

Mind Your Language – It's Apparently Christmas...



Today's society does like to use acronyms in everyday language. In an age of instant communication there seems to be an almost over-bearing laissez-faire attitude to the use of the English language. Perhaps it's yet another sign of my aging process but I received an email from someone the other day which they ended with TY and their name. Folk of my daughters age do not hesitate to tell me this is 'shorthand' for Thank You. Now you may think I'm being old fashioned here but this irritated me greatly. Any appreciation I may have had for this person showing a molecule of gratitude disappeared when I realised they couldn't be bothered to type the words 'thank you'.

Among the many banal comments on the social networking site Facebook, the tendency for people to type omg seems to be growing. Some people use it twice as in 'omg omg I can't believe what's happening in the X Factor.' Now to me – and I suspect I'm not alone – this may well as well be a foreign language. My younger daughter Michaela tells me omg is an acronym for Oh My God. This appears to be yet another Americanism to have crossed the pond to our shores and is another that irritates me greatly.

Not so long ago when someone told you good news, you might expect to say "congratulations". This would be the polite way to react if, for an example, someone said that she was going to have a baby. Now it seems not only acceptable but a requirement of young people to shriek 'Oh My God!!!'

Although the phrase has the word "God" in it, it has now become so frequently used that most people don't associate it

with religion. This means people use it whether they're religious or not. Now, I'm not a religious person by any manner of means but the use of the word God in everyday language with it not having any religious meaning is another abuse of the English language. For which I blame the Americans...

Add to this the fact that most towns and cities in Scotland now have their Christmas lights adorning their High streets – six weeks before Christmas – and you may appreciate why a part of me yearns for years gone by. I write this rant after a hard day at the office, having consciously avoided heading towards the thronging masses of Edinburgh's Princes Street. Some people in Leith already have their Christmas trees up and lights blazing in their windows – I kid you not, dear reader. We have not yet reached the halfway point in November. How many of those so eager to scream Happy Christmas from their houses will actually go to church services on Christmas Eve? In fact, how many go to church at all? It seems to me that many people are not celebrating the birth of Christ but the time of the year when they can spend money they haven't got, scoff food that isn't particularly good for them and guzzle copious amounts of alcohol which will inevitably lead to unacceptable and in some cases embarrassing behaviour.

They're encouraged by the relentless advertising of 'the build-up to Christmas' on television. Already tonight I've seen Tesco's telling us it's time to put our party hearts on, Sainsbury's saying it's a time for sharing and the infuriating Coca-Cola advertisement with a big red truck with the picture of Santa emblazoned on the side trundling through town. No mention of Christmas on the Coca-Cola advert – just yet another Americanisation 'the holidays are coming...' Someone please tell me I haven't slept through an entire month and it's still mid November – not mid December.

I know this will come across as yet another rant from a grumpy old man. And it is. Or as my daughters may put it on Facebook

'OMG, Dad is in one of his moods again. Hope I don't c him b4 I go Xmas shopping. LOL'

But if anyone out there has a degree of sympathy for me, I would like to say thank you. Or, in today's language TY.....

Mike 'The Grinch' Smith