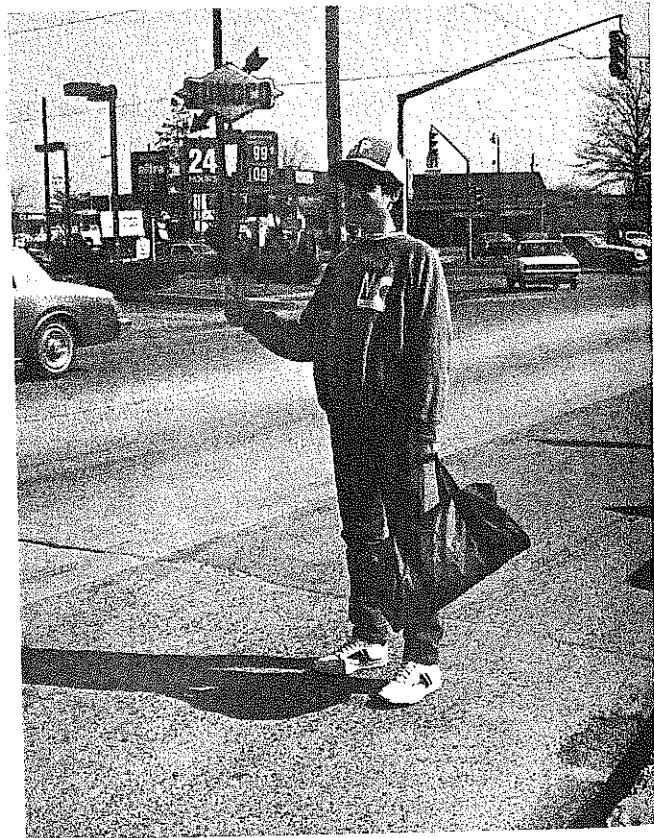


Selection **1**

SPEECH



■ **Skill Development: Skimming**

Skim the selection and mark the following statements with *T* for true or *F* for false.

- _____ 1. The author's main purpose is to compare the oral and written message.
- _____ 2. The pattern of organization is description.
- _____ 3. The passage begins with an attention-getting example of a poor speaker.

■ **Skill Development: Scanning**

Scan to find each of the following details.

- 1. Tom's use of "truckin'" refers to _____

2. The author lists _____ suggestions for clarifying the triangle of meaning for the listener.
3. *Planned ambiguity* refers to _____
4. To use the active voice in a sentence means _____
5. Winston Churchill observed that British and United States citizens are separated by _____

■ Skill Development: Rate

Now read the selection to answer ten true-false items. Use your pen as a pacer and time your reading. To calculate rate, write down the number of seconds it takes you to read the selection. The number of words contained in the reading is listed at the end of the selection. With these two numbers you can calculate your reading speed. First divide the number of words in the selection by the number of seconds you take to read it. Then multiply the answer by 60 to get your reading rate in words per minute.

Example: Words in selection = 750
Reading time in seconds = 170

$$\begin{array}{r} \times 60 = \text{w/m} \\ \# \text{ of sec. } \overline{) \# \text{ of words}} \end{array} \quad 170 \overline{) 750} \quad 4.41 \times 60 = 264.6 = 265 \text{ w/m}$$

LANGUAGE AND MEANING

William Haskins and Joseph Staudacher, from *Successful Public Speaking*.

Note what happened to Tom who addressed a group of older people. In his opening remarks, he stated:

5 *Uh, I want to talk about the art of truckin'. It's a great way to see the country. Uh, at times, it can be a heavy trip. But it's, um, worth the time and effort to cruise down the highway and catch the rays. Yeah, truckin' is quite an experience. I enjoy the heavy sounds from my tunes while waiting for a lift. They keep me floatin'. Yeah, uh, I can't wait to grab some tunes and catch a ride.*

Most members of Tom's audience thought that he was talking about truck driving. They didn't realize that Tom was referring to hitchhiking. They
10 became increasingly confused and frustrated as they listened to Tom. He neglected to adjust his message to his listeners by using terms that were understandable to *them*. And why did he have to? For Tom, "truckin'" is a common term, one he and his friends use all the time.

true or F for

message.

speaker.

15 Commenting on the important difference between British citizens and
 United States citizens, Winston Churchill observed that the only thing
 separating the two groups is a common language. This explains what
 happened to Tom. He spoke English but in terms unfamiliar to his
 audience. If Tom had spoken in a foreign language, his listeners probably
 20 would not have understood much less of his message. In a sense, Tom's
 slang terms were a foreign language to his audience.

Important differences exist between an oral and a written message. A
 reader has the opportunity to reread a written message; a listener in a
 speech setting has only one chance to grasp the meaning (unless the
 speech is videotaped for replay). A speaker's oral language often contains
 25 incomplete sentences that suggest incomplete thoughts, which can cause
 confusion. Oral language is frequently sprinkled with "ahs," "ums," and
 "ers." Such verbal interruptions can help speakers collect their thoughts but
 can also become noise elements that distract listeners.

