and Thesauruses to facilitate proper learning of words, meanings and its uses. Learning does not stop at any age. It only requires a spark to be inquisitive and this will in turn enlighten one's mind.

It might sound severe and unforgiving to the lovers of modern language adapters about the complaints on misspellings and contractions. Though English has always been a borrower of words from all corners of the world, it is also interesting to note that all these usages, have become an inevitable part of our routine life. It is improper to comment on the liberty of another person to use the language in their desired way. Students in Universities and colleges must be encouraged to choose writing to typing, address a gathering rather than speak over phone, in order to collect feedback and improve. At the same time, it is also important to use proper spellings so that a non-native English speaker also holds pride in using the Queens language efficiently.

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