

Lecture 6.1

1 Add to the list of monologues and dialogues given in the lecture. Some further examples can be found in the classification of discourse types, based on those used by the Survey of English Usage, which I summarize in 'Refining stylistic discourse categories':

<http://www.davidcrystal.com/DC_articles/Stylistics3.pdf>.

2 Take a conversational feature similar to 'you know' (eg 'you see', 'mind you', 'I mean', 'like') and see if it works in the same kind of way. Are there other uses of these expressions, apart from the ones I illustrate in the lecture for 'you know'? Can you find any other uses of 'you know'?

3 Investigate the work of the Plain English Campaign using the site at:

<<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk>>.

What factors are involved in turning a difficult text into 'plain English'? Find a piece of writing which you consider difficult and try making it easier to understand. Pay attention to graphetic features (such as layout) as well as points to do with grammar and vocabulary.

4 Find a collection of fonts online, such as:

<<http://www.dafont.com>>

or

<<http://www.1001freefonts.com>>,

choose some examples, and discuss the situations in which they might be appropriately used. Would a comic font be right for expressing condolences? Would a Gothic font look right for a modern fashion store? Create a document online and experiment with different fonts to see what kind of effect is conveyed by each one. Do people in your group all agree about the effect?

Lecture 6.2

1 Choose a topic (eg where you work, where you live) and write a *Wikipedia*-type page as a *Word* document. Then circulate it around your group, asking them to change it as they see fit. Make sure all changed pages are saved so that they can be viewed later. Compare the final document with the initial one. What types of change have been introduced? As well as alterations to sentences, there will be additions and deletions. Do particular kinds of content (eg personal opinions) motivate more changes?

2 Arrange a text-messaging poetry competition. You'll find some examples of earlier ones at:

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2001/may/03/internet.poetry>>

and

<<http://www.txtcafe.com>>.

Note the advice of poets such as Andrew Wilson at:

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2001/mar/29/internet.poetry>>.

3 Develop a sense of the kinds of difficulties faced by translators. A good place to start are collections of translation errors, such as at:

<<http://www.ojohaven.com/fun/translation.funnies.html>>.

Use a 'back-translation' method to assess the accuracy of the automatic translation procedures that exist online, such as:

<<http://babelfish.yahoo.com>>

or

<http://www.worldlingo.com/en/products_services/worldlingo_translator.html>.

Activities

Type in a sentence and translate it into some other language. Then paste in that translation and have the system turn it back into English. Compare the initial and final results.

4 Make a selection of Web pages and evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of the ads on each page. When you encounter an inappropriate ad, see if you can find a linguistic reason for the misplacement, as in the 'knife' example I used in the lecture. You'll get the best results if you choose words that have several online senses, such as 'apple' (fruit, computer, Beatles, etc).