

The Good Times and the Bad Times in 1993

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charismatic Felipe Gonzalez Marquez called a snap election and held on to power but lost his overall majority. And in Greece, Constantine Mitsotakis was swept away at 75 only to be replaced by the once disgraced and ailing former prime minister Andreas Papandreu, age 74.

The troubles of the British royal family lessened only slightly in 1993. Public pressure led to news that Queen Elizabeth would pay personal income tax for the first time. In the summer, Buckingham Palace was opened to the public to help raise money for the restoration of the fire-ravaged Windsor Castle. Press obsession with the Princess of Wales culminating in publication of pictures of her exercising at a health centre, led her to announce that she would be virtually withdrawing from public life at the end of the year.

This was a year in which in the Western world questions began to be asked about the style of life they were adopting in a market-driven, technological age where family life was breaking down under such pressures as unemployment and drugs. A case in northern England in which two small boys were found guilty of murdering a two-year-old attracted international attention because it raised fundamental issues about the consequences of broken homes and of children watching hours of mindless horror on TV screens and the sale of video nasties.

Politically, 1993 was for Latin America a relatively tranquil year. Coups seemed to have gone out of fashion but whether democracy was taking a firmer grip might not be confirmed until 1994 when a spate of elections was due. The focus in the region was on Haiti and Cuba. UN attempts to restore Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power seemed to be succeeding when the exiled president signed a peace agreement with the 1991 coup leader General Raoul Cedras. Aristide was to return on October 30. Then violence broke out again, UN troops were deployed and US warships sent to cover Aristide's return. Clinton backed off and in December Aristide had still not returned.

In Cuba, the last stronghold of communism outside North Korea and (arguably) China, Fidel Castro was finally having to come to terms with the country's economic plight resulting from the end of the Soviet Union. Liberalisation of the economy meant compromising his socialist principles and possession of US dollars by Cuban citizens was legalised for the

first time since 1959. On December 2, Colombian police shot dead their most wanted criminal and one of the world's most infamous, Pablo Escobar, chief of the Medellin drug cartel, died in a shootout at the age of 44. He was said to have caused the deaths of 1,000 civilians and 500 police and to be worth \$3 billion, although the poor saw him as a Robin Hood and many wept at his funeral.

For the first half of 1993, the politics of Russia centred on a growing struggle between President Boris Yeltsin and the Parliament, which still largely comprised former Communists from the Gorbachev days and earlier. The chairman of Parliament, Russian Khasbulatov, and Yeltsin Vice-President and rival Aleksandr Rutskoi, had become increasingly hostile. On September 21, Yeltsin acted. He issued a decree called *On Constitutional Reform*, suspending Parliament and calling for elections to the lower house in a new bicameral legislature. Rutskoi and Khasbulatov denounced the decree. The Congress of People's Deputies voted to impeach Yeltsin and made Rutskoi president.

Yeltsin laid siege to the MPs. He piled on the pressure, first by cutting phone links to the parliament building, known as the White House, then reducing water supplies. Finally 2,000 troops sealed it off. At one point the scene in Red Square was reminiscent of scenes from an Eisenstein film, with master musician Mstislav Rostropovich conducting Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* at a free concert attended by Yeltsin while Rutskoi stood on the White House balcony declaring: "We will fight to the last cartridge. There will be blood."

Negotiations failed to resolve the crisis so the White House was stormed. In a few hours parliament's rebellion was at an end and Rutskoi and Khasbulatov were taken off to prison.

Soon afterwards, communism was put on the scrap-heap of history when Lenin's museum in Moscow was closed and debate began on the removal of the leader's body and those of other top communists from the mausoleum in Red Square.

The West applauded Yeltsin's victory over Rutskoi, but this second attempted coup in three years had undermined the instability of the new Russia and as Yeltsin shut down newspapers and operated other pressures an uneasiness grew that he could be showing autocratic symptoms all too reminiscent of the Russian past.

