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“I Don’t Get It”: Researching the Cultural Lexicon of Global Englishes

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1. Introduction

Anyone talking to an English speaker from the UK is likely to encounter, sooner or later, such sentences as:

- (1) Philippa [leaving a department store]: It was like Clapham Junction in there!
- (2) David [weeding his garden, and grumbling]: This is like painting the Forth Bridge.
- (3) Mary [talking about her holiday]: Our hotel made *Fawlty Towers* look like the Ritz.
- (4) Jim [showing someone his watch]: I’m afraid it’s more Portobello Road than Bond Street.

To be understood, listeners need to have the relevant cultural background. They need to know: in (1) that Philippa has found her shopping expedition chaotic (Clapham Junction in London being the busiest station in the UK for changing trains); in (2) that David is moaning about the way weeds removed at the end of one growing season always seem to reappear in the next (the bridge across the River Forth in Scotland being so large and structurally complex that by the time painters finish giving it a protective coat of paint, it is time for them to start all over again); in (3) that Mary’s accommodation was absolutely awful (*Fawlty Towers* being a television comedy series in which a paranoid seaside hotel manager deals with a never-ending series of disasters, a world away from one of London’s classiest hotels); in (4) that Jim is playing down the value of his watch (bought from a street-market rather than from one of the most expensive streets in London). Listeners who lack this cultural knowledge may smile politely and nod, but inside they have to admit failure: “I don’t get it.”

This is not just a problem for foreign learners of English. English may be your first language, but if you come from a part of the world where these expressions are unfamiliar or unknown, you will be just as lost. And British visitors to other English-speaking countries will face similar difficulties. I can recall many situations where I

have been at a loss because I have no idea what to make of the cultural reference the speaker has unconsciously used. I have reported some of these experiences in past papers (Crystal 2011, 2014, 2017). Native speakers often make allowances for possible misunderstanding by speaking more slowly or simplifying syntax, but cultural allusions are so deeply embedded in their linguistic sensibility that they are usually unaware they have made them. Being a linguist, of course, I ask speakers to explain, and invariably they are surprised at my apparent ignorance. To take just one example: in New Zealand, I repeatedly had to ask for explanations of the cultural allusions used in the “Yeah Right” advertising campaign for Tui beer (Tui 2005), in which a sentence was followed by a dismissive “yeah right” (i.e., “I don’t believe it”). I understood the first of the following examples, because I shared the cultural background, but not the second:

The cheque is in the post. Yeah Right.
Let Paul fly you there. Yeah Right!

My interlocutor could not believe I did not know who Paul was. (I then learned he was the breakfast host on *Newstalk ZB*, the country’s main breakfast show, who owned a plane which he crashed—and survived. He then got another plane, which he crashed—and survived.) Similar incomprehension surfaced in the USA when allusions were made to baseball personalities I did not know, and in Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and The Netherlands.

I choose these last three locations to make the point that local cultural references are not restricted to countries where English is the first language of the population, but can surface anywhere that people carry on fluent conversations in the language—which of course means virtually anywhere, these days. The global spread of English has significantly increased the likelihood of encountering instances of cultural incomprehension—either when visiting a country physically or engaging with it through the internet. The “new Englishes” of the world display the phenomenon most dramatically, for when a country adopts English as a means of communication it rapidly adapts it to meet its needs. Words for local fauna and flora, food and drink, myths and legends, politics, broadcasting, sports, religion, and every facet of daily life soon generate a local vocabulary that is opaque to most people outside the country. So when I find myself listening to an informal conversation among a group of locals—such as a group of teachers at an English Language Teaching (ELT) conference, or a group of managers at a reception following a business meeting—I am very likely going to hear references to local shops, suburbs, bus-routes, institutions, television programs, personalities, and so on that escape me. The participants may allude to an advertising jingle, the lyric of a popular song, a proverb, a childhood story or nursery rhyme, and many other shared topics of local culture, none of which I recognize. After a while, even I begin to nod politely, for one cannot always be intervening to say, “Excuse me, but what does that mean?”

A more awkward situation arises when I *think* I have understood, and interpose a comment, only to find, from the puzzled responses of my interlocutor, that I have got things totally wrong. The instance I reported in Crystal (2017) provides a brief illustration:

A couple of years ago I was lecturing in Leiden. The country was in the grip of exceptionally cold weather. The canals were frozen and people were skating on them. The previous time the canals had frozen over like this, it seems, was 1997. So it wasn't surprising that after the lecture the dinner-time talk—four Dutch colleagues, my wife and me, with a conversation entirely in English—at one point turned to the ice skating. Which bits of the ice were safe? Which weren't? Under the bridges was dangerous, for it was warmer there. Our knowledge of ice-skating was increasing by the minute. It was a lively and jocular chat, and the exceptional weather formed a major part of it. Then one of them said something that I didn't quite catch, and the four Dutch people suddenly became very downcast and there was a short silence. It was as if someone had mentioned a death in the family.

I had no idea how to react. Somebody commented about it being such a shame, about the—I now know how to spell it—*Elfstedentocht*. One of the four noticed my confused face. "The 11-cities tour was cancelled," he explained, adding "because of the ice." Ah, so that was it, I thought. Some sort of cultural tourist event taking in 11 cities had been called off because the roads were too dangerous. I could understand that, as the roads were so slippery that I'd had to buy some special boots a few days earlier to keep myself upright. But why were my colleagues so upset about it? "Were you going on it?" I asked. They all laughed. I had evidently made a joke, but I'd no idea why. "Not at our age!" said one of them. I couldn't understand that answer, and didn't like to ask if it was a tour just for youngsters. Then I got even more confused, for someone said that it was the south of the country that was the problem because the ice was too thin. But why was thin ice a problem? That would mean the travelling would be getting back to normal. I was rapidly losing track of this conversation, as the four Dutch debated the rights and wrongs of the cancellation. It might still be held . . . ? No, it was impossible. It would all depend on the weather . . . And eventually the talk moved on to something else.

What I'd missed, of course, was the simplest of facts—and cultural linguistic differences often reduce to very simple points—which I discovered when I later looked up *Elfstedentocht* on the Internet. It firstly referred to a *race*, not a tour (*tocht* in Dutch has quite a wide range of uses) and moreover an *ice* race, along the canals between the eleven cities. It is an intensive experience, only for the fittest and youngest—hence the irony of my remark. But the semantics of the word was only a part of it. The cultural significance of the word I had still to learn. I discovered it in the website of the *Global Post*.¹

It's hard to overestimate the grip that the *Elfstedentocht* has on the Dutch psyche. For sports fans in the Netherlands the epic 200-kilometer (125 mile) skating race is like the World Series, Super Bowl and Stanley Cup combined. Its mythical status is enhanced by the fact that it can only be held in exceptional winters when the canals are covered by 15 cm (6 inches) of ice along the length of the course. . . . If the *Elfstedentocht*, or "11 cities tour," goes ahead, organizers expect up to 2 million spectators—one in eight of the Dutch population—could line the route. The race has only been held 15 times since the first in 1909, and winners become instant national heroes. The legendary

1963 contest was held in a raging blizzard. Just 136 finished out of 10,000 starters.

A stronger cultural affirmation is difficult to imagine. The fact that it was an ice race was so obvious, to the Dutch people at the table, that they took it completely for granted, disregarding the fact that for me, coming from Wales, the significance of the thickness of ice on canals would totally escape me.

