

# ‘Writes’ and Wrongs in Verbal Communication

## A Sampling of Common Errors

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Speaking in English as a non-native speaker presents its own set of problems. Mistakes come in many forms and even teachers of English are not immune from them. Given below is a sampling of the most common errors made by Indians while speaking in English.



Gone are the days when the classroom was confined to a spoken and correcting exercise. The teacher read from a text, dictated notes bequeathed by his own teachers or his seniors at college, scribbled words or formulae illegibly on the blackboard holding a chalk and a duster, assessed the answers with stains of red ink on fingers, and at the end of theory and

lab exams, recorded the marks scored by hand in printed grade sheets. Saddened to note that 60% of the beloved students had failed to make the grade. Teaching is no longer a “chalk and talk” business, but a joint attempt at learning where the teacher and the student draw information from the same source, the latter often sprinting faster. The world today is engulfed



in a deluge of information from myriad sources. And the main responsibility of the teacher is to provide meaningful learning experiences that enable the student to think high, and at the same time, to develop the essential human connection, the personal touch.

Education can build or ruin nations and hence quality should not be compromised in the selection of teachers. It is quite significant that the National Council for Teacher Education has prescribed clear yardsticks designed as National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). The



four acquisition standards the NPST has listed for teachers are core values, professional knowledge, professional competence and professional development. They have also prescribed four quality-based career stages for school teachers – Beginners, Proficient, Expert and Lead. The NPST clearly underscores the importance of a genuine aptitude for teaching and adequate subject knowledge. Remarkably, the National Education Policy 2020 sets great store by multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning.

Of late, manual writing seems to be going obsolete. In lieu of original contribution in writing, youngsters of today adopt shortcuts like downloading from websites and capitalising on the products of ghost writers. Writing is a harmonious blend of ideas, usage and vocabulary which is less focussed upon at the present time. Reading, in the conventional sense, also

is sought to be substituted by the mobile phone and the computer screen.

Recently I have had occasion to administer job interviews for the selection of Asst Professors of English in two self-financed colleges. Some of the short-listed candidates had cleared the National Eligibility Test. Nearly a dozen entries handpicked for this article are the questions and responses in those high-level interactions. Let us have a look at some of these.

The interview, as usual, begins with the candidate's self-introduction. "*Myself Mr Rajesh Kumar. I am coming from Kannur.*"

"It seems you are a specialist in Indianism" (a word or phrase with strong colloquial content used in India but not in English speaking countries).

"Myself" in self-introduction may pass muster with the Indian context. "Since you are now sitting right in front of us, you are not coming by bus, car or on foot. Regarding "Mister", since it is a term of respectability, you cannot claim it for yourself. In all, I would put it like this 'I am Rajesh Kumar from Kannur.' If you want to be more formal, 'My name is Rajesh Kumar, I am from Kannur.'"

Alphabet-wise I would divide some of the solecisms in everyday usage under their initial letters.

## A

"Your academic background?" "I am an *aloomini* of this great college. *According to me*, preference in appointments should be given to *aloomnis*." "Good, glad to note that you are an alumnus of this college. Incidentally, the word which means 'former male and female students of a school, college or university', is spelt 'alumni' and pronounced /ə'ɫʌmnaɪ/, 'alemnai'. For females it is 'alumna' pronounced /ə-'lʌm-nə/ 'alemne' and its plural, 'alumnae' pronounced /ə'ɫʌmni: / 'alemnee'. "*According to me*" is an Indianism. It should be 'In my opinion.'"

"Since this college, your alma mater, is completing 30 years shortly, could you offer any suggestions for making the occasion a memorable one?" "Certainly. On this *ospishious* (auspicious) occasion, a large celebratory function should be held with a great artist like Sha Rukh Khan or Yesudas as Chief Guest." "Right. But *ospishious* and artist are to be recast, with the former as / ò-'spi-shəs / "ospishes", and the latter /a:(r)'ti:st/, "aarteest", spelt 'artiste'.

**B**

"Meet me 'in' the *backside* of the main building, right or wrong?" "Wrong, sir, it should be 'at' the backside". "What does backside mean?" "Rearside" (pron. 'rier') "Both backside and rearside mean 'but-tocks', the part of the body that you sit on. So, it should be 'at the back', 'at the rear' or 'behind' the main building."

