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Contemporary English Language Texts**

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## **Two Discourses of Old Age at Work in Contemporary English Language Texts**

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### **Abstract**

It is well-known that many countries worldwide face the challenges associated with aging populations. It is reported (Economist, 2010), for instance, that ‘Japan is ageing faster than any country in history’ so that by 2050 its working population will be smaller than it was in 1950, with four in ten Japanese aged 65 or above. In the United States, ‘more than one third of people aged 60–74 years have a surviving parent’ (Brody, 2010), while in the UK, the Office for National Statistics estimates that approximately one-third of babies born in 2012 will survive to celebrate their 100th birthdays. With this in mind, it is pertinent to consider how old people are represented (and how they represent themselves) in contemporary texts. This paper, based on examination of English language texts in various countries (but principally Singapore, U.K. and the United States), identifies two discourses which, among others, appear to be at work. These are referred to here as the ‘explicit discourse’ and the ‘Pollyanna discourse’. Commentary on various text excerpts focuses on ways in which each discourse may reinforce or influence societal understanding of, and attitudes towards, the growing proportion of old people globally. Attention is paid to the possible differing effects on readers or listeners when each of the discourses is deployed by younger or older writers or speakers. There is also consideration, in discussion of the Pollyanna discourse, of the rather frequent use of euphemism when writers/speakers allude to old age and old people. The paper concludes with suggestions for further research.

**Keywords:** old age; discourse; English language; euphemism.

## Introduction

Policy-makers in developed economies worldwide are today engaged in analysis of the effects that lower fertility rates and increased life expectancy will have on national demographic profiles (Anderson & Hussey, 2000). For instance, ‘Japan is ageing faster than any country in history’ so that by 2050 its working population will be smaller than it was in 1950, with four in ten Japanese aged 65 or above (Economist, 2010). In the United States, ‘more than one third of people aged 60–74 years have a surviving parent’ (Brody, 2010, p.7). In the UK, the Office for National Statistics estimates that approximately one-third of babies born in 2012 will reach their 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays. Yılmaz, Kisa & Zeyneloğlu (2012, p.144) cite a 2008 calculation by America’s Population Reference Bureau that by 2025 those over 65 worldwide will total 671 million, and by 2050 one billion. As Iedema, Ainsworth and Grant (2008, p.276) put it, ‘growing numbers of ‘old old’ people’ will need ‘extended, complex and technologized care.’

As governments and societies adjust to this new imperative, the portrayal (and self-portrayal) of old people in texts and media images assumes ever greater importance, since it can affect attitudes to aging and the old. The old (as a group) or individual old people can, of course, be represented by the non-old, or can represent themselves, in an infinite number of ways. Such textual and visual presentations, or self-presentations, may be permeated by numerous emotions or attitudes – for instance, disgust (or self-disgust); pity (or self-pity); compassion; sentimentality; or the mixture of clear-sightedness and gallows humour displayed by some resilient individuals during their last years. Giddens (1991, p.5) sees self-identity as ‘a reflexively organized endeavour’ – and this may be so for both old individuals and the old generally – but, in a super-complex interconnected world, understandings of old age and the old are also shaped by the countless textual and visual representations decoded daily. Accordingly the description or narrativity (Biggs 2001) of ‘old age’ (however defined) assumes significance, and society-wide awareness of the role of language in creating and sustaining perceptions of old age becomes desirable.

Here I use the term ‘discourse’ to mean a ‘way of signifying experience from a particular perspective’ (Fairclough, 1995, p.135) encapsulated in a text or texts. I also follow Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.6) in declaring that discourses ‘do not just describe things; they do things’, since they influence the way people make sense of the world. I coin the terms ‘Pollyanna discourse<sup>1</sup>’ and ‘explicit discourse’ as labels for two contrasting ways in which ‘old age’ is constructed in contemporary English language texts. I do not, of course, suggest that these are the only discourses of old age; they are two among many. However, I do argue that each discourse could potentially shape conceptualisations of, and attitudes to, old age in English-speaking societies. Public narratives ascribe particular characteristics and attributes to old people

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<sup>1</sup>The term is taken, of course, from the Pollyanna books (by Eleanor H. Porter) in which the heroine (Pollyanna) is encouraged to see something positive in every situation or experience – sometimes in ways which the reader might find far-fetched or absurd.

