

Keep your English up to date

Luvvy

Professor David Crystal

Have you noticed how common the 'y' ('ie') ending is in English as a sort of colloquial suffix? A familiarity marker perhaps is a better way of talking about it. You talk about the telly – it's a television. You talk about your auntie – instead of your aunt. Of course, there's mummy and daddy as well. People from Australia are Aussies as well as Australians, and of course in proper names you talk about Charles and Charlie, or Susan and Susie. Very very common suffix.

Not surprising then to find that new words every now and then come into the language which use it, and the one that has attracted a lot of interest recently is 'luvvy' and 'luvvies' - l-u-v-v-y and l-u-v-v-i-e-s. Especially in Britain, it's a kind of mockery for actors and actresses, considered to be rather affected – actors, you know, who turn up and call each other 'darling' all the time and go 'mwah' at each other, when they're kissing each other, and people say "oh, listen to those luvvies talking, those poor luvvies – there's lots of luvvy talk going on" - l-u-v-v-y.

Now what's interesting is it's the spelling that's made this word so new, because there already was a word 'lovey' in the language, going back right to the 1960s, spelt l-o-v-e-y. It's a much older term of endearment. I might say "oh, come on, lovey!" meaning...you might hear from a bus conductor for instance, and it refers simply to you know, 'my dear', and it could be to a man or a woman, although more usually to a woman. So, what we've got is a new word 'luvvy' with a different spelling from the old word 'lovey' – now that doesn't happen very often in language change.



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