

Linguistics is bodacious and radical, McBrosef

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"Fo' sho', the twist is groovy and swell, dude, but bro, I ain't jivin'."

You were crying with confusion by the end of that sentence, weren't you? It's not one you would hear in any high school today, or a decade ago, or a century ago. And yet each word was used properly in context. But no gangster lived in white 1950s suburbia while contemplating the aspects of the dance move "the twist."

Slang words, like the ones above, change through time, sometimes returning in a "retro" comeback and sometimes forever stuck as remnants of the era they came from. Words from different eras will not make sense together, because they originated from different cultural mindsets. But how does slang originate?

James Hunter, Assistant Professor at the English Language Center at Gonzaga University, even finds it difficult to pinpoint the origins of slang.

"Some studies find that there are derivations from hundreds of different areas," Hunter said.

Usually, a slang word is derived at least partially from various sources.

"You could just make up a word, like 'crunk,' for example," Hunter said. "If you look up a word like 'crunk' in the dictionary, you won't find much. So it's hard to determine where it comes from."

For words that already exist, like dude, original meanings become irrelevant in terms of their modern usage. The word dude originally referred to overly stylish and fastidious city folk, soon evolving to refer to city folk going west for vacation, as in "dude ranch." Now, bros ex-

change the term with a nod of the head.

So the natural question is: what allows a slang word to survive beyond its initial era or meaning?

"That's a question that linguists have been trying to answer for a really long time," Hunter said. Still, the slang words that seem most successful are the ones that are used in multiple social groups.

The word cool, for example, is cross generational and universally accepted. The word groovy, conversely, was limited to one era and forever will be associated with it. That is because the word groovy, like swell, boss and the oh-so-popu-

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lar tubular were never useful for every group. Some people, doubtless, could never identify with tubular's surfer aesthetic.

"So much of it is just, 'I want to identify with people like that; I want to use their language.' So when your friends use it all the time, you start doing it too," Hunter said. Slang is dependent on social groups and their interactions.

So one might attempt to pinpoint this generation's slang. We associate groovy with the '70s and boss with the '80s, so what will the 2050 graduates associate with "our" generation.

What is important is how one defines a generation.

A generation could refer to a decade, but then one must consider the different groups captured within just 10 years. Within these constraints, a 14-year-old and 24-year-old would share generations.

"When you get into high school you don't want to be associated with middle school anymore, so you use different language, and when you get into college you don't want to associate with high school anymore," Hunter said.

And therein lies the crux of what slang is.

In Hunter's words, "slang is always used to set you apart. Always. It might be conscious or it might not be. But when your parents say 'I don't understand what you're saying,' or when you talk to your friends on IM or text or whatever you're making your speech community, you're saying I belong here and here's proof," he said.

So let's set ourselves apart. Over the next few months, we would like to try an experiment, that, if we are successful, should result in a few more slang words floating around Spokane.

If you have the urge to call something cool, but need a word that nicely connotes freshness and good hygiene, try using "mint."

For instance, "Man, how do you come up with such mint moves?!" If you need a word for awkward that's a little more awkward, give "recumbent," or it's shorter version, recum, a whirl, as in, "When she saw me at the grocery store it was so recum."

If you want word for sleazy that sounds less like it's coming from your parents, you could use "neon," like this: "That's kind of a neon thing to say..."

After a few months of putting these words out into the scene, we'll revisit this experiment and see how it worked. Some of these words might become everyday and some might never catch on, or all of them might never catch on. It's impossible to it predict. Because if nothing else, slang, like the social groups and communities it typifies, will always be unpredictable.

Texting bytes!

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Byte for byte, texting is more expensive than downloading data from outer space.

Dr. Nigel Bannister, a scientist at the University of Leicester, calculated that transmitting text messages between cell phones costs about four times as much as receiving scientific data from the Hubble Space Telescope.

Bannister did the math and found that sending just one megabyte of texting data costs about \$670, while obtaining the same amount of data from the HST costs anywhere from about \$16 to \$152. However, one text message is only 140 bytes, or .00013 megabytes, so naturally texts don't cost \$670 each.

"Hubble is by no means a cheap mission - but the mobile phone text costs [are] pretty astronomical," Bannister said.