2. The Need for Cultural Lexicons Across World Englishes

As instances of this kind accumulate, the question arises as to how to deal with them, both in research and in teaching. I do not know of any survey describing this kind of lexicon, or the cultural settings that give rise to it, or reporting the frequency with which it is used in everyday conversation, for a particular country, and it is not immediately obvious how one would set about making such a survey. Nor does there exist what might be called a "cultural syllabus" in ELT, in which the lexical features that identify a particular country are organized and graded in some way. All ELT course-books include a certain amount of cultural encounter, of course—a visit to a restaurant, perhaps, or a trip to the Houses of Parliament—but these are sporadic, with the domains (in the sense of 'areas of subject-matter') chosen as a means of making a grammatical point interesting, or as an opportunity to introduce a swathe of new vocabulary. There may be a visit to the shops in Bond Street, but the commercial world of that part of London is not related to other shopping experiences of a contrasting kind, such as would be encountered in the street-markets of Portobello Road or the stalls of Covent Garden. To help develop such intuitions, the learner would need a cultural dictionary or thesaurus of shopping—ideally, both.

Shopping is but one of a large number of domains where people readily make cultural allusions. How many such domains are there, and how might they be organized for a research project? We need a comprehensive descriptive framework within which all the cultural allusions encountered in a country can be located and classified: a cultural taxonomy. And this research task should also have a comparative dimension, to allow the cultural backgrounds of speaker and listener to be brought into some sort of correspondence. We might think of it as a translation task. What is the equivalent of *Clapham Junction* (in the sense of 'chaos') in other global English varieties? Is there an equivalent? Which domains in a country give rise to cultural allusions not shared by other countries? For example, I would expect a country that regularly suffers from earthquakes to have a host of cultural memories of places and events that would be immediately meaningful to the people there; whereas I would not expect the domain of earthquakes to have any great cultural resonance in Britain. Culture is usually defined positively: the features that make a community recognizable. It can also be viewed negatively: the features that a community does not have.

There has been a definite trend, since the 1980s, to increase the amount of cultural information in English language studies. There has always been a strong cultural

element in historical lexicography, of course, as the entries in the unabridged *Oxford English Dictionary* routinely illustrate; and American dictionaries have from their earliest days included basic encyclopedic information in the form of entries on people, places, institutions, historical events, and so on. Dictionaries of individual language varieties also have a respected history, with Hobson-Jobson (for Indian English) first appearing in the nineteenth century (Yule and Burnell, 1886); and a selection of later examples would include dictionaries of Jamaican English (Cassidy and Le Page, 1967), South African English (Branford and Branford, 1978/1991), and Trinidad and Tobago English (Winer, 2009). The scale of these works needs to be appreciated, for they typically contain 10,000 entries or more. There have also been a few discursive publications focusing on cultural identities, such as *British English for American Readers* (Grote, 1992), *Say Again? The other side of South African English* (Branford and Venter, 2016), and the two English-orientated books in the *Coping With ...* series—*Coping with America* (Trudgill, 1982) and *Coping with England* (Hannah, 1987). Many articles in the periodical *English Today* contain partial accounts. But these publications inevitably draw attention to the vast range of varieties for which no descriptive treatment yet exists. The first systematic attempt to make international variation the basis of a general dictionary for English-language learners was the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (Summers, 1992/1998/2004), but the focus of this book was on British and American English, with other varieties receiving only sporadic mention. The recent efforts of the *Oxford English Dictionary* to represent different Englishes is another initiative in that area (see Salazar, this volume).

Regional dictionaries have a literal aim: to describe cultural phenomena as they actually exist. So, for example, the Longman dictionary does describe what Clapham Junction is, but it does not illustrate how people can use this expression in everyday speech. The entry reads (I quote from the third edition): "a very busy railway station in southwest London where a lot of people catch a train to work or change trains." This is accurate enough, in its simplicity (the entries all use the Longman defining vocabulary), but it gives no indication that people apply the notion to other situations, as in my example above. Just occasionally we see in its entries the kind of information that we need in order to capture the extended usage, as in this entry (omitting phonetic details):

Tweedledum and Tweedledee two characters in the book *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll. They are fat little men, who are both dressed in school uniform and look exactly like each other. Their names are often used to describe two people or groups who are almost exactly the same as each other, especially when they both seem to be bad: *Some voters felt there was little real difference between the two party leaders—a case of choosing between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.*

This is the kind of treatment readers have to see (along with other examples of usage) if the dictionary is to help them handle cultural adaptations.

3. Types of Lexicon

Only about a quarter of the entries in the Longman dictionary deal with cultural phenomena, and only a proportion of these present issues of the kind illustrated above. The coverage in fact contains four types of lexical entry. The first three are well-recognized, both in lexicology and ELT (I present the fourth type in a later section).

3.1 Culture-neutral Vocabulary, Regionally Unrestricted

This is the remit of a general dictionary of World English. The lexical items and proper names seem to be understood in the same way by all countries where English is spoken—*sun, tree, land, eyes, hand, enemy, government, speak, want, give, love, make, cold, tired; UNESCO, Denmark, New York, Second World War, Albert Einstein, North Pole, Google, Scrabble* . . . “Seem” is important, as, in the absence of descriptive studies, it is always possible that an item has acquired an additional nuance in a country that differentiates it from usage elsewhere.

3.2 Culture-neutral Vocabulary, Regionally Restricted

This has been the traditional focus of English variationist lexicology: a meaning shared by more than one country is expressed by different lexical items or proper names—[car] *bonnet* (BrE), *hood* (AmE); *pavement* (BrE), *sidewalk* (AmE), *footpath* (AusE); *traffic light* (BrE, AmE), *stop light* (AmE), *robot* (SAfE); *candy floss* (BrE), *cotton candy* (AmE), *fairy floss* (AusE); [cars] AA (BrE), AAA (AmE); [film classification] U (BrE), G (AmE); [financial centre] *the City* (BrE), *Wall Street* (AmE). Related are cases where an item expresses different shared meanings, as with *gas* (BrE—natural gas, AmE—petrol); *flyover* (BrE—of roads, AmE—of planes); *subway* (BrE—of roads, AmE—of underground trains). The point to appreciate here is that the various items are not culturally distinctive, for the countries named, as the referents are shared—both Britain and the USA have passageways under roads and trains beneath the ground, for example. It would make no sense to answer the question “Name a feature that uniquely identifies British culture” by saying “traffic light” or “pavement.”

3.3 Culture-specific Vocabulary, Used Literally

This is the indefinitely large set of lexical items or (especially) proper names associated with a country, traditionally covered by an encyclopedia rather than a dictionary (though lexicographical traditions differ, as mentioned above: proper names have been an important feature of American dictionaries, whereas British dictionaries on the whole have avoided them). Using British and American English examples, this category can be illustrated by terms to do with government (*House of Lords; Capitol Hill*), national symbols (*Union Jack; Uncle Sam*), broadcasting companies (*BBC; NPR*), television programs (*Fawlty Towers; Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*), geographical locations (*the Fens, Bond Street, the Forth Bridge; the Prairies, Broadway, the Grand*

Canyon), and historical personalities (*Winston Churchill; George Washington*). Here the "Name a unique feature" question can be answered positively.

4. A Cultural Taxonomy

How many cases of this kind are there, in a variety of English? And how can they be systematically studied? The first task is to construct a comprehensive descriptive framework for global variation. Such a task might seem impossibly large, for the "universe of discourse," as it is sometimes called, is infinite. We can talk or write about anything. But the challenge of organizing this vast discourse into discrete and manageable domains has long been a subject of study by the science of classification, *taxonomy*, with its many specific applications, such as the Linnaean taxonomy for biology and the Dewey taxonomy for libraries. The taxonomy I know best is the one I developed for a project called the Global Data Model (GDM), devised in the 1990s as a means of classifying content on the Internet, and which was eventually adopted and adapted by various companies as a system for dealing specifically with online advertising (Crystal, 2010). It was also used as the organizing principle for the Cambridge University Press family of general encyclopedias in the 1990s and the corresponding Penguin family in the early 2000s, so it has been well tested.

