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In 1971 Tim Shopen distributed a sprightly little piece that he titled 'Caught in the act', calling attention to the growing use of the verb go as an auxiliary, to make sentences like Go look at the fireworks. His point was that we don't have to wait until a revolution is over before we study it. For one thing, the causal factors are often in full view. For another, and for a change, we perhaps can be wise before the fact instead of after, and predict what the outcomes are likely to be. And for a third, it's simply fun to watch the passing scene. I think I had best put my remarks today in this last category, and invite you to sit back and relax as we poke some fun at the way we and our contemporaries play with the serious business of expressing ourselves. What I'm proposing to do is take you on a thirty-minute tour of some of the changes I've observed over a few decades of listening for trifles and noting them down in hopes they may add up to something.

You can't travel far along this road without encountering the pop grammarian--a redoubtable force who often promotes the very changes he is sworn to prevent. The war against bad grammar is like the war against drugs: you try to stop them, you manage to divert them, and you end up by ruining the economy of Peru. My first instance is just such a case of succeeding too well. But let me say first, by way of orientation, that I'm going to limit my discussion to just two broad conduits of change, hyperurbanism and what I'll call infantilism--I'll explain that later.

I begin with the fate of the objective pronouns in English. A good illustration of what pulls the puristic trigger that sets this off is a line from In These Times magazine (Nov. 16-22, 1988, p. 5) in which an editorial writer is reporting remarks made by a drug dealer about Dan Quayle. This person had said When him and Marilyn got married in 1972, I gave him a present of some Afghanistan hashish. The editor decorated this quotation with a bracketed [sic] after the word him. Now you can be sure that if the man had said I got some hashish for he and Marilyn, the editor would have left it that way or corrected it without comment. The hillbilly mistake is the one that gets flagged. Another straw in the wind was a

remark by a student who was asked why she wrote *for John and I* instead of *for John and me*. Her reply was, '*For John and me* doesn't sound nice'.

When you get mistakes at that level of gut feeling, your cause is lost. The objective case of the pronoun gets associated with people who raid henhouses and when you ask *Who's in there?* say *Ain't nobody here but us chickens*. In fact, that use of *us* with an appositive noun is probably more stigmatized than any other combination in spite of being the traditionally correct form.

So what's the new rule, since I promised that we'd be wise before the fact? It seems to be the following: 'Use the objective case with prepositions only for single ungrouped pronouns!' This means that when the pronoun is in a coordination, or an apposition, or is postmodified (e.g. by an adverb or by a clause), then the subjective case will be used. It comes down to a virtual rule of prefixation: the preposition is bound tightly to just the single pronoun that comes after it. The upshot is that while you don't get **They're coming with I* (or *she* or *he* or *they*), you nowadays pretty regularly get coordinations like

> [The South African police were charged with] torturing he and his co-defendants. (Jessica Gigi, KPFA)
> I ran into he and his wife. (John Molinari)
> Write your assemblyman or senator and urge he or she to... (Terry Goggin)

or you get appositions like

> ...is bankrupting we the American people. (Howard Jarvis)
> ...for they themselves. (Robert Owen)
> ...accusations against he, Blandón. (Larry Bensky)

or you get postmodifications like

> A very sad item--especially to we here at Channel 7.

The appositional case is noteworthy when the second element of the combination is a clause, because it tells us something about the influence of register here. Thomas Middleton at the Los Angeles *Times* found that somewhere between his typewriter and the printed page at *Harper's Magazine* the line that he wrote which read *maiden name of her who was willed* had become *maiden name of she who was willed*. When he commented on it in his column, he got mail insisting that the change was correct. But the best evidence comes

from the self-corrections that speakers make. The talk-show host Lee Rogers a couple of years ago started out saying For us folks who like to flirt with danger, then paused, chuckled, and continued with WE who like to flirt with danger. More often the speaker is simply oblivious. Us folks who are fans of Rumpole of the Bailey will remember his unrepentant she who must be obeyed, which he inserted everywhere. The reason for the special status of the appositional clause is that it is not colloquial, so in order to match the elevated style you have to use the more elevated pronoun.

The only instance I have of someone overshooting the rule as I've stated it, and using a subjective pronoun in the ultimate situation, is one where the speaker said A lot of us, like I, who think... But like is exceptional in being synonymous with such as, so this probably doesn't count.

