

vernacular, *adj.* and *n.*

Pronunciation: [?] Brit. /vəˈnækjələ/, U.S. /vərˈnækjələr/

Forms: Also 1600s **vernaculer**.

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: < Latin *vernāculus* domestic, native, indigenous (hence Italian *vernacolo*, Portuguese *vernaculo*), < *verna* a home-born slave, a native.

The Latin adjective occurs in a large variety of applications; the restricted use common in English is represented by *vernacula vocabula* in Varro.

A. adj.

1. That writes, uses, or speaks the native or indigenous language of a country or district.

- 1601 BP. W. BARLOW *Def. Protestants Relig.* 2 A vernaculer pen-man..having translated them into English.
- 1715 M. DAVIES *Eikōn Μικρο-βιβλικη* 77 The Office of the Virgin Mary..is Translated also in most Languages for the Use of the Vernacular Romanists.
- 1716 M. DAVIES *Diss. Physick* 38 in *Athenæ Britannicæ* III The Learned vernacular Editor of Hippocrates's Works in French, Mr. Dacier.
- 1819 W. TAYLOR in *Monthly Mag.* 47 30 The vernacular public remained unmoved, and gazed at the labours of authorship, as Londoners at the opera.
- 1869 E. A. FREEMAN *Hist. Norman Conquest* (1875) III. xii. 145 The vernacular poet more kindly helps us to the real names.

2.

a. Of a language or dialect: That is naturally spoken by the people of a particular country or district; native, indigenous.

Usually applied to the native speech of a populace, in contrast to another or others acquired for commercial, social, or educative purposes; now frequently employed with reference to that of the working classes or the peasantry.

- 1647 J. HOWELL *New Vol. of Lett.* 149 This [sc. Welsh] is one of the fourteen vernacular and independent tongues of Europe.
- 1699 R. BENTLEY *Diss. Epist. Phalaris* (new ed.) 316 Being Dorians born, [they] repudiated their vernacular Idiom for that of the Athenians.
- 1715 M. DAVIES *Eikōn Μικρο-βιβλικη* Pref. 35 They don't understand their Breviaries and Mass-Books, not..when translated and expounded in their respective vernacular Tongues.
- 1832 G. DOWNES *Lett. from Continental Countries* I. 197 The congregation here being chiefly peasants, and artisans, a sermon was delivered in the vernacular dialect.
- 1858 W. E. GLADSTONE *Stud. Homer* II. ii. 50 When the Chaldee tongue became the vernacular, and the old Hebrew disappeared from common use.
- 1874 H. R. REYNOLDS *John the Baptist* v. §3. 338 There were 'voices'..which expressed in some vernacular idiom of Hebrew or Greek the thoughts of the Almighty.

in extended use.

- 1778 T. WARTON *Hist. Eng. Poetry* II. 50 They much improved the vernacular style by the use of this exotic phraseology.
- 1785 *European Mag.* 8 467 Several passages are modulations on the vernacular airs of Otaheite.
- 1850 *Ecclesiologist* 11 176 Even Rome, then, cannot consistently blame words to the vernacular Gregorian melodies.

b. In predicative use. Also with prepositions.

- 1808 S. SMITH *Wks.* (1859) I. 103/2 The Scriptures translated into the Tamulic language, which is vernacular in the southern parts of the peninsula.
- 1835 T. B. MACAULAY in G. O. Trevelyan *Competition Wallah* (1866) 321 The intellectual improvement of those classes..can at present be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

- 1856 H. B. STOWE *Dred* II. xxxii. 323 He commenced a speech in that peculiar slang dialect which was vernacular with them.
- 1870 R. ANDERSON *Hist. Missions Amer. Board* III. iv. 52 The Arab-speaking race..must receive the gospel mainly from those to whom the language is vernacular.

c. Coupled with the name of the language.

- 1775 T. WARTON *Hist Eng. Poetry* (1870) 61 The vernacular English, as I have..remarked, was rough and unpolished.
- 1842 R. H. BARHAM *Lay St. Aloys* in *Ingoldsby Legends* 2nd Ser. 242 The 'Requiem' was sung; Not vernacular French, but a classical tongue.
- 1864 G. W. DASENT *Jest & Earnest* (1873) II. 10 The vernacular Anglo-Saxon before the Conquest was undergoing that change which all languages suffer.
- 1883 J. A. FROUDE in *Contemp. Rev.* 44 18 He [Luther] began to translate the Bible into clear vernacular German.

3.

a. Of literary works, etc.: Written or spoken in, translated into, the native language of a particular country or people.