The GDM has ten top-level domains, subdivided into some 1,500 hierarchically organized subdomains:

- UNIVERSE (space and space exploration)
- EARTH SCIENCE (structure and surface of the Earth)
- ENVIRONMENT (land care and management)
- NATURAL HISTORY (plants and animals)
- HUMAN BODY (physical and psychological make-up of the human being, including medical care)
- MIND (knowledge, beliefs, science, technology, arts, and communication)
- SOCIETY (social organization, including politics, economics, military science, and law)
- RECREATION (leisure activities, including hobbies, sports, and games)
- HUMAN GEOGRAPHY (world geography, travel, and geography of countries)
- HUMAN HISTORY (world history, archaeology, and history of countries)

As an illustration of the approach, Table 9.1 shows the taxonomy used for the domain of EARTH SCIENCE, with some subdomains conflated, along with some indications of content and a British cultural illustration. (The complete taxonomy is provided in the Appendix.) For domains where there is no British example, I have given an instance from some other part of the world.

These subdomains show the level of discrimination that worked satisfactorily for the internet and encyclopedia projects. Whether this level works well for capturing the usages that appear in global cultural variation is an open question. An important methodological issue will be to decide how granular such a model should be. Each of

Table 9.1 The Domain of EARTH SCIENCE Exemplified

Domain	Example
Climate [atmosphere, weather ...]	<i>the Met Office</i>
Rocks and minerals [formations, mines ...]	<i>Giant's Causeway</i>
Earth dynamics	
Earthquakes	<i>Port-au-Prince</i> (Haiti, 2010)
Tsunamis	<i>Sendai</i> (Japan, 2011)
Volcanic eruptions	<i>Mount St Helens</i> (USA, 1980)
Landscape	
Mountains [hills, plateaux, passes ...]	<i>the Downs</i>
Caves [caverns, potholes ...]	<i>Wookey Hole</i>
Valleys [canyons, gorges ...]	<i>Cheddar Gorge</i>
Vegetation [forests, grassland, soils ...]	<i>the New Forest</i>
Deserts [dunes, oases ...]	<i>Atacama</i> (Chile)
Ice [glaciers, icebergs ...]	<i>Aletsch</i> (Switzerland)
Islands [atolls, reefs ...]	<i>Anglesey</i>
Coastline	<i>Chesil Beach</i>
Freshwater bodies	
Groundwater [springs, geysers ...]	<i>Bath Hot Springs</i>
Inland [lakes, swamps ...]	<i>the Lake District</i>
Rivers [estuaries, streams ...]	<i>River Severn</i>
Waterfalls	<i>Gaping Gill</i>
Control [dams, reservoirs, canals ...]	<i>the Thames Barrier</i>
Bridges	<i>the Humber Bridge</i>
Saltwater bodies	
Seas [oceans, currents, tides ...]	<i>the Channel</i>
Coastline [gulfs, bays, fjords ...]	<i>the Wash</i>
Control [harbours, breakwaters ...]	<i>Dover Harbour</i>

these domains could be broken down further, if required for a particular country—for example, different kinds of vegetation. Conversely, it may be that most of a domain, such as HUMAN BODY, will not need to be represented, as the vocabulary (*hand, foot, head* ...) will be shared across countries without any cultural implication (apart, perhaps, from their metaphorical use in fixed expressions, such as proverbs). It is impossible to say how a cultural adaptation of the GDM taxonomy will develop, without descriptive application. Similarly, although each line is illustratable by an indefinitely large set of items, only some of these will be sufficiently frequent and country-wide in awareness to justify inclusion. Corpus-based studies should help here.

There will be some unexpected outcomes. One way of quantifying the extent of cultural presence is to take an extract from a country's English language output and identify the number of expressions in it that an outsider would fail to understand. When I did this, using an extract from an online forum in Zurich in which people were complaining (in English) about traffic problems in the area (Crystal, 2014), 19 of the 129 content words (about 15 percent) were culturally opaque. I was not expecting the figure to be so high. The impression I get, from such occasional pieces of analysis, is that, the more local and specific the domain of inquiry, the greater the number of culturally opaque expressions.

Another unexpected outcome relates to choice of domain. For example, in the GDM model the domain of NATURAL HISTORY is divided into 156 subdomains. It might be thought that this domain would be of less importance in a cultural dictionary, and that such a level of granularity would be unwarranted; but that is to underestimate the minute way in which cultures actually manifest themselves. There are 43 categories of symbol for the USA listed in one website <<https://statesymbolsusa.org/us/symbols/state>>, and that domain is one of the most fruitful. There are some overlaps and duplications, but around 700 entities are recognized, which would populate a goodly number of the natural history subdomains.

These lists are encyclopedic in character. Whether one understands a sentence in which the items occur depends on real-world knowledge, which can be provided only by someone who knows the country well, from the inside—and even then, not all the items will be known to everyone. If I have had a good education, and travelled a bit, I will of course know some of the equivalents in other countries, but I will have no intuition about their local usage. For example, in Britain I know that the Meteorological Office is usually referred to as *the Met Office*; but I do not know whether there are similar everyday ways of referring to the equivalent organization in the USA (the National Weather Service), Australia (the Bureau of Meteorology), or elsewhere—or whether these names turn up in everyday English at all. It would take natives or long-

Table 9.2 US-specific Cultural Symbols in the Domain of NATURAL HISTORY

Category	Number of unique members	Examples
Amphibians	24	Arizona tree frog, Idaho giant salamander, New Mexico spadefoot toad . . .
Birds	62	California quail, Baltimore oriole, Carolina wren . . .
Dinosaurs/Fossils	60	Alaska woolly mammoth, Kentucky brachiopod, Mississippi petrified wood . . .
Cats and Dogs	22	Alaskan malamute, Maine coon cat, Boston terrier . . .
Aquatic life	102	Kentucky spotted bass, New England neptune, Oregon triton . . .
Flowers	74	Louisiana iris, Carolina lily, Oklahoma rose . . .
Food and agriculture	147	Texas red grapefruit, Rhode Island greening apple, Louisiana gumbo . . .
Horses	17	Florida cracker horse, Missouri mule, Tennessee walking horse . . .
Insects	68	California dogface butterfly, Oregon swallowtail, Carolina wolf spider . . .
Mammals (excluding cats, dogs, horses)	66	Alaskan malamute, California grizzly bear, Virginia opossum . . .
Plants	40	Texas purple sage, Wyoming big sagebrush, Oklahoma Indiangrass . . .
Reptiles	33	Arizona ridge-nosed rattlesnake, New Mexico whiptail lizard, Alabama red-bellied turtle . . .
Trees	59	California redwood, Colorado blue spruce, Ohio buckeye . . .

Source: <<https://statesymbolsusa.org/us/symbols/state>> (last accessed April 14, 2020)

term residents of these countries only a few minutes to add a column to the EARTH SCIENCE domain, and fill out the subdomains with appropriate examples from their part of the world. The long-term research aim would be to create a comparative table in which this were done for all countries. If such a table existed it would solve the problem I had with, for instance, *Elfstedentocht*. I would look up this word and be directed to the subdomain SPORT, within RECREATION, and then to RINK SPORTS. I could cross-refer to The Netherlands. I would see examples there of the kind of usage I had experienced in my conversation.

