

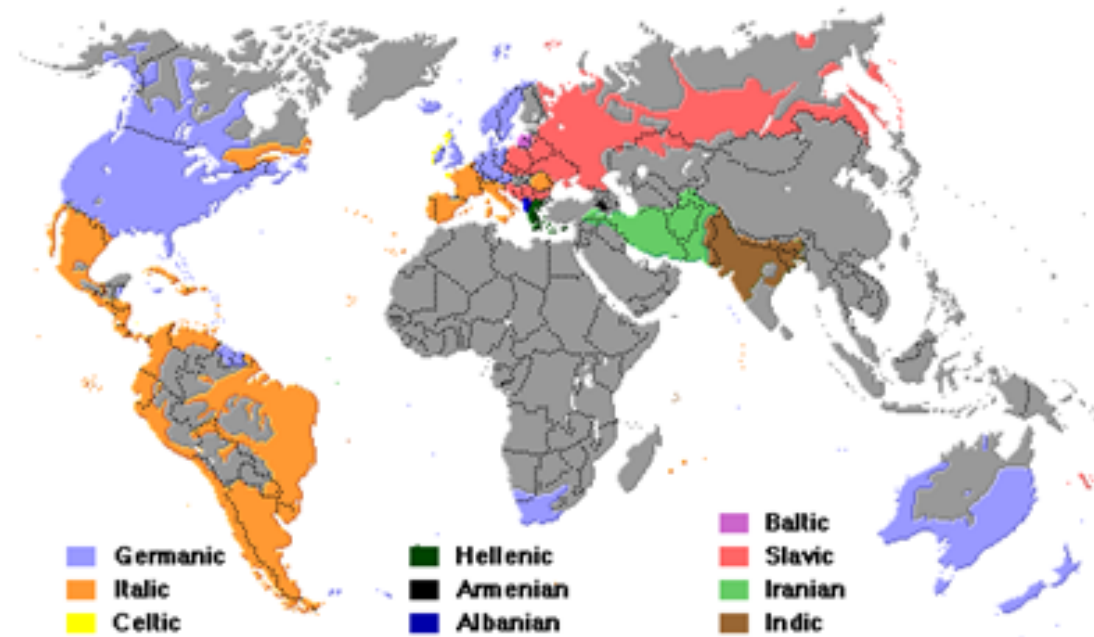
A forum to encourage independent thinking

The THINK Club

Published Quarterly

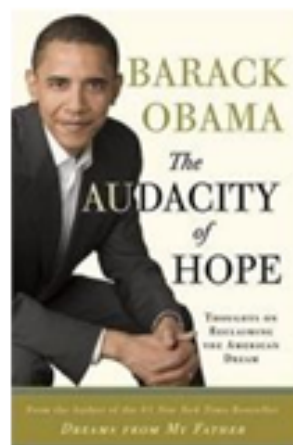
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Love of Language



Book Review:
**The Audacity
of Hope**

**Atlas Shrugged
(Redux)**



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Letters

Going through my archives, I happened to read “Why Think?” I have to admit that I found some of the “bloopers” like people mowing their lawn without shoes or believing that the Sun actually rotates around the Earth instead of vice versa pretty humorous. However, at least concerning the Earth rotating around the Sun, I guess people who have never been told can’t be blamed for their ignorance. I mean it DOES look like the Sun is rotating around the Earth. It also looks like the Earth is rotating around the Sun. Without knowing any better, most people would probably assume that the Earth is the one staying still. Since a person without knowledge of the orbital patterns of our galaxy also probably has no knowledge about things like gravity, momentum, etc. Some of the bloopers I actually found quite interesting. The one that says that some people actually believe the U.S. might have been responsible for the attacks of Sept. 11th is noteworthy. Obviously, looking at its context, it’s implying that a notion like that is absurd; that of course our government would never do anything like that to us. And on the surface, that is definitely the easiest and most comfortable thing to believe. But if you do a little research, even as absurd as it sounds, you will probably start to question the official story. I am not saying that our government was behind the attacks, but there are so many holes in the official story that they are definitely lying to us about some things. Using that last paragraph as an example, it is interesting how logic and reason can have a completely different meaning or relevance based on your society or past experiences. Where some people would consider an accusation against the U.S. for the events on 9/11 absurd and outrageous, others would be the first to advocate it. The moral of the story is that you should never assume that you know everything. You can think, and learn, and become the smartest person on the planet, but you will always have more to learn.

**Adam Hamby
Tonganoxie, KS**

The special on Food (The Think Club, Spring 2009) was a disappointment. I always thought that ‘The Think Club’ was about food for thought and not as much about the edibles.

**Holly Nort
Bluffton, IN**

Thinking Wildly

Man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain.

– Lilly Tomlin

I like the word “indolence.” It makes my laziness seem classy.

– Bern Williams

Nurse: Doctor, there’s an invisible man in the waiting room.

Doctor: Tell him I can’t see him.

Mom: We can’t keep a horse in the house. Think of the smell.

Son: Don’t worry. They’ll get used to it!

Everything is changing. People are taking the comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke.

– Will Rogers

What is another word for thesaurus?

– Steven Wright

By and large, language is a tool for concealing the truth.

– George Carlin

I believe that laughter is a language of God and that we can all live happily ever laughter.

– Yakov Smirnoff

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The Language of Car

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Life has never been a smooth ride for me nor did I ever expect it to be that way. I have met obstacles, bumps, jars and jerks along the way but have always been able to steer through them without a shock. I must have bumper to bumper protection from God. Although it may seem that I am in the driver's seat, someone else is providing me the needed traction. I am only a passenger on the road of life, a *musafir* (a traveler in Urdu/Hindi).



