

STYLISTICALLY MARKED WORDS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERARY PROSE

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the use of stylistically marked words used in contemporary English. The aim of our study is to find out the occurrence of both registers: formal and informal. A particular attention is paid to the informal English lexicon as there is a certain shift from neutral communication to more informal communication in contemporary English. Different approaches to the classification of the informal English lexicon will be discussed and illustrated with the samples excerpted from contemporary literary prose. The excerpted samples will be analyzed and classified on the basis of their salient characteristics. Each category will be commented on and examples will be given to demonstrate particular meanings used in different contexts.

Keywords: *English vocabulary, formal vocabulary, informal vocabulary, colloquialisms, slang, crime fiction*

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of language in real life is influenced by situations in which it occurs and the audiences it is associated with. Different contexts require different levels of formality. Mostly, people use neutral language in their everyday communication. However, the language is used for different purposes and therefore it is important to distinguish which level of communication is appropriate for a particular context. The concept of formality and informality is not inherent to the distinction between written and spoken language. Written English used in academic writing or journalism is formal while writing emails to friends is affiliated with informal language (Carter & McCarthy, 2013). However, language used in academic lectures is less formal, while writing official emails or business emails requires formal language.

Every language is based on its specific rules and conventions that influence the choice of grammar and vocabulary associated with formal and informal uses of the language. Formal and informal contexts require the use of words and grammatical structures that are appropriate. In informal English, contractions, relative clauses without a relative pronoun and ellipsis are more common as well as the syntactic rules of negation and agreement are altered, while the passive plays an important role in academic language which prefers impersonal constructions. In formal English, the syntactic rules are strictly followed to enable language users to express their utterances in a logical and effective way. As far as vocabulary is concerned, some words are formal (e.g. garments, offspring) or informal (e.g. gear, kids), and others are quite neutral (clothes, children). Formal and informal lexicons comprise stylistically marked words as they are characteristic for a particular style of speech or level of formality.

According to Carter and McCarthy (2013), the expression ‘standard’, viewed in a broader sense, can be interpreted in different ways. For example, standard grammar is most typically associated with written English, however, spoken interaction has certain lexical items and grammatical structures that are standard for this communication mode, but considered incorrect according to the rules and norms of standard written language. What may be considered non-standard in written texts may be standard in speech. From the grammatical perspective, heads such as *That man over there, he looks like your husband* or tails which enable to extend or reinforce what one wants to say, e.g. *They are nice people, our neighbours* might be considered incorrect while written in formal styles. The same is applicable for vocabulary choice. While using the word *kids* in informal styles is correct, in academic contexts it is appropriate to use either the neutral word *children* or the specific term *offspring*.

On the contrary with more traditional classifications, in which formal language was mostly linked to written mode, both formal and informal uses of language can be part of written and spoken modes. Spoken interaction may range from being intimate and informal to being formal and distant. Often the distance between speakers is dictated by social factors such as interpersonal relationship, the setting or the respective power and social status of the speakers (Carter & McCarthy, 2013).

Languages have developed a wide range of varieties for handling the different levels of relationship and many cultures have rules of social behaviour that strictly govern styles of formality and informality. In Slovak as one of Indo-European languages, there is the distinction between 'you (familiar)' and 'you (polite)'. While 'ty' is to be used only with those people are in friendly terms (relatives, friends, peers) or it is used by adults addressing children, 'vy' is more formal and used when addressing unknown, elderly or socially higher ranked people (those who have more power or authority than somebody else in a group or an organization). Therefore grammar and vocabulary rules differ from those used in English. While Slovak formal '*Ako sa máte?*' has its English equivalent in the expression *How are you?* used to ask about somebody's health, informal '*Ako sa máš?*' might be expressed by using phrases such as *How's it going?*, *How are you doing?* or even *How you doing?*.

To make the concept referring to formal and informal language narrower, the focus of our study is put on register. There are many degrees of formality, and most spoken and written English is situated somewhere between the two extremes. To use different registers properly, it is necessary to be exposed to authentic materials in order to become aware of general tendency towards the choice of vocabulary dependent on the context. Due to a variety of factors that are related to language learning, reading contemporary literary prose seems to be helpful for language learners who tend to master English in terms of register.

