

## **Practise/Practice**

In addition to theological studies, I have been teaching English. English is taught in all the schools in Ghana. However, the seminary principal thought it would be good for the students to have some classes to improve their speaking and writing skills. He, the vice-principal and I had noticed in numerous sermons students confuse the subjunctive and objective cases when using “you and I” or “you and me.” At least they are not as sloppy as most of us Americans in putting “I” or “me” first. This is something my mother did not abide. Neither did she tolerate the use of a preposition at the end of a sentence. But I digress.

One concern I raised in accepting the task is I am an American and my usage is not the Queen’s English. Winston Churchill once observed the United States and the United Kingdom are, “two nations divided by a common language.”

Having spent ten years in Botswana and South Africa, I am well aware of the many subtle language differences between the British and American use of the language. There are, for example, differences in spelling – colour/color or programme/program. There is the need to know the different usage of “curb” and “kerb.” Debbie must always remember at the hospital to use “theatre” when referring to the operating room (a surgery is a doctor’s office) or “chemist” when sending someone to the pharmacy. Sometimes the misunderstanding of terms has humorous consequences such as referring to a man wearing a brightly colored pair of braces (suspenders). Other times the consequences can be a bit more embarrassing or risqué. But, again, I digress.

Recently I was teaching a lesson regarding words that are confusing such as when to use “your” or “you’re.” (Less we forget “yore.”) Or remembering “minute” has two distinctive pronunciations with two different meanings. After many years in Southern Africa and Ghana, I thought I was well versed. Then one student asked, “What are the correct uses of ‘practice?’” I was flummoxed. It was time to consult Safari.

Sure enough, there it was. In the Queen’s English “practise” is a verb and “practice” is a noun. In Canada and the US using “c” is the correct spelling for either. Who woulda *thunk*?

I am always telling students that when I teach I hope to learn as much from the lesson (or them) as they. Today, this old dog indeed learnt a new trick.

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Larry also preached in chapel at the seminary on November 8, 2020.