I think that like me, everyone else has been helped along the way by many kind and generous people. "I can do it by myself," or "I have made myself," or "I did it my way," is just tooting one's own horn. So many times we tend to run on fumes along the lonely highway of life. That is the sign that our attitude is due for a tune up. We need to make an immediate u-turn and rush to the repair shop.

If we are honest, and humble, we will acknowledge that there have been others in our lives who have helped us keep rolling – be it our parents who maneuvered us out of difficulties in spite of their own rough patches or be it a friend who gave us a push when we could not get out of first gear – there are people who may have courteously yielded to us so that we could compete in the fast lane. I give them my thumbs up!

Shifting gears, let's not forget our mentors; someone who may have advised us to turn up our high beam and, at the same time, pay attention to our interior. Whenever we veered a bit, a mentor advised us to check our rear view mirror so that we could rev up our engine and accelerate before it was too late.

I don't know about you, but I have stalled with my obsession about people who envied me whenever I cruised along smoothly on the highway of my career and life in 'General.' Their muffled praise, jealous exudes of toxic fumes, subliminal expressions and sudden lane changes made me feel that I was riding on flat tires.

The need for speed was enormous. I decided to stay in the race. The only way to do that was to aim for the pole position ignoring the crashed cars and the ones trying to sputter along on an empty tank. Instead of paying attention to the bystanders who wanted me to shift into neutral, I got inspired by those who always showed me the checkered flag, those who wanted to see me in the winner's circle, and those who buffed my exterior to remove the rust.

Vroom vroom and Chitti chitti bang bang! After burning enough rubber and kicking heaps of tires, all I can say is 'life has been one sweet ride.' I am still rolling along. It is not going to be an automatic hit. Thanks to everyone who saved me from being a road-kill!



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Commentary

Language of Praise

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

My uncle, who was considered academically mediocre by the rest of the family, was my biggest admirer. He was a kind man in every way, empathetic, generous and emotional. Maybe, he saw his own situation in me. Most of the time my teachers elicited a string of foolish answers from me and my parents sighed at my report cards. My peers would poke fun at my inanity.

"You are the smartest kid," my uncle would say to me, "you will shine." I used to see him two times in a year. He would visit me at my parents' place in the winter and I would go to stay with him in the village during the summer vacation. My uncle understood the prodding and humiliation that I had to go through. He also knew my strengths that no one cared to cultivate in me.

He would gather all the kids and ask them to explain the meaning of popular idioms and phrases such as "Rome was not built in one day" or "Slow and steady wins the race." My answers used to be heuristic and metaphoric instead of being contextual. He always marveled at my explanation, originality and creative expression. No wonder I was always the best and the brightest in his opinion. That made life easier for me and boosted my self-esteem to an extent. I admired myself because I thought that I was good instead of the other way round.

I remember my high school exam results. That was quite a drama. About fifteen of my cousins and friends (children of close family acquaintances) appeared at the board exam that year for the high school diploma. Those days (in the old country), the results of the high school board exams used to be published in the leading newspapers with students' names and their ranking based on the percentage of points scored in the exam.

Needless to say that all my cousins and friends were thought highly of by everyone and they were supposed to excel. I never occurred in anyone's thoughts except my uncle's. I was not supposed to be anywhere near them in intellect or performance and rightly so. After all, I had a poor academic track record.

As the day of declaration (of the exam results) neared, my uncle's confidence in me grew. "You will do better than them," he uttered in confidence. Those were the most treasured words. I was me, the rest were merely them. To make a long story short, my uncle was right and others were wrong. I looked in the mirror every

morning and found myself to be a very special person. My self-esteem leaped.

But most kids in my situation are not that lucky. Praise is not a pleasure we can arrange for ourselves. It really needs to be delivered by someone else like my uncle and much of its impact depends on the deliverer. Later in life, I was praised by others, but never to quite same effect. Many times, the compliment was wrung grudgingly, like squeezing juice from a dry apple. My uncle knew my worth.

Another sticking point is the value we place in certain attributes such as jumping grade levels in schools or scores obtained in certain standard tests. Yes, those students should be praised but not at the cost of lowering others' self-esteem or neglecting their areas of intelligence. There are many forms of intelligence such as verbal-linguistic, spatial, musical or interpersonal. We cannot neglect those intelligences at the cost of a standardized testing. My uncle recognized my intelligence as an independent thinker and he engraved that in my brain. I wallow in it thoroughly, roll around in it, install in my heart and whisper it over before I go to sleep. Yes, a genuine praise feels wonderful.

From: <http://childparenting.about.com>

The behavioral effect of praise is to reinforce your child's correct behavior and self-discipline. Praise increases the bond of affection between parent and child and builds self-esteem.

Here's How:

Look your child in the eye.

Move close to your child.

Smile.

Praise a specific behavior. "You did a great job cleaning up your room."

Speak with feeling and sincerity.

Touch your child affectionately, maybe a pat on the back.

Praise immediately, as soon as you notice commendable behavior.

Tips:

Praise should be honest and specific.

Don't dilute the effectiveness of praise by overdoing it or being insincere.

Language of Attitude

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Do you feel intimidated, humbled and humiliated by your pharmacist? Am I the only one who feels this way? The pharmacist and his crew remind me of the 'Soup-Nazi' of the Seinfeld fame. I have to hold my prescription carefully with both hands and stay at attention by their little counter until someone comes to the window.

