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British actress attacks English slang

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

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THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

British Oscar-winning actress Emma Thompson has hit out at the slang used by her compatriots. The star of Harry Potter and Nanny McPhee movies told the British magazine Radio Times that she thought too many people in Britain didn't speak properly. She said a lot of the language she heard on the streets made people sound stupid. In particular, the phrases "innit" and "ain't" drove her insane. "Innit" started off as a variation of "isn't it" but is now used to replace a whole variety of tag questions, ranging from "wasn't it" to "don't we" and "won't I". She made her comments after visiting her old high school. She told the students not to use slang so much, "because it makes you sound stupid and you're not stupid".

Ms Thompson told her interviewer she thought people needed to rethink how important correct grammar and language are. She said: "We have to reinvest, I think, in the idea of articulacy as a form of personal human freedom and power." She didn't say people should not use slang, but they should remember where and when to use it: "There is the necessity to have two languages – one that you use with your mates and the other that you need in any official capacity. Or you're going to sound like [an idiot]," she said. Language experts say Thompson's rant was an attack on "teenspeak," which has developed through text messaging and social networking sites. Many parents say they don't understand their children.

WARM-UPS

1. SLANG: Walk around the class and talk to other students about slang. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Oscar / slang / compatriots / speaking properly / stupid / variation / tag questions / interviewer / correct grammar / articulacy / freedom / language expert / text message

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. ENGLISH: What do you want to improve? Complete this table and share it with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you heard. Change and share again.

	How much?	Why?	How to improve?
Knowledge of slang			
Pronunciation			
Writing			
Text message shortcuts			
Grammar			
Reading			

4. STUPID: Students A **strongly** believe using slang doesn't make you sound stupid; Students B **strongly** believe it does. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. INSANE: What drives you most insane about English? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the one that drives you most insane at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- slang
- punctuation
- grammar
- not understanding movies
- pronunciation
- spelling
- different accents
- how it gets into your language

6. GRAMMAR: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'grammar'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. An award-winning actress has criticized British people's use of slang. | T / F |
| b. The actress told a magazine that no one in the U.K spoke properly. | T / F |
| c. She said some phrases she often heard made her go crazy. | T / F |
| d. The actress told pupils at her old school to cut down on using slang. | T / F |
| e. She said people need to think more about the importance of grammar. | T / F |
| f. She said she was against people using slang. | T / F |
| g. Linguists said her words largely criticized language used by teenagers. | T / F |
| h. Most parents have no problems understanding their teenage children. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. hit out at | a. correctly |
| 2. compatriots | b. crazy |
| 3. properly | c. criticized |
| 4. insane | d. expressiveness |
| 5. stupid | e. fellow citizens |
| 6. articulacy | f. friends |
| 7. necessity | g. idiotic |
| 8. mates | h. outburst |
| 9. experts | i. requirement |
| 10. rant | j. specialists |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. hit out at the slang used | a. attack on "teenspeak" |
| 2. too many people in Britain | b. by her compatriots |
| 3. "ain't" drove | c. didn't speak properly |
| 4. a whole variety | d. grammar and language are |
| 5. it makes you sound | e. have two languages |
| 6. rethink how important correct | f. her insane |
| 7. articulacy as a form of personal | g. of tag questions |
| 8. There is the necessity to | h. human freedom |
| 9. Thompson's rant was an | i. social networking sites |
| 10. text messaging and | j. stupid |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

British Oscar-winning actress Emma Thompson has hit _____ at the slang used by her compatriots. The star of Harry Potter and Nanny McPhee movies told the British magazine Radio Times that she thought too many people in Britain didn't speak _____. She said a lot of the language she heard on the _____ made people sound stupid. In particular, the _____ "innit" and "ain't" drove her _____. "Innit" started off as a variation of "isn't it" but is now used to replace a whole variety of tag questions, _____ from "wasn't it" to "don't we" and "won't I". She made her _____ after visiting her old high school. She told the students not to use slang so much, "because it makes you _____ stupid and you're not stupid".

ranging
phrases
properly
sound
out
insane
comments
streets

Ms Thompson told her interviewer she thought people needed to _____ how important correct grammar and language are. She said: "We have to _____, I think, in the idea of articulacy as a form of personal human freedom and _____." She didn't say people should not use slang, but they should remember where and when to use it: "There is the _____ to have two languages - one that you use with your _____ and the other that you need in any official capacity. Or you're going to sound like [an idiot]," she said. Language _____ say Thompson's rant was an _____ on "teenspeak," which has developed through text messaging and social networking _____. Many parents say they don't understand their children.

sites
power
rethink
mates
experts
reinvest
necessity
attack

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

British Oscar-winning actress Emma Thompson _____ slang used by her compatriots. The star of Harry Potter and Nanny McPhee movies told the British magazine Radio Times that she thought too many people in Britain _____. She said a lot of the language she heard on the streets made people sound stupid. In particular, the phrases "innit" and "ain't" _____. "Innit" started _____ of "isn't it" but is now used to replace _____ tag questions, ranging from "wasn't it" to "don't we" and "won't I". She made her comments after visiting her old high school. She told the students _____ much, "because it makes you sound stupid and you're not stupid".

Ms Thompson told her interviewer she thought people _____ important correct grammar and language are. She said: "We have to reinvest, I think, in the _____ as a form of personal human freedom and power." She didn't say people should not use slang, but they should remember _____ use it: "There is the necessity to have two languages – one that you _____ and the other that you need _____. Or you're going to sound like [an idiot]," she said. Language experts say Thompson's _____ on "teenspeak," which has developed through text messaging and social networking sites. Many parents say they don't understand their children.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'tag' and 'question'.

tag	question

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• hit• magazine• streets• tag• high• students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• rethink• idea• necessity• mates• attack• parents
--	---

STUDENT SLANG SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

Write five GOOD questions about slang in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

SLANG DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'slang'?
- c) Do you think standards of speech are falling in your country?
- d) How well spoken are you?
- e) What's wrong with slang and "street" language?
- f) What do you think of the phrase "innit" to cover a variety of tag questions?
- g) Do you like using slang?
- h) What English slang do you like or dislike?
- i) If you knew more English slang, how would it help you?
- j) Does using slang in your own language make you sound stupid?