The Importance of Language

30 Tom's experience is not uncommon. As a speaker, your language can excite
 audience members emotionally and intellectually; it can also help listeners
 think logically. But, your language can also confuse listeners. It is your
 responsibility to choose words wisely.

Symbol Makers. How are we able to share our thoughts and feelings
 with each other? This task is largely accomplished through the words we
 35 use. Words are symbols; symbols stand for things. Words can contain
 multiple meanings; for example, think about the words "love," "hate,"
 "car," "experience," "shapely," and "class." How many definitions exist for
 each term? Words (symbols) help us share our thoughts with other people.
 Because words can have multiple meanings, they expand our ability to
 40 communicate our views of reality to ourselves and to others. We seek to
 understand the world around us through the language we use to define it.

While the flexibility of language is very useful, it can also create
 problems in communication. Sometimes our meaning is not clear to other
 people. Nevertheless, we should continue to select and use symbols we
 45 believe will be understandable to others. In short, we must be "symbol
 makers."

Human Survival. Have you ever considered the possibility that without
 language, civilization as we know it would come to a standstill? Language
 helps us grow; it helps us erect societies, conquer diseases, and discover
 50 new technologies. None of this would be possible without language.
 Language is the vehicle by which we can express our ideas, feelings,
 beliefs, values, and attitudes. From our basic survival needs to our needs

for self-esteem or self-actualization, we routinely use the tool of language to develop.

55 Human survival depends on our ability to use symbols. This presupposes a general agreement on the meaning of the symbols we use. If we use language narrowly, assuming that only *one* meaning exists for each word, we may have difficulty communicating with other people who assign different meanings to our words. We may also have difficulty if we assume
60 that everyone is familiar with the words we use. This is the difficulty that befell Tom in the opening example in this chapter. If Tom had explained that by "truckin'" he meant hitchhiking, he could have made his meaning much clearer for his audience.

The words of language allow us to understand and interpret one
65 another's ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and values. This interpretative process unites us in a world where we can survive and grow as human beings.

Meanings Are in People. The meanings contained in ideas, events, places, or things are ultimately lodged in people. People decide what the symbol means and what it represents to them. You may choose a symbol
70 that means one thing to you but means another to the listeners. Why? In their work, *The Meaning of Meaning*, psychologist Charles Ogden and literary theorist I. A. Richards devised the triangle of meaning to illustrate the communication process. Ogden and Richards argue that meaning usually starts with a thought. You think of a bushy tail, long whiskers,
75 floppy ears, hopping action, and a small animal eating carrots. Putting all these thoughts together, you uncover the symbol "rabbit" as the focus of your thoughts.

People's experiences and background weigh heavily on the manner in which their triangles of meaning are constructed. You, as a speaker, can not
80 take for granted that audience members will construct their triangles of meaning in a manner similar to yours. If audience members appear confused, angry, or bored, they are sending you an important message about their triangle of meaning during the communication process. To counter this difficulty, you can use one or more of the following methods to clarify meaning:
85

1. Give the audience the dictionary meaning of words that cause confusion and identify the source of the definition.

2. Define confusing words in subjective terms. For example, you may use the word "exam." To convey your meaning of the word, you can say, "I
90 view the word 'exam' as more than a simple test. I view it as the opportunity to communicate my ideas in written form in response to statements made by my instructor."

3. Cite stories, analogies, or examples to help clarify meaning. For instance, you may wish to convey both the meaning and emotion you feel
95 when using a particular word. Suppose you want to convey the meaning and emotion of the word "frustration." You can illustrate with an example,

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saying "Frustration to me is that feeling of rage that comes over me when I need a course that I can't get during registration."

100 4. Use a visual aid to illustrate meaning. For example, if you want to convey the meaning of the word "serenity," you may want to supplement a verbal description with a photograph (large enough to be seen by the audience) of a peaceful forest scene.

Clear Language. You, as a speaker, must be clear. If you use technical language, you should define terms, especially if the listeners are not trained or skilled in the areas that use this terminology. Vocabulary level should be appropriate for the listeners. If it is too high, listeners may fail to understand; if too low, listeners may feel insulted.

105 On the other hand, sometimes, "planned ambiguity" creates interest in a message. Occasionally, speakers purposely use terms that are unfamiliar to listeners. Speakers may even tell the listeners that few people are aware of the term's meaning. They eventually explain or define the term within the context of the speech. For example, the word "metacommunication," which means communication about communication, may not be immediately defined by a speaker, who may instead introduce examples of metacommunication, such as slapping someone on the back while saying, "How are you?" or smiling while saying, "How are you doing?" The speaker uses these examples to clarify the meaning of the term "metacommunication." Then the speaker can define the term by verbally explaining that metacommunication is communication, verbal and nonverbal, that gives clues to how a message is to be interpreted. The speaker can then tie the definition to the examples mentioned earlier. This type of planned ambiguity is not only effective in gaining attention but helps to demonstrate a speaker's flexibility. Too much planned ambiguity, however, can erode the clarity of the speaker's language—which, after all, is of primary importance.