- 1661 J. GLANVILL *Vanity of Dogmatizing* 156 Though, in Greek or Latine, they amuse us, yet a vernacular translation unmasks them.
- 1716 M. DAVIES *Diss. Physick* 20 in *Athenæ Britannicæ* III Dr. Harvey's *Family-Physician*, and most of Will. Salmon's Books, with other such like Vernacular Pharmacy.
- 1789 R. HURD in W. Warburton *Tracts* 170 Long vernacular Sermons from Dr. Parr.
- 1841 I. D'ISRAELI *Amenities Lit.* I. Pref. p. v A history of our vernacular literature has occupied my studies for many years.
- 1868 J. H. BLUNT *Reformation Church of Eng.* I. 495 Vernacular prayer-books had, indeed, been long known in England.
- 1874 J. R. GREEN *Short Hist. Eng. People* i. §5. 49 The Chronicle..remains the first vernacular history of any Teutonic people.

b. Performed in the native language.

- 1874 A. SOMERVILLE *Lect. Missions* xiii. 243 A paper which he read on Vernacular Preaching at the Ootacamund Missionary Conference.

4.

a. Of words, etc.: Of or pertaining to, forming part of, the native language.

- 1716 M. DAVIES *Athenæ Britannicæ* II. 174 This Ralph is call'd also Roger, the Latin name, Ranulphus, being possibly capable of both those Vernacular Appropriations.
- 1729 A. POPE *Dunciad* (new ed.) I. 1 (*note*) Which being a French and foreign Termination, is no way proper to a word entirely English, and Vernacular.
- 1788 V. KNOX *Winter Evenings* (1790) II. xxii. 193 Brown..preferred polysyllabic expressions derived from the language of ancient Rome, to his vernacular vocabulary.
- 1816 W. SCOTT *Old Mortality* Peroration, in *Tales of my Landlord* 1st Ser. IV. 346 O, ignorance! as if the vernacular article of our mother English were capable of declension!
- 1848 'L. MARIOTTI' *Italy Past & Present* I. ii. 146 Low-born vernacular idioms were handed down to posterity as the poet's creation.
- 1866 J. BRYCE *Holy Rom. Empire* (new ed.) xv. 283 Whose official style of Augustus, as well as the vernacular name of 'Kaiser' [etc.].

b. Native or natural to a particular language.

- 1844 *Proc. Philol. Soc.* 1 176 The finding an isolated term in an Anglo-Saxon or German vocabulary by no means proves it to be vernacular to that language.

5. Connected or concerned with the native language.

- 1844 J. H. STOCQUELER *Hand-bk. India* 439 The southern side of the building is appropriated to the vernacular department, and the northern to the English.
- 1883 R. B. SMITH *Life Ld. Lawrence* II. 535 Efforts were made to extend vernacular education.

6. Of arts, or features of these: Native or peculiar to a particular country or locality. *spec. in vernacular architecture*, architecture concerned with ordinary domestic and functional buildings rather than the essentially monumental.

- 1857 G. G. SCOTT *Remarks Secular & Domest. Archit.* p. ix I want to call attention to the meanness of our vernacular architecture, and to the very partial success which has hitherto attended the attempts at its improvement.
- 1857 G. G. SCOTT *Remarks Secular & Domest. Archit.* 6 Look at the vernacular cottage-building of the day.
- 1878 G. G. SCOTT *Lect. Mediæval Archit.* (1879) II. 315 The revived knowledge of the architecture of Greece rudely disturbed the vernacular style derived from Rome.
- 1893 *Harper's Weekly* 21 Oct. 1011/2 The theatre is a big, rather bare room, apparently of vernacular Javanese construction.
- 1939 *Country Life* 11 Feb. 154/2 It is as delightful an example as one could find of Georgian vernacular architecture.
- 1976 G. MOFFAT *Short Time to Live* xi. 115 'What's brought you to Sandale?..' 'Vernacular architecture, sir... Interiors too: spice cupboards, stone stairways, spinning galleries.'
- 1977 *Dædalus* Summer 3 The studies of so-called vernacular architecture (like barns) no longer seem eccentric in an atmosphere in which architecture can be defined not in terms of monuments but as any changes at all that man makes in his environment.

†7. Of diseases: Characteristic of, occurring in, a particular country or district; endemic. *Obsolete*.

- 1666 G. HARVEY *Morbus Anglicus* i. 2 Which instances do evidently bring a Consumption under the notion of a Pandemick, or Endemick, or rather a Vernacular Disease to England.
- 1728 E. CHAMBERS *Cycl.* (at cited word) Diseases which reign most in any particular Nation, Province, or District, are called Vernacular Diseases.

8. Of a slave: That is born on his master's estate; home-born. *rare*.

- 1804 *Ann. Rev. & Hist. Lit.* 1803 2 326 A disposition to use kindly, and to emancipate frequently, the vernacular slave.