For ordinary Russians, life

was now harder than it had been under the communists and many wondered whether capitalism and democracy were really a better way. Many were getting rich, but many more were getting poorer. And although it continued to be true that much less turmoil had followed the demise of the Soviet Union than might have been expected a few of the new countries were racked by violence.

The struggle between Azerbaijan and the Armenian enclave of Nagorny Karabakh with Turkish and Iranian interference took many lives. The worst conflict was in Georgia where the government of former Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze lost a large chunk of that country to the separatist Abkhaz rebels. Shevardnadze blamed Russian interference warning that "the evil empire is still thriving." He offered to resign but crowds in the capital Tbilisi demanded he remain, and in the end Russian troops helped him push back the rebels when Georgia joined the Commonwealth of Independent States.

In other parts of the former Soviet empire, especially the Baltic states, Poland, and Hungary, economic recovery and democratic government were going hand in hand. The two parts of Czechoslovakia began life on January 1 as the Czech Republic and Slovakia in what many thought an unnecessary divorce. Vaclav Havel was painlessly elected President of the republic while Michal Kovac became President of Slovakia amid bitter political infighting.

The former Yugoslavia remained to haunt and agonise Europe throughout the year. At the end, nothing was any better. Sarajevo was still besieged. Ethnic cleansing had been taken several stages further. The Western powers had remained a dither and divided, giving much in humanitarian relief under the UN flag, but refusing to intervene. As winter set in, the map of Bosnia Herzegovina showed the Muslims and Croats ever more squeezed in a finger of land down the middle of Bosnia between the Serbs with Muslim towns like Zepa, Goradze and Srebrenica encircled.

Peace plans came and went. Maps were drawn and redrawn. Provisional agreement on a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina in three republics in Geneva in June failed to materialise. In May, the US, Russia, Britain, France and Spain agreed a controversial plan for UN "safe areas," but the plan was seen as giving de facto recognition of the status quo in Bosnia. Meantime, countless more died,

atrocities on all sides kept coming to light, and thousands more Muslims had to flee their homes. European countries wrung their hands, ever anxious not to be sucked into an endless Balkan morass.

The year began with the death of the greatest ballet dancer of his generation, Russian Rudy Nureyev, within a few weeks of appearing sadly and bravely, a shadow of his once-great self, on a Paris stage. Nureyev was the first of several great artists to be lost in 1993. Another Russian was opera star Boris Christoff and America's legendary jazz trumpeter Dizzie Gillespie and eccentric rock musician Frank Zappa.

The elf-like film actress Audrey Hepburn, who had spent her last years among poorer children as ambassador for Unicef, died. So did romantic British film actor Stewart Granger and star of horror movies Vincent Price, as well as Italian director Federico Fellini of *La Strada* and *8 1/2* and Myrna Loy, star of the *Thin Man* films. Three of Britain's top authors, Nobel Prize winner William Golding (*Lord of the Flies*) and Anthony Burgess (*Clockwork Orange*) and social historian E.P. Thompson (*The Making of the English Working Class*) died, as well as British sculptress Elizabeth Frink. Aids toll of tennis star Arthur Ashe and golf star Bobby Moore. Other losses of the year included Indian industrialist JRD Tata, President of Turkey, Turgut Ozal, and the much-respected British Liberal leader Jo Grimond.

A sad year? A good year? A bad year? In Britain in 1993, a leading TV newscaster Martyn Lewis began a national debate when he lectured under the title *Good News, Bad News*. His theme was that press, radio and TV harped too much on the bad things that were happening and failed to balance it with some of the more cheerful and positive events.

His colleagues at first derided his remarks, but then public reaction inclined the other way. Maybe, some felt, a better balance should be struck. In retrospect, 1993 may seem at first full of gloom and doom, but even though the agreement struck between Israel and the PLO over the Gaza strip was coming under strain by the year's end, it showed that even the most intractable problems can eventually be solved.

That was the good message of 1993.