Concise Language. Have you ever heard someone lament, "I wish the speaker would get to the point"? This question highlights the speaker's need to be concise. This is especially true in public speaking where speakers often face time restrictions. One professor frequently comments to his class: "Almost everyone can hit the three main points of their speech in one hour. It indeed is the artist of communication who must adequately cover them within a much shorter period of time." Concise language aids in this process.

135 Conjunctions, terminology that does not have to be defined, and shorter sentences are devices speakers can use to reduce a breezy, long-winded style to a clear, concise, and effective method of communication. A speaker who says, "Today I'm glad to be able to present for your listening pleasure a message of significance on the topic of nuclear defense," is indeed

140 verbose. A speaker who says, "Today I want to discuss nuclear defense," clarifies the message by being concise and direct. At times speakers may need to be more detailed in their explanations, but if this becomes their predominant language style, they may find it difficult to hold their listeners' attention. You will discover that concise, direct language promotes the clarity and strength of your message.

145 **Correct Language.** Public speakers are on display. Listeners expect them to *sound* educated; they expect speakers to use grammatically correct language. As a result, a speaker's credibility may rise or fall based on the perceived correctness of his or her language.

150 Incorrect language draws attention away from the meaning of a message. Listeners may begin to focus more on the speaker's grammatical errors than on the purpose of the presentation or the meaning of the message. At times, a speaker may elect to use ungrammatical phrases to gain the listeners' attention. However, as with planned ambiguity, the speaker should use this technique sparingly. Overuse of ungrammatical phrases as an attention-getting device can prove counterproductive.

155 **Active Language.** Active voice produces active language; active voice sounds bolder, more direct. As professors Flesch and Lass explain, "The active voice, which shows who is doing something—as in 'I hit Johnnie'—makes a sentence strong; the passive voice, which shows who is being acted on—as in 'Johnnie is being hit by me'—makes a sentence weak." A public speaker who says, "Air pollution limits the quality of life," uses the active voice. The statement shows that the subject is acting. A speaker who says, "The quality of life is being limited by air pollution," shows what is being acted on. Active voice usually suggests more concise communication in both speaking and writing.

165 As we have seen, there are a number of language pitfalls that speakers should attempt to avoid. These include sexist, racist, and technical language. These types of language build walls between speakers and listeners. On the other hand, language can build bridges between speakers and their audience. Language that builds bridges is affective, clear, concise, correct, and active. In the language that you use in your public speeches, don't be a "wind-bag." Help your listeners experience the excitement and vitality of your ideas by using language that punctuates this excitement and vitality.

/1860

Reading time in seconds = _____

× 60 = _____ words per minute

of seconds / # of words in selection

■ Comprehension Questions

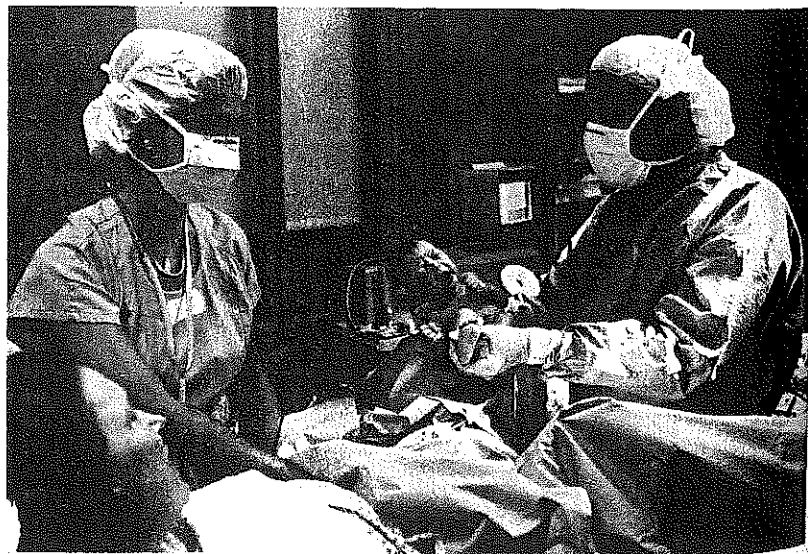
Mark each statement with *T* for true or *F* for false.

- _____ 1. We become symbol makers because we select and use symbols to be understandable to others.
- _____ 2. The authors believe that civilization would come to a standstill without language.
- _____ 3. Ogden and Richards devised the triangle of meaning concept.
- _____ 4. Speakers must help audience members construct their triangles of meaning.
- _____ 5. Planned ambiguity is not an effective way to open a speech.
- _____ 6. The authors believe that it is more difficult to cover the main points in an hour than in a shorter period.
- _____ 7. The authors believe that listeners expect good grammar.
- _____ 8. An effective speaker seeks to build a wall between the speaker and the listeners.
- _____ 9. The active voice sounds bolder and more direct than the passive voice, according to the authors.
- _____ 10. Personal examples detract from the clarity of a speech and should not be used.

Comprehension (% correct) _____%

Selection **2**

BIOLOGY



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