2. STYLISTICALLY MARKED WORDS AND CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

English as every language has its own rules and norms concerning the difference between formal and informal language. Apart from a number of grammatical patterns that are more appropriate for one of the levels of formality (formal, semi-formal, neutral and informal), vocabulary can be categorized into several registers. However, there are certain general definitions such as that more formal vocabulary commonly involves longer words the origins of which are in Latin or Greek, while shorter words that originate in Anglo-Saxon are considered more informal. Learners of English can be exposed to a variety of words which may confuse them and later result in an incorrect use of words in specific contexts. Using inappropriate language, non-native speaking language users might appear either rude or bookish to native speakers.

2.1 Research Methodology

As mentioned in many previous articles (Béřešová, 2014; Béřešová, 2015; Béřešová, 2016), teachers of English in Slovakia need to support their learners in acquiring natural English. English course books used in language classes are based on neutral language and articles for reading are written in more formal language. The only samples of informal English are recognizable in texts for listening, which are mostly not analyzed linguistically as the aim of using them is to support listening comprehension and if so, mostly they are not used for practicing informal conversation. To provide learners with authentic informal English, several resources might be used such as videos, interviews, everyday discussions that are available on the internet or contemporary literary prose. The latter is widely used in language teaching whereas most language learners are visual and using visual materials enables them to learn new words at their own pace and use their learning strategies appropriate for vocabulary learning.

The goal of our study is to find out the proportion of formal and informal words used in authentic language presented in contemporary literary prose as these texts belong to reading for pleasure. Learners can choose the book they are interested in and pay attention to those words they want to learn with intent to use them productively later. The classification of informal words analyzed against a set of criteria based on salient features is to serve to underline the deep differences between lexical items

at levels of politeness. One of the partial goals concerns the processes that enable new words to enter either formal or informal lexicons.

For our purposes, two books were chosen, one written in British English – *Need You Dead* by Peter James (2017) and one written in American English – *Fifty Fifty* by James Patterson and Candice Fox (2017). This choice might raise some objections, however, the criteria for the book selection are based on the number of copies sold, which means both writers are bestseller writers whose writing style is refined and their books published in 2017 provide language learners and readers with language used currently. The philosophy behind our research is qualitative, not quantitative as the goal was to present salient features of contemporary English. An analysis results from 50 excerpts concerning informal vocabulary and 30 excerpts referring to the formal lexicon from each book. An uneven number is due to the classifications of stylistically marked words in English inasmuch as formal words are basically used in different genres from belles-lettres, however, technical words enter the English lexicon due to advances in sciences and industry intensively.

2.2 Results – formal vocabulary

Words have their meanings that are governed by social conventions and are influenced by contexts. Most words have a basic or core meaning, surrounded by peripheral or subsidiary meanings. Contemporary dictionaries use a corpus to establish the most frequent uses of a word in a large quantity of both written and spoken texts and usually list senses of a word in order of frequency.

Formal words have usually one meaning as they are used for clear and unambiguous presentations of ideas. Many formal words are of French, Latin and Greek origins due to the ruling position of French-speaking Normans and being languages of education in terms of Greek and Latin. Formal vocabulary is typical for official documents, academic settings, scientific books and articles, etc. The formal lexicon can be distinguished into three main categories:

- a) technical, scientific and specific words: *anatomy*, *lexeme*, etc.
- b) official, formal (learned) words: *obesity*, *plausible*, etc.
- c) literary (bookish) and rhetorical words: *belles-lettres*, *steed*, etc. (Béřešová, 2017).

Formal words are commonly two- and more-syllabic words, as mentioned above, mostly of Greek or Romance origins. Even though they are used in more formal and official texts, in our research based on contemporary literary prose we could find a large number of them since the plots of both stories were embedded in issues related to crimes and justice. Therefore some words taken from both books were related to specific areas of our life such as *testimony*, *prosecutor*, *footage* (Patterson and Fox, 2017) and *anthropologist*, *telepathy*, *solicitor* and *Go-Pro camera* (James, 2017).

Both books contain words that are related to cultural and institutional aspects of the area in which the plot is situated. However, while James's book was supplemented by a list of abbreviations that needed to be explained even to native speakers, Patterson and Fox expected readers to be familiar with certain abbreviations or to seek them in other materials. James's list of abbreviations is comprised of the initialisms of authorities, organizations or units belonging to police and specific technical terms therefore the expressions were completed by in-depth definitions, for example, *CAD – Computer Aided Dispatch. The system where all calls from the public are logged and, if they require police attendance, the live time record of whom is attending, how it is developing and what the outcome is* (James, 2017, p. 485).