DEREK INGRAM is Editor of Gemini News Service.

A pair of ear lobes, two noses, one wife and a mother-in-law were the main characters in a midnight scuffle. The human limbs, ear lobe and nose, everywhere are usual traditional victims in any punitive assault of such scales. Wives are eternal apple of discord and mothers-in-law are the universal disposal pit of all social and domestic garbages born of unhappy marriage life. She unfortunately gorges all the gall and garbages and assumes the character of *Nilkant*, the Hindu mythical god. From time immemorial she is equally loved and loathed and, ironically, remains at loggerhead with any one having individual choice.

In Tel Aviv a disgruntled son-in-law recently broke into his estranged wife's apartment at midnight and had mouthful of arguments. Having found words less productive and punitive, he used his mouth and teeth to bite the ear lobe and nose of his wife. This action on his wife being considered insufficient, he decided to attack the bigger culprit - the 70 year old mother-in-law, considered to be the originator and sustainer of all vices in the wife. He did not, however, change the attack target. He bit the old lady's nose, her ear lobe as well, and left them bleeding.

Neither the son-in-law nor police could find out the reason why nose and ear lobe were targets. But the knowledgeable feel that in all fray and feuds of this nature in small-domestic arena, both ear and nose become usual targets of attack. The reasons are their accessible physical location as well as the traditional love or loathe with which these limbs are held.

The nose is a symbol of esteem in the orient. Any sacrilege or physical violation of the nose is both insult and injury. In Iran and Central Asia rubbing of each other's nose is an expression of affection. In rural Bangladesh rubbing of the nose on ground is a punishment. The ear or the ear lobe always

Distant Drum M N Mustafa

gets the punishment either born of anger or affection. The brother-in-law (sister's husband etc) traditionally pulls the ear of the younger brother-in-law. To pull by the ear is a minor punishment in traditional Bangladeshi style.

The estranged Israeli son-in-law at the moment of his anger in midnight found the nose and ear close to each other to bite them one after another without any loss of time. Allah in His infinite mercy has kept all sensory organs close to each other at the upper level in human body and drainage and sewage system at the lower. Terrestrially we follow the same mechanism. The son-in-law wanted to disturb the take-in system, not the drainage. He was not that bad.

Now let us examine the mother-in-law, her nose and ear lobe. When a venerable and adorable mother-in-law is hit by no less a person than the spouse of her own daughter, the juicy story is already made. It matters little where she is hit or hitting is soft or hard. Mother-in-law is a veritable paradox in social relationship, neither a mother selfless enough to substitute or to become a shadow mother nor insignificant to ignore. Her position is almost akin to bats among birds and animals - having similarities and dissimilarities with both. As a mother of some dubious and controversial legal status she sits astride both her son and daughter even when both of them are married out. Her sense of possessiveness over her married daughter sometimes is so much overwhelming that the son-in-law at times resents it. Here the trouble starts at her daughter's home.

Again, when a daughter-in-law comes home sitting astride the shoulder of her son, the mother does not surrender

her control over her son in favour of the wedded wife who legitimately refuses to play the second fiddle. Both the son-in-law and daughter-in-law wait patiently and let the old engine worn out. When matters go beyond control, the worst happens.

The Hindu community has a special day called *'Jama Sashit'* for the son-in-law. On this day, the son legally acquired through wedlock with the daughter, is ritually pampered and given a suit of clothes and fed with all the best delicacies the mother-in-law could prepare. In other communities there is no special earmarking of any day for treating, or so to say, entreating the most privileged among the relatives. Usually the son-in-law is humoured vocally, sartorially and gastronomically. They receive gifts, dowries of enormous quantity either to keep them pleased or placated. The princes received them in the past and so also did the paupers depending on the largeness of resources or heart.

