

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English - April 19, 2015

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“There’s too much of shouting and screaming on the news channels these days. The only thing that people do is to wash their dirty linens in public.”

“Some channels just manufacture news! By the way, it’s dirty linen and not linens. When you ...”

“I know what the expression means. When you wash your dirty linen in public, you are discussing in public, things that you shouldn’t be. Things that should remain private.”

“Very good! Americans tend to say ‘air your dirty laundry in public.’”

“How about this example? Political parties are washing their dirty linen in public.”

“Considering the kind of people who become politicians, it isn’t surprising. In our company, we’re told not to air our dirty laundry in public.”

“Many people like Sujatha believe that it’s not wrong to wash your dirty linen in public. Got an email from her yesterday, by the way. Wrote about the student life in America.”

“And what did she have to say about student life in America? Did she ...”

“She said that the student life there was very ...”

“It’s ‘student life’ and not ‘the student life’. The word ‘life’ is frequently used in expressions like ‘married life’, ‘city life’, ‘student life’, etc. Such expressions are not preceded by ‘the’.

“In other words, when we are talking about the way of life of a group of people, we don’t use ‘the’. Is that what you’re saying?”

“Absolutely! My friend who got married a year ago says married life is a real pain.”

“Many villagers believe that city life is exciting. What do they know, right? Tell me, are you going to watch the match tonight?”

“Of course! What else is there to do? Who are you pulling for?”

“Pulling for? Are you asking me which team I’ll be supporting?”

“That’s right! The expression ‘pull for’ can also be used to mean to cheer for someone. During the World Cup, we were all pulling for India. My neighbours, though, were pulling for South Africa.”

“How about this example? Remember Atul, we’re all pulling for you. Just go out there and do your best.”

“Sounds good. The expression is limited to informal contexts. The champion became angry when everyone started pulling for the underdog.”

“That usually happens. Especially, when the match is one sided. Understand you ran into your boss at the theatre. What did he say?”

“Nothing! He cut me dead.”

“Cut you dead! You look alive to me. Am I ...”

“Not very funny, I’m afraid. When you cut someone dead, you ignore the person completely. You may have seen him, but you pretend you haven’t.”

“In other words, you look through the person.”

“I guess you could say that. I gave Radhika a smile, but she cut me dead.”

“She does that to a lot of people. When some of his old friends went to say hello to the Minister, he cut them dead.”

“The original expression was ‘to cut someone’. Later, the word ‘dead’ was added. The aging superstar has mellowed. He doesn’t cut anyone dead these days.”

“The youngsters are cutting him dead, I guess.

“Television news is like a lightning flash. It makes a loud noise, lights up everything around it, leaves everything else in darkness and then is suddenly gone.” – **Hodding Carter**

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