This is the kind of project that could benefit from the crowd-sourcing potential of the Internet, along the lines of the Urban Dictionary, where items can be added as new associations develop and old ones die out. The third edition of the Longman dictionary (2004) includes the *Atkins Diet*, *Ben Affleck*, *the iPod*, and *Jamie Oliver*, for example, and has an extra 50 pages. Several of the entries in the first edition of the Longman Dictionary (1992) are already receding from public consciousness, such as some of the characters from television programs of the 1960s. There was an entry on *Ena Sharples*, for example, who was certainly an iconic figure in those days, but I wonder how many people today would be able to make sense of a sentence in which the name was used to characterize “an old, working class woman with strong opinions and strict ideas about other people’s moral behavior, which she expressed very openly,” given that her last appearance in the show was in 1980. But she’s still there in the third edition.

It is difficult to predict how long a cultural memory will last. Presumably, once the generation that experienced a phenomenon has passed away, the memory will die, unless there is a really good reason to motivate intergenerational transmission. Judging by this example from the CLIMATE subdomain of Earth Science, heard in 2018, forty years is an eyeblink:

Climate

A “There’s a big storm on its way.” B “Are you sure? Who announced it? Michael Fish?”

The reference is to the unfortunate weatherman who in October 1987 announced on television that reports of a hurricane approaching Britain were false, only to be proved wrong a few hours later when the worst storm in nearly three centuries hit the southern part of England, causing huge destruction.

And a cultural reference may last long after the phenomenon itself has disappeared, as this next example illustrates:

Bridges

[in London] “I’ll meet you on the South Bank—by the wobbly bridge.”

The reference is to the Millennium Bridge across the Thames, opened in 2000, because when it was first built, the number of people crossing it caused it to sway alarmingly (the problem was fixed by 2002, but the usage has stuck).

It would be important not to delete entries that become obsolete. Cross-cultural linguistic studies are usually synchronic in character, but we need a historical cultural

lexicography too. A glance at any issue of a Victorian magazine will immediately display items whose meaning is culturally opaque, such as this article, taken from *Punch* (May 24, 1862). The items that need glossing are underlined.

Held to Anything but Esteem

A correspondent writes to the *Times*, complaining of the scanty supply of steam at the Exhibition. We should have thought that they could have got any supply of it with the Brompton Boilers so close at hand. We must say that the Commissioners have been most dreadfully backward all through their management of the Exhibition in keeping the steam up to the high point of the Exhibition of 1851.

Of the 27 content words, and ignoring duplications, eight (30 percent) need a gloss—twice as many as in the Zurich example. The older a text, it seems, the greater the degree of cultural opacity. A historical cultural dictionary, or thesaurus, to complement the general vocabulary already covered by the *OED*, would facilitate the interpretation of such passages.

However, useful as such a work would be, it would not solve the problems illustrated by Clapham Junction, Bond Street, and the Forth Bridge. The Forth Bridge would be there, in the subdomain of BRIDGES, but simply as a gazetteer entry, with information about its location, size, shape, and so on. In a fuller entry, there might indeed be some cultural references, such as to films in which it has appeared—the climax to Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935) is a famous instance. But none of this would help learners understand why someone would refer to this bridge when weeding a garden. That requires a further element in an entry, in which figurative allusions are explained, and this requires a consideration of metaphor. So in addition to the third lexical category identified above—*Culture-specific vocabulary, used literally*—we now need a fourth: *Culture-specific vocabulary, used metaphorically*

5. Cultural Metaphors

The classical account of metaphor (Richards, 1936) identifies the two elements that enter into this figure of speech: the *tenor* is "the underlying idea or principal subject" of the metaphorical expression; the *vehicle* is the entity which has properties that the creator of the metaphor attaches to this idea. For example, if Hilary says *Our garden is a jungle*, *garden* is the tenor, what she wants to talk about, and *jungle* is the vehicle, the metaphorical way she wants to talk about it. For a metaphor to be successful, it is crucial that both elements are known and have some evident relationship to each other. We have to know what a jungle is like to make sense of Hilary's sentence. If she had said *Our garden is a quadratic equation*, the metaphor would fail for most people (except perhaps for mathematicians and poets), because either they do not know what a quadratic equation is, or they find it difficult to see how its properties relate to the properties of a garden.

The examples at the beginning of this chapter all illustrate metaphors where the speaker assumes a level of cultural knowledge. In *It was like Clapham Junction in there*,

the tenor is 'a chaotic situation', and the vehicle is 'Clapham Junction'. In the other cases, there are two vehicles (italicised):

This is like *painting the Forth Bridge* [tenor: 'weeding']

Our hotel made *Fawlty Towers* look like *the Ritz* [tenor 'hotel accommodation']

I'm afraid my watch is more *Portobello Road* than *Bond Street* [tenor: 'cost of watch']

These are all examples from British English. An example from American English is *That was from out in left field*, said by a lecturer in response to a question that evidently took him by surprise. The tenor is 'unexpected question', and the vehicle is 'baseball', the specific allusion being to a situation where the ball is returned from the left side of the outfield, as seen from the home base, thus taking the runner by surprise. An example from South African English is *Let's go graze*, said by one hungry student to another. The tenor is 'needing to eat' and the vehicle is 'animals feeding on grass'. Examples like this illustrate the importance of understanding culturally-rooted metaphors across the Englishes-speaking world. Recent research on world Englishes has started to investigate cultural metaphors (see, e.g., contributions in Callies and Onysko 2017, and in Callies and Degani 2021). Findings from these and other future studies could help to inform the taxonomic approach to cultural metaphors.

Another important source of cultural adaptation is the catch phrase, as the original usage is readily applied to a wide variety of situations. If someone uses a catch phrase to create an effect in a conversation, or indirectly alludes to one, its success totally depends on the listener's ability to recognize its origin. Film and television provide the largest category of illustrations:

Star Wars: May the force be with you. [said to someone about to clean his car]

Star Trek: I'm boldly going! [said by a man about to take a first trip on a zip wire]

Batman movies: Good thinking, Batman [said by a mother in response to a suggestion made by her son]

Monty Python: And now for something completely different [said by a host introducing speeches at a wedding reception]

Blue Peter: This is something I made earlier [hostess bringing in a plate of meringues]

In the most famous cases, the allusion may by now be so well known that we have to consider it a part of Standard English: the item would appear in a general dictionary as an idiom without a regional stylistic label. (*Catch 22* would be an example from the LITERATURE domain.) I wonder if there is any variety of English these days where *May the force be with you* would be opaque? Or *Batman*? But I imagine items deriving from *Monty Python* or *Blue Peter* would be completely missed in many places, and remain features of a specifically British cultural identity.

It is not at all obvious just how many items identified in the cultural taxonomy would give rise to this kind of metaphorical adaptation. In principle, any of them might

be the vehicle of such an expression. In practice, certain domains prove to be much more exploited than others. In an analysis of all the cultural entries in the second edition of the Longman dictionary, there were 214 where I could easily find an adaptation, and 75 percent of these came from just six domains: Television (39), Literature (34), Recreation (22), Cinema (20), Society (20), Beliefs (16), Communication (12). But a personal survey of this kind is not enough, as any one person's intuition will bring to mind adaptations that reflect individual experience, and these may not be shared by others. Those who know Shakespeare or the King James Bible well will be likely to use adaptations in their conversations which reflect their knowledge of the texts and which would be missed by anyone unfamiliar with them. Only a large-scale and long-term international study could provide a robust account of the range of situations where adaptations take place, providing data on frequency of use and an evaluation of effectiveness (such as the "likes" used in social media). Constructing an online site so that the data can be easily seen, and items from different countries easily compared, will also provide a Web designer with interesting challenges.

