

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

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- *From:* Harlan Messinger <hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Thu, 14 Aug 2008 18:26:59 –0400
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analyst41@xxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Aug 14, 11:18 am, Harlan Messinger
<hmessinger.removet...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

analys...@xxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

That having been said –
the material I found suggests that simply asserting that
Shakespeare
has used "off of" may not be the whole truth. Note that I said
"may
not" – what I found is just an assertion on the web.
If you guys don't want to research whats in the different
versions of
the play– you are simply saying that you don't care for the
truth.

I'm saying that we're convinced already. If you care to convince us of
something else, make your case or stop worrying about it. Saying, "I
want you to believe me, so you should make the effort to support my side
of the argument because I don't want to take the trouble" doesn't work.
All it does is support the impression you always give of being fast to
have an opinion and slow to have a basis for your opinion.

Thats not a correct characterization what I am saying. I am asking
you to adhere to my standards for the truth of the data used for or
against my argument.

YOUR standard for truth? You mean, the inventing–the–facts–to–suit–the–theory standard where you make
up out of whole cloth a circumstance that lets you ignore the facts given to you? Like when you scoff, based
solely on your own uninformed intuition, at being told usage of "off of" is old; and then you're told that it is,
you scoff, based solely on your uninformed intuition that says that the great writers of the centuries must
necessarily have agreed with you, at the idea that anyone of literary note would have used it; and then when
you're given a list of venerable uses, including some by people of literary note, you scoff (again based on your
own uninformed intuition) at the idea that they really meant it to be taken as good usage. Your operating

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pattern strongly suggests that if someone demonstrated to you that the variety of English put into Simpcox's mouth by Shakespeare was considered the best English of the day, you'd claim that the authors of the references used in that demonstration were drunk the day they'd written those remarks.

Or do you mean the deflection-of-attention standard of truth, where, given a LIST of very old uses, you seize on one to question, conveniently ignoring that it wasn't the only one you were given, possibly in the hope that they wouldn't be brought back to your attention.

In this case, other people have already explained to you in varied dimensions that the real and imagined attributes of "off of" that you claim make it inferior, don't. You cited redundancy, yet you've been told that redundancy isn't inherently inferior: it's often useful; it often isn't as redundant as you think it is, sometimes being more specific than the non-redundant equivalent or meaning something slightly different; and many absolutely standard constructions in many languages, such as adjective case and gender agreement, the French and Afrikaans negative, the use of the object pronoun along with the explicit referent object noun in Spanish, are redundant. Even in English, the existence of "onto" and "underneath" and "up above" have been brought to your attention, and you've chosen not to comment at all.

This is simply a lie.
Either you think that they're all barbarisms too,

in which case your opinion is truly an outlier, or you think those are fine components of the English language, in which case you are contradicting yourself when you object to "off of" for having a characteristics that other words and phrases do.

This is a lie also – since I gave what I think is a brilliant explanation why "off of" is being resisted. let me summarize here since you guys are too lazy and deceitful to go

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back and check the record.

It is an essentially an exact synonym for "off" (apart from the diagramming aspect that might be needed for people who move their lips when they read)

I'm interested that you think that dismissing the opposing view and waving away facts that contradict your assertion with an ad hominem attack can be part of a "brilliant explanation".

It is not ad hominem at all. You said something that's patently not true as can be easily verified from Google Groups.

You claim that something is true, and then you attempt to deflect anyone who might say otherwise by characterizing counterexamples as involving "people who move their lips when they read". Perhaps you don't know what "ad hominem" means, but this is a resounding example of one.

that can only be used literally – whereas "off" can be used both literally and in idioms and metaphors and it is only recently that "off of" has started contaminating the metaphorical "off".

Since the recentness is an unsupported assertion by you and since the notion of "contamination" is a purely subjective value judgment that falls outside of the scope of academic discussion, the brilliance quotient of these last few lines of yours is zero.

That it is really awkward is shown by
"fell off the back of the truck" – 10800 hits
"fell off of the back of the truck" – 3 hits.

How exactly does this demonstrate anything about awkwardness? How does a demonstration that a particular construction is used infrequently in a particular environment show anything about its use in other environments? You are the master of the non-sequitur and the red herring.