(Fealy et al., 2012, p.86) and this, surely, affects how societies see the old as a group.

The term ‘text’ may be thought to have so straightforward a meaning as to need no explanation. However, I should make clear that I use it here to include any “stretch of language...from just one word (e.g. a SLOW sign on the road) to a sequence of utterances or sentences in a speech, a letter, a novel, etc” (Carter and McCarthy, 2006).

My intention in foregrounding the Pollyanna discourse and explicit discourse of old age is to contribute to debates about how best to understand, and come to terms with, the issue of aging societies worldwide. A recent official report in the UK (Commission on Dignity in Care) reads, in part, as follows:

Individual words matter. Expressions such as ‘bed blockers’ imply that older people are a burden or a nuisance, while referring to them by illness reduces them to a clinical condition, rather than recognising them as a person.

Van Lier (1995) suggests that an outcome of greater language awareness is an ability to ‘perceive the things that go on around us with greater clarity.’ If the way old age is constructed in texts can affect the way individuals and communities understand, and react to, old people as a group, then promotion of greater language awareness is warranted. Fairclough (1999, p.75) observes that ‘as everyday lives become more pervasively textually-mediated, people’s lives are increasingly shaped by representations which are produced elsewhere.’ He also argues that this affects how we are seen by others and even how we see ourselves. This may be particularly true for old people, whose self-image is to some degree constructed by others – see, for instance, evidence from doctor-patient dialogues collected by Coupland (1997) which appear to show old people presenting themselves in ways which align closely with general ageist prejudices. As Coupland (2009, p.860) puts it, ‘identity might...be best thought of as...a dialogue between ‘who we are’ and who in the social frames we are exposed to, we might be expected to be.’ Consequently, public discourses of old age and the self-image and self-presentation of old people may be seen as mutually constitutive.

We now turn to exemplification and discussion of the Pollyanna discourse and the explicit discourse of old age. Examples are taken principally from Singapore (where this paper was drafted), Britain and the United States.

### **Constructing Old Age: Two Contrasting Discourses**

Contemporary texts emphasising negative aspects of old age, or of growing older, abound. In the British newspaper the *Guardian* (John, 2011) the writer and philosopher Alain de Botton is quoted as saying that, at 50, ‘we are definitely in the suburbs of mortality’, going on to suggest that what comes

next – old age – is ‘pretty much a vale of tears.’ Meanwhile, the BBC’s World Affairs Editor, John Simpson, spent four days in 2012 as a day-time companion for an 83 year-old woman. Subsequently, Frost (2012) reported Simpson as saying that he would rather take his own life than allow his son (born after his own sixtieth birthday) to see him as ‘a gibbering old freak’. Jacoby (2010) states that ‘nearly half of the old old — the fastest-growing segment of the over-65 population — will spend some time in a nursing home before they die, as a result of mental or physical disability.’

Jacoby, de Botton, and Simpson provide observations on old age from the perspective of the somewhat younger person. The former literary editor and novelist Diana Athill (b. 1917), by contrast, offers a stark first-hand description (Athill 2011), calling the last years of life ‘tiresome’, endured in the knowledge that things can only get worse. In her experience most old people, on hearing that an acquaintance of similar vintage has died, will remark how ‘lucky’ that person has been. Similarly, just before his death, the astronomer and BBC broadcaster Sir Patrick Moore (1923-2012) saw ‘absolutely nothing to be said in favour of growing old’ and suggested ‘legislation against it.’ Such comments tend to emanate from those in the throes of extreme age, rather than from younger brethren who observe them. The distinguished gerontologist Elaine Brody, writing at 86 (Brody, 2010, p.5), describes old age in a notably matter-of-fact fashion:

People my age walk more slowly and fatigue more quickly. Our waistlines thicken and our hair thins. Our balance is not great. We develop lots of wrinkles.

It is those residing in ‘retirement homes’ – rather than the younger people visiting them – who most often write with dispassionate clarity about the tribulations of old age. Texts of this kind exemplify the explicit discourse of old age, which can be contrasted with the Pollyanna discourse. Examples of both discourses are discussed below.