Apart from initialisms, this glossary contains clipped words, for example, *Intel Cell* meaning Intelligence Cell, which is a name for a dedicated team of officers and staff who provide the intelligence research and analysis to a major crime or incidents (James, 2017, p. 488). Sometimes, official words or expressions are explained, for example, *Letter of Request* in the sense of the formal request sent by one country's prosecution to another asking for permission for the police to carry out enquiries and investigations within the other's territory (James, 2017, p. 489). This glossary provides sufficient information about unknown words or abbreviations and is very useful for those who are not experts in crime and punishment topics.

Technical terms are usually used in technical, scientific and academic texts and are quite frequent in speeches of those who are engaged in their particular areas of science and technology. Their status of formality is usually not marked in the dictionary - ... *a once-beautiful fashion model who'd had sulphuric acid sprayed in her face...* (James, 2017, p. 313). Some of these words have their neutral counterparts, for example, *carnivore – meat eater, subsequently – next/later, commence – begin*. On the other hand, other words are marked by the term formal in the dictionary, which enable non-native speakers to be aware of the fact that it is not suitable to use the expression in informal situations. The expression *faeces*, which is marked as formal in the dictionary (Hornby, 2005, p. 547), was used in the speech of a narrator – *Distressed call from a woman who says her husband has just pushed dog faeces into her face* (James, 2017, p. 13). Its informal equivalent is dog poop.

As far as American crime fiction is concerned, it is possible to conclude that words of Latin origin are formal words. Analyzing the sentence *The workout was invigorating, my quiet exhilaration heightened when he announced ruefully that I'd completed it* (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 67), we could find the formal verb *invigorate* borrowed from the Latin expression '*invigārāre*' and the expression *exhilarate* as a loanword from Latin '*exhilarāre*' as well. The third expression *ruefully* is derived from the verb *rue* described as old-fashioned or formal in the CALD (Hornby, 2005, p. 1329) in the meaning to feel bad about something.

A large number of samples regarding English formal words, analyzed in our study, were Latinate equivalents of multi-word verbs. Latinate words were more frequent in the speech of a narrator – *As the postmortem continued, with Dr Frazer Theobald moving at his customary slow pace...* (James, 2017, p. 143), while multi-word verbs were used by the characters in their speeches – *'He had been accusing her in his messages of stealing his money'. Go on. He's been threatening her with dire consequences.....'* (James, 2017, p. 162).

To conclude this formal vocabulary analysis, it can be claimed that words regarding police work such as investigation and processes related to it were formal. The speeches of narrators included more formal vocabulary than the speeches of characters.

2.3 Results – informal vocabulary

Informal vocabulary is used in everyday personal conversation and is limited socially and/or geographically. They are mostly short words of native origin, for example, *mum, dad, ta* and are frequently emotionally marked. The informal English lexicon comprises lexical shortenings (*lab, doc, dorm, gym*), idioms (*to drop someone a line, to pull someone's leg, to kick the bucket, to be in high spirits, to bury the hatchet*), phrasal verbs (*to turn up, to go on, to show up*), binomials (*high and low, give and take, pick and choose, bricks and mortar*), similes (*as good as gold, as poor as a church mouse, as mad as a hatter, smoke like a chimney, drink like a fish*), collocations (*a coach potato, a high flyer, a wet blanket*), proverbs and sayings (*Don't count your chickens before they are hatched, Fire is a good servant, but a bad master, You can't teach your grandmother to suck eggs*). The informal lexicon was clearly demonstrated in speeches of characters, for example, *'Thanks. I don't know why I bothered to come back* (James, 2017, p. 253). On the other hand, in the last decade informal vocabulary has been more and more frequently used in the articles of the newspapers and magazines to attract readers. Using modern technologies by people communicating on a regular basis has resulted in a certain shift from neutral communication to more informal communication.

Analyzing informal words from the word-formation perspective, a large number of our samples were shortened words or even numbers, for example, *'Like you, guv. 24/7. Call me any time you need me'* (James, 2017, p. 393). The expression *24/7* is used when the speaker wants to emphasize that he/she is available all the time (twenty four hours a day, seven days a week). The expression was marked as informal in the dictionary. The expression *guv* was used by Peter James and this informal word (*guv!*) is defined in the CALD as an exclamation used in British English by a man to address another man meaning 'sir', for example, *'Just as fast as you want, guv'* or *'Good to hear from you, guv!'* (James, 2017, p. 393).

