

Goodbye to *hi* and hey to *catch ya* and beyond

The Internet and instant messaging are constantly changing the English language. The common, frequently used expressions such as greetings, farewells and other terms are expressed with even newer words from all over the world. *Dear Sir*, *Good morning* and even *Hi* have given way to the likes of *Yo*, *G'day* and *Wotcha* some time ago. *Yours faithfully* or *Best wishes* turned into *Hasta la vista*, *Catch ya*, *In a while* and *Adios*. These new expressions never last though, and are frequently replaced by even newer phrases.

Instant messaging, which is considerably faster than email, is *the* way to communicate. In the UK alone, about 45 million of these messages are sent every day. A survey of British Internet users has revealed that the most common greeting these days is *Hey*, a modernisation of *Hi*. Almost as popular is *Yo*, a greeting associated with the hip-hop culture slang, but which was first recorded in English in the middle of the fifteenth century. *Wassup*, a contraction of the informal greeting *What's up*, first entered the English language in the 1970s, originating in Jamaican patois.

Apart from the Internet and messaging, advertising and TV continue to popularize new phrases. For example, high-profile television advertising campaign for a well-known beverage rapidly propelled *Wassup* into the mainstream. However, some words enter from other languages as well. Previously favoured farewells gave way to equally eclectic ones that include *Ciao*, *Au revoir*, or *Hasta la vista*.

Instant messaging, with its emphasis on speed and brevity, encourages shortening and abbreviation, such as *see you* spelled as *C U*. With many people working and studying online, individual groups or professions develop their own jargon too. Many office workers now greet their new colleagues with *Nice to e-meet you* in their introductory emails.

Today's technology means that new phrases and new uses of existing ones can go round the world in a matter of hours and can become established almost as instantaneously as they are sent. English of the Internet era changes almost daily. So, if you feel awkward using the latest phrases, then you're better off sticking to the mundane, but safe, *Hi*, *Best wishes* and *See you soon*.

Activity 1

Read the text and answer the questions.

- a. What is *patois*? (paragraph 2)

- b. What is the meaning of *slang*? (paragraph 2)

- c. What is the meaning of *jargon*? (paragraph 4)

- d. What is the difference between *patois*, *slang* and *jargon*? How should these words be used?

Activity 2

What is the meaning of *high-profile*? Do you know other compound adjectives with *high*? Match the following words with their definition and check your answers in the Macmillan Online Dictionary.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1 high-class | a. important and powerful in a company or organization |
| 2 high-flying | b. involving people in important or powerful positions |
| 3 high-level | c. showing strong moral principles |
| 4 high-minded | d. of high rank or status |
| 5 high-powered | e. successful and determined to achieve more things |
| 6 high-up | f. very good in quality and very |

Activity 3

Read the text again. Infer and write the meaning of the following words. Then look for their definition in the Macmillan Online Dictionary and compare your answers.

- a. Propelled

- b. Mainstream

- c. Mundane

Activity 4

The following words have more than one entry in the Macmillan Online Dictionary. Read the entries and write an example sentence for two of them. Then ask a partner to guess the meaning used in each sentence.

- a. Favoured

- b. Awkward

For discussion

Ask and answer the questions with a partner.

- a. Do you use any of the greetings and farewells mentioned in the text? What greetings and farewells do you use when you are:
- speaking?
 - writing letters?
 - using the Internet?
 - texting?
- b. What slang, abbreviations and other language do you use on the Internet and when you are texting?