

Re: observable language change – "off of" makes it to the NY Times

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2008-08/msg00501.html>

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- *From:* Harlan Messinger <[hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Mon, 11 Aug 2008 20:33:41 -0400
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analyst41@xxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Aug 11, 5:42 pm, "benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx" <[benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:benli...@xxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

On Aug 12, 8:05 am, analys...@xxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Aug 11, 3:04 pm, Adam Funk <[a24...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:a24...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

On 2008-08-10, Brian M. Scott wrote:

On Sun, 10 Aug 2008  
07:18:29 -0700 (PDT),  
<[analys...@xxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:analys...@xxxxxxxxxxx)>  
wrote in  
<[news:47020cff-57cc-4340-9bd7-2956455923af@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:47020cff-57cc-4340-9bd7-2956455923af@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>  
in sci.lang:

start quote:  
Overnight,  
Russia  
landed  
ground  
troops off of  
warships  
into the  
disputed  
territory of  
Abkhazia  
and  
broadened  
its  
bombing

Re: observable language change – "off of" makes it to the NY Times

campaign to  
the  
Georgian  
capital s  
airport.  
end quote.  
Whats next  
– "I'm like"  
for "I said"  
?

Different category  
altogether. See, for instance,  
<<http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/nonerrors.html>>  
(search  
for 'off of').

I agree with you. There are plenty of other  
"compound prepositions"  
in English: "He came down from the top of  
the hill while we were  
walking up to it."  
Of course, "off of" doesn't seem to add any  
information in comparison  
with "off", but I'm not convinced that's much  
of an objection to  
adding just one syllable or two letters.

--

Bob just used 'canonical' in the canonical  
way. [Guy Steele]– Hide quoted text –  
– Show quoted text –

Would you use it serious writing?

Why not? You still haven't explained why it's "dumb".

You are obviously posturing (have you ever used it in serious  
writing?) It is just slovenly speech and inexcusable writing.

It is perfectly normal speech, and as for "inexcusable"—are you in contention for the title of Usenet Drama  
Queen, 2008? Get a grip.

There cannot be a shadow of a doubt that the NY Times has  
started

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using it to make its bourgeoisie readers feel at home, who it thinks

"bourgeois"?? You really ought to check a dictionary, for both spelling and meaning.

Sad.

What, that someone would expect the guy who's bitching about a perfectly ordinary English usage to use correct English himself?

would be put off by too strict an adherence to the rules of proper usage and therefore occasional "down home" expressions like this would be a good marketing ploy.

"down home"?? Try to avoid using terms like this that just make you look silly.

It is a scientific socio-linguistic observation – how a journalistic product is changing to keep up with the linguistic changes (it thinks is) going on among its target audience.

Has it \*occurred\* to you that nobody is keeping up with anybody, but that's how the author writes, because that's how people have been speaking and writing for 500 years?

Here is what the online dictionary says

"The" online dictionary? Obviously you've made your choice of source to venerate.

start quote:

Usage Note: The compound preposition off of is generally regarded as informal and is best avoided in formal speech and writing: He stepped off (not off of) the platform. Off is informal as well when used to indicate a source: formal style requires I borrowed it from (not off) my brother.

end quote.

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At any rate "off of" has a legitimate use  
"In a war characterised by such atrocities as the hacking off  
of  
civilians limbs and the widespread use of rape to"

That's not "off of" anyway, so it's not a "use" of anything.

Genuine "off of" is attested from the 15th century on.

Where?

King James Bible? Shakespeare? Milton?

For crying out loud, do you think he made this up? From the OED:

?c1450 in G. Müller Aus mittelengl. Medizintexten (1929) 116 Take a sponfull of {th}e licour..of of {th}e  
fyir and sette it in good place tyl {th}at it be ny colde, soo as {th}ou mayst suffryn to holdyn {th}er–in {th}in  
hand. a1616 SHAKESPEARE Henry VI, Pt. 2 (1623) II. i. 98 A fall off of [1594 Falling off on] a Tree. 1667  
A. MARVELL Corr. in Wks. (1875) II. 224 The Lords and we cannot yet get off of the difficultyes risen  
betwixt us. 1678 J. BUNYAN Pilgrim's Progress 49 About a furlong off of the Porters Lodge. 1712 R.  
STEELE Spectator No. 306 {page}6, I could not keep my Eyes off of her.

etc. Not just Shakespeare, but Pilgrim's Progress. Does it EVER occur to you, given the number of times  
you've been shown to be wrong here, to wonder IN ADVANCE whether maybe the other person is right?

While "where are you at" is equally inapporprate, somehow  
it is cute  
whereas "off of" is preternaturally annoying.

I'm sure you could regale us with a recital of your likes and dislikes  
all day long. Some might find this cute, and some annoying. But unless  
you can explain rationally what's wrong with "off of", take it to  
a.u.e.

This is sad also.

It's sad to expect you to have a rational basis for your objection if you expect to elicit any sympathy for it?

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