A drugstore is usually operated by a crew of four people. One person is a pharmacist who stays secluded on his throne, one person is always on the phone while two others pretend to be too busy to attend to customers.

It happened to me again today. After five minutes of waiting, someone finally came to the counter. Her eyes were filled with antagonism, coldness and inhospitality which, probably, are the prerequisites for the job. I presented my prescription to the omnipotent and bowed to her with respect. She looked at the prescription and asked for hundredth time, "Have you ever had the prescription filled here before?"

"Yes, this place is like my second home. I have every disease known to the humankind. I come here at least twice a day and wait all day long for my medicines. I only go home to sleep. Thanks for your kindness; I haven't seen my wife in daylight for years and yet she recognizes me. How come you don't?" I unloaded my frustration on her.

"It will be two hours," she replied wryly and walked back to the center of the enclosure. My words had no meaning for her.

"Why two hours? You have filled this prescription at least twenty times for me before. I can see the medicine right in front of my eyes and it has the correct number of capsules in the container. Why can't you just grab it and hand it over to me?" I pleaded in frustration.

"The pharmacist will talk to you when he is free," she snapped at me and walked away like a lioness about to devour her prey. I dread seeing a pharmacist. That reminds me of going for a flogging in a Catholic school. Father Lawler, who was my school principal and the pharmacists are my biggest nightmares.

The pharmacist came to the window after fifteen minutes. "What can I do for you?" He asked in an unconcerned manner.

"Why do I have to wait here two hours for my refill?" I asked gathering my courage.

"Well, as you can see, we are very busy around here," he answered succinctly.

"What are you busy for? I do not see many customers around. Moreover, there are four of you in this cage. Why can't one of you just hand me the medicine?" I was determined to do or die.

"That's not the way things are done here. We have to look at your medical history and all other medicines that you take and make sure that this medicine is right for you," he tried to play one-upmanship on me.

"But my doctor already has my medical history. He manages my medicine. I have paid my dues to him by spending one third of my diseased life in his office in a flimsy gown. He knows what is right for me. That is why he gave me this prescription. As far as you are concerned, you have been dispensing the same medicines to me for years. What is there for you to check and why do I have to wait for another two hours to get my refill?" I demanded an explanation.

"Do you want an explanation?" The pharmacist became aggressive.

"Want? I not only I want it. I insist on getting one!" I decided to stick to my rights.

"There is no law that forces pharmacists to fill prescriptions right away. As a matter of fact, I don't think pharmacists should have to fill prescriptions for insensitive people like you at all." The pharmacist was determined to have an all out war with me.

"I can take you to the court. I can sue you, if you deny me my prescribed medicines." I tried to threaten him.

"Yes, I can deny. I can prove that the drug you want interacts negatively with another one. No court of law would want to be responsible for this kind of liability. It's part of our checks and balances with patient care in this country and this is the only power we can exert on hapless people like you and I intend to exert that power."

"Do you know that you have an attitude?" I was exhausted by listening to his lecture.

"Yes, I know! That is one of the prerequisites of getting into this occupation. In other professions aptitude is the key, but you need an attitude and not the aptitude to go into this field. We are screened to make sure that we have a negative attitude towards the patients. Our selection is very rigorous. We are tested for derogatory and cynical behavior and only the best in the class are chosen to apply for this profession. It is not easy being a pharmacist, after all."

"Thank you! Can I get my medicine now?" I was humbled.

"You will have to wait for another two hours now." The pharmacist returned to his throne just like the 'Soup-Nazi.' I walked away meekly to the magazine stand and gazed at air-brushed, made-up and contrived face of Oprah smiling at me for a millionth time.

Wake Up America

By Robert Bickmeyer

Nikita Khrushchev supposedly said, “We can’t expect the American people to jump from capitalism to communism, but we can assist their elected leaders in giving them small doses of socialism, until they awaken one day to find that they have communism.” Some say he did not say that, but I’ve heard enough of his rhetoric to know he believed it. Communism, of course, embraces atheism as well as socialism, both antithesis to the American way of life.

Socialism: Do we really want our government to collect the benefits of the hard working, responsible citizenry and dole them out to those who are lazy and irresponsible? For example, farmer A plows his land, plants the seed, irrigates for growth and harvests a bountiful crop. Meanwhile farmer B cruises through Spring, Summer and Fall, watching television, partying and simply enjoying life while his land is barren. Should farmer A share his crop with farmer B? Yes, under socialism where there is little incentive to better yourself. “Let him who does not work, not eat,” reads II Thessalonians 3:10. We, of course, must compassionately provide welfare for the truly needy and tough love for the lazy.

Atheism: Most atheists consider themselves intellectually superior to the common man who believes in God and whose children believe in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. I say this because the atheists I have met or whose writings I have read appear to have above average intelligence, but they are tripping over their ego. This supposed intellectual superiority is outweighed by the multitude of believers in God that include Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Francis Bacon, Albert Einstein, every American president, our current American congress and 95 percent of Americans. Conversely, leading atheists were Josef Stalin and subsequent heads of the communist Soviet Union, Adolf Hitler, who, besides killing six million Jews, hated Christianity, calling it a religion for weaklings, and Roger Baldwin, one of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union. Let us not forget those communist/atheist countries where all religion is banned and, in fact, people were murdered and persecuted for practicing religion.

In addition to providing aid to all major world disasters, American Christian charities build and operate: orphanages, hospitals, schools, soup kitchens and beds for the homeless. Their charitable works are

endless. Meanwhile atheists...I give up...what do they do? I am sure there are many fine atheists who are kind and charitable, but there are too few atheists to organize and form groups such as the above.