The force behind the change in the pronouns is the old familiar one of hyperurbanism. Speakers want to do the accepted thing but they are not grammarians and they confuse the accepted thing with some one superficial aspect of it. With the pronouns it's pretty clear how things are going. With certain other prescriptive edicts the outcome is harder to foresee. Take the word as and the normative rule that made headlines a couple of decades ago, with the ad for Winston cigarets--you remember how it went, Winston tastes good like a cigaret should. Enough people took this seriously to start a reaction against using the word like at all, and now we have the radio newscaster Don Moseley saying things like Illinois, as California, has [similar traffic laws]. Jack Smith of the Los Angeles Times finds the same thing affecting other phrases with like, and he cites the sports reporter Dick Engberg's play-by-play description of a game where Engberg says, It looks as if a first down, and a few minutes later says, It looks to be a first down, twice avoiding a perfectly correct like. Smith observes that this is particularly true in sports, where such a degree of gentility strikes one as a bit surprising.

But as's problems don't stop with like. It has another rival in the shape of than. People are a little uneasy about than in part I suspect because of the normative rule affecting different from and different than--in any case, uneasy enough to hesitate a bit at the point where than collides with as in the comparison of inequality. We can express the same idea two ways:

Mine is three times longer than yours.
Mine is three times as long as yours.

So people who are uncertain about as and than cross them up and we hear things like

> Strokes are up to twice as common in blacks than in whites. (KGO)
> Hillsborough, Atherton, and Los Altos Hills, where videocassette recorders may be as common than washing machines. (SF Chronicle)

It works both ways, because you also find as construed with more:

> Methadone...is three times more potent a stimulus as morphine. (Science Focus)

The determinant more often seems to be a kind of vague sense of equality for as and inequality for than, regardless of syntax, so if you can have same as you can also have similar as and exactly the other side of the coin as.

We can also see the instability of as in a number of collocational shifts, especially involving blends. As yet resembles as of now, and that gives rise to as of yet. As well as you can resembles as best you can so we get as best as you can. As for X resembles as far as X is concerned, so we get as far as X. The ties of as well as to the comparison of equality are loosened to the point that as well as displaces and as a correlative of both, and we get both John as well as Mary. And the same as well as takes on the function of besides. I have a lovely example of this from a Stanford phonologist:

> As well as the strictly tonal aspects of the above three phenomena, there's a temporal aspect as well.

Here you see as well being pulled both ways, toward its traditional interior or final position and toward its new initial position equivalent to besides.

We can sympathize with anyone trying to prognosticate the outcomes with as. From where I stand it looks as if we're faced with accepting a flock of new idioms.

My two examples so far of hypercorrection, or gentrification as Michael Kernan of the Washington Post calls it, have both been from grammar--the new rule for the personal pronouns and the uncertain fate of as. Let's take a look now at the same phenomenon as it can be observed in pronunciation. What's happened and what is happening here is epitomized in an announcement

in May of last year that the San Francisco Mime Troupe was thenceforth to be known as the San Francisco [mim] troupe. What we're witnessing is the piecemeal adoption of Latin values for the vowel spellings whenever a speaker attempts to deal with a new word or a less familiar word that looks particularly dressy, or even with a familiar word if it has associations that are elevated enough to suggest that it ought to have a more dignified pronunciation. So we get [mim] for [maɨm], [haspis] for [haspes], and Dr. Dean Edell pronounces viands as [vianz]. The same avoidance of an i for an i accounts for divisive pronounced [dəvɪsɨv], which I've heard separately from Arthur Schlesinger and Daniel Schorr. Similarly with the letter a, which any vulgarian can pronounce [e] and therefore you need to upgrade it to [a]: Nanking becomes [nankɪŋ], uranium comes out [jeranɨəm], talkshow host Bill Wattenberg says [bask] for Basque, a Grand Auto ad announces an [ɨkstravaganzə], Aquatic Park becomes [əkwatɨk] Park, Sudan becomes [sudan], and I've even heard [oš̌ɨanɨk] for oceanic. Spellings with au are also Latinized, though this affects only a relatively few words: glaucoma becomes [glaəkomə], traumatic becomes [traəmætɨk]. (This may be partly a reaction to the loss of the [a] - [ɔ] contrast.)