The informal lexicon can be divided into several categories that might be put into different frameworks as applied linguists can view them from different perspectives. Colloquialisms might be

defined as words used in everyday conversation by educated people. The most frequently used expression is the word *guy*, which is an informal word for neutral *man* - *This guy was in national security* (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 34). This word has its British equivalent in the expression *mate* - *Hey, mate, heard you've been making a right pig's ear of everything in my absence!*' (James, 2017, p. 253). Some informal words might belong to more English varieties, for example, the word *buck* is an informal expression for a US, Australian or New Zealand dollar - *Bella was keeping an eye on me as she readied things on the table, duct tape and three small plastic mobile phones, the kind bought at supermarkets for thirty bucks* (Patterson and Fox, 2017, pp. 324-5)

Substandard words and expressions are regarded incorrect from the standard English perspective and are used by less educated people, e.g. *ain't*, *wanna*, *gonna*, *gotta*, *dunno*, etc. Some contemporary writers use these words in the speech of their characters to emphasize their educational background - *'I don't wanna die'* (Patterson, 2017, p. 205).

Slang is viewed as that which is unconvinced or unconcerned by rules, regulations and ideologies, but is vibrant, creative, witty and open to seemingly infinite re-invention. It is language of highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current word employed in some special sense. The use of slang introduces many new words into the language by recombining old words into new meanings. Slang is a non-standard vocabulary composed of words and senses characterized primarily by connotations of extreme informality, composed typically of coinages or arbitrarily changed words, clipped or shortened forms, extravagant, forced and facetious figures of speech, or verbal novelties experiencing quick popularity and relatively rapid decline into not being used (Fromkin and Rodman, 1988). The original meaning of the word *wicked* is morally bad, whereas it means very good in slang. The line between slang and colloquialism is often opaque, and one dictionary places a term to one side of that line while another to the other side of that line.

Slang vocabulary has figurative meaning and can be characterised as expressive, frequently ironic and impolite. The themes and images, primarily among them sex, the parts of the body and how they are used for either pleasure or pain, money, crime, prisons and policing, personal, racial and national insults, physical excess (via drink or drugs, insanity, prostitution, homosexuality) are universal in slang all over the world. For example, *grass* for marijuana. If words belong to special vocabulary used by a secret social group (e.g. criminals), it is called argot. The argot words are sometimes of unknown origin or are distortions of everyday words or common words that have been given a special meaning, for example, *apron* (wife, woman), *bear* (gruff, irritable person).

In the following three sentences, it is possible to recognize that language used by a police officer is based on slang and words concerning the experience of people living in that particular area in Australia. *'There is ice around here,' Snale told me. 'Softer drugs, too. Lots of weed'* (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 122). While the expression *ice* means money and the meaning of this word was not in the CALD, but only in the Slang Dictionary (Green, 2010), the word *weed* in the CALD has the fourth meaning related to the drug Cannabis in informal language.

Jargon is informal vocabulary associated with professional terminology and group activities as every conceivable science, profession, trade, and occupation has its own set of words, some of which are considered to be slang and others technical words depending on the status of the people using these 'in' words (Fromkin and Rodman, 1988). As they are related to criminal fiction, both books contain a lot of expressions that might be characterized as jargon.

Many jargon terms pass into the standard language as it spreads from a narrow group until it is used and understood by a large segment of population. In recent years, modern technologies enable ICT professionals to communicate all over the world, and this field of science has encouraged a dramatic expansion in the variety of new words. A number of abbreviations related to modern technologies were found in analyzed books, for example, *CCTV cameras* (James, 2017, p. 449), *an ANPR camera* (James, 2017, p. 450), and *the Virginia Tech killer* (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 238), *CCTV* (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 242) and *EFIT images* (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 248).

Dialectisms are words with local coloring as they are used in the speech of the local people living in a particular area. The speakers of the mother tongue usually do not understand those words as they do not belong to the standardized form of the language. One dialect that is distinguishable from other Northern English dialects is Mancunian spoken in the Manchester area. Despite the fact that some words, phrases and sayings such as *having a buzz* (having a good time), *scran* (food) can be found in dialects spoken in Liverpool and Glasgow, other dialectisms, for example, *gaff* (home, flat), *sound* (okay), *safe* (on good terms), etc. are used to describe everyday life. The plot of the British criminal story is held in Brighton, James Patterson and Candice Fox situate their criminal fiction in Australia.