"You have a tired look in the eyes; any health problem?" "Yes sir." "I haven't had 'breakfast' this morning. Besides, the co-passenger in the uber was my *bette noyer*. His body/*bawdy* language was deplorable." "The meal that you take in the morning is pronounced /'bræk-fəst /, 'brækfest', not 'brakefaast'. And your co-passenger was your/ bet 'nwa: (r)/, "bet nwa". Spelt 'bete noire', it means the person or thing you dislike most."

"Regarding his body language, is it the changes in the body movements reflecting his feelings, or his vocabulary teeming with obscene jokes and stories (*bawdy* / bə:di/ language') / that you disliked most?" "Both, sir".

**C**

"Next, Chandni Singh..." "Sirs, today is a *crooshial* (crucial) day for me. As President of the XYZ unit of our town, I was *on the chair* of a function arranged in the college *canteen*. My list of *criteria*s for a successful teacher consists of three quali-



ties." "Great that you are the namesake of a top-rated artiste. But "crucial" meaning 'extremely important' or 'decisive', is to be pronounced 'kru:ʃ(ə)l/, 'crooshel'. And 'criteria' itself is plural with 'criterion' as the singular. Again, Ms President, if you presided over the function, you were 'in the chair', not on the chair. The venue was not the 'canteen' which is an ordinary eatery in a factory, workshop or school. So better, replace 'canteen' with 'café', 'cafeteria' or 'restaurant'."

**D**

"Sir, I have a *doubt*. What is Dutch courage?" "Wait, is it a question you want to ask or a doubt you want cleared? If it is a question, you should say 'I have a question.'"

'Dutch courage' is the boldness or confidence you get when you are drunk.

"What's for *dessert*?" 'Dessert', or 'afters', meaning 'sweet food eaten at the end of a meal', is pronounced dɪ'zɜ:(r)t/, 'dizert', and not desert, /'dez.ət/, which means a waste land.

"Have you got the relevant *datas*?" Data, already plural (sing. datum) means facts or information examined for making decisions. 'These data show that most cancers can be cured if detected early'. Data set, data retrieval, demographical data.

**E**

"The school I graduated from is provided with most modern *equipments*. When



you *enter into* the main foyer, you will be wonderstruck with its elegant ambience. 'Equipment' like 'advice', is an uncountable noun which cannot become plural with the addition of 's', 'es' etc. Instead, use 'items/pieces of' equipment.

'Enter' means to get into an enclosed area, and so, you 'enter' the foyer or the lab. 'Enter' also means to be involved in an activity, e.g. 'enter a relationship', 'enter a competition'. You can 'enter into' the details, negotiations, or the spirit of the occasion."

"Sir, I am confident that I have sufficient *expertise* ('expertise') as a skilled teacher." "You may be right, but the word is to be pronounced /,ɛkspə:'ti:z/, 'exper-teese'"

'Encore', (French) pron' ɒŋkɔ:(r)/, 'ongko' – implies 'once more' or 'one more'. An audience calls out 'ongko', not *encore* at the end of a concert to ask the performer to sing once more or one more song.

**F**

"I applied for this position when I learnt that *few faculties* are required in the Dept of Food Technology". "Dear Farokh, 'Food' is pronounced /fu:d/, 'fuood', rhyming with 'mood,' and not 'fud'. I admit that the college requires assistant professors in F.T. We require 'a few' teachers, not 'few' which has a pretty negative sense. "Few burdens are heavy when everybody lifts".

(African proverb). "Faculties", apart from its meaning as abilities, physical or mental, implies the "departments in a university or a college like the Faculty of Law, the Arts Faculty, or all the teachers in a department such as "faculty members" or a "faculty meeting". Hence 'members of faculty' or 'faculty members', and not '*faculties*'.

'Felicitations' (congratulations) is praising or appreciating someone, wishing someone happiness.

My hearty 'felicitations' (not felicitation) on your success.

**G**

"Your *good name*, please?" "Since all names are good this polite enquiry doesn't carry much sense. ("After all what is in a name?" Juliet to Romeo) A good many Indians use this expression in the sense of 'first name'. But since it is a typical Indianism, you had better avoid it". Of course, 'good name' has the meaning 'reputation'."

The new municipal office is certainly gigantic. True, but the word has to be pronounced /dʒɑ:ɪ'gɑntɪk/, 'jaigantik', and not 'jaijantik'.



To ginger up – to make something more exciting, interesting. "The cover page of *Femina* has been ginged up (not *gingered*) with a new design." A 'ginger group' encourages others to follow a new way of doing things. 'Gingerly' means carefully and cautiously. "The new government gingerly sought to prevent the crisis escalating."