We are a Christian nation. In 1776, Thomas Jefferson and friends founded a nation in which 99.8 percent of the populace professed themselves to be Christian. Every Founder was a Christian. Since that time, our nation has opened its arms and welcomed all religions to our shores. Now some of these non-Christians seem to be saying, “Thanks for taking us in when we were in need, but your ways disturb us. We are offended by your frequent references to Christmas, Easter and God. Change your ways.”

Although Iraq has groups of Christians, Jews and people of other faiths, it is considered a Muslim nation. Although there are assorted Protestants in Ireland, it is considered a Catholic nation. Although Israel’s populace is 79 percent Jewish, it is considered a Jewish nation. Consequently, with a populace that is 87 percent Christian, the United States is a Christian nation.

It is time our country takes another look at all the folderol over “separation of church and state.” Such separation was enacted as recently as 1947 (160 years after the Constitution was written) by a very close 5-4 vote in the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1952, Chief Justice William Douglas, a liberal, wrote that separation of church and state was not in the U.S. Constitution. It does, however, appear in the constitution of the now defunct communistic Soviet Union. Any U.S. legislator who initiates legislation to reverse this misguided, mythical clause that enables the pathetically politically correct police to run amok will have earned a statue of himself/herself in front of all 50 state capitals.

In my town diversity is ballyhooed as something wonderful. Immigrants are catered to in many ways. Since three of my four grandparents were born in Germany, many would say I am 75 percent German, while others would label me German-American. Both would be wrong. I am 100 percent American!

Although my father grew up in a home with two German immigrant parents, his fluency in speaking German was limited to the ability to count to ten. He spoke only English at home and at school.

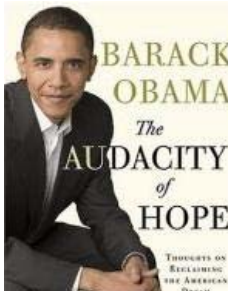
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Book Review

The Audacity of Hope

Author: Barack Obama

Publisher: First Vintage Book (Paperback)



I read *The Audacity of Hope* because I wanted to understand our current president, Barack Obama. *The Audacity of Hope* is a true reflection of Obama's manifesto and his concept of government and governing. I agree with

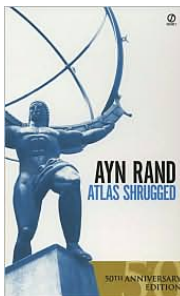
Obama's concerns about health care, education and national security. His book is conversational and full of his good intentions and interesting anecdotes. Though many Americans wish for the same things Obama does, I wish that he would have elaborated more on how he would fund all those wonderful programs.

Regardless of my opinion, Obama presents his arguments in a way that forces us (the readers) to reexamine our ideas and beliefs. For every argument he makes, he comes with valid premises and conclusion. Unfortunately, a valid argument is not necessarily a true argument and that is the greatest weakness of *The Audacity of Hope*.

Atlas Shrugged

Author: Ayn Rand

Publisher: Signet Book (Paperback) 50th Anniversary Edition



I had heard so much about the American classic *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand (Russian born) that I promised to read its 50th anniversary edition, after all. Though the book's 50th anniversary happened in 2007, it took me two years to contemplate and

fulfill my promise. I am glad that I did.

Atlas Shrugged is a complex combination of mystery, love story, social criticism, and philosophical concepts. The epic novel embodies the author's passionate celebration of individualism, free will, capitalism, logic, and reason.

Set in an imaginary America in a communist world, *Atlas Shrugged* is a sharp critique of a corrupt communist system and its damaging effects on areas as various as love, science, and industrial productivity. The novel's main protagonists, Dagny Taggart and Hank Rearden, are capitalist-minded industrialists, "Atlases" who carry the collapsing national economy on their backs. Things change, however, when the mysterious John Galt begins a revolution against the existing order, believing that the parasitic society would destroy itself if its competent and hardworking members would simply stop working. But first, the protagonists must learn how to let go of the ties of obligation, responsibility, and guilt connecting them to the abusive community in all aspects of their lives.

The novel explains Rand's own philosophical principles in a dramatic action story combining "metaphysics, morality, economics, politics and sex. All in all, this is a very complex work of literature not easy to comprehend."

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The Language of Love

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



“Love is a many splendored thing.” Love is the emotion that has mystified us from time immemorial. Most stories, novels, movies, poems and songs are based solely on love. No wonder, “love makes the world go ‘round.” Yet, true

love is the scarcest entity – hard to find. Ironically, “I love you” is, probably, the most abused and overused expression in any language. Love is a paradox inasmuch as it can be the cause of both bliss and misery. Love puts smile on our face and tears in our eyes. Love is easy to feel but difficult to express.

I have heard the expressions: “Love is giving until it hurts.” “Love is stronger than a man’s convictions.” “Love is the reflection of man’s worth.” “Love is the irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired.” “Love is never having to say you’re sorry.” I do not disagree with any of those statements.

A wise man once said to me ‘Love is God.’ Various dictionaries liken love to kindness, friendship, marriage, forgiveness, attachment, appreciation, fantasy, illusion, bond, affection and sensuality. I do not disagree with those either, but I have always wondered about an apt expression of love. Or is it that love can only be felt and expressed in a non-verbal form?

Poets have attempted to express verbal love most lucidly and eloquently, albeit poems can only briefly touch the true meaning of love. According to Elizabeth Barrett Browning love is eternal and indestructible by time and death.