King Charles II of England (1662) received the sale and port of Bombay in India, port of Tangier and cash £500,000 and other possession in his marriage with Catherine of Braganza, daughter of King John of Portugal. Napoleon Bonaparte in his marriage with an Austrian princess received as gift an Austrian principality, King Rameses II of Egypt was pampered with territorial gifts from his Mesopotamian father-in-law. Many fathers-in-law ceded with their princesses, purses and principalities in the wedlock. Poor Adam, the first father, having no mother-in-law and dowry, inherited the whole earth from his kind Creator. No dowry or gift from parents-in-law waited upon him, and no upbraid from the all-knowing mother-in-law was hurled at him. Sometimes fathers-in-law also derived benefits from wedlock of their daughters. Seleucus, the general of Alexander the Great, got back some of the territories in India when his daughter, Helen, was married to Chandragupta Murya. Etimoddowla and Mirza Asaf got big jobs in Mughal court when their daughters married emperors. Some (Etimoddowla) even had an elegant mausoleum, thus combining comforts available here with hereafter. Only Zafar Barmiki lost life, wife and son for marrying Caliph Harun's sister.

Mother-in-law, the pillar on which the citadel of conjugal happiness or unhappiness rests, has actually made or marred many marriages. They have thrust greatness on many unworthy sons-in-law. King Darius, the conqueror of this sub-continent in third century B.C., was the son-in-law of King Xerxes. His mother-in-law wanted him to become a king and that's why he donned the royal robe. Many slaves became kings backed by their mothers-in-law - Sultan Altamas, Kutubuddin Aibek. Mother-in-law Nurjahan conspired abortively to make her son-in-law Shahriyar the emperor of India. Maria Theresa, the Austrian empress, wrongly advised her son-in-law Louis XV to treat French revolutionaries harshly. Her daughter advised the people to eat cake when they complained that they had no bread. This cost her daughter, Mary Antoinette, and son-in-law dearly and they were guillotined. Indira Gandhi's relations with her daughter-in-law Menoka illustrated the traditional relations between the two women - law-coated mother and daughter.

A daughter-in-law, Khana, who gave us sayings (*Khanar Bachan*) lost her tongue. Mihir, the astrologer in the court of King Bikramaditya, conspired with his wife to chop off Khana's tongue because she argued with the father-in-law on some astronomical point. Critics treated mothers-in-law humorously and have attributed a lot of jokes to them. Once the mother-in-law of a farmer succumbed to injury caused by the kick of a donkey. At the funeral all villagers assembled. The clergy thanked all of them saying that he never saw so many people attending any funeral in the village. Suddenly a man from the crowd shouted - "We have not come to attend the funeral. We have come to buy the donkey capable of hurling such lethal kicks."

Once a son-in-law took two of his dogs to hospital to have their tails cut off. The veterinary surgeon insisted on knowing the reasons for depriving the dogs of their tails. The son-in-law admitted that he did not like that his dogs wag their tail as sign of welcome on arrival of his mother-in-law.

A disgruntled daughter-in-law was asked to advise on the kind of funeral for her mother-in-law. She suggested that her mother-in-law first be cremated, then her ashes should be contained in an iron casket and buried ten feet deep. Asked why two kinds of funeral were necessary since one system was sufficient, she replied laconically: "Take no chance."

A Tentative Texture of Silence

by Azfar Hussain

1 Your footfalls: the rhythm of signs dust-printed across a field full of fog
2 Our words blindfolded stumble against love - when silences bleed like a potential wound
3 The train whistles in the twilight leaving an echo that burns like a coal on the lips of the horizon far-off
4 You stand and I stare You yawn and I burn as if
5 See, our silences here defecate yellow syllables

The British Council Language Matters

The Intro

The Language Lab

This week we have some of our regular features: there is a Word Processor, a Language Lab and Wobbly Words. Also, continuing our series on the spoken language, another article on pronunciation.

In this column we want you to write in with any little problems you may have and we will see if we can 'analyse' them. Try to keep your questions short and it will be much easier to answer them in the limited space available.

asking about the use of 'has been' and 'have been' except in forming the present perfect continuous tense.