"I request you to *grand* me three leaves." – the wording in a leave letter. The Principal summoned his colleague and gave him three mango leaves. The teacher was asked to apply for 'leave of absence for three days', or 'three days leave'. Here, 'leave' means official permission to do something. He was informed

that 'grand' required a minor surgery. The word which implies 'give' or 'sanction', is to be spelt 'grant'. 'Grand' is an adjective as in 'grand master', a grand occasion, or Grand Prix. "Oh, I get it," came a prompt reply, "I should have used past tense!"

**H**

Hope you are 'hale and hearty' is an endearing phrase often used in personal letters. Implying 'strong and healthy' it is usually applied to elderly people.

The 'home straight' (or 'home stretch' Am Eng.) means 'the last part of a race or an activity.' "Kiran dominated the race in the home stretch."

During self-introduction in job interviews, certain greenhorns give unnecessary details also. 'My *house name* is Meenachil'. The proper word is 'family name'. Of the two buildings to reside in, 'house and home', 'house' is only a building for residential purpose, but 'home' is rich in sentiments of attachments. As the adage goes, "Home is where the heart is."

"Is 'half' singular or plural?" "Singular" "Not always. Fractions like half, one-third, 30 per cent etc. are singular if the relevant noun is singular, taking a singular verb, and plural if the following noun is plural. "One-third of my property is hypothecated to SBI". "Twenty per cent of students are late today due to the hartal."

A scene in the House of Commons: "Half the members of this House are fools," shouted the Opposition Leader. There was absolute silence for a few seconds, after which the Speaker stood up. "What are you saying? How dare you refer to the members of this esteemed House as fools? You must apologise and withdraw your statement." "I am sorry, sir,



I withdraw my statement. Half the members of this House are not fools."

**I**

"You look weary and worn. Are you ill?"

In the context of health, both 'ill' and 'sick' are used indiscriminately, meaning 'not feeling well' or 'suffering from a disease.'" I feel ill (Br Eng) / I feel sick (Am Eng).

'ill people' / 'the sick' are people who are ill/sick. "Indrajit is terminally ill with cancer."

"Indira has just called in sick (telephoned that she is unable to report for work due to illness)."

Sick also means – "feel like vomiting." "Mom, I feel sick, I was sick twice in the night."

'Indict' meaning 'to accuse of or to charge someone with a crime' is often mispronounced as 'indikt', but it is /ɪnˈdɪkt/, 'indite'. "The minister was indicted on charges of corruption."

Information – For additional *infor-mations*, phone the number below. 'Information' being an uncountable noun, it is wrong to say informations. "I have two shocking pieces of information to pass on to you."

*It's* - "I have no idea of *it's* value." "The baby threw *it's* food on the floor."

*It's* being a possessive adjective in this

**Pronunciation of "Bruschetta"**



The Italian dish of grilled bread with garlic, olive oil, and tomatoes actually takes a hard "r." This is because in Italian, "sch" comes only before "e" or "i," and is always pronounced like the English "sk." Thus, it's not "broo-SHET-ah," it's "broo-SKET-ah."



context, there should not be any apostrophe. — e.g. 'its value' — 'its best.' 'It's' is the short form of 'it is' or 'it has'. "It's raining cats and dogs. It's been an invidious task".

## J

"I don't understand your computer *jargons*". 'Jargon' is uncountable. Hence, computer jargon. "The document was full of legal jargon."



'Jealousy' and 'envy' are often used in the same sense. "My neighbour is jealous of / envious of my success." But for 'sexual jealousy' or 'a jealous wife', 'jealousy' cannot be replaced with 'envy'.

"The new teacher frequently says side-splitting jokes." "We should correct him. Let him 'tell'/'crack' jokes.

Job and job "You need the patience of Job (pron 'Jeub' or 'Joob' Am Eng) to deal with such gangsters."

"What is your job (pron /dʒɒb/, job, job Am Eng)?" "What do you do? / What line of work are you in?" 'Job', like 'position' and 'post', means work for which you get regular payment. "Mini certainly knows her job," suggests she is very good at her job. Teaching job, job hunt, job satisfaction.

'Position' refers to a particular job within an organisation, especially at a high level. "Mr Jagdish has been elevated to the position of Registrar." 'Post' is an important job in a major organisation. "Two ads have been put up for the post of Librarian."