In the sentence '*But do youse ever, I dunno*' (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 252) the expression *youse* in Australian English is used for plural of you. In the southern US version it means you all. The expression *dunno* was found in the speech of a character in British crime fiction as well – '*I dunno. I usually buy Lena a few things....*' (James, 2017, p. 169).

Certain words that are not to be used, or at least, not in 'polite company' are considered taboo. They might be words that have religious connotations and are profane if used outside of formal or religious ceremonies. In contemporary literature, it is possible to find these expressions when the characters are under pressure and cannot control their behavior – '*Oh, Jesus.*' *Zack panted, his sweat-drenched hands squeaking on the other side of the glass, fingers spread, desperate. 'Oh, Jesus Christ, I think I can hear ticking'* (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 205). Sometimes they were accompanied by another word referring to a woman in an offensive way – '*Jesus Christ, I don't know how you ended up such an ungrateful bitch*' (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 120). In British crime fiction the expression *God* was used for the same purposes – '*I – I – oh God – he just came out in front of me. I – didn't have a chance*' (James, 2017, p. 114). However, it is not possible to generalize anything as it needs more excerpts from a number of books written in both varieties, British and American.

Taboo words of many cultures are words relating to sex, sex organs, and natural bodily functions. Currently, these words are used when people are irritated and want to make it clear for the others. Contemporary literature contains these words, however, some decades ago, these words were not written in full, for example, b-----y. In contrast with this wording, all the samples taken from both books contain taboo words written in full – '*I bloody knew it*' (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 76). A number of words found in the books were as taboo or slang in the CALD with the comment that these swear words are considered offensive and are used to express anger, disgust or surprise - '*This is bullshit. I'm not wearing a fucking murder charge*' (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 294). American criminal fiction entails more taboo words than British. However, the use of taboo words was directly proportional to the topic and plot of the story and there are other factors that might influence the use of the words, for example, the writer's attitude to life, his/her style of writing, the audience's expectations, the publisher's requirements concerning profits, etc.

Both books entail words related to affection, such as *sweetheart* in American English – '*Welcome to the club, sweetheart*' (Patterson and Fox, 2017, p. 214) and *darling* in British English – '*Sleep tight my darling*' (James, 2017, p. 125). On the other hand, the samples excerpted were properly analyzed and the list of informal words such as *mate* (friend), *dumb* (stupid), *meathead* (stupid person), *shut up* (stop talking said in a rude way), *bullshit* (nonsense), *shit* (nonsense, an unpleasant person who treats other people badly), etc. Informal language includes taboo vocabulary, often labelled as vulgar slang in dictionaries or thesauruses.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Currently, language is changing very quickly as society changes are more rapid than they used to be. All these changes are reflected in people's attitudes to life and their behavior, which significantly influences the language they use. In contrast with mother tongue acquisition, it is quite difficult to respond to changes in target languages as language learners might not have enough opportunities to be exposed to language currently used in target countries.

The main focus of our study is the main division in registers: formal and informal with their sub-registers with regard to contemporary English in two varieties: British and American. For this purpose, two books were chosen one written in British English – Peter James’s *Need You Dead*, and *Fifty Fifty* by James Patterson and Candide Fox. The reasons for the selection of these two books were multiple. Primarily, the selection was based on previous experience with reading other books written by these two popular writers, analyzing them either from linguistic or cultural perspectives. Both writers belong to best-selling writers, the chosen books were published in 2017, which means that language used in them might be considered authentic and contemporary and as both books are thrillers, they contain both the speech of a writer as well as speeches of characters. In order to analyze stylistically marked English words, it was assumed that

- a) speech of characters would use more informal language than the speech of a writer
- b) informal English of the characters would contain words considered taboo, even vulgar more frequently in American English rather than British English.

Both assumptions were only partially proved because both writers use inner language of main protagonists and therefore it contained informal language along with neutral.

