


STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY



Classification of Words

- By level of usage
 - Common words
 - Literary words
 - Colloquial words
 - Slang words
 - Technical words

Classification of Words

- Common words

- Common words are connected with the ordinary things or activities necessary to everyday life. The core of the common words is the basic word stock. They are stylistically neutral, hence they are appropriate in both formal and informal writing and speech.

Classification of Words

- Literary words

- Literary words are chiefly used in writing, especially in books written in a more elevated style, in official documents, or in formal speeches. They are comparatively seldom used in ordinary conversation. In English, most of the literary words are of French, Latin or Greek origin. Many of them have their everyday synonyms. For example, *cast* (throw), *edifice* (building), *endeavor* (try), *purchase* (buy), etc.
- More examples: *recognition*, *distinction*, *inclination*, *dubious*, *amelioration*...

Classification of Words

- Colloquial words

- In contrast with literary words, colloquial words or expressions are used mainly in spoken English, as in conversation among friends and colleagues. They can also be used in informal writings, but are inappropriate in formal speeches or writings. They are marked *colloq.* or *informal* in dictionaries. Such as: *kid, guy, fellow, gay...*

Classification of Words

Compare:

- Feeling *fatigued*, Tom *retired* early. (literary)
- Tom felt so *dog-tired* he *hit the sack* early. (colloquial)
- John was *dismissed* for petty thieving. (common)
- John was *fired* for petty thieving. (colloquial)
- *Penalties* for overdue books will be strictly enforced (literary)
- You have got to pay *finer* for overdue books. (colloquial)
- They *approved of* the plan. (literary)
- They *agreed to* the plan. (common)

Common words

- Common words: being used by common people every day, and appear in all kinds of writing
- Common words are good for all kinds of writing

Colloquial words

- Colloquial words are mainly used in informal or familiar conversation.
- 1) being **short** words of **one or two syllables** and most of them are of **Saxon origin**
- 2) seldom used in formal writing, unless for some special purpose or effect

Slang words

- Slang is defined as language, words or phrases of a colorful, facetious (playfully jocular; humorous), or taboo nature, invented for specific occasions, or uses, or derived from the unconventional use of the standard vocabulary. The chief reason for the formation and use of slang expressions is to secure freshness and novelty. A slang usage is not generally used in formal conversation unless the speakers are on intimate terms; slang embraces those daring and new expressions that have not been accepted by the majority of people as Standard English.