## K

"I *kindly request* the Manager to enhance my housing loan to \$70 lakh." The Manager pointed out to the loanee that kindness should come not from the applicant but from the sanctioning authority. "Sorry, sir. I request you to 'kindly enhance'....."

"Our classes are *keyed up* to the needs of bright students." The phrase 'keyed up' means 'nervous before an important event.' eg: "Don't get keyed up about the interview." So the sentence has to be corrected as "Our classes are 'keyed to' the requirements of bright students."

Some of us have the habit of giving unsought advice to others. 'A kibitzer' thus gives gratuitous advice, unhelpful comments while someone is doing something, like playing cards or chess. The word is often pronounced wrongly as *kaibitzer*, but it is /'kɪbɪtə(r)/, kibitzer. Next time you 'kibitz' you are likely to be keelhauled (punished), not 'keyholed', by the loser.

'Keepsake' or a memento is a single word, but 'kept woman', meaning a 'keep' or "a woman who is supported in return for sex", are two words.

## L

*On the last Monday* a big *leopard* damaged our neighbour's new 'milking' shed. "The accident occurred last Monday." Similarly, "Last Monday, a leopard....." The word, spelt 'leopard', is pronounced /'lepə(r)d/, 'leped'. 'Lap/leg' means the last stretch of a race. "She was passed by several runners in / on the last / final lap and finished ninth."

In-laws are relatives by marriage, according to Canon Law. eg: brother-in-law, mother-in-law. My father-in-law heaved a sigh of relief on account of a 'let-out' clause in the contract. Incidentally, in 2008 when Sr Alphonsa was declared a saint in accordance with the Canon Law, in the commemorative stamp, 'canonisation' was spelt *cannonisation!*

**M**

"How about your research?" "Collection of *materials* is almost over. By God's grace, my guide is a good mender to me." "Are you still collecting stationery for the project? What you have collected is 'material', i.e., data or information. Good that your guide is your mentor too. The word is pronounced /'mentɔ:(r)/, 'mento' or 'mentor', rhyming with centaur, not mender. Incidentally, 'mentor' is an eponymous word, a word derived from a person's name. The original Mentor was Ulysses' bosom friend in Homer's epic 'Odyssey'. When Ulysses was away from home for 20 years for the Trojan War, his son Telemachus was groomed superbly by Mentor. Hence the word 'mentor' denoting an 'experienced and trusted advisor.'

"The recently published *memmoyers* (memoirs) of the former CM contain a few unfair references to a former President." 'Memoirs', pronounced /'mem.wɑ:(r)/, 'memwaa', means 'an autobiographical account of a famous person.'

'Memento' (meaning souvenir or keepsake), is something that you keep or give somebody as a reminder. Wrongly pronounced *momento*, it should be / mə'mentəʊ/, 'memento'.

**N**

"What's next? Oh yes, we will look at the word 'next' itself." The exam begins 'next Monday' (not on, or *on the next Monday*), but it is alright to say 'the next chapter', 'the patient in the next room'.

Please *do the needful* being an Indianism is to be replaced with "do whatever is necessary."

"Nouveau riche" (French) meaning 'a person who has recently become 'rich' is often pronounced as 'nowoo rich', but the right pronunciation is /nu:vəʊ'ri:f/, "noowevu reesh."

"Niche" (French) which is 'a hollow in a wall to put a statue in', or figuratively, 'a

position very suitable for a person', is to be pronounced /ni:ʃ/, /nitʃ/, 'neesh', not 'neeche'. "Sunish has 'carved a niche' for himself as a rated sports journalist."

**O**

Official and formal – I am waiting for 'official' permission to start the construction. The inaugural function being a 'formal', occasion has to follow certain formalities.

"When does the function begin?" "At 10.30 o'clock." 'O'clock' meaning 'of clock' is used only with full numbers 1 to 12. So wrong to say 10.30 o'clock. What time is it? It is 10 o'clock.

One of the – "One of the file has dis-



appeared." "One of the MLAs have resigned" – both are wrong. "One of the ..." is followed by a plural noun and a singular verb that agrees with the keyword 'One'. So "One of the files has disappeared."

Ordinance – "The 'ordinance' factory Omprakash is working for is particular about the observation of the Martyrs' Day. It should be "ordnance" and "observance" respectively.

**P**

"Practice makes a man perfect." No, it is "practice makes perfect."

"Out of the 30 students who had 'passed out in 2020, hardly anyone has responded to the HoD's appeal." To pass out means 'to faint'. "She passes out at the sight of blood." Of course, there is the Passing Out parade of army and police of-



ficers at the end of a course of study at a military school or police college. So, "Out of the 30 students who had graduated/completed the course in 2020..."