### **The Pollyanna Discourse of Old Age**

Above I proposed the term ‘Pollyanna discourse’, in which a misleadingly rosy view of old age is constructed which may not be helpful as policy-makers worldwide struggle to resolve the fundamental problems arising from aging societies. There is, too, a danger that the ‘Pollyanna’ discourse of old age may lead less reflective young and middle-aged people to imagine that the last years of life are less problematic and trying (for the individual) than is typically the case. Alternatively, the Pollyanna discourse can be interpreted as constituting a patronising approach to old people as a group and, thus, as corrosive of the capability of societies to see old people as individuals, with particular strengths, weaknesses, problems, capabilities and rights. Pollyanna texts are generally written by people of working age, rather than by the old themselves.

An archetypal linguistic indicator of a text carrying the Pollyanna discourse of old age is, I think, the phrase ‘golden years’. Here is an example from an online text about financial planning for retirement (Citibank Singapore):

TM Retirement (LP) is a limited premium participating whole life plan that offers lifetime annual cash payouts from age 65. It is designed to cater to your retirement needs throughout your golden years, while providing you with comprehensive coverage and liquidity when you need them most.

The same phrase (in the title – ‘Preparing for Golden Years’ – and in the text) is also used by the Singapore Health Promotion Board, in regard to retirement planning:

Retiring from your job can be a life-changing event. If you have not actively planned for your retirement years, you may view the new freedom as lacking in focus and fulfillment. It is important to be well prepared for the golden years and all it takes is simply planning - the earlier, the better.

In both cases the text is ostensibly addressed to the person preparing for retirement (you, your). Presumably in using the phrase ‘golden years’, therefore, the writers of these texts seek to create a positive impression of old age. We can also assume that the two anonymous writers are of working age themselves – that is, they are not writing about retirement / old age from first-hand experience.

In Singapore the term ‘silver generation’ also appears. For instance, a media report (Channel News Asia, 2012) highlights new technology which will assist the ‘silver generation’ in watching TV programmes, while the Singapore Silver Pages (see References) are provided by the Agency for Integrated Care ‘as a one-stop resource to address the information needs of the ageing population in Singapore.’ Also in Singapore, the website of the Temasek Polytechnic Centre for Ageing Studies (see References) notes ‘the impact that a growing silver population will make on Singapore as a country.’ The use of phrases such as ‘silver generation’ and ‘silver population’ may partly reflect the Confucian ideal of respect for the elderly (Sun, 2002) at work, perhaps, in Singapore, with its majority of ethnic Chinese citizens. However, like ‘golden years’ it can also be seen as an indicator of, and contributor to, the Pollyanna discourse of old age. For instance, the choice of ‘silver’ rather than ‘grey’ may well be motivated by the former’s more positive connotative meaning. As Philip (2006, p.77) points out, ‘grey’ is associated with dullness, whereas ‘silver’ benefits from the positive connotations of the precious metal.

The names of some retirement homes are also redolent of the Pollyanna discourse. In Singapore we find, for instance, the Bright Hill Evergreen Home and the Sunnyville Nursing Home. Numerous ‘care homes’ around Britain

feature the word ‘sunny’: Sunny Bank (Weymouth, Manchester); Sunnybank (Aberdeen); Sunnyhill (East Sussex); Sunnymead Manor (Bristol); Sunnymede Nursing Home (Keynsham); and so on. Others refer to flowers, such as Red Rose Lodge Retirement Home (Bridlington); Primrose Lodge Care Home (Dorchester); and Daffodils Care Home (Merthyr Tydfil), or to trees or woodland: Evergreen Care Home; Woodlands Nursing Home; Beechwood Nursing Home; Green Park Nursing Home; Tree Tops; and Oakland Nursing Home (all in Scarborough, UK). Such names present old age as a time for contented contemplation of the natural world. A key characteristic of the Pollyanna discourse is that it makes use of the associations/connotations of terms and names such as ‘golden years’, ‘silver generation’, ‘Sunnyville’ and ‘Green Park’ to create this positive aura.

The Pollyanna discourse is also found in texts directly addressed to the old, such as the following online example (MacRae, 2013). The author appears to work for an organization providing housing for old people near Bristol (U.K.). The text’s heading is ‘Get Social’.

During our younger years I’m sure many of you wish you had more time for your family and friends. Now is a great opportunity to spend more time with old friends and make new ones. You may want to consider moving into specially designed housing for older people. Many have separate living quarters with separate flats to stay independent but with communal areas for socialising. This is a great way to meet similar people you share interests with and is an easy way to socialise without having to leave the housing estate.