Smiles, tears, of all my life! and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Lord Byron in his poem, “She walks in Beauty” likened love to innocence. For him love was abstract without any physical form as nowhere in the poem any mention is made of any physical features of the lady.

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies.....
....A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent.

Wordsworth found love in the beauty of nature as often expressed in his poems. The most vivid expression of his love can be found in the following excerpts:

I wandered lonely as a cloud...
...And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Coleridge’s expression of love was passionate and of sacrifice:

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Shelly saw love in the fusion of lovers as one entity:

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
...In one another’s being mingle-
Why not I with thine?

For John Keats, the youngest of all romantic poets (died at the age of 25) love is the ultimate beauty and the only truth.

.... Beauty is truth, truth beauty,– that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

But what is the best expression of love? Real love is mysterious and defies rigid explanations, but love makes its presence known while giving or receiving it. When your heart aches in someone else’s pain, a state of love exists. However, that does not translate love in a verbal form. We are human; therefore we err. Thus we hurt our loved ones advertently or inadvertently. If love is really divine, eternal, real beauty and ultimate truth then love has to be above ego and pride and that should give us the courage to say, “I am sorry and I was wrong.” In my opinion, that is the ultimate expression of love.

Sent your comments to:

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The Case for Short Words by Richard Lederer

When you speak and write, there is no law that says you have to use big words. Short words are as good as long ones, and short, old words – like *sun* and *grass* and *home* – are best of all. A lot of small words, more than you might think, can meet your needs with a strength, grace and charm that large words do not have.

Big words can make the way dark for those who read what you write and hear what you say. Small words cast their clear light on big things – night and day, love and hate, war and peace, and life and death. Big words, at times, seem strange to the eye, the ear, the mind and the heart. Small words are the ones we seem to have known from the time we were born, like the hearth fire that warms the home.

Short words are bright like sparks that glow in the night, prompt like the dawn that greets the day, sharp like the blade of a knife, hot like tears that scald the cheek, quick like moths that flit from flame to flame, and terse like the dart and sting of a bee.

Here is a sound rule: Use small, old words where you can. If a long word says just what you want to say, do not be afraid to use it. But know what our tongue is rich in crisp, brisk, swift, short words. Make them the spine and the heart of what you speak and write. Short words are like fast friends. They'll not let you down.

The title of this essay and the four paragraphs that you've just read are wrought entirely of one-syllable words. In setting myself this task, I didn't feel especially cabined, cribbed or confined. In fact, the structure helped me focus on the power of the message I was trying to put across.

One study shows that 20 words account for 25 percent of all spoken English words, and all 20 are monosyllabic. In order of frequency they're: *I, you, the, a, to, is, it, that, of, and, in, what, he, this, have, do, she, not, on, and they*. Other studies indicate that the 50 most common words in written English consist of a single syllable.

For centuries our finest poets and orators have recognized and employed the power of small words to make a straight point between two minds. A great many of our proverbs punch home their points with pithy monosyllables: "Where there's a will, there's a way;" "A

stitch in time saves nine;" "Spare the rod and spoil the child;" "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Nobody used the short word more skillfully than William Shakespeare, whose dying King Lear lamented: *And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life! Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, And thou no breath at all?... Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips. Look there, look there!*

Shakespeare's contemporaries made the King James Bible a centerpiece of short words: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good" The descendants of such mighty lines live on in the 20th century. When asked to explain his policy to parliament, Winston Churchill responded with these ringing monosyllables: "I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us." In *Death of the Hired Man*, Robert Frost observed that "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." And William H. Johnson used 10 two-letter words to explain his secret of success: "If it is to be, it is up to me."

You don't have to be a great author, statesman or philosopher to tap the energy and eloquence of small words. When I taught English, I traditionally asked my ninth-graders to write an essay composed entirely of one-syllable words. My students greeted my request with obligatory moans and groans, but when they returned to class with their essays, most felt that, with pressure to produce high-sounding polysyllables relieved, they had created some of their most powerful and luminous prose. Here is a submission from one of my ninth-graders:

What can you say to a boy who has left home? You can say that he has done wrong, but he does not care. He has left home so that he will not have to deal with what you say. He wants to go as far as he can. He will do what he wants to do.

You too can tap into the vitality and vigor of compact expression. Take a suggestion from the highway department. At the boundaries of your speech and prose place a sign that reads: "Caution: Small Words at Work."

English as the Universal Business Language

By Bala Prasad

Success, in any industry, hinges on successful communication. From the local merchants in the town square to the CEO of multinational corporations, business goals can't be met if we do not communicate effectively with our clients. The global economy no doubt benefits from adopting a universal business language.

Why adopt English as the universal business language? Because English has already achieved global status around the world. It is the world's second largest native language, the official language in 70 countries, and English-speaking countries are responsible for about 40% of world's total GNP. It is the de facto working language of 98 percent of German research physicists and 83 percent of German research chemists. It is the official language of the European Central Bank, even though the bank is in Frankfurt and neither Britain nor any other predominantly English-speaking country is a member of the European Monetary Union. An official language of the United Nations and many other international organizations, like the International Olympic Committee, English is also the language black parents in South Africa overwhelmingly wish their children to be educated.

English can already be at least understood almost everywhere among scholars and educated people – it's the world media language, of cinema, TV, pop music and the computer world. All over the planet people know many English words, their pronunciation and meaning.