"Pankaj has been promoted as *Personal Manager*." It should be 'Personnel (Pl) meaning 'staff', 'related to human resources'. Medical personnel' / 'security personnel.' But one could speak of 'personal space', 'personal service'.

The brochure gives a detailed account of the job prospectus of the course. The word to be used is 'prospects' implying 'chances' or possibilities.

'Principal' and 'principle' are pronounced alike. However, at many a school/college in India, 'Principal' /'prɪnsɪp(ə)l/, is wrongly pronounced "Principall".

**Q**

English and the English have two 'kween's' – 'Queen' /kwi:n/ is the female ruler of a country or the wife of a king, and 'quean' /kwi:n/ means 'a prostitute', both pronounced alike.

"On the qui vive" – French, pron./ki:vi:v/, 'kee veev' means – watch closely or pay close attention to a situation. "Raju is always on the qui vive for business opportunities."

'Qualification' implies exams or courses of study one has passed. 'Qualifications' refers to exams passed, experience and skills acquired that are required for a job.

'Quandary,' not *quandry* - pron. /'kwɒnd(ə)rɪ/, 'kwonderi', means a state of perplexity, a dilemma. "We are in a

quandary over which college to send our children to."

**R**

Despite the ravages of recession Honda is *ramping* (ramping up) the production of City.

"You should anticipate the mental *road blocks* (roadblocks – something that stops the progress of a plan) that get in your way".

Rendezvous (French) means 'a meeting place for two or more persons' or 'an arranged meeting.' "Our *rendesvoos* was fabulous." The word is spelt 'rendezvous' and pronounced /'rɒndɪvʊ:/ /'rɒndɪvʊ:/ "rondivoo."

Résumé- "Your *résumé* should be double-checked." The word is to be pronounced /'rezjʊmeɪ/, 'resumay', and not 'resume', which is a verb meaning 'to continue'.

**S**

Anchor at a wedding reception – "A classy *syoot* is arranged for the newlyweds." Spelt 'suite', the word is to be pronounced /'swi:t/, 'sweet'.

Staff – a group of people who work for an organisation. "There exists a cordial bonhomie between staff and students at the College." "The staff are happy about the pay revision." "The management has cut the staff by a quarter." "We require 40 members of staff". Wrong to say *staffs*.

'Sceptic' and 'septic' – 'Sceptic', pronounced /'skeptɪk/, 'skeptik', means a 'disbeliever, one who doubts the prevailing doctrines.' 'Septic', pron. /'septɪk/, 'septic, / means 'infected with harmful bacteria. "That dirty cut may 'go septic' (not skept- tic)."

Southpaw (leftie/lefty/leftlander) is someone who uses their left hand, esp.in games. "Southpaws are eligible for a special discount." The word is spelt southpaw, and not *south paw*.



**T**

Another compare – “*Last but not the least*, you dear students.” It is “last but not least”, (without ‘the’). ‘The’ is pronounced /ði:/, ‘thi’, only before vowels, as in The Indian Ocean, the upshot (the final result)

Tortoise is a land animal, but turtle lives mainly in water. Tortoise /'tɔ:ɾ.təʊs/ (Am), ‘tottes’ is often mispronounced ‘*tortoise*’.

‘Tete-a-tete’, (French) meaning ‘a private conversation between two people’ is to be pronounced. /tɛt ə 'tɛt/, 'tɛt ə tɛt', and not *tette-aa-tette*.

‘Target’ – pron. /'tɑ:(r)ɡɪt/, ‘taagit’, not *taarjet*, means ‘a level you are trying to achieve.’

“The government’s target of 4% annual growth seems hard to achieve”.

**U**

My office is ‘*on the upstairs*’. Avoid ‘on the’. “My office is upstairs.” “I am going downstairs.”

‘Umpteen’ /ʌmp'ti:n/, not *umteen*, means a large number. “The college offers umpteen scholarships.”

‘Unbeknown to me’ – ‘without the knowledge of’. “Unbeknown to me (without me knowing) my brother sold the car.”

‘Upswing’ – (not ‘*up swing*’) is an ‘increase’ or ‘improvement’. “We are going to witness an *upswing* of / in economic recovery.”