6. Conclusion

These challenges have to be faced, for the problem of intercultural linguistic opacity is increasing as countries continue to adapt English to meet their needs. These needs are usually seen in relation to a country's desire to be part of the global English-speaking community. But alongside this natural drive to foster mutual intelligibility, there is the equally important drive to express national identity; and as this second force grows, it begins to interfere with the first. This is never a big problem for a "new English" in its early days of emergence; but once that initial period is over, and a country begins to "own" English in a mature manner, then the scale of the problem begins to grow. It can be seen especially in a country's literature written in English, where novelists, for example, confidently write about their home experience using local expressions, literally and metaphorically. And these days English writing is increasingly encountered in Web pages and social media, as in my Zurich example.

An intercultural perspective, finally, prompts us towards an alternative interpretation of such labels as "Brazilian English." Traditionally, these labels referred to the errors introduced into the English of learners due to interference from their mother-tongue. In the approach outlined here, "Brazilian English" is now a positive term, not a negative one: it means the expressions used by capable English speakers in Brazil which identify its unique culture and which would be a potential source of misunderstanding to outsiders. Englishes that have long established their identity no longer have a problem in being described in this way. If I talk about "American English," "British English," "Australian English," and the like, there is no hint of apology in these labels. The varieties are seen as equals in a global English-speaking world. The ultimate aim of an international cultural reference work would be to help all varieties of the language achieve this status.

Appendix

This is a modified version of the Global Data Model taxonomy, with some of the superordinate headings in the hierarchy omitted for reasons of space. It shows 1,180 domains. Also omitted from the online version are subdomains for the geography and history of individual countries. These have been grouped into broad geographical areas, because in a cultural table these countries would provide the horizontal axis, as follows:

<i>Domain</i>	<i>British English</i>	<i>USA English</i>	<i>Indian English</i>	<i>Brazilian etc. English</i>
...				
Water control				
Rivers				
Waterfalls etc.				
Universe				Freshwater bodies
Cosmos				Groundwater features
Observation of the cosmos				Inland water features
Stars & constellations				Water control
General cosmological notions				Rivers
Non-planetary bodies				Waterfalls
Solar system				Saltwater bodies
Astrology				Currents
Space exploration				Coastline water features
Space missions				Sea control
Space vehicles				Oceans and seas
Extraterrestrial life				Land relief features
Time				Sea floor
Measurement of time				Caves
Time-keeping				Deserts
				Ice features
Earth Science				Mountains
Atmosphere				Coastline land features
Climate				Plateaux
Earth general				Islands
Earth study				Earth vegetation
Earth history				Valleys
Earth formation				
Earth dynamics				Environment
Earth surface processes				Farming
Earth cycles				Farming policy
Earthquakes				Farming practice
Earth tectonics				Agriculture
Tsunamis				Animal husbandry
Volcanoes				Gardening
Earth resources				Horticulture
Minerals				Garden design
Rocks				Garden tools
Energy sources				Garden plants
Earth surface features				Gardening exhibitions
Water bodies				Environmental habitats

- Rural environment
- Urban environment
- Environmental care
- Environmental damage
- Environmental protection
- Environmental study
- Natural history**
 - Study of natural history
 - Eukaryotes [plants, fungi, animals, protoctista]
 - Plants
 - Bryophyta [liverworts, mosses]
 - Plant diseases
 - Gymnosperms [trees, shrubs]
 - Cycadophyta [cycads]
 - Gnetophyta [cone-bearing desert plants]
 - Coniferophyta [conifers, ginkgos]
 - Lycopodiophyta [clubmosses]
 - Angiosperms [flowering plants]
 - Dicotyledons
 - Caryophyllidae [sorrel, dock]
 - Dilleniidae [heathers]
 - Hamamelidae [witch hazel, chestnut, oak]
 - Magnoliidae [vines]
 - Rosidae [hawthorn, laburnum]
 - Asteridae [petunia, marigold, foxglove, chamomile]
 - Monocotyledons
 - Commelinidae [grasses, cereals]
 - Liliidae [daffodils, bluebells, tulips]
 - Arecidae [dates, palms, coconuts]
 - Alismatidae [water plants]
 - Zingiberidae [ginger, arrowroot, herbs]
 - Pteridophyta, Filicinophyta [ferns]
 - Equisetophyta, Sphenophyta [horsetails]
 - Psilophyta [whiskferns]
 - Fungi
 - Basidiomycota [mushrooms, stinkhorns]
 - Ascomycota [yeasts, truffles]
 - Zygomycota, deuteromycota [moulds, pathogenic yeasts]
 - Animals
 - Chordates
 - Cephalachordata [amphioxus, lancelet]
 - Tunicata [tunicates, sea squirts]
 - Vertebrates
 - Birds
 - Procellariiformes [petrels, albatrosses]
 - Podicipediformes [grebes]
 - Falconiformes [falcons, kites, eagles]
 - Galliformes [chickens, peafowl, grouse]
 - Sphenisciformes [penguins]
 - Pelecaniformes [pelicans, gannets, cormorants]
 - Coliiformes [mousebirds]
 - Ciconiiformes [herons, flamingoes, spoonbills]
 - Apterygiformes [kiwis]
 - Coraciiformes [kingfishers, hornbills]
 - Rheiformes [rheas]
 - Casuariiformes [emus, cassowaries]
 - Apodiformes [thorntails, swifts]
 - Caprimulgiformes [nightjars, goatsuckers]
 - Gruiiformes [coots, cranes, buttonquails]
 - Charadriiformes [curlews, guillemots, puffins]
 - Cuculiformes [cuckoos, roadrunners]
 - Trogoniformes [trogons]
 - Columbiformes [pigeons]
 - Psittaciformes [cockatoos, parrots, lovebirds]
 - Anseriformes [swans, geese, ducks]
 - Strigiformes [owls]
 - Struthioniformes [ostriches]
 - Tinamiformes [tinamous]
 - Gaviiformes [loons]
 - Passeriformes [garden birds]
 - Piciformes [toucans, woodpeckers, puffbirds]
 - Fish
 - Chondrichthyes [sharks, rays, skates]
 - Agnatha [lampreys, hagfish]
 - Sarcopterygii [dipnoi, lungfish]
 - Osteichthyes [bony fishes]
 - Elopiformes [tarpons, ladyfish]
 - Perciformes [angelfish, mullet, mackerel, tuna]
 - Clupeiformes [sardines, herrings, anchovies]
 - Atheriniformes [moonfish, rainbowfish, garfish]
 - Gasterosteiformes [sticklebacks, pipefish, snipefish]
 - Pleuronectiformes [flounder, halibut, plaice]
 - Salmoniformes [salmon, trout]
 - Paracanthopterygii [perch, cod]