A language becomes a world language for one reason – the power of the people who speak it. Power means political, economic, technological, and cultural power. For historical reasons, English has achieved the position it has. English is an easy language to learn compared to, for example, Asian languages. Even major Romance languages, such as French and Spanish, English have simpler grammar, particularly simpler verb conjugations. English has no gender or number inflection for adjectives, articles, and adverbs.

Adopting English as the universal business language will not lead to the erosion of other cultures, here's why. Consider that Chinese culture that is not translated into English is only accessible to Chinese speakers. For all others, it's as good as lost. If future Chinese speakers keep writing in Chinese, more culture will be lost. But if everyone learns English, those Chinese writers can expose their culture to a much larger audience if they write in English.

Ironically, only English speakers are adversely affected by the adoption of English as the universal business language. This is because, while the rest of the world is striving to become bilingual, native English speakers will have no incentive to learn a second language. In the long run, it is much better on an individual basis to understand more than one language. But for the business world, one language should be used: English.

Common Business Language is Unfeasible

By Musafir

A common global business language is as metaphoric as a blissful romantic dream. It's not only quixotic, it is as illogical as wanting to have one nation, one race or one common thought. The concept of having one global language is nothing new. In fact L. L. Zamenhof created Esperanto specifically for this purpose at the end of the 19th century. Today, a majority of the world population is unaware of his effort.

Unfortunately, language is more divisive than race, religion and culture. Bangladesh was carved out of Pakistan in 1972 over the differences in language. Europe has never been united as one nation despite having a similar western culture because of language differences. The point I am trying to make here is that people do not want to lose their linguistic identity at any cost. Despite that European businesses have dominated the world since the industrial revolution.

A true language, business or otherwise, evolves in the environment we live in. The words spoken on different soils have different meanings just like having different flavors and varieties of fruits. We should realize that meaning is given to words in a cultural context rather than a dictionary definition. This means people from different cultures may use the same word to mean different things in different contexts, even when speaking the same language. A French person speaking English may say, "I should have more time to bend on your business" actually meaning to say, "I want to pay more attention to your business." A Japanese person speaking English may feel more comfortable saying "inconsiderable number of departments" instead of saying, "It is difficult to manage so many departments." A rural Indian speaking English may say, "what does your father go?" instead of saying, "none of your business."

Kalidas could not have created *Shakuntalam*, Shakespeare could not have written *Macbeth* and Homer could not have penned *Iliad* with the same mastery, lucidity and emotion if they had to write in a common global language. Consequently, the world simply would have simply been void of their brilliance and we would have been left with limited expressions such as "you know, OK, cool or you figure!."

A language can only evolve; it cannot be imposed. It takes thousands of years, myriads of folklores, traditions and habits to create expressions and give meaning to the words. Let us be united by speaking different languages rather than be divided by speaking a common global business language.

Languages of the World – Some Facts

Here are some facts about languages spoken on planet earth.

Most Widely spoken languages:

No one exactly knows for sure what is the most widely spoken language in the world. The figures can be construed in any way to change the fact, but this is much is true that the following are the top ten languages spoken on the planet (without going into ranking):

Rank Language	Speakers (millions)	Countries
1. Chinese, Mandarin	1,120	Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Singapore, S. Africa, Taiwan, Thailand
2. English	480	Australia, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Ireland, Israel, Lesotho, Liberia, Malaysia, Micronesia, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, S. Africa, Suriname, Swaziland, Tonga, U.K., U.S., Vanuatu, Zimbabwe, many Caribbean states, Zambia.
3. Spanish	332	Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Rep., Ecuador, El Salvador, Eq. Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Togo, Tunisia, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela.
4. Arabic	235	Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, UAE, Oman, Iraq, Lebanon
5. Bengali	189	Bangladesh, India, Singapore
6. Hindi	182	India, Nepal, Singapore, S. Africa, Uganda
7. Russian	180	Belarus, China, Estonia, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, U.S., Uzbekistan
8. Portuguese	170	Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, France, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe
9. Japanese	125	Japan, Singapore, Taiwan
10. German	98	Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Czech Rep., Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Slovakia

Families of Language

1. The Indo-European Family

The most widely studied family of languages and the family with the largest number of speakers. Languages include English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Russian, Greek, Hindi, Bengali; and the classical languages of Latin, Sanskrit, and Persian.

2. The Uralic Family

A family found in Europe (Hungarian, Finnish) and Siberia (Mordvin) with complex noun structures.

3. The Altaic Family

A family spread from Europe (Turkish) through Central Asia (Uzbek), Mongolia (Mongolian), to the Far East (Korean, Japanese). These languages have the interesting property of vowel harmony.

4. The Sino-Tibetan Family

An important Asian family of languages that includes the world's most spoken language, Mandarin. These languages are monosyllabic and tonal.

5. The Malayo-Polynesian Family

A family consisting of over 1000 languages spread throughout the Indian and Pacific Oceans as well South East Asia. Languages include Malay, Indonesian, Maori and Hawaiian.

6. The Afro-Asiatic Family

This family contains languages of northern Africa and the Middle East. The dominant languages are Arabic and Hebrew.

7. The Caucasian Family

A family based around the Caucas Mountains between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Georgian and Chechen are the main languages. They are known for their large number of consonants.

8. The Dravidian Family

The languages of southern India (in contrast to the Indo-European languages of northern India). Tamil is the best known of these languages.

9. Austro-Asiatic Family

This family are a scattered group of languages in Asia. They are found from eastern India to Vietnam. Languages include Vietnamese and Khmer.