We can observe confusion here in pronoun use (‘During *our* younger years I’m sure many of *you* wish...’). This may have arisen because the writer seeks to be inclusive (‘our’) but in reality stands outside the circle of those she addresses through the text (‘you’). Note also the indirectness apparent in the third sentence (‘You may want to...older people’). This proposition (about moving into housing for the old) implies that those addressed have a free choice (‘You may want to’). However, for many old people no option exists. As physical and/or mental capabilities decline they can no longer live comfortably and safely in their homes and are *compelled* to move into accommodation designed for old people. A more direct version of sentence three might be: ‘It is quite likely that as you get older you will need to move into specially-designed housing for older people.’

But should the phrase ‘older people’ itself be seen as a linguistic exponent of the Pollyanna discourse? As Wajnryb (2003) points out, ‘older person/people’ can be seen as one of a stock of euphemisms used in relation to aging. She plots the arrival and disappearance of various words used to describe old people, such as ‘geriatric’ and ‘senile’, which she argues were ‘respectful terms’ in the early 20th century, but gave way to ‘elderly’ in the 1960s. More recently, she notes that 1998 was the Year of the Older Person ‘which, like the ‘fuller figure’, softens the cold impact of the simple adjective



by adding the ‘-er.’ However, Wajnryb notes the resulting imprecision: older than whom? Like Wajnryb I would argue that, just as a 57 year-old individual is often dubbed ‘middle-aged’ (though he or she may not live to 114), the use of ‘elderly’ and ‘older’ to describe people who are, say, in their early eighties is a euphemism – with euphemism and indirectness typical of the Pollyanna discourse’s capacity to mislead.

The Pollyanna discourse of old age has the following salient characteristics:

- It relies on language with pleasant connotations (‘golden years’; ‘silver generation’; names for retirement homes containing words like ‘sunny’ or references to trees or flowers);
- It may contain euphemism or indirectness (for instance using phrases such as ‘older people’, ‘seniors’ or ‘the elderly’ when referring to octogenarians or nonagenarians);
- It is generally found in texts produced by those of working age (such as advertisements for retirement homes, or information provided by agencies concerned with aging) and therefore provides an ‘outsider’ perspective;
- It avoids the unpleasant realities of old age for some individuals, such as dementia, reduced mobility, deterioration in acuity of the five senses, and incontinence.

### **The Explicit Discourse of Old Age**

The second discourse I have proposed is the explicit discourse of old age. This:

- Tends to emphasise the trials of old age (such as reduced mental and physical capabilities) and the frustration these can cause;
- Is characteristically constructed by an old person, able to describe old age from a first-hand or ‘insider’ perspective;
- Is less reliant on connotation than the Pollyanna discourse of old age, instead impacting the reader/listener more directly, through denotative meaning;
- Contains far fewer examples of euphemism or indirectness than the Pollyanna discourse.

Consider this extract from Athill’s (2011) article:

Not long ago, I was invited to open a literary festival in Toronto together with the Canadian writer Alice Munro, whose work I have loved and admired for years. Flying to Canada: what a nightmarish thought! My whole body seemed to recoil from it, because my legs have become so wobbly that walking more than about 50 yards is

impossible, and even that much is frighteningly difficult when my deaf old head is being battered by the incomprehensible din of places such as airports, an experience so horrid that probably no undeaf person can imagine it.

This paragraph is free from euphemism and presents the experience of old age honestly, if with a little humorous self-deprecation (“my deaf old head”). Athill openly refers to her own inability to walk very far and to the unpleasantness of the ‘incomprehensible din’ of airports for one whose hearing has deteriorated with age. The text is characterized by *directness* in that the writer presents her perceptions straightforwardly to the reader. The *indirectness* of the Pollyanna discourse is absent, and the phrase ‘golden years’ could only be applied to the content of this paragraph with bitter irony.

We should not, however, neglect the fact that, although typically found in writing by old authors, the explicit discourse is sometimes evident in texts constructed by younger speakers and writers. Consider, for instance, the poems of Philip Larkin. Larkin’s ‘The Old Fools’ opens, entirely without euphemism or indirectness, thus:

What do they think has happened, the old fools,  
 To make them like this? Do they somehow suppose  
 It's more grown-up when your mouth hangs open and drools,  
 And you keep on pissing yourself, and can't remember  
 Who called this morning?