- Osteoglossiformes [featherback, butterfly fish]
 Ostariophysii [minnows, carp, barbel]
 Scorpaeniformes [rockfish, lumpfish, razorfish]
 Tetraodontiformes pufferfish, sunfish, boxfish]
 Actinopterygii, Acipenseriformes, Polypteriformes [sturgeon, reedfish]
 Anguilliformes [eels]
- Mammals
 Proboscidea [elephants]
 Chiroptera [bats]
 Edentata [anteaters, armadilloes]
 Perissodactyla [horses, zebras]
 Marsupialia [kangeroos, koalas]
 Lagomorpha [rabbits, hares]
 Carnivora [dogs, cats]
 Caniformia [dogs, seals, walruses, badgers, bears]
 Feliformia [cats, lions, tigers, hyaenas]
 Monotremata [platypuses]
 Primates [monkeys, humans]
 Rodentia [rats, mice]
 Insectivora [hedgehogs, shrews]
 Ectacea [whales, dolphins]
 Tubulidentata [aardvarks]
 Sirenia [manatees]
 Artiodactyla [pigs, sheep, antelopes]
- Amphibia
 Urodela, Trachystomata, Caudata [hellbinders, newts]
 Gymnophonia [wormlike amphibians]
 Anura [frogs, toads]
- Reptiles
 Crocodylia [crocodiles, alligators]
 Chelonia [turtles, tortoises]
 Rhynchocephalia [lizards]
 Squamata [wormlizards]
 Sauria [geckos, chameleons]
 Serpentes [snakes, vipers]
- Metazoa [invertebrates]
 Brachiopoda [lamp shells]
 Ctenophora [jellies, sea gooseberries]
 Tardigrada [liverworts, bearworms]
 Platyhelminthes [flatworms, flukes]
 Gnathostomulida [intertidal marine worms]
 Nematomorpha [hairworms, gordions]
 Pentastoma [respiratory parasites in vertebrates]
 Kinorhyncha [mud dragons]
- Loricifera [microscopic marine sediment-dwelling]
 Nematoda [eelworms, hookworms, roundworms]
 Acanthocephala [spiny-headed worms]
 Priapulida [priapulids]
 Mollusca [clams, oysters, octopus, squid]
 Arthropoda [crustaceans, insects]
 Crustacea [lobsters, crabs, barnacles]
 Myriapoda [centipedes, millipedes]
 Pterygota [flies, bees]
 Arachnida [spiders]
 Gastrotricha [hairybacks]
 Entoprocta [tiny aquatic, anus inside]
 Echinodermata [urchins, starfish]
 Chaetognatha [arrowworms]
 Phoronida [horseshoe worms]
 Cnidaria [coral, jellyfish]
 Ectoprocta [moss animals]
 Onychophora [velvet worms]
 Nemertina [marine worms, ribbonworms]
 Annelida [earthworms, fanworms]
 Pogonophora [beardworms]
 Hemichordata [acorn worms]
 Rotifera [rotifers, wheel animalcules]
 Echiura [spoon worms]
 Sipuncula [peanut worms]
 Mesozoa [wormlike marine parasites]
 Protoctista [see below]
 Myxomycota [slime moulds]
 Protophytes [no everyday name]
 Protozoa [no everyday name]
- Prokaryotes [see below]
 Bacteria
 Cyanophycota [no everyday name]
 Prochlorophycota [no everyday name]
 Viruses
- Human beings**
 Human body
 Human appearance
 Human movement
 Human development
 Human fitness
 Human anatomy
 Human physiology
 Human sensation

- Clothing
 - Clothes fashion
 - Clothes making
 - Clothing the body
 - Headwear
 - Clothes for the limbs
 - Clothes for the lower limbs
 - Footwear
 - Legwear
 - Clothes for the upper limbs
 - Clothes for the torso
 - Clothes for the torso as a whole
 - Clothes for the lower torso
 - Clothes for the upper torso and neck
- Body decoration
- Dangers and accidents to the body
- Medicine
 - General medical concepts
 - Medical diagnosis
 - Pathological analysis
 - General medical techniques
 - Diseases
 - Circulatory diseases
 - Blood disease
 - Immune disease
 - Lymphatic disease
 - Pulmonary disease
 - Heart disease
 - Skin disease
 - Ear disease
 - Mouth disease & dentistry
 - Gastro-intestinal diseases
 - Gastro-intestinal disease
 - Endocrine disease
 - Kidney & urinary disease
 - Reproduction
 - Pregnancy & birth
 - Childhood disease
 - Male & female reproduction
 - Eye disease
 - Connective tissue disease
 - Brain & neural disease
 - Hospital care
 - Hospitals
 - Nursing
 - Medical organizations
 - Alternative medicine
 - Acupuncture
 - Alexander technique
 - Aromatherapy
 - Art therapy
 - Auricular therapy
 - Ayurvedic medicine
 - Bach flower remedies
 - Chelation therapy
 - Chiropractic
 - Colonic irrigation
 - Color therapy
 - Cranial osteopathy
 - Crystal therapy
 - Cupping
 - Cymatics
 - Dance therapy
 - Ear candling
 - Feldenkrais method
 - Feng shui
 - Flotation therapy
 - Gestalt therapy
 - Herbalism
 - Homeopathy
 - Hydrotherapy
 - Iridology
 - Kinesiology
 - Light therapy
 - Magnetic therapy
 - Naprapathy
 - Naturopathy
 - Negative ion therapy
 - Osteopathy
 - Polarity therapy
 - Qigong
 - Rebirthing
 - Reflexology
 - Reiki
 - Rolfing
 - Sex therapy
 - Shiatsu
 - Sitz bath therapy
 - Spagyric therapy
 - Tai chi chuan
 - Thalassotherapy
 - Traditional Chinese medicine
 - Trager psychophysical integration
 - Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation
 - Water birth
 - Psychiatry
 - Medical treatment
 - Blood services
 - General medical procedures
 - Paramedical services
 - Surgical intervention
 - Nutrition
 - Cookery
 - Cookery methods
 - Cookery equipment
 - Food and drink
 - Drinks
 - Non-alcoholic drinks
 - Alcoholic drinks
 - Confectionery
 - Bakery
 - Sweets and candies
 - Dairy products

- Food flavorings
- Food provision
- Meat
- Seafood
- Fruit and nuts
- Vegetables
- Nutritional science
 - Nutritional disorders
 - Diet
 - Food constituency
- Eating and drinking
 - Catering
 - Eating locations
 - Catering management
 - Meals
 - Eating implements
- Paranormal activity
- Drugs
 - Medical drugs
 - Recreational drugs
- Psychology
 - Human behavior
 - Human cognition
 - Human emotions
 - Human personality
 - Human perception
 - Human perception of sound
 - Human perception of taste
 - Human perception of smell
 - Human perception of touch
 - Human perception of vision
 - Study of psychology
- Human safety
- Human activities**
- Arts and crafts
 - Arts in general
 - Decorative arts and crafts
 - Basketry
 - Ceramics
 - Floral arts
 - Glassware
 - Stained glass
 - Jewelry
 - Lacquerwork
 - Metalwork
 - Enamelwork
 - Mosaic
 - Carpets
 - Needlework
 - Tapestry
- Literature
 - Literature in general
 - Literary study
 - Literary criticism
 - Literary style
 - Creative writing
- Drama
- Prose literature
 - Fiction
 - Novels
 - Crime novels
 - Adventure & thriller novels
 - Historical novels
 - Romantic novels
 - Science fiction & fantasy novels
 - Supernatural & horror novels
 - War and spy novels
 - Westerns
 - Short fiction works
- Non-fiction literature
 - Biographies
 - Diaries
 - Humorous & satirical literature
 - Short nonfiction works
 - Travel literature
- Poetry
- Music
 - Musicology
 - Recording of music
 - Visual representation of music
 - Musical composition
 - Classical music composition
 - Instrumental music composition
 - Opera composition
 - Popular music composition
 - Technical production of music
 - Presentation of music
 - Classical music presentation
 - Instrumental music presentation
 - Vocal music presentation
 - Modern music presentation
 - Folk music
 - Jazz
 - Media music
 - Musicals
 - Popular music presentation
 - Religious music
- Performing arts
 - Cinema in general
 - Cinema performance
 - Cinema evaluation
 - Cinema production
 - Dance in general
 - Dance performance
 - Ballet
 - Dancing
 - Ethnic dance
 - Study of dance
 - Production of dance
- Radio in general
 - Radio performance
 - Radio evaluation
 - Radio production