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SLANG DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think people need to rethink the importance of grammar and language?
- c) What do you understand by the term "articulacy as a form of personal human freedom and power"?
- d) Do you think most people know where and when to use slang?
- e) Do you think Emma Thompson has a point?
- f) Is there "teenspeak" in your country? What do you think of it?
- g) Do you think it's OK to use text messaging shortcuts in regular written English?
- h) What's your biggest problem with English?
- i) What can parents do to understand "teenspeak"? Go to "teenspeak" school?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Emma Thompson?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

British Oscar-winning actress Emma Thompson has hit (1) ____ at the slang used by her compatriots. The star of Harry Potter and Nanny McPhee movies told the British magazine Radio Times that she thought too many people in Britain didn't speak (2) _____. She said a lot of the language she heard (3) _____ the streets made people sound stupid. In (4) _____, the phrases "innit" and "ain't" (5) _____ her insane. "Innit" started off as a variation of "isn't it" but is now used to replace a whole variety of tag questions, (6) _____ from "wasn't it" to "don't we" and "won't I". She made her comments after visiting her old high school. She told the students not to use slang so much, "because it makes you sound stupid and you're not stupid".

Ms Thompson told her interviewer she thought people needed to rethink (7) _____ important correct grammar and language are. She said: "We have to reinvest, I think, in the idea of articulacy as a form (8) _____ personal human freedom and power." She didn't say people should not use slang, but they should remember where and when to use (9) _____: "There is the necessity to have two languages – one that you use (10) _____ your mates and the other that you need in any official capacity. Or you're going to sound like [an idiot]," she said. Language experts say Thompson's rant was an attack (11) _____ "teenspeak," which has (12) _____ through text messaging and social networking sites. Many parents say they don't understand their children.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. | (a) out | (b) in | (c) up | (d) down |
| 2. | (a) prosper | (b) properly | (c) prosperity | (d) proper |
| 3. | (a) at | (b) up | (c) on | (d) to |
| 4. | (a) peculiar | (b) especially | (c) practicality | (d) particular |
| 5. | (a) driver | (b) driven | (c) driving | (d) drove |
| 6. | (a) ranger | (b) range | (c) ranging | (d) ranges |
| 7. | (a) how | (b) why | (c) which | (d) whether |
| 8. | (a) by | (b) of | (c) at | (d) from |
| 9. | (a) them | (b) that | (c) it | (d) these |
| 10. | (a) with | (b) of | (c) at | (d) in |
| 11. | (a) to | (b) by | (c) with | (d) on |
| 12. | (a) developing | (b) developed | (c) develops | (d) develop |

British actress attacks English slang – 29th September, 2010

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WRITING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1009/100929-slang.html>

Write about **slang** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner’s paper.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about English slang. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. SLANG: Make a poster (in English) about slang in your country. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. "TEENSPEAK": Write a magazine article about "teenspeak". Include imaginary interviews with teenagers who use it and parents who don't understand it.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to a language expert. Ask him/her three questions about slang. Give him/her three of your opinions on it. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. T d. T e. T f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. hit out at | a. criticized |
| 2. compatriots | b. fellow citizens |
| 3. properly | c. correctly |
| 4. insane | d. crazy |
| 5. stupid | e. idiotic |
| 6. articulacy | f. expressiveness |
| 7. necessity | g. requirement |
| 8. mates | h. friends |
| 9. experts | i. specialists |
| 10. rant | j. outburst |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. hit out at the slang used | a. by her compatriots |
| 2. too many people in Britain | b. didn't speak properly |
| 3. "ain't" drove | c. her insane |
| 4. a whole variety | d. of tag questions |
| 5. it makes you sound | e. stupid |
| 6. rethink how important correct | f. grammar and language are |
| 7. articulacy as a form of personal | g. human freedom |
| 8. There is the necessity to | h. have two languages |
| 9. Thompson's rant was an | i. attack on "teenspeak" |
| 10. text messaging and | j. social networking sites |

GAP FILL:

British actress attacks English slang

British Oscar-winning actress Emma Thompson has hit **out** at the slang used by her compatriots. The star of Harry Potter and Nanny McPhee movies told the British magazine Radio Times that she thought too many people in Britain didn't speak **properly**. She said a lot of the language she heard on the **streets** made people sound stupid. In particular, the **phrases** "innit" and "ain't" drove her **insane**. "Innit" started off as a variation of "isn't it" but is now used to replace a whole variety of tag questions, **ranging** from "wasn't it" to "don't we" and "won't I". She made her **comments** after visiting her old high school. She told the students not to use slang so much, "because it makes you **sound** stupid and you're not stupid".

Ms Thompson told her interviewer she thought people needed to **rethink** how important correct grammar and language are. She said: "We have to **reinvest**, I think, in the idea of articulacy as a form of personal human freedom and **power**." She didn't say people should not use slang, but they should remember where and when to use it: "There is the **necessity** to have two languages – one that you use with your **mates** and the other that you need in any official capacity. Or you're going to sound like [an idiot]," she said. Language **experts** say Thompson's rant was an **attack** on "teenspeak," which has developed through text messaging and social networking **sites**. Many parents say they don't understand their children.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a 2 - b 3 - c 4 - d 5 - d 6 - c 7 - a 8 - b 9 - c 10 - a 11 - d 12 - b