

Re: Why does some culture's language become replaced but others don't?

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On 2008-08-04, LEE Sau Dan wrote:

Adam> I definitely agree that the frequencies differ. Personally,
Adam> I try to avoid using the passive voice in writing without a
Adam> good reason,

So, you seldom write formal documents, do you?

That's not the case. My teachers fairly consistently taught me to avoid using the passive voice very much (unless an editor demands it, of course).

- (1) Precision and recall were then calculated for all six classes.
- (2) We then calculated precision and recall for all six classes.
- (3) Table 4 shows the precision and recall figures for all six classes.

I think (2) and (3) sound better (if read aloud or sub-vocalized) and are easier to understand quickly than (1). I wouldn't write (1) unless an authority (boss or editor, for example) insisted on the passive voice. This is a conscious stylistic preference, of course, and I know not everyone agrees.

Adam> but in general, that's a good example of what I mean: the
Adam> construction exists in speech but is much more frequent in
Adam> writing; the same is true of nesting a relative clause.

Do you often write with slangs and constructions not in the standard language? e.g. "gonna", "gotta", ...

In formal writing, no. In informal writing, sometimes. I don't think my English output consists of a few clearly demarcated types but of a continuum ranging from very informal speech to very formal writing,

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just as there are a lot of subtle variations between the casual speech of different people speaking the same language.

Is "gonna" a distinct lexeme or just a surface realization of "going to" in casual speech?

Even if it's a distinct lexeme, I think the intersection of the spoken and written lexemes for a given person (dealing with a particular subject, if jargon is included) account for most of the union of the two lexica. The frequency distributions are different, of course.

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I heard that Hans Christian Andersen lifted the title for "The Little Mermaid" off a Red Lobster Menu. [Bucky Katt]

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