A language must change, to keep pace with society.

A recent article by Donald Hughes about the use and abuse of our language aroused considerable interest. Here a linguist, DAVID CRYSTAL, of the Department of English at University College, London, discusses the question from a different viewpoint, and offers some answers.

All right for the specialist, though it may be condemned as "jargon" by the layman. One regional dialect or accent is no better than another — one might even be more common or useful (so-called "B.B.C. English," for instance) but this is quite a different thing. And there is therefore no justification whatever in condemning the usage of others because it does not fit in with some unrecognised notion of what English should be like, or because one would sound more well-informed to speak "proper" English.

There's nothing wrong with "utilise" or "concerning," they can be most effective at times for rhythmical reasons, or to avoid monotony. (And it is the "proper" or "normal" word for "antipathy"?)

Egocentric in the extreme to condemn types of language as "irresponsible," "abominable," mere prejudice to talk about linguistic m.o.r.o.s.e and "cowardly" usage.

There's nothing wrong with "utilise" or "concerning," they can be most effective at times for rhythmical reasons, or to avoid monotony. (And it is the "proper" or "normal" word for "antipathy"?"

Hughes gives us no instance of the kind of excesses which deserve to be shot at (the case of Gruntraw's "you're king indulgence in the intern and the like)

He castigates "in fact" (which isn't as common as all that) but omits "indeed" and a host of others.

Such words are not meaningless. They may be smaller words, and are an essential part of the rhetoric of debate. Without them, the dislocations of our language would sound very thin indeed.

So the first thing Mr Hughes would like to do is that the purpose of the academic advocates of English Usage: they do not say "everything goes," still less "everything is good;")

They have studied the quirks and tendencies of the language, often in minute detail (as in the two-year project conducted by the University College, London, and others at Edinburgh and Leeds); and they have noted that people want to use a kind of language which suits the context they are working in.

One of the dialects of English, they see, due to historical accident, has received more normal amount of attention, and has greater prestige and influence than others; this "standard" language has become most people's objective as a result. They need to be familiar with it if they want to get on. Which is why it is taught so widely. Not because it is better for communication; but because it is useful. Society has decreed it.

No-one has yet discovered a language which is not in a state of flux, and the changes in form and meaning which occur, and the innovations and obliterations which are just not valid objects of criticism.

Many of the "new" usages objected to, are not as recent as Mr Hughes likes to think. The growth of concretised prepositions after verbs, for instance, was parodied by Morris Bishop some time before 1700. "Come up out of In and under there" has been typical of English for centuries. "To face out with a face" for example, are all recorded in the Middle Ages.

Recourse to the N.E.D. would also have shown that "image of" may be more popular these days (and what's wrong with popularity?), its meaning is certainly not new. As "symbol, emblem, representation" it has been recorded since 1500, and as "embellishment" or "ornament" a representative, type, of an attitude or orientation etc.

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Every now and then, the "radio Times" columns erupt into the national press with tirades and complaints about the use and abuse of English. But it's unfortunate that when the subject is promoted onto the frontpage (as in Donald Hughes' recent article) the naive tone and parochial conservatism of the lettercolumns come as well.

And that's when issues such as speaking and word-sounding, and usually a large proportion of actual error.

The scapegoat once again turns out to be the academic, typified as an evil ogre living in a University castle and spending all his time importing and teaching foreign languages, of which there are simply too many, but no native ideal in English which all must adopt if they hope to avoid linguistic damnation.

English, above all else, is in a state of flux. It can be most effective at times for rhetorical reasons, or to avoid claptrap. And that's the "obvious, natural" word for "antelipse.

Condemn excessive usage, verbiage, by all means; but are you so sure that instances of the kind of excesses which deserve to be denounced are not at the businesses of "soliciting your kind indulgence in the interest of a cause you care for"? He castigates "in fact" (which isn't as common as it should be) "do" and "have" as "indelible" and a host of others.

Such words are not meaningless, he reminds us, but are signifiers of emphasis, and are an essential part of the modern technique which, if we are to avoid a State of slumber, must be explained. "There couldn't possibly be a case for making one construction more "word-sounding" than the other. Therein does the harshness lie? In the difference in pronunciation?"

In the same way, the N.E.D. shows "suspect" and "think" among synonyms for "believe". Yet the list of quotations is possessed by S. Thomas Brown, Macaulay, Carlyle and Scott are all there.

And for the "distressing transatlantic habit" of turning a noun into a verb, although a perfectly good thing exists in American English, as any book on the development of the language will testify.

Why are people on television for instance, so fond of microphones, come to that? The word is more natural. I would have thought a self-conscious language would substitute some more carefully and naturally, but it doesn't offend my sense of humor. It is merely of course, the only valid test of a piece of language. Then, is merely everythmg, has a whether it succeeds in the valid use in its own con-

They have studied the quirks and tendencies of the language, often in minute detail (as in the twelve year projected Survey of English Usage by the University of Edinburgh and Leeds) and they have noted that people want to use a kind of language which suits the context they live or work in.

One of the dialects of English, they see, due to "theoretical accident", it does fit in with some preconceived notion of what English had better be like, or how it should sound.

The language is in the extreme to condemn types of language as "irresponsible", "subordinate", mere prejudice to talk about linguistic monstrosities and to this, of course, has become the most people's objective as a result.

They need to be familiar with it if they want to get one which is why it is taught so widely. Not because it is better for communication; but because it is useful. Society has decreed it.

No-one has yet discovered a language which is not in a state of flux. And the changes in form and meaning which occur, and innovations and obsessions, are not just valid objects of verbiage, but are just as meaningless.

Modern of "the new" usages objected to, are not just "the more correct as Mr Hughes likes to think. The growth of concatenated prepositions after verbs this time," was parodied by Morris, Bishop some time ago: "Come up from the floor of in under there" — but has been typical of English for centuries. "To face up with, out of, down with," for example, are all recorded in the Middle Ages.

The course to the N.E.D. would also have shown that though "image of" may be more popular these days (what's wrong with popularity?), its meaning is certainly not new. As "symbol, emblem, representation" it has been recorded since 1508, and as "embodiment" or "natural representative, type, of an attitude or orientation" since 1374, and used like this by Shakespeare. Chaucer, and Shelley.

As for the use of "do have you" for "do you have," why is this so abominable? The verb is merely conforming to a process of periphrasis in verbal expressions, which did "do" or "did" which has been going on since late Anglo-Saxon times, and which which has affected all verbs except "be" and a few examples ("might," "should."). Regional dialects have had "do you have" for ages. It certainly doesn't offend my sensibility to hear it.

And as I now have two methods of asking the question instead of one, a good case could be made out for saying that the language has been enriched, based on arguments of rhythm, nuance, and so on.

There couldn't possibly be a case for making one construction more "word-sounding" than the other. Wherein does the harshness lie? In the difference in pronunciation?"

If our aim is to produce a Shakespeare, it is by no means the fault of the language (or the academic), but could I suggest (with tongue in cheek) that you read yourself with our teaching method?"