Spellings with o in unstressed position show a somewhat different tendency, which is that of rejecting a pronunciation with shwa. In fact, this is becoming so common that one observer--I forget who--was led to remark on a general shrinking of the territory of shwa as a result of spelling pronunciations. The most notable case is that of the agentive suffix -or, especially when the status of an object or an occupation demands something loftier than a humble shwa. So we get jurors and monitors, and I've even heard givors from a tax expert and talkshow host Owen Spann referring to sellors and cowardly slackors. The same treatment of -or shows up in non-agentives like condors and meteors. The or spelling also does its work when it's internal in a word, resulting in a shift of stress: most people now say mayoral for máyoral, and I've heard temporally for témporally and femoral for fémoral. The same treatment of o but not associated with r turns up in Akron for [ækrən] and havoc for [hævək]. Asbestos comes out asbestos about half the time, and our friend Dean Edell gives us the beautifully appropriate butt ox for buttocks.

What with all this and the misinterpretation of the Latin digraph ae, Judaea becomes [dʒedea] and the masculine and feminine plurals alumnī and alumnae are

exactly reversed. Similar influences account for Harvard astronomer Owen Gingerich pronouncing Leviathan as if it were spelled like marathon.

If Latin confers dignity, Greek confers more, and people who learn that the plural of crisis and thesis is crises and theses now pluralize process as processes, and I've heard purposes as the plural of purpose, and the president of American University in an interview with Larry King speaking of sexual practices.

The element of malapropism that drives this whole machine shows its workings in the report of the woman who had her vagus nerve operated on and wrote it up as something wrong in Vegas, spelled you know how.

To finish off this dip into pronunciation I give you two quotations, one from Leonard Bloomfield and the other from Allen Walker Read. Bloomfield says (1961, 20), 'Writing is merely a device for recording speech. A person is much the same and looks the same whether he has ever had his picture taken or not. Only a vain beauty who sits for many photographs and carefully studies them may end by slightly changing her pose and expression. It is much the same with languages and their written recording.' Allen Walker Read says (1982, 88), 'In its extreme form [the belief in spelling pronunciations] holds that the oral form of a word is merely the degraded echo of its written form. Year by year the oral tradition is being eroded away. In my boyhood the word spelled k-i-l-n was everywhere pronounced [kɪl], but in recent years I have heard nothing but [kɪln]. I valiantly hold out for [kɪl] but I feel like a back number for doing so.' To add from my own experience, I cling just as stubbornly to margarine (with [g]) as the proper shortened form of oleomargarine--what right does anyone have to pronounce g-a as [dže]?--but I have to be prepared for miscommunication. At one supermarket when I asked a clerk, Where's margarine? the answer was 'I don't think she works here'.

The English spelling system is ideally and almost uniquely situated to have a maximum effect on speech. It is just close enough to being reasonable to encourage people to guess, and just far enough to permit a lot of minor shifts, especially in vowel correspondences. Couple this with a highly print-minded generation that suffers from a deathly fear of sounding wrong, and the stage is set for some large-scale changes that have more respect for Murphy's law than for Grimm's.

So much for genteelism, hypercorrection, gentrification, or whatever you want to call it. Let's take a look now at some of the recent advances of infantilism, of the failure of children to confront some ad-

ditional rule that would prevent them from clinging to a generalization that they had formed earlier. I'll first cite some examples of leveling in pronunciation.

In general the native English suffixes get attached without altering the stem of a word. Law gives us lawful and lawfulness, but legal gives us legality; the native form tends to be transparent, like the word hairy for 'having hair'; the borrowed one is opaque, like hirsute. Children who internalize the set of native rules are going to say running from run, slowly from slow, funny from fun, and fighter from fight. They have learned, correctly, to keep the stem intact. But even with native words we have traditionally had a certain later rule that syncopates a syllable whose nucleus is a syllabic [l], for instance tickle gives ticklish, fiddle gives fiddling, gobble gives gobbler. My impression is that starting a little over a decade ago this syncopating rule has been falling by the wayside, and now the majority of speakers that I hear are preserving the full stem, so that what for me is a minimal pair in peddling-pedaling, the one for itinerant salesmanship and the other for riding a bicycle, is now ped-l-ing for both. It seems to be -ing that is most affected, but I have twice heard the phrase to sit idle-ly by, and on radio I've heard George Bush's kinder, gentler America converted to kinder, gentle-er.

