

Standard English

Which English do you prefer?

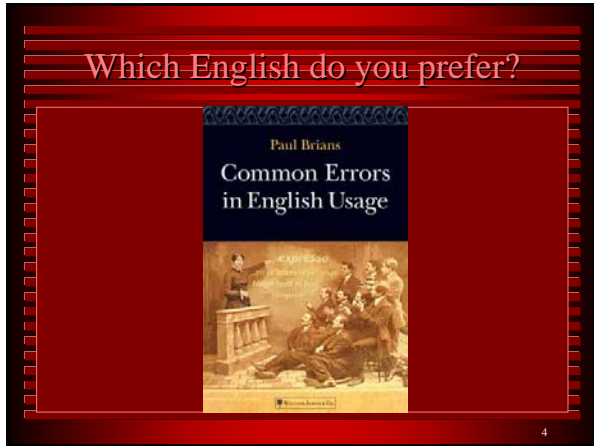
1. I did it.	1. I done it.
2. Come quick!	2. Come quickly!
3. the book that I bought	3. the book what I bought
4. them books	4. those books
5. I didn't break anything.	5. I didn't break nothing.
6. I'm first, ain't I?	6. I'm first, aren't I?

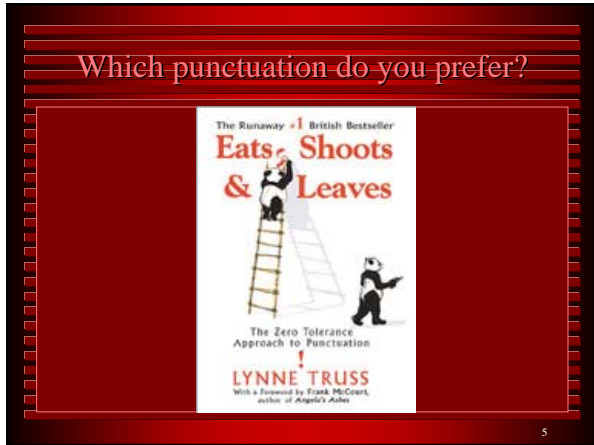
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Which English do you prefer?

1. I took some money from the ATM.	1. I took some money from the ATM machine.
2. My Dad always votes Democrat.	2. My Dad always votes Democratic.
3. surfing the Internet	3. surfing the Web
4. Who will the blame fall on?	4. On whom will the blame fall?
5. The IRS sent the refund check to my wife and I.	5. The IRS sent the refund check to my wife and me.
6. 'Can I speak to Susan?' 'This is her.'	6. 'Can I speak to Susan?' 'This is she.'
7. This will wet your appetite.	7. This will whet your appetite.

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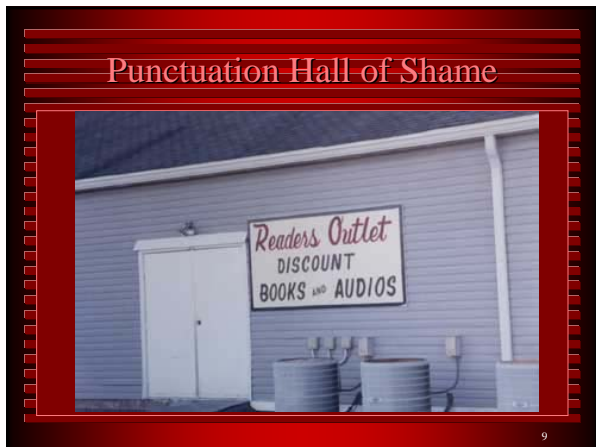




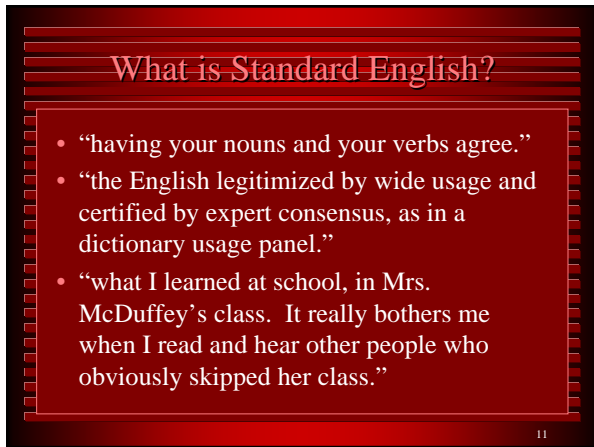


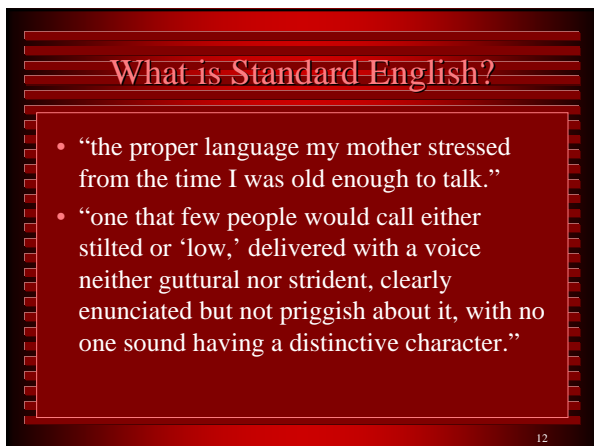












What is Standard English?

