

Party patter and insufferable clichés

The Holiday season is a wonderful time of year. It brings forth great joy and celebration amongst mankind. Families unite, old friends visit, and social gatherings give respite from the seemingly endless conflicts we endure during the remainder of the year.



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

Unfortunately, those well-intended celebrations are often contaminated by the most painful of human experiences - party patter. Nothing is more aggravating than being forced to indulge in mindless conversation loaded with old clichés that should have been sentenced to horrific deaths within minutes of their birth.

The parlance of which I speak knows no geographic bounds. After spending time at a few social functions in both Florida and New England, I found the use of the tired, worn out, old, and unimaginative vernacular, of pandemic proportion.

How much longer are misused words and phrases like: whatever; my bad; yadayada; as if; and networking, going to accost our ears and try our patience?

Tolerating the language of the business community with their relentless efforts to deceive the public with esoteric terminology is enough to make most of us revert to the barter system of trade. Phrases like, "forward thinking," which translates to "highly speculative," and "downsizing," which means, "to fire people because the company is failing," continue to haunt us in the ruthless world of commerce.

Let us not forget sports announcers, who would be speechless without their cliché depen-

dent vocabulary, which they need in order to communicate. We forgive them because they cannot help themselves and know no other way. But must we be burdened with a continuous onslaught of nonsensical chatter in our day-to-day conversations?

"Yadayadaya," was funny the first time Jerry Seinfeld used the term in his highly successful sitcom in the last century. It was mildly amusing when it became the hook that identified with the program. Nonetheless, enough is enough. We are not Jerry Seinfeld. According to a popular urban dictionary, "yadayadaya" is a synonym to the phrase etcetera and means "and the rest." Another synonym is blah, blah, blah. When a person is telling a story and wants to leave out a part because it is too much trouble or too boring to articulate, must they revert to that cliché? "Yadayadaya" is not necessary. "Etcetera," will work just fine.

"Whatever," is probably the most insulting term of the last few decades. It translates to, "Whatever you have said, think, want to say or imply, is inconsequential, irrelevant and mindless, and is not worth acknowledging." In times past people have dueled with pistols or swords for less.

The term is not funny, polite, or grammatically correct.

"As if," dates back to the Valley Girl parlance of the 1980s, and is nothing more than an incomplete phrase that implies, "as if you know what you are talking about, were qualified, or were deserving," depending on the circumstance. Instead of completing the phrase and being blatantly insulting, "as if" is apparently enough to get the acerbic point across in all situations - as if not completing the phrase lightened the severity of the insult.

I will never understand the resurgence of the phrase "my bad." This cliché is often credited to the mindless movie, "Clueless," of the 1990s. However, the history of the term is documented on the Internet as dating back to the 1980s. At that time, slang terms often circulated at street level for many years before being adopted by anyone who felt inclined to write them down. That's clearly not the case any longer, of course, and any word or phrase that is widely known is dateable quite precisely via website blogs.

According to our crack research team, the Googlamaniacs, the first citation in print is C. Wielgus and A. Wolff's, 'Back-in-your-face Guide to Pick-up Basketball', 1986: "My bad, was an expression of contrition uttered after making a bad pass or missing an opponent."

Isn't it time for these, and about a dozen other mindless clichés that infest our everyday speech, to hang at the end of a dangling participle until they are dead?

Corrupting our language with uncivilized, ignorant speech patterns is part of our system that we will never understand.

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