

WEBWORDS 24

Loving words

Caroline Bowen

"Everybody says words different," said Ivy. 'Arkansas folks says 'em different, and Oklahomy folks says 'em different. And we seen a lady from Massachusetts, an' she said 'em different of all. Couldn't hardly make out what she was sayin'!"

(John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 1939)

As forebears go, my grandfather's grandfather's father's eccentric little brother, Alexander the Corrector 1699–1770, is just the sort of person you would expect to crop up in the pedigree of a speech-language pathologist fascinated by the diacritic minutiae of phonological analysis and tiny, tiny html tags that leave others yawning. Various described as a timid Scotsman, a tragic figure, a tormented genius, and barking mad: whimsical and unforgettable, [Alexander Cruden](#)¹ led a life bound up with words, the scriptures, and putting people straight. A proof-reader by trade, and working alone he took 12 years to write his *Concordance to the Bible*, an intricately cross-referenced 2.5 million word index, dictionary, and analysis, three and a half times the length of the Bible itself. Over 260 years later it has not been superseded, remaining a standard theological reference that allows scholars to find every instance of each word (save three or four) in the Bible (Keay, 2004). What in heaven's name would this ridiculously egotistical, one-man Wikipedian produce if he came back now with computer? A web site, no doubt. Would he link to [Humorous Grammar Rules](#)², [McGonagall Online](#)³, [Cecil Adams](#)⁴ or the [Devil's Dictionary](#)⁵? Perish the thought!

His portrait hangs in pride of place in my mother's sitting room at Cruden Cottage. He was always there – in the thick of family repartee in the 10 or more different houses we called home when I was growing up. One visiting British clergyman was so impressed he organised a photograph of himself with his face pressed side by side with the Corrector's. That same cleric was a mad wordsmith himself, very keen on the well-turned neologism, and went to convert West Australian Aboriginal place names into Welsh-sounding ones. Pingethly for Pingelly was irresistible. It's funny what you remember people for.

Eclectic

What better place, other than a bookcase, that is, could there be to find word lovers giving free rein to their wit, passion and silliness than on the net? Take for example [Catherine Ball's](#)⁶ joyously eclectic pages that include the [Sounds of the World's Animals](#)⁷, inevitably prompting the question, "What

"The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause."

Mark Twain

do speakers of Afrikaans, English, Dutch, German, and, wait for it ... Vietnamese have in common?" The answer? They would all finish the cloze sentence "A duck says ___" with "quack quack". By contrast, only English speakers would end "A sheep says ___" with "baah", only the Welsh say "A pig says soch, soch", and, apparently, rude pussycats in Japan say, "nya nya" – which is not as bad as "Nyaa Nyaa Nuh NYAAAA Nyaa!", or all your base are belong to us⁸, obviously.

Useful and fun

Among the useful sites for those who work with people who have trouble with words are the [ESL Cafe](#)⁹, where Dave Sperling has classified his ESL and EFL content as stuff for teachers, stuff for students and stuff for everyone. [ELLLO](#)¹⁰ is the English Language Listening Laboratory Online, and it comprises many listening activities and games. Then there is the [Flash Animations for the English Class](#)¹¹ site, where many of the clips come with comprehension questions. Whet your appetite for [hot potatoes](#)¹² with the "I had a dream" activity in which you have to find 14 differences between Martin Luther King's speech and a transcript of it. [The Interactive Quizzes](#)¹³ are a project of the Internet TESL Journal and contain many games that are readily adaptable for children and adults with language impairment. Then there are the [IPL Languages and Linguistics](#)¹⁴ resources, the [Using English for Academic Purposes](#)¹⁵ pages that focus on listening comprehension and note taking, the overwhelming megalist that is [Word Safari](#)¹⁶, the BBC's [Words and Grammar](#)¹⁷, and for the origins of words: [Wordwizard](#)¹⁸.

Wordlovers are not a homogeneous group by any means. Some live for [crossword puzzles](#)¹⁹, others yearn for [Scrabble](#)²⁰, or their daily blog (I like [Karen's](#)²¹) some like their words [without pictures](#)²² and would stay up all night for the fun of [My Word](#)²³ via streaming audio. Fusspots, nitpickers, proof-readers and copyeditors appreciate [banned for life](#)²⁴ (devoted to expressions so hackneyed and insufferable that they should be forever banned from news reports), the [Plain Language Commission](#)²⁵, and of course the [Apostrophe Protection Society](#)²⁶ (which need's you're help).

Beyond words

When you have had your fill, get creative with [Kaleidoscope Painter](#)²⁷ and come to terms with your inner artist with [Mr Picassohead](#)²⁸. Take my word for it: it's fun too!

Reference

Keay, J. (2004). *Alexander the corrector: The tormented genius who un-wrote the Bible*. London: Harper Collins.

LINKS

1. <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/ark/stories/s1333685.htm>
2. <http://www.creativeteachingsite.com/humorggrammar.htm>
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 26. <http://www.apostrophe.fsnet.co.uk/>
 27. <http://www.permadi.com/java/spaint/spaint.html>
 28. <http://www.mrpicassohead.com/create.html>
- Find Webwords 25 with lots of live links at: <http://speech-language-therapy.com/webwords25.htm>

WORD OF THE DAY

An option for news time in the classroom or group setting?

Suze Leitão

Many of the articles and papers in this issue of *ACQ* discuss the importance of rich, elaborated and well-organised lexical stores as a basis for language and literacy development. Intervention has traditionally focused on building semantic networks and strengthening semantic knowledge. As we came to learn more about phonological processing, phonological elaboration, as discussed in our “What’s the evidence?” column written by Lyndsey Nickels, also entered our therapy regimes. The issues covered by Elizabeth Love and Sue Reilly in their paper highlight the importance of developing rich vocabulary knowledge in young children, linking their developing semantic and conceptual understanding to their knowledge of the sound structure of a word – how it is said, written and used.

One simple strategy that can be adopted in the classroom setting would be to encourage children to bring a “word of the day” for news. This can then be discussed in class using a framework of scaffolds based in psycholinguistic theory, adapted to the language levels and needs of the age group.

Word of the Day:

What is my word? *Princess*

Why did I choose it? Why is it interesting? *Because it's beautiful.*

Where did I find this word? *In a book*

What does it mean? *a Beautiful Lady*

Does it have any parts? *NO*

How many sounds does it have? *7*

How many letters does it use? *8*

Is there anything interesting about its spelling? *Because the .c. makes a c sound*

Does it make me think of any other words? *My little Pony*