Larkin (who died at sixty-three) did not subscribe to the Pollyanna discourse of old age; rather, he developed his own powerful version of the explicit discourse. His poetic near-obsession with age, dying and death became more noticeable in his later years, though it was present much earlier. His poem ‘Next, Please’ (written before he was thirty) closes with an oblique reference to death as ‘a huge and birdless silence’ – an oblivion, a nothingness, which he seems to have found appalling. By the time he wrote ‘The Old Fools’ (at the age of fifty) his attitudes to old age and death had become utterly adamant. Memorable and thought-provoking as ‘The Old Fools’ is, it presents a malicious cartoon of old people. Indeed, his depiction of old age here smacks of otherisation (Holliday 1999, p.245) in which a member of one cultural, ethnic or religious group (or, here, age group) reduces members of another to ‘a simplistic, easily digestible, exotic or *degrading* stereotype’ (my emphasis). Not all old people (or even old old people) drool and can’t remember to whom they spoke earlier in the day. Unlike Athill (2011), Larkin is an onlooker, an outsider. When he adopts the explicit discourse of old age therefore – as a younger, more physically and mentally active person – he risks demeaning those he describes. Equally, when younger speakers and writers deploy the Pollyanna discourse of old age (such as MacRae, 2013) they may seem patronising. The younger onlooker must find a balance; a way of

describing old age which is neither too brutal (explicit) nor too rose-tinted (Pollyanna).

### Discussion

In March 2013, Professor Noam Chomsky (b.1928) delivered the Edward W. Said lecture in London, choosing as his subject ‘Violence and Dignity: Reflections on the Middle East.’ Afterwards he answered questions from the audience. Imagine that an audience member had prefaced a question in either of the following ways:

‘Professor Chomsky, you are in your golden years. Do you...?’

‘Professor Chomsky, as a member of the silver generation, would you...?’

If a questioner had used such a form of words, how might this have been interpreted by Chomsky or by the audience? It would probably have been found inappropriate, would-be patronising, lacking in respect, or, quite simply, rude. Next, imagine an audience question incorporating a paraphrase of a quotation used earlier in the present text (Brody, 2010: 5) and beginning like this:

‘Professor Chomsky, you have reached an age when people typically walk more slowly, feel tired, get fatter, lose their hair, display poor balance and are greatly wrinkled. Do you think...?’

From these (rather unlikely) examples we can draw two conclusions. Firstly, younger-than-old adults only use the Pollyanna discourse when addressing old people in general, or individual old people who can be patronised with relative equanimity. Social conditioning typically prevents such younger-than-old speakers or writers using it when addressing old people of power or stature. To address an eminent person in this patronising way is to fall in others’ estimation - or to lose face (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech 2005). Secondly, while it seems acceptable for old people themselves to adopt the explicit discourse of old age (referring to *their own* physical infirmities), this is not so when a younger-than-old person concentrates on the physical infirmities of the old. This latter case might be seen as a flouting of the approbation maxim of Leech’s politeness principle (Leech, 1983, p.135) under which the speaker (or writer) seeks to minimise dispraise of the other person.

It is commonly accepted (see, for instance, Blundell et al., 1982) that choice of language and speaker tone and formality are influenced by factors such as setting (office, bar); topic; social relationships between the participants in the communicative event; and the psychological attitudes of the participants. The effect on listeners or readers of the two discourses of old age under

discussion (explicit and Pollyanna) appears to have a tendency to vary according to at least five factors:

- relative ages of the speaker/writer and the listener(s)/reader(s)
- setting (face to face or at a distance of time or space)
- relative ‘standing’ (in terms of factors like public recognition and reputation, or accomplishment) of sender and receiver(s)
- respective social roles of the participants
- speaker’s/writer’s communicative purpose (for example, informing; advising; or criticising)

In ‘Get Social’ (MacRae, 2013) discussed above, the writer advises old people on their future actions (‘You may want to consider moving into specially designed housing for older people’). In many cultures (including those influenced by Confucianism) there is a marked respect for old people, who are treated with deference because of their experience, accumulated wisdom, and standing as parents and grandparents. However, MacRae offers observations to her old readers which might be expected from a parent to a child, or a teacher to teenagers. For instance, she advises that living in a community of old people provides ‘a great opportunity to spend more time with old friends and make new ones.’ Cannot old people judge this for themselves? MacRae’s psychological attitude to her addressees appears to be causing her to ‘talk down’. Below is a reworking of the MacRae text, shorn of its Pollyanna characteristics:

As you get older you may decide that you would be safer and happier in sheltered housing specially designed for old people. This accommodation provides separate flats, allowing you to be as independent as you want, and giving you privacy, but also offering the possibility of meeting up with neighbours in the communal areas. Living in a housing estate of this kind gives you security and means that help will always be at hand if you need it.

