

Excerpt from *Bootstraps* by Victor Villanueva (novel)

Que portorro doesn't have a mustache? His is respectable, nearly trimmed always, never did wear a *chibo*, the little strip of hair from the bottom lip to the chin; never did let the mustache turn into a *chinchow*, the Charlie-Chan like droop below the lipline. He wore his mustache like his father had, like his uncle Diego, like the respectable men of the block, like Zorro. But this is not TV California; it's his new world, and he'll comply. (Villanueva 37)

Excerpt from *Honor* by Elif Shafak (novel)

They called her Kiz Ebe - the Virgin Midwife. They said she was the best midwife this impoverished Kurdish region had seen in a hundred years... [They said], "The Virgin Midwife is in command. Everything will go well. Thanks first to Allah, then to her." ...Like every midwife, she was aware of the danger of her name being uttered in the same breath as the name of God. When she heard the peasants speak such blasphemy, she would murmur to herself, *Tövbe, tövbe*. They didn't have to hear her; it was enough that God did. She had to make it clear to Him that she was not coveting His power, nor competing with Him, the one and only life-giver. (Shafak 33)

* "I take it back, I take it back"

Excerpts from *Origins* by Amin Maalouf (novel)

1) The younger brother... nicknamed himself Chitân, which literally means "Satan" but in our parts has the milder meaning of "Devil." He claims to chat with "the other one," his namesake, every day, and in our village no one makes much of it, except for two or three devout widows who disapprove of jokes on these subjects. Our Chitân likes to say he is immortal... The elder brother has no nickname. Everyone calls him respectfully *ustaz* Eliya, the customary title for teachers, lawyers, and learned people in general. (Maalouf 23)

Excerpts from "Sometimes those Pueblo Men can sure be Coyotes" by Tohe (poem)

(A handsome man from Pueblo is driving two teenage girls, the narrator and her friend, home. They make several comments about him in Navajo, assuming he doesn't know the language.)

we had just pulled onto Central

when one of us said

Éi hastiin ayóo baa dzólní' this man is very handsome

Éi laa' I agree

...

A'héhee' at'ééke he said thank you, girls (Tohe 16-17)

Excerpt from "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" by James Baldwin

Now, I do not know what white Americans would sound like if there had never been any black people in the United States, but they would not sound the way they sound. *Jazz*, for example, is a very specific sexual term, as in *jazz me, baby*, but white people purified it into the Jazz Age. *Sock it to me*, which means, roughly, the same thing, has been adopted by Nathaniel Hawthorne's descendants with no qualms or hesitations at all, along with *let it all hang out* and *right on!* *Beat to his socks*, which was once the black's most total and despairing image of poverty, was

transformed into a thing called the Beat Generation, which phenomenon was, largely, composed of *uptight*, middle-class white people, imitating poverty, trying to *get down*, to *get with it*, doing their *thing*, doing their despairing best to be *funky*, which we, the blacks, never dreamed of doing - we were funky, baby, like *funk* was going out of style. (Baldwin 508)

Excerpts from Pinyin.info website by Victor H. Mair (academic website)

There is a widespread public misperception, particularly among the New Age sector, that the Chinese word for “crisis” is composed of elements that signify “danger” and “opportunity.” It appears, often complete with Chinese characters, on the covers of books, on advertisements for seminars, on expensive courses for “thinking outside of the box,” and practically everywhere one turns in the world of quick-buck business, pop psychology, and orientalist hocus-pocus. Like most Mandarin words, that for “crisis” (wēijī) consists of two syllables that are written with two separate characters, wēi (危) and jī (機/机). While it is true that wēijī does indeed mean “crisis” and that the wēi syllable of wēijī does convey the notion of “danger,” the jī syllable of wēijī most definitely does not signify “opportunity.” The jī of wēijī, in fact, means something like “incipient moment; crucial point (when something begins or changes).” Thus, a wēijī is indeed a genuine crisis, a dangerous moment, a time when things start to go awry. A wēijī indicates a perilous situation when one should be especially wary. It is not a juncture when one goes looking for advantages and benefits.

Excerpt from “Chiastic Antisymmetry in Language Evolution” by Jamin Pelkey (academic article)

First a note on “chiasmus”, a term I use throughout. The term is a romanization of ancient Greek χiasmós, now superficially and narrowly associated with A:B::B:A patterns in speech and writing. The full scope of the term, properly understood, is necessarily both broader and deeper (see further discussion in Lissner 2007 and Pelkey 2013b, Wiseman and Paul 2014). I use the term in its broader sense deliberately for at least three reasons: First, as a needful shorthand for cumbersome phrases like “symmetry disruption and the subsequent restoration of symmetry in a new mode”, which it represents. More to the point of its selection, like its namesake, χ chi, a Greek visual equivalent to Latin X, chiasmus is implicated in crisscrossing or intertwining patterns and inverse parallelisms (whether spoken, printed, painted, sung, danced, woven or otherwise enacted). Thirdly, my use of “chiasmus” is intended to make a clean distinction that encompasses, but supersedes, mere symmetry. The antisymmetrical reality that chiasmus names is processual, whereas symmetry alone is static (see discussion in Turner 1991; Nöth 1994, 1998). (Pelkey 41)

Discussion Questions:

1. Underline where the writers are using a language or specialized vocabulary they don't expect their readers to understand. What different strategies do they use to draw attention to this?
2. What effect does using specialized language have in each situation? What is gained or lost in each situation? What might be gained or lost in an English-only version?
3. Are there any examples or strategies you think are particularly useful or effective? What kinds of strategies have you seen or used in the past, and what strategies do you think might be useful for introducing specialized language in the future?