**V**

‘Vicious’, meaning ‘violent and cruel’ is pronounced /'viʃəs/, ‘vishes’ not *vishious*, and ‘vivacious’, meaning energetic and attractive, is /vi'veɪʃəs/, /vɪ'veɪʃəs/, ‘vivaishes’ and not *vaiveshious*.

‘Very’ emphasises an adjective – very

nice of you. Very real problems. Very is also an adjective that emphasises nouns. “Start this very minute.” “This is the very last time I lend you money.” Wrong to say wish you *the very best* in the sense “more than the best.”

‘Vehicle’, wrongly pronounced *vehikkle*, is /'vi:ɪk(ə)l/ 'veekle’.

View – “with a view to doing something” – “We bought the two-storey (Am Eng: story) villa ‘with a view to moving’ there when we retired.”

**W**

“We are all worms, but I do believe I am a glow-worm.” (Winston Churchill)

‘Worst’ and ‘best’ are opposites, but strangely enough ‘to worst’ and ‘to best’ have the same meaning – ‘to defeat’ somebody in a fight or an argument.



In ‘industrial waste’, or ‘chemical waste’, ‘waste’ being uncountable, it is wrong to say chemical *wastes* etc.

We have four ‘weres’ namely ‘were’, ‘where’, and ‘wear’ and ‘ware’. Of these, the first one has a long vowel /wɛ/, whereas the other three have the same diphthong /we:/ (a sound formed by the combination of two vowels). ‘Dinnerware’ and ‘Innerwear’ are self-explanatory. By the by, ‘warehouse’ is the standard English word for godown.

**Pronunciation of “Segue”**



Segue, which means to lead from one thing to another without a pause, is pronounced just like the Segway, a motorised two-wheel vehicle that came out a few decades ago.



'Warrior' is to be pronounced /'wɔ:riə/, 'worrier'. There is a story of a teacher explaining the first line of Tennyson's poem 'Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead' as "Some *Varrier* (a Hindu community in Kerala) died, and his body was brought home."

**X**

XL – pronounced 'eks el' (abbr. of extra-large) used for size of clothes etc. "In the new XL shirt, you look older by 10 years."

An 'X-rated' or 'X-certified' film, containing sex and violence, is forbidden to viewers under 18.

'Xed out' (pron 'eksd') means to mark or remove a mistake in a piece of writing using an X, that is, to cross out. "I xed



out all cousins from the list of wedding guests."

'Xenophobia', /zɛnə'fəʊbɪə/ 'xenophobia', and not *seenofobia*, is the extreme dislike/fear of foreigners.

**Y**

His annual salary is \$10 lakh an year is to be corrected as "His salary is \$10 lakh 'a year' /jɪə(r). "A 'yearling' is an animal between one and two years old. An ear /ɪə(r)/ is meant to listen, not just to hear.

In *Your's truly* or *Your's sincerely* – 'Yours' being a possessive pronoun there is no apostrophe. Hence "Yours sincerely" or 'Sincerely yours'. "They all left, leaving 'yours truly' (meaning 'me' or 'I') to clear up the mess."

Youth – period of time between being a child and being an adult, also the quality of being young – "Youth is a rebellious stage of life." Youth also means 'young people.' "Politicians ignore the ambitious youth of the country." "Recently a few gangs of youths have been brought to book for drug running." Wrong to say, *the youths of today*.

'Yen' is a strong desire. "I have an *yen* to/for travel." No, it is a 'yen'. Yen is also the standard unit of money in Japan.

**Z**

Z is pronounced 'Zee' in Am Eng.

To 'Zero in on', (not zero in) means "to direct your full attention at something," or "to aim a gun towards someone". "The committee zeroed in on the key issues."

'Zinger' is an amusing remark or story – "Try to start your speech with a real zinger." Zing (n) means energy, enthusiasm, excitement. "You have to put more zing into the narrative." To zing implies to criticize somebody strongly / to move something fast. "The MP zinged the Silver Line project at two press meets."

"Zip your lip" – to tell someone not to say anything about something. "Better zip your lip, or you'll be in trouble."

This write-up seeks to point out the inadequacies in speaking and writing vis-a-vis lexis, idiomatic usage, spelling and subject-verb concordance. Instead of overdependence on advanced technology such as AutoCorrect and Grammarly, reading in its conventional sense is to be resurrected which is inarguably a desideratum devoutly to be wished for. This study is a melange of words and phrases of different categories such as formal, informal, technical, literary, archaic, old-fashioned and humorous as well as American, French and Indian, which will hopefully deepen and widen the sensibilities of a reader. ■