Perhaps it is due to the novelty of text messaging that cell phone companies feel entitled to collectively squeeze vast sums of money from their customers.

Due to the tiny amount of data one text consists of, texting should be a free service given to customers as part of their cell phone package. For example, one Verizon network text, incoming or outgoing, costs 20 cents, according to their own website. For those that don't purchase a bundled messaging package, this 20 cent per message fee borders on extortion. The outrageous fee for texting has been observed by others, notably a member of Congress.

Over the last three years, the cost for text messaging has doubled throughout the wireless industry.

In an effort to discover the cause for this 200 percent price increase, Senator Herb Kohl, D-WI, wrote letters to each of the four main cell phone carriers.

Senator Kohl stated that the increase "is hardly consistent with the vigorous price competition we hope to see in a competitive marketplace." In our capitalistic society, it seems that prices should be going down, not doubling over three years.

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Graphic by Caroline O' Grady



Maddy Weatherhead / Staff Photographer/ Lewis and Clark

A smiling Greenbluff scarecrow welcomes people of all ages.

I just called your Green Bluff

MARY DOMBROWSKI
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LEWIS AND CLARK

October is the time of year when the wistful nostalgia of summer has passed and it truly begins to feel like the autumn season. The hectic first month of school and the out-of-the-blue unseasonably hot days of September have passed.

With that passing there comes a crisp new feeling in the chilly air. The trees along the streets erupt in stunning shades of red, yellow and orange, as if they were having a last goodbye party before winter arrives.

Sweaters and scarves pop up against the cold, frost sparkles on the leaves and branches, and, in the most seasonably associated act of fall, dedicated gardeners finally get to reap the sweet rewards of the time and patience they put into their gardens all summer.

Let's face it though, high school students are hardly the most likely candidates to have spent precious untold hours of their summer planting, watering or weeding unless they saw some sort of monetary compensation for their work. Yet what could be more symbolic of this glorious season than enjoying the wide variety of produce the climate in this part of the country allows to grow? Very few things can begin to com-

pare with the simple joys of a round orange pumpkin or freshly pressed cider. Luckily, Green Bluff, a community of independently run farms and fruit stands just north of Spokane, is in its prime season during the month of October, the Harvest Festival time.

Green Bluff's website says that the growers association of Green Bluff was formed in 1902 to protect the local strawberry farmers. It has now expanded to include 38 farms, many of which are open year-round.

Although all the Green Bluff farms are connected through the growers association, each offers up its own unique personality that contributes to the quirkiness of the community. Knapp's Farm, for example, features "Punkin' Chunkin'," in which a pumpkin is placed into a compression powered cannon which then is shot "over a quarter of a mile."

Walter's Fruit Ranch offers live music, birthday parties, and petting zoos. Few pesticides or chemicals are used in the produce at the farms, and a large emphasis is placed on organic and the individual grower.

The thing that makes Green Bluff such an interesting place to while away an afternoon exploring, is the relaxed mood that hangs off of everything. A tremendous amount of effort and physical work was put into the generating of the products, yet everyone is pleasant, relaxed, and willing to help.

Dogs lounge around catching the warm autumn sun allowing people to pet them. The fact that positive vibes float through the air is as evident as the persistent clacking of grasshoppers against pumpkin vines. The difference in atmosphere than what has become the negative, bustling of many of our lives is profound enough to look at things objectively.

The community of Green Bluff is close knit, with an emphasis on hard work and friendliness. Farms stay in the family for generation after generation.

"My grandparents bought the farm in 1955. Beyond that we don't really know how old it is," Knapp's Farm owner Patty Knapp said.

While searching through a pumpkin patch for the perfect Jack-o-lantern pumpkin, families spending time together outdoors, and the sound of farm machinery coming from somewhere beyond a field of golden wheat, there comes a point at which one begins to forget the many priorities he or she has set.

The true colors, smells, and feelings that the season of fall brings begin to register. In a way, the farms and growers of Green Bluff can be an escape. Or it could just be picking the most perfect apple out of your favorite grower's orchard. But for some, caught up in the spirit of the harvest, it may just be the same thing.