- Theatre in general
 - Theatrical performance
 - Circus
 - Theatre acting
 - Theatrical entertainment
 - Puppetry
 - Magic as entertainment
 - Mime
 - Theatre evaluation
 - Theatre production
 - Television in general
 - Television performance
 - Television evaluation
 - Television production
- Visual arts
 - Graphic arts
 - Graphic artworks
 - Graphic art techniques
 - Engraving
 - Engraving artworks
 - Engraving art techniques
 - Photography as art
 - Painting as art
 - Painting artworks
 - Painting art techniques
 - Sculpture
 - Sculpture artworks
 - Sculpture techniques
- Beliefs
 - Mythology
 - Folklore
 - Legends
 - Myths
 - Ancient and native beliefs
 - African beliefs
 - American beliefs
 - Middle American beliefs
 - North American beliefs
 - South American beliefs
 - Middle Eastern beliefs
 - Egyptian beliefs
 - Phoenician beliefs
 - Assyro-Babylonian beliefs
 - Persian beliefs
 - Pacific beliefs
 - Prehistoric beliefs
 - European beliefs
 - Celtic beliefs
 - Finno-Ugric beliefs
 - Ancient Greek beliefs
 - Ancient Roman beliefs
 - Slavonic beliefs
 - Teutonic beliefs
 - Religion
 - General religious notions
 - Buddhism
 - Buddhist beliefs
 - Buddhist practices
 - Buddhist sources
 - Christianity
 - Christian individuals
 - Christian locations
 - Christian practices
 - Christian sources
 - Christian beliefs
 - Christian groups
 - Catholics
 - Protestants
 - Baptists
 - Millenarianism
 - Mormons
 - Jehovah's Witnesses
 - Quakers
 - Methodists
 - Christian Orthodox
 - Hinduism
 - Hindu beliefs
 - Hindu practices
 - Hindu sources
 - Islam
 - Islamic beliefs
 - Islamic practices
 - Islamic sources
 - Judaism
 - Judaic beliefs
 - Judaic practices
 - Judaic sources
 - Confucianism
 - Jainism
 - Unitarianism
 - Zoroastrianism & Parseeism
 - Shintoism
 - Sikhism
 - Taoism
 - Lamaism
 - Minority belief systems
 - Wicca
 - Divination
 - Gnosticism
 - New Age
 - Spiritualism
 - Shamanism
 - Scientology
 - Satanism
 - Theosophy
 - Voodoo
 - Witchcraft
 - Mediums of communication
 - Study of communication
 - Advertising
 - Broadcasting medium
 - Methods of communication
 - Special systems of communication
 - Secret systems of communication

- Alternative systems of communication
- Means of communication
 - Postal communication
 - Electronic communication
 - Graphic communication
- Nonverbal communication
 - Auditory communication
 - Visual communication
- Language
 - Language in general
 - Language in use
 - Language structure
 - Spoken language
 - Written language
 - Sign language
 - Grammar
 - Vocabulary
 - Language evaluation
 - Language disability
- Publishing
 - General publishing notions
 - Editorial content
 - Books
 - Newspapers & magazines
 - Content of newspapers & magazines
 - Editions of newspapers & magazines
 - Bookmaking
 - Printing
 - Papermaking
 - Typography
 - Page layout
 - Typefaces
 - Publishing sales & marketing
 - Bookselling
 - Selling newspapers & magazines
 - Knowledge
 - Education
 - Teaching and learning
 - Educational institutions
 - Further education
 - Schools
 - Younger schooling
 - Older schooling
 - Vocational training
 - Educational resources
 - Knowledge management
 - Oral transmission of knowledge
 - Retrieval of knowledge
 - Bibliography
 - Indexing
 - Storage of knowledge
 - Libraries
 - Computer storage
 - Philosophy
 - Classical philosophy (BC and early AD)
 - Medieval philosophy
 - Modern philosophy (from 16th century)
 - Reference science
 - Science & sciences
 - General science
 - Biology
 - Biochemistry
 - Biochemical elements
 - Genetic chemistry
 - Hormones
 - Biological energy
 - Biological cells
 - Biological cell division
 - Biological cell structures
 - Genetics & heredity
 - Embryology
 - Biological organisms
 - Ecology
 - Palaeobiology
 - Biological taxonomy
 - Evolution
 - Biological study
 - Mathematics
 - Mathematical graphs & charts
 - Geometry & trigonometry
 - Algebra
 - Arithmetic
 - Statistics
 - Physical sciences
 - Chemistry
 - Chemical elements
 - Analytical chemistry
 - Inorganic chemistry
 - Organic chemistry
 - Chemical apparatus
 - Physics
 - Mechanics
 - Classical mechanics
 - Quantum mechanics
 - Fundamental particles
 - Atoms & nuclei
 - Nuclear energy
 - Relativity
 - Waves (physics)
 - Electromagnetism
 - Acoustics
 - Optics
 - Properties of matter
 - Fluid mechanics
 - Solid state physics
 - Thermodynamics
 - Electricity
 - Study of physics
 - Technology
 - Building

- Interior design of buildings
- Soft furnishings
- Upholstery
- Floor coverings
- Hangings and window dressing
 - Household linens
- Cleaning & care of buildings
 - Textile cleaning in buildings
 - Surface and object cleaning
 - Dry cleaning in buildings
 - Wet cleaning in buildings
- Decoration of buildings
- Furniture
 - Furniture-making
 - Design of furniture
 - Types of furniture
 - Furniture tools & materials
- Buildings in general
 - Planning of buildings
 - Sale of buildings
- Architecture
- Dwellings
 - Types of dwelling
 - Structural elements of a dwelling
- Building professions
 - Construction of buildings
 - Construction of building interiors
 - Construction of building exteriors
 - General notions in building
 - Security of buildings
 - Safety of buildings
 - Utilities in buildings
 - Electricity in buildings
 - Lighting in buildings
 - Electricity supply in buildings
 - Gas supply in buildings
 - Heating in buildings
 - Ventilation in buildings
 - External plumbing in buildings
 - Internal plumbing in buildings
- Computing
 - Computer science
 - Computer hardware
 - Computer central processing
 - Computer peripherals
 - Computer software
 - Computer programming
 - Computer systems
 - Electrical engineering
 - Electrical equipment in general
 - Audio and video equipment
 - Material science
 - Optical technology
 - General optical notions
 - Photographic technology
- Energy & power supply
- Mechanical technology
 - Machines & engines
 - Engineering
 - Tools & devices
- Textiles
- Transportation
 - Air transportation
 - Air travel
 - Air piloting
 - Air services
 - Air safety
 - Air vehicles
 - Air vehicles in general
 - Air vehicle design & manufacture
 - Air vehicle construction
 - Air vehicle design
 - Air vehicle products
 - Commercial air vehicles
 - Air vehicles for business
 - Air vehicles for general public
 - Types of air vehicle
 - Balloons as air vehicles
 - Air cushion vehicles
 - Gliders
 - Helicopters
 - Aeroplanes
 - Vintage air vehicles
 - Aeroplane maintenance
 - Aeroplane parts
 - Airports and airways
 - Airport construction
 - Airway organization
 - Air traffic control
- Goods transportation
 - Containers for transporting goods

