



Raping the Language

Although the creation of the film *Idiocracy* evidences how we're already halfway to an idiocracy — the work reflects decadent modern culture — it's a good comedic warning about where we're headed. For those too unsophisticated to imbibe such Hollywood fare, know that the movie presents a dystopian future America dumbed-down to a preposterous degree. One thing portrayed in the film is the degradation of language, with, for instance, a doctor character starting an interrogative with "why come" instead of "how come." And it is a perfect example of art imitating life.



Many today will rape the English language, taking pleasure in mangling and tangling it, confusing corruption with creativity. What follows are examples of such, starting with the relatively innocuous and concluding with the more dangerous.

While journalists are supposed to be word men (those were the days, huh?), they often lead the charge toward idiocracy. It's not just the news piece I read a few years back penned in pidgin English — obviously by someone to whom English isn't his first language — but those who try to be "cute." For example, Golf Channel's Tim Rosaforte recently mentioned something that had been revealed and began his sentence with, "The big reveal is...." But unless he was about to apprise the audience of a [large window jamb's existence](#), "reveal" is a verb, not a noun. The word you're looking for, Tim, old boy, is "revelation." Likewise, let's dispense with the new and budding practice of writing things such as "The tells are there," which seems to have originated in the poker world. For unless we're talking about a raised mound at a Middle Eastern archeological site, "tell" is a verb, not a noun. If one wants to "tell" someone about a thing serving as a clue, the relevant term is "indication."

Oh, just to head the cutting-edge lexical fashionistas off at the pass, I'm aware that some usages I'm condemning may have already infected certain less sophisticated dictionaries. The fact is that unlike the French, we don't have a language academy to regulate our language. Consequently, if grunts and other guttural emanations came to take the place of most words — which I half expect — they'd be in dictionaries, too. But I don't have to accept the defining of ignorance upwards any more than the notion that Lady Gaga actually creates music.

Then there is one of my pet peeves, the almost universal misuse of "healthy," as in "Eat that venison, Timmy; it's healthy." But given that the deer has been shot and cut into pieces, I doubt it is. If a deer is running around in "a good state of physical health," it's healthy. Once it's on your plate, however, it can only be "healthful" and perhaps make you healthy.



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Next there are the examples of the wider society taking its lead from the ghetto. For instance, we may now hear, “He ‘disrespected’ me,” which is just a step away from saying “dissed.” I prefer to respect the language and say, “He showed me disrespect” or “He acted disrespectfully.” In the same vein, some now say “My bad” when they mean “My mistake.” Let “bad” enjoy its adjectival existence.

Sometimes, though, a desire to sound intelligent can actually grease the skids for language devolution. For example, while most now use the word “gender” when they mean “sex,” the former once referred only to words, which can be divided into three gender groups: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Why has “gender” been the victim of a language bender? Well, just consider that in the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the organizers sought to define what could constitute a family. And they listed five “genders”: male heterosexual, female heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian, and bisexual. This language was ultimately removed because of Vatican contingent lobbying, but it reveals the truth: “Gender” was co-opted to facilitate the homosexual agenda.

After all, if you want to normalize something, it helps to lump it in with what is normal. But since it’s already cemented in people’s minds that there are only two sexes, no one could realistically label homosexuals a third sex. So a new term was needed. And what better than one already inclusive of more than two categories, with the third being “neuter”?

Of course, most people know nothing of this and just use “gender” because it sounds more sophisticated than “sex.” This is also part of what causes us to say “underprivileged” or “disadvantaged” when we mean “poor.” But this trap is easy to avoid. Just apply a principle embraced by good writers: Never use a longer word when a shorter one suffices.

Destructive agendas are also enabled by the common desire to be “fair.” A good example is a recent *Telegraph* piece entitled “Germany is linguistically stuck in the 1880s,” which to my ears sounds like a compliment. The author, Brian Melican, complains about Teutonic resistance to inclusive language and [writes](#) that it’s common in German to read a sentence translating into the following:

“When the customer calls, he can expect to speak directly to a consultant. The consultant will always make every effort to satisfy the customer’s wishes — after all, his job is to listen to the customer.”

So here we have a company who — to judge by its description — employs only male consultants, who then deal with only male customers.

Well, that is the conclusion one might draw — if he had the education of a Fig Newton. The rest of us know that male pronouns used generically are inclusive: They refer to members of both sexes. Melican desires that everyone submit to the thorough linguistic hen-pecking compelling the use of the nauseating “he or she” and “his or her,” even though, interestingly, the language engineers never propose to defeminize English by ceasing to refer to cherished items (e.g., ships) and qualities (e.g., wisdom) as “she.” (Note: If Mr. Melican were concerned about correct grammar and not just politically correct grammar, he might have known that “company” in his last sentence should be followed by “that,” not “who.”)

Then there is literary anthropomorphization of inanimate objects. For instance, in this *Toledo Blade* column, writer Jeff Gerritt [points out](#) how most black murder victims were “killed by handguns” as he kills our language. Now, since this phraseology can serve to facilitate the gun-control agenda, you can decide whether Mr. Gerritt is extremely smart or extremely stupid. But when one says “killed by,” the “by” implies action by an entity with will and purpose. A marksmanship competition can be won by a



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marksman with a rifle. Similarly, a victim isn't killed by a gun with a criminal; it's the other way around. And unless firearms develop intellect, free will, and the power of locomotion, this won't change.

There are many other examples, which alike are driven by ignorance, insidiousness, or both. Whatever the case, we ought to be mindful of the theme of the [old book](#) *The Tyranny of Words*: The side that defines the vocabulary of a debate wins the debate. So watch your mouth — the culture you save may be your own.



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