This would be one way to measure the impoverishment of American English outside of inner city vernacular

"Impoverishment" is a subjective value judgment by you that reflects only on your personal outlook and falls outside the realm of rational analysis.

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let us cut all this crap – why don't you point to the use of "off of" in an idiom/ metaphor that isn't a contamination of an earlier attested version of exactly the same idiom/metaphor with only "off"?

AGAIN: this concept of "contamination" is *your* *subjective* *value judgment* and is of no academic, objective concern. As to whether things that used to be said one way are now, whether occasionally or frequently or exclusively, said another way: yeah, languages changes, it always has changed, it isn't always logical, even the most standard features of a language are often based on earlier illogical leaps, that's life, deal with it, move on.

For that matter, irregardless of which occurred first – is there any idiom/metaphor with "off of" which also doesn't have the more frequently used version with "off" ?

I already addressed your authoritarian compulsion to treat "most frequently used" and "abominable" as categories that are both exhaustive and mutually exclusive. You make me wonder whether you also class all ice cream eaters into either the category "[your favorite flavor here] lover" or "barbarian".

– the invasion of idioms/
metaphors that originally stated with "off" by 'off of'.

You treated it as some recent barbarism, yet you've been shown that it was used by eminent writers over 400 years ago.

You've claimed that no one uses "off of" in formal writing and that the New York Times use of it is an egregious case, but you have given no evidence that this use in formal writing is a new phenomenon, and just because you "suspect" that it is doesn't mean that everyone else will share your suspicion. In fact, let's look in the annals of the New York

Times:

6 September 1932, "FARM BOARD WHEAT AS WELL AS COTTON TAKEN OFF MARKET":

"A refinancing program whereby the surplus of cotton and wheat now held by the Federal Farm Board and its affiliates will be held off of the market during"

5 December 1900, "REDUCTION OF WAR

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TAXES": "When that tariff comes off the tariff will have to come off of other things."

31 January 1875, "BURIED IN THE SNOW; PERILS OF MINING TOWNS IN NEVADA":

"About 7:30 o'clock yesterday morning a huge snow-slide or avalanche came down off of the eastern slope of Mount Davidson,"

29 March 1860, "THE MYSTERY OF THE SLOOP SPRAY": "Jaruis L. Tyres, Aid to the Chief of Police, was sworn, and testified to taking the two Boats off of the defendant"

That's good research – now compare it against the number of times the naked 'off' was used.

This isn't an election. Your authoritarian outlook on language, that the way that's most commonly used is THE CORRECT WAY and that every other way is therefore an abomination is your own personal perspective and falls outside of the realm of rational analysis.

The burden of proof is on you to show that all the other examples have a bearing on "off of".

All *what* other examples? What bearing? I gave you *these* examples to demonstrate that the Times didn't just start using "off of", no more, no less. Point proven. Move on.

I went through the same thing in the sentential adverb debate with "hopefully" – why it hasn't received the acceptance of "Frankly" etc.

Who says it hasn't? I accept it and consider it fully admissible in any context. Most other people accept it—because most people don't read columns by malcontents who seize single targets to pick on, people LIKE YOU who manufacture reasons to disparage a usage without noticing that the aspects of it that they dislike are shared by other usages that it has never occurred to them to question and that they indeed consider just fine. In other words, people who don't notice all the inconsistencies and contradictions of the positions they take. Who says any of the people who take strong issue with "hopefully" have ever taken the blinders off and considered it in the context of other usages, like "frankly", that they use every day and considered perfectly acceptable?

Besides you *still* haven't addressed "up above" or even "above", "underneath", and "onto",

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which are all similar constructions, so I have reached the conclusion that you just don't like their implications but can't think of a way to deal with them, so you're hoping that if you ignore them they'll go away.

That's going to be much harder since there will be many uses of 'off' for which 'off of' is not a possible alternative.

You just contradicted your own earlier assertion that "off" and "off of" are "exact synonyms". Congratulations.

Good gotcha – you forgot the additional gotcha that there are "off of"s that aren't "off of"s at all.

Good gotcha? It was glaringly obvious. And I didn't forget anything: that's part of why your characterization of them as "exact synonyms" didn't make sense.

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