The formal register can be divided into several sub-registers as they reflect different social contexts. A group of the formal register contained also words borrowed directly from Latin, but phonologically assimilated, for example, *in situ* used in the speech of a character – ‘No, actually, we’d like to see him *in situ* in his office (James, 2017, p. 106) or *tabula rasa* in the inner speech of a character – Awfully sorry, we had a technical glitch, your tapes got wiped. You’ve arrived here *tabula rasa* (James, 2017, p. 123). The informal register contains several sub-categories and distinctions between them are not always clear. Colloquial language is conventional and people use it when they are at ease in informal situations, while slang is the language of non-conformity, created by those who are bored by the conventions of society expressed in conventional language. Therefore, slang can be characterized by language that is new and innovative.

The language used by James Peter contained more formal words than American writers’ language as he tries to explain all the specific organizations involved in crime investigation, focusing on specific procedures and instruments used by police forces. His book is supplemented by two lists, one concerning technical terms, one referring to slang and phrases. This seems to be very useful as readers do not need to search for particular meanings on the internet and can get unambiguous and clear information about work of police. The list of slang and phrases contains words that either reflect general policemen’s professional life, for example, *Beep test* (the fitness test all officers are required to pass) or police jargon – *Q word* short for quiet used by emergency services personnel as they do not say word ‘quiet’, as it invariably is a bad omen, causing chaos to reign or the expression *shout*, which is slang for an emergency (999) call.

The writer presents a lot of abbreviations, most of them might be characterized as initialisms, for example, *TFU* standing for Tactical Firearms Unit. The letters usually stand for official names of the organizations mentioned in the book, however, there are some that stand for many different organizations, e.g. *SIO* – Senior Investigating Officer. An abbreviation *ABC*, which either represents all the letters of the alphabet or is used in the meaning of basic facts about a subject in the neutral lexicon, was used in the meaning of the mantra used by Senior Investigating Officers for maintaining an open and enquiring mindset in investigations – *Assume Nothing, Believe No One, Check Everything* (James, 2017, p. 493). In this case, the expression *ABC* belongs to the informal lexicon and can be characterized either as slang or jargon. The abbreviations are part of both lexicons. Informal vocabulary includes word-formation processes such as shortening as well as blending. Another process of word formation is recognizable in the expression *Misper* which is based on clipping back parts of two words (missing, persons) that are blended into one expression (James, 2017, p. 489).

The second book, written by James Patterson and Candice Fox, contains more taboo words than the British writer’s. Nevertheless, it is necessary to add that the narrator is a female detective whose brother is accused of the brutal murders of young students and she is irritated at not being able to prove his innocence. This annoyance influences her inner speech as well as her interaction with

people. On the other hand, the book contains Australian English due to Candice Fox, an Australian crime novelist, who started collaborating with James Patterson in 2015.

Contemporary literary prose provides readers with formal vocabulary – *I need the current triangulation* (James, 2017, p. 171) in which *triangulation* is a technical term meaning a method of finding out distance and position as well as informal words – *The ACC has dumped a civilian bean-counter on us, in the role of detective inspector* (James, 2017, p. 146) in which *bean counter* is an informal word meaning a person who works with money and wants to keep strict control of how much money a company spends.

The speech of a narrator has more formal words than the speeches of characters. In the sentence ... *typing up her report on an incident she had attended yesterday – a local café proprietor had called in that a man ...* (James, 2017, p. 11) the expression *proprietor* was used in the speech of a narrator. This word is defined as formal (Hornby, 2005, p. 1212) having a neutral equivalent *owner*, which was used in the speech of a character – *I was the passenger – I'm Chris Bayross, the owner of Bayross Supercars* (James, 2017, p. 115).

Informal English include expressions and phrases that are more typical for one variety rather than another one, although British English and American English influence each other through close relations and everyday impact on people's language through literature and cinematography. Based on our own experience there are still more and more words that used to be officially claimed American slang used by British English speakers. On the other hand, others are one-sided, although comprehensible for both varieties – *Hey, mate, heard you've been making a right pig's ear of everything in my absence!* (James, 2017, p. 253), in which the phrase *to make a pig's ear out of something* means to do something badly in informal British English.

An analysis of contemporary literary prose encouraged us to reveal how quickly words related to science and technology (intravenous injection) are made informal, for example, *I pulled out my IV, pushed aside the blankets and started untying my hospital gown* (James, 2017, p. 223). This rapid development in the English lexicon is challenging and non-native learners and users should find any ways of keeping pace with this. Fortunately, most dictionaries indicate formality and informality of lexical items. What is more, taboo words are usually accompanied by a clear definition how much offensive they are, which enables non-native speakers to use words properly in different contexts.

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