A more noticeable change along the same lines--in the preservation of the stem--has been occurring in Latinate words with the -able suffix, affecting their stress. If convért gives convértible, prefér should give preférable, not préferable, and that's what most younger speakers now seem to be saying. I've recorded comparable rather than cómparable, admirable rather than admirable, reparable rather than reparable, and revócable rather than revocable--I suspect that these days if you were to ask your lawyer for a révocable trust it might take him a moment to catch on. At the same time the negative, in a phrase like Their fate was irrévocable, is likely to produce the older pronunciation. Similarly compárable but incómparably good. It's obviously the transparent forms that are leveled--I doubt that anyone would be called disrepútable. I suspect that this tendency is tied in with a more general one, which is to reject the early stress on longer words if there's a motive for shifting it: résolute gives resolútely, órdinary gives ordinárily, possibly related to climax. We éxtricate, but things are inextrícable; the older inéxplicable similarly becomes inexplícable. And it's more effective to call something despicable than merely déspicable.

My last example of infantilism is from the grammar, and is something that is having a much more drastic effect on the language. Let's take it through the learning stages and try to find the point where the learner comes to a fork in the road and takes a wrong turn. Children are exposed from the very beginning of the multi-word stage to model sentences like Daddy loves pancakes and Doggies bite. I think it's safe to say that at this stage all that the child is aware of is that there is a verb of a certain form preceded by a noun of a certain form--no nonsense about subjects and predicates. That purely mechanical relationship can be maintained indefinitely without interfering with understanding the meaning of most utterances, especially with the help of context. The result is that more speakers than ever before--I'm tempted to say a majority of speakers--are resorting to proximity agreement rather than subject-verb agreement. The grammatical status of the noun doesn't matter, only its nearness. If you haven't noticed this it is probably because with all simple sentences the output of the two rules is the same. The most numerous cases are of agreement with the noun in a prepositional phrase, like this recently from KQED in an interview with the commander of the USS Pueblo; the reference is to bumper stickers reading 'Remember the Pueblo', and the interviewer said, The intent of those bumper stickers were to remind us... The process is helped along by a vague sort of blending--the speaker could have said, with the same meaning, The bumper stickers were to remind us. But it happens even without that. I've recorded a medical doctor saying knowing that this is a response to changes in her body are helpful, and a radio announcer offering a report on what the medfly people say are going on, where the agreement is with the subject of a different verb. Even agreement with an object pronoun shows up, as in a remark by Owen Spann: The interest from them are exempt from state and local taxes. Also agreement with a parenthetical denial rather than with what the sentence actually affirms, as in this from one of our phonologists: the contour, not its starting and ending points, are the basic units of analysis. Also agreement with an appositional noun: everyone--liberals, conservatives, and the general public, are outraged by the arms-for-hostages deal. Most cases are plural agreement, but the singular shows up too, as when another talkshow host, Art Finley, said That's one thing America has that not too many countries in the world has. I think the favoring of the plural represents a convergence with another tendency, which is

to favor the plural whenever there is any doubt. This shows up most clearly when the speaker anticipates a predicate nominative, especially in pseudocleft sentences like

> What we're going to see in the next few months are all the candidates speaking out.

but the same happens with plural predicates generally. A speaker will head one way and then back off, as when a radio guest who makes birdcall whistles said

> The wood we use is--are--the hardwoods.

or in another case where the speaker actually used both singular and plural:

> What was thought to be sticks of dynamite were only railroad flares.

Just the idea of a plural to come may be enough. The representative of the American Bar Association before the Senate hearings on the Kennedy nomination said

> The only tactful thing I can say are as follows.

The uncertainty that still plagues this is visible in a philosophical observation by Congressman Lee Hamilton, who said

> Methods and means is what the country are all about.

Nevertheless, my prediction is that contact agreement will prevail (see Francis [1986]), and when KQED says

> Burning chemical wastes are no longer necessary.

I like to ponder what a future Chomsky will do with

> Flying planes are dangerous.

I won't go on, simply because there's nowhere to stop. Genteelisms and infantilisms are only two of many forces for change, but they are enough to give you an idea of how the ground moves under our feet. Linguistics is a hazardous occupation.

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