

# A flexible language

ANN ENGLISH

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According to Professor Peter Trudgill (Opinion, *EDP* October 27) the English language has been ruled by 'interfering pedants' for the last 300 years. What does this mean? With the use of the printing press and wider education, those authors who had previously written plays to cater for the general public began to produce poems, books and dissertations which could be set down in printed form. There were a few dictionaries in use in the early 1700s but they were not very comprehensive. London booksellers who wished to sell works by Carlyle, Swift, Defoe, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Fielding, Pope and many others got together and paid Samuel Johnson to produce a dictionary that could be used as a national reference for derivations, meanings and spellings of words.

They certainly did not lay down pedantic rules to eliminate dialect speech.

English is a flexible language and very difficult to learn with its many deviations from normal rules of grammar and weird variations in pronunciation.

As an example, there are seven ways to pronounce 'ough' - *though, through, cough, plough, rough, thought* and *borough*. English has many homonyms, some of which sound the same but have different meanings and some that look the same but have different sounds.

*Desert, bow, bark, stalk* and *left* are just a few examples. English is also a very accommodating (try spelling that correctly!) tongue accepting new words all the time. Here are a few of the latest: *Adorbs, amazeballs, douchbeggary, geocahce, selfie, mansplain* and *side boob*. How many of those do you understand?

There will always be those pedantic persons who would like to keep to strict laws concerning grammar but I don't agree with Professor Trudgill that we have been browbeaten by them.

Only a few days ago a friend was telling me about some children who were fostered by her parents.

"Just like part of the family they wuz," she said. "They brung them up lovely alonga the rest onus."

The spoken word is there for easy communication but when it comes to writing it down I guess over the years I have gotten on the side of the pedants.