No impression is now given that being old is “a great opportunity”. It also discards the misguided enthusiasm evident in “great opportunity” and “great way” and removes the confusion in pronouns (“our younger years...many of you”). It hints at the greater need for security and nearby assistance in old age, but without going into detail about the types of emergency that might arise (as the explicit discourse of old age might). Similarly, the tone is more matter-of-fact than that of the original, while not veering towards insensitive cataloguing of the physical and mental problems obliging some old people to quit their homes (explicit discourse).

## Conclusions

Let us begin by indicating weaknesses in this paper. Firstly, I have discussed a limited number of texts relating to old age, selected to support a particular line of argument. Secondly, it is good practice for those who interpret texts or discern particular discourses within them to avoid treating their personal conclusions as being of overwhelming significance. For instance, I am not a member of the group (old people) being addressed in the MacRae text. It would be preferable to collect data on the reactions of old people themselves to such texts. Furthermore, I have assumed throughout that texts realising a particular discourse (such as the Pollyanna discourse) have the potential to re-shape people's attitudes. In order to substantiate such a claim, psycholinguistic evidence needs to be adduced. As Stubbs (1997, p.106) points out, 'If language and thought are to be related, then one needs data and theory from both.' Nevertheless, despite these weaknesses I offer final observations plus suggestions for more rigorous follow-up research.

I have proposed two contrasting discourses of old age: the Pollyanna discourse and the explicit discourse. These two discourses, I argue, constitute the Scylla and Charybdis between which all speakers and writers of the younger-than-old age group should steer in public communication. For them, adoption of the Pollyanna discourse may result either in patronising old people, or in creating the impression (particularly for young people) that the general experience of old age is essentially pleasant. I have also argued that the explicit discourse of old age is best left to old speakers and writers, who describe the late stages of human life from an 'insider' perspective. Younger writers or speakers (like Larkin) who employ the explicit discourse of old age from an 'outsider' perspective risk sounding callous or hostile. Indeed, texts of the Larkin sort might serve to legitimise negative attitudes to the old, to dehumanize them and, in some readers, to engender or reinforce contempt for them. Where written or spoken communication about old age and the old is intended for public consumption a more neutral tone is surely required: neither sentimental and saccharine (Pollyanna) nor apparently heartless and uncaring (explicit). In-service and pre-service language awareness sessions for those caring for the elderly (including health care professionals, nursing home administrators and relevant civil servants and local government officers) might use examples of the two discourses as extremes which public discourse about old age and old people should avoid. See, for instance, the UK Commission on Dignity in Care report mentioned earlier.

This paper has discussed contemporary texts in English. Investigation of the extent to which these discourses are evident in texts in other languages might prove revealing. Is it the case that both patronizing and callous attitudes to the old are displayed, at times, in all cultures? A second, perhaps more productive, research project might look at how samples of old readers/listeners react to, and interpret, texts displaying each of the two discourses. Do old people themselves find the Pollyanna discourse patronizing or the explicit discourse unnecessarily brutal? An excellent paper by Mautner (2007) suggests

ways in which corpus data can be used to examine the role certain key words (such as ‘elderly’) perform in creating and sustaining societal attitudes to old age.

Finally, it is desirable that residential homes and care homes for old people choose neutral names, rather than fanciful ones containing words for flowers, trees or other greenery, or which include the adjectives ‘golden’ or ‘sunny’. Old age need not necessarily be a time of sadness or suffering, but it is, I think, misleading to associate it with warmth, bright colours or natural beauty. Naming by the road (such as Montague Road Nursing Home, Felixstowe, U.K.) or by the locality (Bukit Batok Home for the Aged, Singapore) is surely more appropriate. Changes in naming policy may not eventuate, however, since many private sector residential homes for the old are run for profit. Names with pleasant connotations may be judged more attractive for marketing purposes.

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