

R OXBURY, Connecticut — Despite everything, I believe we are at a point in human history when the concept of free speech has finally penetrated more people than ever before...

The Age of the Fanatic

Renowned US author and playwright Arthur Miller writes in this exclusive column for Inter Press Service that while the concept of free speech has penetrated more people than ever before, reason as a guiding force in human society has lost much of its credibility.

television, and music. Before the Age of Reason there was the Age of Faith. Now we have the Age of the Fanatic. This would almost be funny if it weren't so tragic...

ready had the Italians, putting everyone in wonderful uniforms and parading millions of people around in enormous public squares, and throwing malcontents into camps.

the most ethnically mixed in the world, yet our fascists were often calling for anti-foreign measures, exalting something called 'the people', meaning 'white Americans', and praising American racial purity...

it attempts to keep people children forever. We need only look at the former Yugoslavia for the consequences. The Serbs, who in World War II were the most valiant in stopping Hitler in the Balkans...

Confused 'Deshi'

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Bandhapadya, Mahasweta Devi and Hasan Azizul Haque. I discovered them in translated works by others, but that is the tragedy of being a BBCD. I discovered the words of my people in the tongue of another people...

Equally intrinsic in me though, are the love of blue jeans and a big juicy hamburger; liberal ideas of the emancipation of all women, the belief in equal rights in spite of class and creed...

have the right to choose, to speak their minds, to vote; the love of the sun and sand, the belief that to hang out is one's human right, and the absolute conviction that God is a man!