- Standard English, also known as Standard Written English or SWE, is the form of English most widely accepted as being clear and proper.
- Publishers, writers, educators, and others have over the years developed a consensus of what standard English consists of. It includes word choice, word order, punctuation, and spelling.
- Standard English is especially helpful when writing because it maintains a fairly uniform standard of communication which can be understood by all speakers and users of English regardless of differences in dialect, pronunciation, and usage. This is why it is sometimes called Standard *Written* English.

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What is Standard English?

- There are a few minor differences between standard usage in England and the United States, but these differences do not significantly affect communication in the English language.
- Most dictionaries merely report on words that are used, not on their grammar or usage. Merely because a word appears in a dictionary does not mean that it is standard.

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What is Standard English?

- “ye shall therefore take the vsuall speach of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx. myles, and not much above. I say not this but that in euery shyre of England there be gentlemen and others that speake but especially write as good Southerne as we of Middlesex or Surrey do, but not the common people of euery shire ...”
 - George Puttenham, 1520-1590, English courtier

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What is Standard English?

- Standard English is ...
 - geographically restricted
 - written rather than spoken
 - a variety used by a certain social class

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Standard English Changes

Julia Keller, Chicago Tribune, February 2005:

- Can we, like, talk?
- Or write rite?
- And who cares, so long as you know what I'm sayin'?
- Know what I'm sayin'?

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Standard English Changes

- “Somebody somewhere is always complaining about somebody else’s language. Somebody is always carping about how kids aren’t taught grammar anymore, about how political speeches don’t rise to the rhetorical distinction of a soup-can label, about how the planet is imperiled by the galloping inability of people to know the difference between “it’s” and “its”—and it’s a crime, that’s what it is.”
 - Julia Keller, Chicago Tribune, February 2005

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Standard English Changes

- “There’s always a certain hysteria in language conversations, a very strong emotional reaction. We all think language is going to hell in a hand basket.”
 - William Labov, Linguistics Professor

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Where does Standard English come from?

Where does Standard English come from?

- In the 17th century ...
 - The suggestion that there was a “right” way of speaking seemed strange to most people.
 - The uneven spelling of books and papers of the time shows that a “right” way of spelling was foreign to most writers and printers.

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Where does Standard English come from?

- King Charles II came to the throne of England in 1649 after the tumult of the English Revolution.
- Britain was a society composed of several competing language varieties, of which Scots was one.
- The idea of standard English was in its infancy.

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Four Stages in the Process of Standardization

1. Selection of one dialect over others
2. Codification of that dialect through dictionaries, grammars, and the schools
3. Increase in the functions and ranges of use of that dialect
4. Acceptance by the community at large of that dialect as the “standard” form

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I. Selection of One Dialect

The Struggle for Supremacy

- The struggle and eventual victory of the dialect of the English south midlands over others
- The struggle for supremacy between English and Scots
- The Guid Scots Tongue

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What happened to Scots English?

- **The Weather Forecast in Scots English**
- “Snell winds hae rocht havoc in aw the westland airts o Scotland the day. Glesgae folk especially had a guid when broken lums tae thole. And while the west chittered in the cauld souch o the wind the noreast was smuird wi cranreuch and snaw. And that’s the news in Scotland the nicht. Frae me guid nicht.”

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1. Selection of One Dialect

- Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?
- *For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*


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1. Selection of One Dialect

- We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,
Frae morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin' auld lang syne.
- And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!
And gie's a hand o' thine!
And we'll tak' a right gude-willie waught,
For auld lang syne.

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2. Codification



- Dr. Samuel Johnson, (1709-1784) author of the two-volume *Dictionary*, containing definitions of 40,000 words

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3. Increase in Functions

- Standard English replaced Latin as the language of scholarship.
- Many varieties of English (including Standard English) spread to the New World, where it took on new words and new meanings.
- The Industrial Revolution in Britain led to many new words for new technologies.
- English began to compete with French as the language of diplomacy.

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4. Acceptance

What keeps Standard English in its high place?

- Schools
- The media
- The military
- Organized religion
- The economy
- Dictionaries
- Style manuals

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4. Acceptance

- Judgments about SE are *not* judgments about language.
- Judgments about SE are judgments about the people who speak it.
- Judgments about SE are also judgments about the people who don't speak it.
- Judgments about SE are judgments about people who are like me.

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Speaking Proper

- **Chapter 1: The Season of Reason**
England's "Age of Reason" sees massive political upheaval; John Locke's "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" argues that language needs to be used more concretely; coffee houses become centers for exchanging ideas.
- **Chapter 2: Swift Changes**
Jonathan Swift argues unsuccessfully in court that English will suffer from its own growth; Dr. Samuel Johnson spends seven years updating the dictionary; upper and lower classes continue to speak different versions of the language.
- **Chapter 3: From Scotland's Yards**
English replaces Gaelic in Scotland's lowlands; Thomas Sheridan's mission is to teach Scots proper English; Robert Burns' poems defy much of the standard English that Sheridan fought to adopt.
- **Chapter 4: Beyond Wordsworth's Words**
William Wordsworth writes in the language of the common people, to critical disdain; Richard Sheridan's "Mrs. Malaprop" turns the language upside down; Jane Austen popularizes literature for female readers.

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World Standard Englishes

- Australian, New Zealand, and South Pacific SE
- British and Irish SE
- American SE
- Canadian SE
- Caribbean SE
- West, East, and South(ern) Africa standardizing English
- South Asian standardizing English
- East Asian standardizing English

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Learning Activity

- Read chapters 6 and 7 in 'Dialects in Schools and Communities' and write 2-5 pages on these two issues.
 - Does the teaching of Standard English in schools disadvantage speakers of non-standard dialects?
 - How can the teaching of non-standard dialects be included in the curriculum?

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