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Gorilla in the room

S. Upendran

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What is the meaning of the expression ‘elephant in the living room’? (Sukumar, Bangalore)

An elephant is a relatively large animal; it will be impossible to miss, especially in the confines of a living room. You can pretend to ignore it, but you will always be aware of its presence. The expression ‘elephant in the (living) room’ is mostly used to refer to a serious problem – one which people are aware of, but choose to ignore. They think that if they do not talk about it, the problem will somehow go away. Another expression which has the same meaning is ‘gorilla in the room.’

Dowry – the elephant in the living room that neither party was keen on discussing.

Does the word ‘cellfish’ exist? (A Damini, Madurai)

Yes, it does; the word is a combination of ‘cell phone’ and ‘selfish’. When people get a call on their cell phone, they sometimes get so involved in their conversation that they forget their surroundings. We have seen drivers stop their vehicle in the middle of the road to answer the phone – ignoring the honking and swearing of their fellow drivers behind them. In our country, some people, as soon they board the train, take out their cell phone and proceed to talk loudly. These individuals are not really bothered if they are disturbing those around them. Using the cell phone in this manner, when you completely disregard the wishes and feelings of those around you, is described as ‘cellfish’.

I told the idiot in the opposite berth to stop being cellfish. Who wants to listen to his marital problems in the middle of the night?

How is the word ‘vide’ pronounced? (K.Manjula, Chennai)

There are several ways of pronouncing this word of Latin origin. One way is to pronounce the first vowel like the ‘ee’ in ‘feel’, ‘peel’ and ‘heel’, and the following ‘de’ like the word ‘day’. The word can be pronounced ‘VEE-day’ with the stress on the first syllable. It is mostly used in formal contexts - especially in academic writing - to mean ‘look at’ or ‘refer to’. When an author uses this word, he means that he would like the reader to refer to a particular book, document or page for additional information. In India, formal letters referring to an earlier correspondence usually contain this word.

The comic genius has also played serious roles in films – vide *The Truman Show*.

Is it okay to say 'I heart you'? (N. Akshay, Delhi)

The expression seems to be used in the United States. We know that world over the shape of the heart is used as a symbol of love and affection.

It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that the Americans use the expression 'I heart you' to mean 'I love you'; they believe that it is a better way of saying the same thing. 'I heart you' is used by people who are reluctant to use the word 'love' when they wish to declare their feelings to their partner.

According to some scholars, this expression became quite popular in 2012 when the R&B artist, Tony Braxton, released her single 'I heart you'.

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People are prisoners of their phones, that's why they're called cell phones. - Anonymous

upendrankye@gmail.com

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