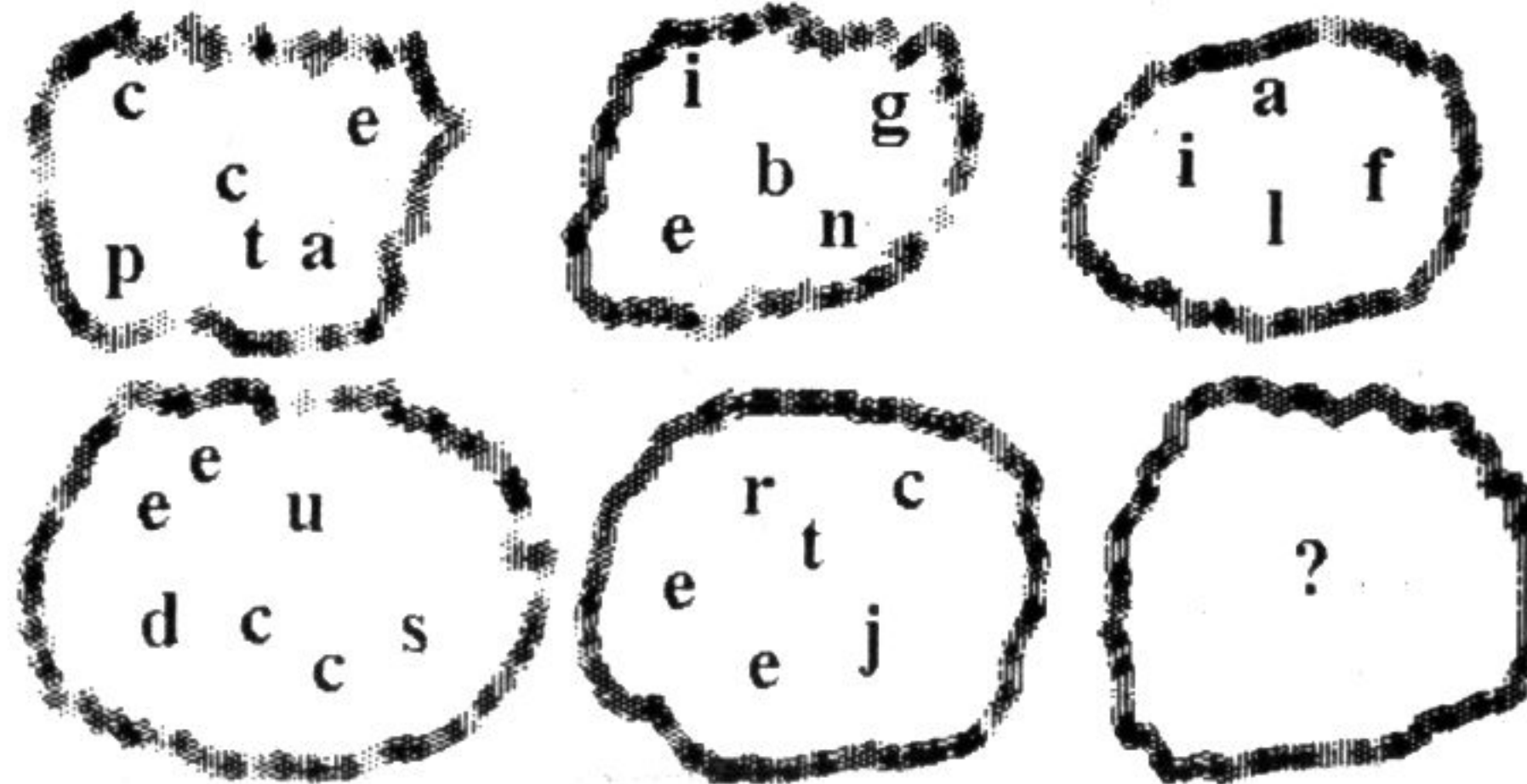
Across the Mid-night

by Akhtar Ahmad

Across the mid-night Along with my soul The wonderful owl Begins to chant The duet song...

Wobbly Words

Try this word puzzle. In each shape the letters are jumbled up. Put them in the correct order. What is missing?



- 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

Where has all the English Gone ?

Having established that the role of English in Bangladesh should be, we return this week to the question often put to us, 'Do you think our young students have the opportunity of successfully acquiring English?'

very well in an examination, which (at SSC and HSC levels) includes English as a compulsory subject, without being able to listen to, speak, read or write English with any satisfactory degree of proficiency?

hard; in particularly ruthless cases, even over the edge. Nevertheless, what parent can resist taking pride in their children's achievements?

there be any truth in the assertion that this significant improvement was connected with the introduction of new, objective type questions? Multiple-choice objective questions were not actually introduced until 1992...

The Intro

Today's column has many of our regular features. There is another Writing Pad and Language Lab, and also the next in our series of articles on language learning and teaching in Bangladesh.

you would only do this if you wished to contradict (or possibly correct) another speaker. As we have pointed out before, there will be a series of articles at a later date which discuss the issue of the spoken language.

The Language Lab

In this column we want you to write to us about any little problems that you have with English and we will see if we can 'analyse' them. We will try to give the best answer possible in the space available.

It is quite another question though whether it is acceptable to write a contraction. Here the answer is perhaps more complex. It refers also to some of the issues discussed last week in this column.

In certain contexts it is certainly correct to write contractions. For example, if you are writing speech and using inverted commas (' '), it is quite normal to imitate basic features of the spoken language such as contractions.

Today's question has some relevance to questions that have been raised before in this column.

One reader has asked

Is it correct English to say 'My name's John'?

In other words, is it 'correct' to have a contraction ('s instead of is).

Well it is certainly correct to say this. Indeed, it would be very strange to say 'My name is John' unless you wanted to emphasise the word 'is'. And

In letter writing one key difference between formal and informal letters is the use of contractions in the latter. We come back therefore once again to one of the issues raised last week: your audience. What is appropriate

The Word Processor.....