There seem to be two main answers to this. One is that they are simply the present perfect form of the verb 'to be'; the other that they are often used with the particle 'to' to mean something like 'visit'. But let us elaborate....

The first use is quite straightforward. Where you can say 'I am sick' referring to the present time, you can say 'I have been sick' for a couple of days now' referring to a continuous period of time leading up to the present. This leaves open the possibility that you may continue to be sick in the future.

You can also say 'I have rarely been sick in my life', referring to events dotted over a period that is also up to the present time. Here it is also possible that you may repeat being sick at various times in the future.

We say this is quite straightforward only inasmuch as it is one of the standard ways of explaining the meaning of the present perfect tense. It is in fact quite a difficult feature of tense use in English, since it is shared by so few other languages. Many other European languages have a tense that is formed in a similar manner, but the way in which it is used is quite different.

What about Bangla? Does it have a tense that is formed in the same way? Does it have a tense that is used with the same meaning?

Many people have much more

difficulty with 'have been to'. It is used in many textbooks to introduce the present perfect tense. But it is rarely made clear that what you are looking at is not the present perfect tense of the verb 'to be' in its usual sense. It is really a phrasal verb which exists only in the present perfect and past perfect forms (it is defective). It has a different meaning from 'to be' in the same way as 'stand' and 'stand up' are different.

Typical examples of its use are found in almost every English language textbook: 'Have you ever been to Thailand?', 'He has been to Mexico but he hasn't been to Brazil' or 'She had been to his house earlier in the day'.

Many learners are a little confused when they learn this, because it is rarely made clear that they are dealing with a type of verb that they are usually not familiar with at such an early stage of learning the language.

We hope we have managed to answer your question Mr Hussain. Don't forget though; it is always useful to give some examples to illustrate your question when you write in.

Please send your questions to us c/o The Daily Star.



Word Stress

People often think that good pronunciation is a matter of getting the individual sounds (phonemes) right. Of course this is important, but perhaps even more important in long words is getting the stress on the right syllable. For example, one very common Bangladeshi mispronunciation is the word 'important'. The correct stress is on the second syllable (imPORTant), but Bangladeshi speakers of English often put it on the first syllable (IMportant). Consider the effect of the wrongly placed stress in this sentence - you could find yourself in trouble!

He's a very important man.

There are rules about the placing of the stress in long ((polysyllabic) words in English, but they are so complicated, and there are so many exceptions that it's advisable to learn the stress of each individual word as you come across it. A good dictionary is indispensable for checking where the stress is - find out how your dictionary indicates stress, and when you took up a word, make a point of saying it to yourself several times to fix the pattern in your memory. Look at the words below. Consider which syllable carries the main stress, and group them accordingly.

1st syllable	2nd syllable	3rd syllable etc
eg PHOtograph	phoTOgraphy	photoGRAPhic

advertise	advertisement	analysis	apology
appreciate	appreciation	benefactor	carelessness
cigarette	coincidence	comfortable	diplomacy
diplomatic	economical	educate	educational
elastic	eligible	illegible	important
impotent	impractical	inconvenient	industrial
inhabitant	insincere	laboratory	mechanical
misunderstand	necessary	necessity	pedantic
political	politician	populated	population
realistic	sensation	sensitive	sensitivity
telephone	temporary	unanimous	understand
undergraduate	university	unnecessary	vegetable