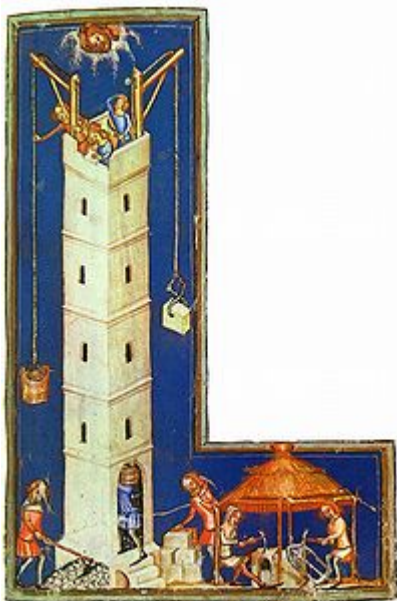
10. Niger-Congo Family

This family features the many languages of Africa south of the Sahara. The large number of languages include Swahili, Shona, Xhosa and Zulu.

Adopted Words in English

Modern English has adopted foreign words from a variety of languages. Although significant number of English words came from Latin and ancient Greek, it has been enriched by languages spoken in old English colonies around the world. For example, here are the English words adopted from languages spoken in India, mostly Hindi/Urdu)

The Story of Babel



1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Go

to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children built. 6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Word	Meaning
Aryan	Noble. The same root as 'Iran'. Originally referring to Indo-European peoples; later used by Germany to denote Germanic peoples.
bandanna	Dyed cloth. One of many cloth and clothing terms from Hindi.
banyan	Indian tree associated with the story of the Buddha.
basmati	A type of rice. One of many food terms from Hindi.
camphor	White aromatic substance.
chutney	A side dish for food.
coolie	Someone who carries load.
cummerbund	Closed waist.
guru	Hindu teacher.
Himalaya	Abode of Snow. Mountain range in India, Nepal and Tibet.
Jodhpurs	Riding breeches named after their town of origin.
juggernaut	Dominant. From 'Juganath', the name of an Indian god whose image gets carried around the town in a huge cart once a year.
jungle	Now used as another term for a thick forest.
lacquer	Colored varnish.
loot	Stolen goods.
mahout	Elephant driver.
mantra	Keyword, litany or chant.
musk	Scrotum. After the shape of the deer's scent bag.
nile	Blue. Egyptian river.
nirvana	Freedom from oblivion. State of bliss reached after the end of endless cycles of rebirth
punch	Five. As in the drink - from the five ingredients used.
pundit	Learned. As in a 'sporting pundit'. Used in the UK.
raja	King. Indian king or prince. UK rule in India became known as 'The Raj'.
swastika	Luck. The symbol for luck. It is found on Hindu and Buddhist temples in India.
sari	The distinctive wrap-around cloth worn by many women in India.
sentry	Armed guard.
thug	Cheat.

Thinking about Communication

By David Beagan

“What people don’t realize is that I’m faster than you think I am,” I heard a young man say on a TV show. I loved the delightful incongruity between “people” in the first part of the sentence and “you” in the last part. Unfortunately, I think the young man who said it had no idea how awkward it sounds, delightful or not, and how he could fix it. When he goes on a job interview, will he even be aware of how lack of ability with language will be viewed? We are all fallible. For example, I recently heard, “I am a risk taker and I have all of my life.” Probably a slip of the tongue, next time the speaker would undoubtedly say, “... and I have *been* all of my life.”

Or consider this example, heard recently, “I hope there is a golden retriever here,” uttered by someone upon arriving at a park to test a pet cleanup product. He meant to say golden retriever, but his brain substituted a different word. So yes, none of us are perfect. But more and more I observe people who are inept in their ability to communicate. Maybe as I have gotten older, I am more sensitive to these things. Sometimes in professional situations it seems people are struggling to get their point across – grasping for the right word, blathering on as if talking enough about ones thought might somehow be the same as actually communicating it. I understand that people are doing the best they can. But for those who may wish to do better, here are some thoughts on how we can all do better.

Let’s start right off with getting our mindset right. While almost none of us could be considered roles models for grammatical perfection, those who claim, “it doesn’t matter how I say something as long as I get my point across.” To me, they might as well be saying, “who cares if I am lazy?” How much time, effort, and money have been wasted because people think or assume that they understand one another when really they do not. Only later do they find out that they were not communicating well.

I remember, growing up, I had learned the bad habit of saying, “I *seen* it.” A work friend would repeatedly correct me, reminding me that I should say, “I *saw* it.” Eventually I broke the habit. Another I am still working on is saying “hissself.” No such word! Correct is of course, “himself.” I’m getting better, but still working on that one.

Here are some of my peeves with how people communicate to me. I sometimes hear people start off with a pronoun, as in, “she will be coming back in a minute.” Excuse me, who is *she*? If we haven’t been talking about someone, I cannot know who you are thinking of.

One of the foundations of being a good communicator is empathy. The ability for the speaker to put himself in the shoes of the listener. Always endeavoring to understand what the other person knows, what their viewpoint is, and how what is being said will be perceived. So many times I hear someone explain something to another person and think, that is a great explanation – for someone like you who already understands it! A lot of being a good verbal communicator involves being a good listener. While explaining, are you getting indicators of understanding: nods, “uh-huhs,” and an intent listener? Good. Or are you getting silence, and averted gaze, or other signs of disinterest? Not good.