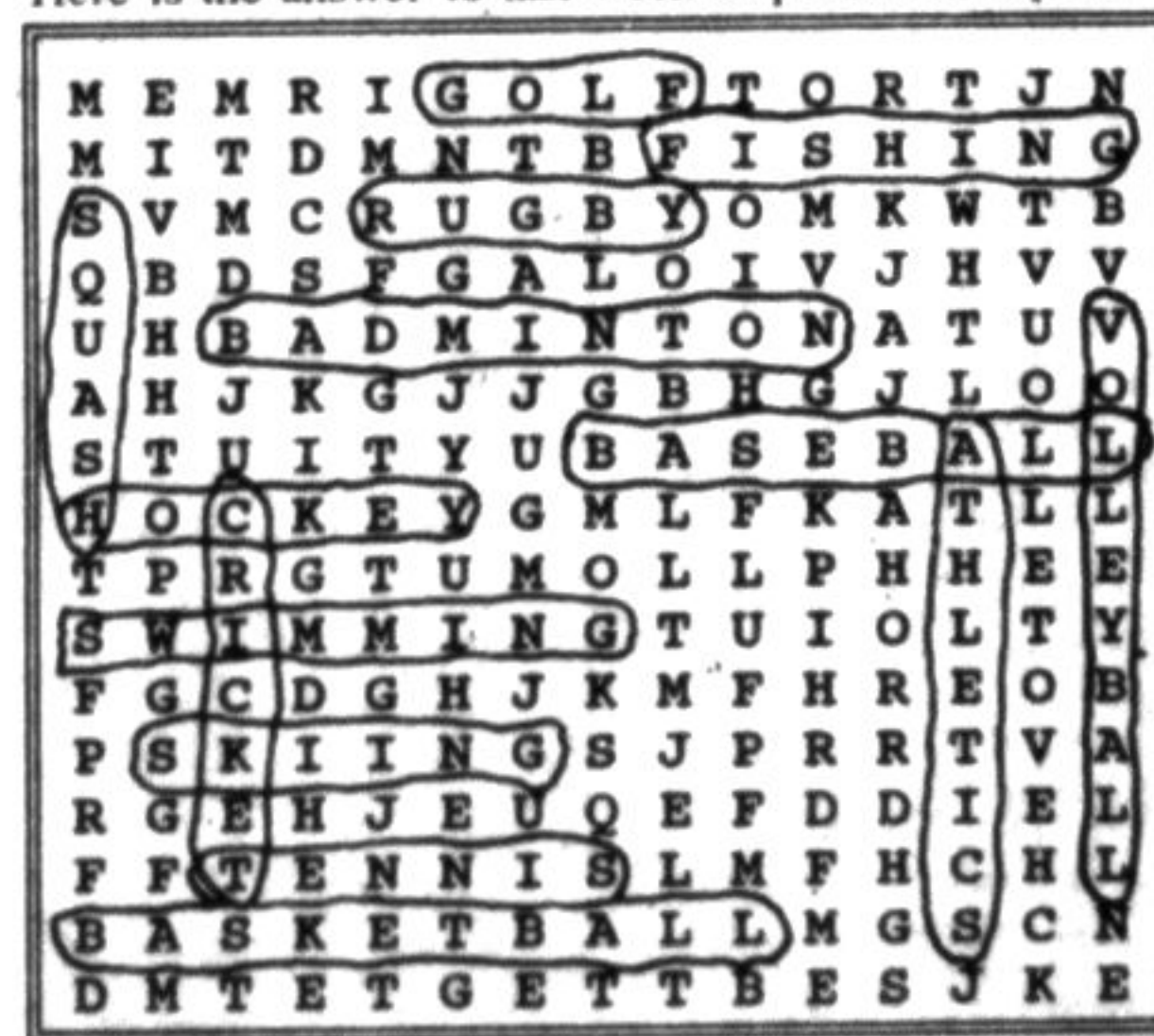


Whatever English these students may, or may not, have learnt, it doesn't seem to have proved of practical use. This seems to be the crux of the problem, and to many people it does seem an unfortunate waste. How can people be taught English for so long and yet not be able to use it? The key word here is 'use', for, of course, something has definitely been learnt. For example, these students must have acquired skill in passing examinations, and in many cases, very well. But isn't there a contradiction here? How can students do

Back in the headmaster's study at the government high school, another aspect of these examinations was however, brought to light. 'Our students got very good marks in the SSC examination this year,' the headmaster said. 'But the guardians are never satisfied. They want people to be taught English for so long and yet not be able to use it? The key word here is 'use', for, of course, something has definitely been learnt. For example, these students must have acquired skill in passing examinations, and in many cases, very well. But isn't there a contradiction here? How can students do

WORD SQUARE

Here is the answer to last week's sports wordsquare.



The Writing Pad

Today we would like to take a quick look at introductory expressions.

By this we do not mean linking words and expressions (because, therefore, etc.) but the expressions which lead into certain key parts of your letter. One example we pointed out recently was for requests: 'I would be grateful if you could....'

Look at this example but also look back at the example letters in previous weeks.

Dear Mrs Chatterley I am writing to you with regard to your recent application for a post with our organisation. I regret to inform you that your application has not been successful on this occasion. We will, however, keep your application on record and may contact you in the future if a suitable vacancy becomes available. Yours sincerely

Here we have two typical 'introductory phrases'...

I am writing to you

&

I regret to inform you

These are very much standard phrases and rarely vary in this kind of writing. If you vary standard phrases (by adding 'kindly' 'very much' or something similar) you often make them seem more personal, and this is not usually appropriate in writing this type of letter.

When you read letters, try to spot such phrases. But be careful. It is important to get the form exactly right. Notice

'I regret to inform you....'

In Bangladesh it is normal to omit the 'you', but this is not possible in standard English. Another common error is to forget the 'it' in

'I would appreciate it if

And, just as important, notice the form of the sentence which follows, eg:

'I regret to inform you that + sentence'

or

'I regret to inform you of + noun (noun phrase)'

Remember also that standard phrases come into and go out of fashion. What was acceptable and normal yesterday may seem old hat, overly formal or even laughable tomorrow. For example, to begin the letter above with

'Reference is made to.....'

while perfectly correct grammatically, would seem rather stilted - that is, rather too formal.

Answer: 1. accept 2. begin 3. last 4. mounted 5. next 6. missing 7. out or finish 8. record 9. the opposite of 'report' 10. succeed 11. the opposite of 'begin' 12. read the opposite of 'begin'