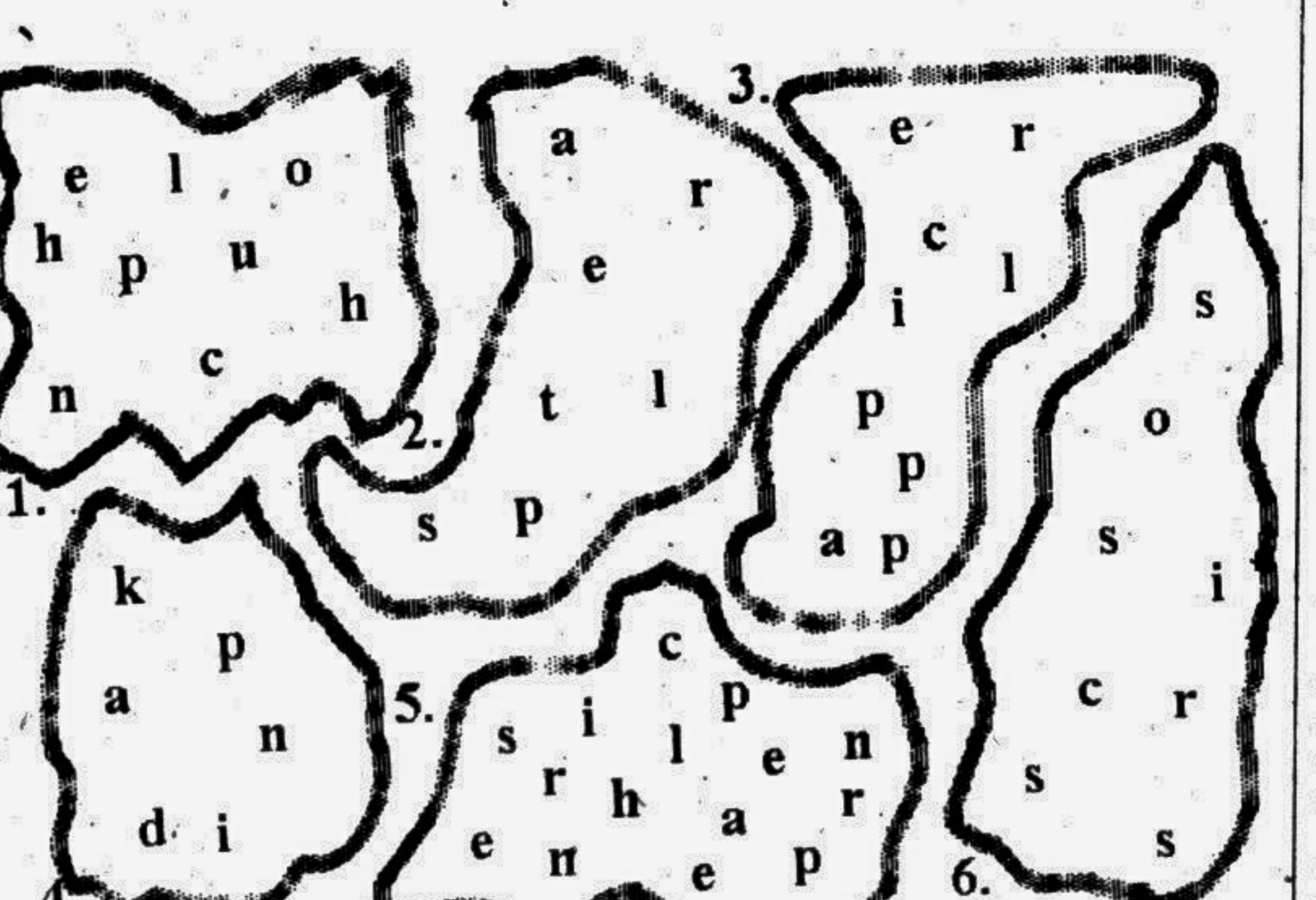
If you're not sure, check in your dictionary. Then practice saying each group of words so that the pattern becomes established in your memory.

Answers to Wobbly Words: 1. hole 2. paper clip 3. paper 4. pad 5. pencil sharpener 6. scissors - They're all office stationery.

Contributors: Marina Burns, Dennis O'Brien, Janet Raynor, Robert Shrubbsall © The British Council

Wobbly Words

Try this word puzzle. In each shape the letters are jumbled up. Put them in the correct order. What do all of them have in common? Be careful. Some of the shapes contain more than one word.



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