- Transporting goods
- Packaging goods for transportation
- Rail transportation
 - Rail system
 - Railways
 - Railway tracks
 - Railway organization
 - Rail traffic control
 - Rail travel
 - Rail services
 - Rail safety
 - Rail journeys
 - Rail vehicles
 - Rail vehicles in general
 - Construction of rail vehicles
 - Design of rail vehicles
 - Rail products
 - Commercial rail vehicles
 - Rail vehicles for business
 - Rail vehicles for general public
 - Types of rail vehicle
 - Vintage rail vehicles
 - Rail vehicle maintenance
 - Rail vehicle parts
 - Road transportation
 - Driving on roads
 - Requirements for driving on roads
 - Road safety issues
 - Road vehicle requirements
 - Road management
 - Roads
 - Road construction
 - Organization of roads
 - Traffic control
 - Methods of traffic control
 - Highway code
 - Road vehicles
 - Road vehicle performance
 - Road vehicle construction
 - Road vehicle design
 - Road vehicle products
 - Commercial road vehicles
 - Business & industrial road vehicles
 - Public road vehicles
 - Domestic road vehicles
 - Bicycles
 - Motorbikes
 - Motorless road vehicles
 - Automobiles
 - Underfoot rollers
 - Vintage road vehicles
 - Road vehicles maintenance
 - Road vehicle parts
 - Road vehicle body & accessories
 - Road vehicle cooling systems
 - Road vehicle fuel & exhausts
 - Road vehicle ignition
 - Road vehicle braking systems
 - Road vehicle electrical systems
 - Road vehicle engines
 - Road vehicle engine block
 - Road vehicle engine cylinder head
 - Road vehicle engine carburetor
 - Road vehicle suspension and steering
 - Road vehicle transmission systems
 - Road vehicle marketing
 - Water transportation
 - Travel by water
 - Water travel services
 - Water travel piloting
 - Water travel safety
 - Water vehicles
 - Water vehicles in general
 - Water vehicle construction
 - Water vehicle design
 - Water vehicle products
 - Commercial water vehicles
 - Water vehicles for business & industrial
 - Water vehicle for general public
 - Water vehicle types
 - Non-motorized, non-sailing water vehicles
 - Motorized water vehicles
 - Water vehicles with sails
 - Vintage & ancient water vehicles
 - Water vehicle maintenance
 - Water vehicle parts
 - Waterways
 - Traffic control of waterways
 - Construction of water routes
 - Organization of water routes

Society

Economics

- General economic notions
- Commerce
 - Commercial profit-making
 - Commercial non-profit-making
- Economic theory
- Employment
 - Employment conditions
 - Employment earnings
 - Employment conflicts
- Finance
 - Personal financial management
 - Account management

- Saving and borrowing
- Foreign exchange
- Financial markets
- Government financial management
 - Accountancy
 - Taxation
- General finance notions
- Insurance
- Money
- Law
 - Lawcourt systems
 - Lawcourt procedure
 - Lawcourt organization
 - General legal notions
 - Dealing with crime
 - Criminal enquiry
 - Detection and arrest
 - Police
 - Evidence of crime
 - Crime prevention
 - Crime punishment
 - Legal domains
 - Commercial law
 - Criminal law
 - Drugs law
 - Crimes relating to people
 - Homicide
 - Sex crimes
 - Injury & threat crime
 - Crimes against children
 - Crimes relating to objects
 - Criminal damage
 - Theft
 - Family law
 - International law
 - Property law
 - Inheritance law
 - Tort
 - Military affairs
 - Peace movements
 - Armed forces
 - Army
 - Navy
 - Airforce
 - Military science
 - Military technology
 - General military notions
 - Defensive weaponry
 - Offensive weaponry
 - War
- Politics
 - General political notions
 - Political beliefs
 - Political activities
 - National political activities
 - International political activities
 - Political elections

- Political groups
 - Local political groups
 - National political groups
 - International political groups
- Sexual matters
 - Meeting and dating
 - Sexual behavior
- Society and culture
 - Anthropology
 - Social structure
 - Genealogy
 - Heraldry
 - Position in society
 - Primary social groups
 - Social rights of passage
 - Secondary social groups
 - Social institutions
 - Study of society
- Terrorism

Recreation

- General leisure notions
 - Leisure activities
 - Social leisure activities
 - Bellringing
 - Funfairs
 - Fireworks
 - Parties
 - Outward bound activities
 - Animal sports
 - Ballooning
 - Bungee jumping
 - Guiding and scouting
 - Mountaineering
 - Underwater diving
 - Parachuting
 - Quad biking
 - Rambling
 - Skateboarding
 - Caving & potholing
 - Whitewater rafting
 - Wakeboarding
 - Windsurfing
- Gambling
 - Gambling in games
 - Gambling in sports
 - Gambling in animal sports
 - Gambling in football
- Games
 - Board & surface games
 - Backgammon
 - Chess
 - Dominoes
 - Draughts / Checkers
 - Go (game)
 - Monopoly (game)
 - Shuffleboard

- Shogi
- Chance & reward games
- Bingo
- Craps
- Pachinko
- Roulette
- Computer & video games
- Card & tile games
 - Baccarat
 - Blackjack
 - Bezique
 - Canasta
 - Contract bridge
 - Cribbage
 - Mah jong
 - Poker
 - Pinochle
 - Rummy
 - Card tricks
 - Tarot cards
 - Whist
- Projectile games
 - Bagatelle
 - Frisbee
 - Paintball
 - Quoits
 - Rounders
 - Skittles
- Puzzle & word games
 - Crosswords
 - Rubik's cube
 - Scrabble
- Pastimes
 - Collecting as a pastime
 - Numismatics
 - Antiquarian books
 - Philately
 - Creative hobbies
 - Knitting
 - Modelling
 - Quilting
 - Origami
 - Playful activities
 - Kites
 - Models & miniatures
 - Toys
- Sport
 - Animal sports
 - Equestrianism
 - Cross country equestrianism
 - Dressage
 - Show jumping
 - Polo
 - Angling
 - Animal racing
 - Greyhound racing
 - Horse racing
 - Rodeo
 - Aerial sports
 - Hang gliding
 - Athletic sports
 - Athletics
 - Biathlon
 - Orienteering
 - Walking as a sport
 - Ball sports
 - Bat & ball sports
 - Baseball
 - Cricket
 - Softball
 - Foot & ball sports
 - American football
 - Australian rules football
 - Canadian football
 - Soccer
 - Gaelic football
 - Rugby league/union
 - Hand & ball sports
 - Basketball
 - Court handball
 - Handball
 - Korfball
 - Netball
 - Volleyball
 - Water polo
 - Racket & ball sports
 - Badminton
 - Pelota
 - Real tennis
 - Squash
 - Table tennis
 - Tennis, lawn/court
 - Stick & ball sports
 - Bandy
 - Croquet
 - Golf
 - Field hockey
 - Hurling
 - Ice hockey
 - Lacrosse
 - Throwing/pushing/sliding ball sports
 - Bowls
 - Curling
 - Ten-pin bowling
 - Combat
 - Boxing
 - Fencing
 - Martial arts
 - Kendo
 - Karate
 - Judo
 - Sumo
 - Wrestling
 - Gymnastics

Gymnastics	Geographical locations
Trampolineing	Geographical studies
Rink sports	Geography
Roller skating	Mapping
Skating	Travel
Figure skating/ice dance	Travel accommodation
Distance/speed/short-track skating	Travel destinations
Snooker, Billiards, Pool	Travel guides
Snow sports	Travel means and plans
Skiing	Journeys
Toboggan, Bobsleigh, Luge	Travel planning
Strength sports	Sub-Saharan Africa-related
Powerlifting	Asia-related
Tug of war	Australasia/Pacific-related
Weightlifting	Europe-related
Target sports	Middle America/Caribbean-related
Darts	North America-related
Archery	North Africa-related
Shooting as a sport	Arctic/Antarctic-related
Vehicle sports	South America-related
Cycling as a sport	
Motor vehicle sports	History
Motorcycle racing	Historical studies
Car racing	Archaeology
Water sports	Sub-Saharan Africa-related
Open water sports	Asia-related
Canoeing	Australasia/Pacific-related
Powerboat racing	Europe-related
Rowing as a sport	Middle America/Caribbean-related
Surfing as a sport	North America-related
Sailing as a sport	North Africa-related
Water skiing	Arctic/Antarctic-related
Swimming and diving	South America-related

Notes

- 1 <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-02-10/europe-s-deep-freeze-has-netherlands-buzzing-hopes-epic-elfstedentocht-ice-race>, Feb 10, 2012, last accessed April 13, 2020.

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