9. Personal, private.

- 1840 G. S. FABER *Primitive Doctr. Regeneration* 38 I was favouring my evil propensities, as if they were specially my own vernacular property.

B. n.**1.**

a. The native speech or language of a particular country or district (see A. 2); also, the informal, colloquial, or distinctive speech of a people or a group. Cf. sense B.

1b.

- 1706 J. EVELYN *Hist. Relig.* (1850) I. vii. 427 It is written in the Chaldæo-Syriac, which was..the vernacular of our Lord.
- 1840 R. H. BARHAM *Ingoldsby Legends* 1st Ser. Pref. p. iv Mr. Maguire,..in his account of the late Coronation, retains his own rich vernacular.
- 1864 J. H. BURTON *Scot Abroad* II. i. 94 Even within the native stronghold of the Dutch vernacular.
- 1874 A. H. SAYCE *Princ. Compar. Philol.* v. 179 A child can learn as readily the vernacular of Canton as the language of London.

- 1925 F. N. SCOTT in *McNaught's Monthly Mag.* May 144 (*heading*) English and American vernacular.
- 1930 G. B. SHAW *Admirable Bashville* 89 With the advent of compulsory education sixty years ago,..newspapers and plays alike soon came to be written by illiterate masters of the vernacular.
- 1984 *Gainesville (Florida) Sun* 28 Mar. 7 B/2 Observe feminist vernacular: Call it a 'personhole cover'.

in extended use.

- 1807 W. TAYLOR in *Ann. Rev.* 5 575 By neglecting the vernacular in idea, he has missed in part the advantage of home praise and hereditary sympathy.

b. Frequently in *in the vernacular*. Cf. sense B. 1a.

- 1815 J. C. HOBHOUSE *Substance Lett.* (1816) I. 176 The court confessor in his sermon at St. Denis..took the opportunity of what is called in the vernacular preaching *at* the Duke of Orleans.
- 1856 G. W. DASENT *Jest & Earnest* (1873) I. 337 The performance of the services of religion in Latin, and no longer as of old in the vernacular.
- 1888 A. JESSOPP *Coming of Friars* i. 37 Of the five..no one of them was qualified as yet to preach in the vernacular.
- 1975 L. GILLEN *Return to Deepwater* iv. 62 In the vernacular,..I couldn't care less what you do.

c. Without article. (Cf. B. 2.)

- 1857 T. HUGHES *Tom Brown's School Days* i. i. 19 Repeating in true sing-song vernacular the legend of St. George and his fight.
- 1882 B. D. W. RAMSAY *Recoll. Mil. Serv.* I. i. 25 The fair songstress opened upon me such a volley of choice Tuscan vernacular, that I fairly fled.

2. With *a* and plural. A native or indigenous language.

- 1715 M. DAVIES *Eikōn Μικρο-βιβλική* ` 325 Charles the Fifth, King of France, order'd the Bible to be translated..in the Picardian and Norman Vernaculars.
- 1744 R. NORTH & M. NORTH *Life Sir D. North & Rev. J. North* 255 Latin, and the Vernaculars Westward,..carry nearly the same Idiom.
- 1850 'S. YENDYS' *Roman* vii. 100 The wayfarer Of many lands is not responsible For each vernacular.
- 1882 *Athenæum* 4 Mar. 280 Some of the peoples and tribes whose vernaculars that class comprises.
- 1892 *Times* 24 Dec. 3/1 Spain, destined to be for long the most active enemy of the circulation of the Scriptures in modern vernaculars.

3. *transferred*. The phraseology or idiom *of* a particular profession, trade, etc.

- 1876 P. G. TAIT *Lect. Recent Adv. in Physical Sci.* vi. 151 To use the vernacular of engineers.
- 1891 *Cent. Mag.* May 128/2 On the bar we found friends that we had made in Panama, who had preceded us a few days, long enough to speak the vernacular of mining.

4. A vernacular style of building. Cf. sense A. 6 above.

- 1910 *Encycl. Brit.* II. 436/1 The culture of the 'Queen Anne' type of architecture..presented a simple vernacular of construction and detail.
- 1967 *Listener* 7 Sept. 292/3 What was normally North American about these houses..was their general internal planning..an open-plan vernacular that still works well today.
- 1977 M. GIROUARD *Sweetness & Light* ii. 25 They came back to London to design buildings in which Gothic merged into farmhouse vernacular.

DERIVATIVES

ver'nacularness *n. rare*

Apparently only attested in dictionaries or glossaries.

1727 N. BAILEY *Universal Etymol. Eng. Dict.* II *Vernacularness*, Properness, or Peculiarness to one's own Country.

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