I sometimes hear people exclaim, “can I finish” when interrupted. Generally it is thought of as rude to interrupt. I remember during one of the presidential campaigns that maverick candidate Ross Perot would sometimes, exclaim, “can I finish?” Now I am sure that in some cases he was justified in calling the interviewer on interrupting him. But it seemed he did it so much that one of the nighttime comedians would imitate him doing it and everyone would know who was being mocked. Mr. Perot would have better served his campaign by giving appropriately succinct answers in the time frame allotted and thus not inviting interviewers to cut him off. Too many politicians have perfected the fine art of the filibuster, filling the time with blather so that there is less time for them to be asked difficult questions. So I think the lesson on interruptions is, try not to, but if the other person is going on, and on, and on, politely ask to jump in, apologizing as necessary. Another technique, usually in a professional situation, is to write your question or comment so you don’t forget. It should almost go without saying, that as a speaker, if you don’t want to be interrupted keep your points on point, pause for questions, and do not monopolize the conversation.

Some parting points. Keep the language as simple as possible. A wise one once said, “brevity is the soul of wit.” Avoid using jargon unless you are certain the listener knows its meaning. A silent pause is always more effective than filling with “um,” “uh,” or “you know.” A smile and eye contact, can make up for myriad other deficiencies. Always be polite, respectful, and never condescending, especially in the face of anger. I think one of the greatest things I ever heard from Wayne Dyer was, when confronted with a choice of being right or being kind, always choose kindness.

India's Election and New Challenges

By Rajesh Jain

The verdict is in. A new United Progressive Alliance government has taken charge. With it comes the promise of a change for the better. The new government has the opportunity – and the challenge – to outline a bold vision for India, a vision that fires up the imagination of its people and the vitality of its entrepreneurs.

The new government has to credibly signal its commitment to addressing the major challenges facing India and enlist the support of the private sector in creating innovations for achieving goals that are big, visionary and bold. In the past, whenever allowed the freedom to do so, the Indian corporate sector has risen to the occasion and helped India's development. It is time once again for the Indian government to present corporate India with a set of truly transformational challenges.

Here is a small set of inter-related broad areas where change is urgently needed and which, with proper government support, Indian entrepreneurs and corporations will eagerly participate in.

- **Education:** India needs a radically different education system as the current one is dysfunctional and largely irrelevant in the modern context. In a world of rapid and accelerating change, the foundational skill is to learn how to learn. The education system has to produce life-long learners, which the current setup does not permit. Fortunately, a radical re-engineering is possible through the use of powerful tools presented by the revolution in information and communications technologies. To achieve this, institutional reform of the type that encourages private sector participation in education is necessary.
- **Energy:** Any economic activity, like all processes in the universe, depends on energy. Today's developed nations achieved their level of prosperity on cheap fossil fuels, an opportunity not available to India's 1.2 billion people. Fortunately, India is large enough to be able to leapfrog the fossil fuel stage by investing in the development and use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind. The required investment cannot be raised without leadership which convincingly articulates the vision.
- **Urbanization:** India's economic future depends on India's success at urbanizing its immense rural population. No economy has achieved even middle-income status without being mostly urban. What India needs is to make its agriculture more productive. The labor released from agriculture has to be provided training and opportunities in manufacturing and services sectors. It is important to distinguish between the development of rural areas and that of rural populations. The former is neither necessary nor sufficient for development; the latter is indispensable and can be achieved most effectively by urbanizing them. This challenge is the creation of new, livable cities that would lead the urbanization of the population needed for India's transition to an industrialized economy.
- **Transportation:** India is a large country with a large population. For the economy to prosper, people and goods have to be efficiently moved over large distances. India is approximately ten times as densely populated as the US. It therefore cannot afford the solution that works for the US for transporting people, namely, air travel. What India needs is a land-based system and more specifically a rail-based transportation system, both for goods and people. The technology exists for super-efficient, super-fast rail systems. India has to seriously invest in that and replace the century-old current railway system. Furthermore, within cities, India needs to have an efficient public transit system and not take the unsustainable, car-centered approach.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** Although India has one of the world's cheapest and extensive mobile networks for voice communications, its data networks are quite inadequate. India needs to make serious and large investments to upgrade its digital wireline and wireless networks to create a high-speed, ubiquitous envelope of data connectivity across the nation. This is what will spur the creation of the next-generation of entrepreneurial outfits creating world-leading applications and services for the domestic market.
- **Governance:** India has to make judicious use of its financial capital. The problem is that the current leaky system does not allow the most effective and efficient use of those resources. What is needed is to leverage technology in better governance through citizen participation. Technology can enable citizen oversight of public spending and enforce accountability. Innovations such as smart national ID cards and eVoting can increase participation in democratic processes.

India has a limited window of opportunity for getting its policies right so it can participate successfully in a globally very competitive world. It missed many previous opportunities but cannot afford to miss this one. The time has come for government and corporate India to come together to Think Big and drive the disruptive innovations that India so urgently needs to move rapidly up the development ladder.

Answers to Mental Exercise from Page 17

What am I?

the letter 'h'

Spacey Sentence

Is a boardroom takeover countdown underway?

Famous Scramble

relith	Hitler
won ten	Newton
looser vet	Roosevelt
rose scat	Socrates
peon loan	Napoleon
girl bend	Lindberg
no side	Edison

Think-Do-Ku

H	K	U	B	C	T	N	L	I
C	L	B	I	N	K	H	U	T
N	T	I	U	H	L	B	K	C
B	H	L	C	K	U	T	I	N
I	N	K	H	T	B	U	C	L
U	C	T	L	I	N	K	B	H
T	U	C	K	L	H	I	N	B
K	I	N	T	B	C	L	H	U
L	B	H	N	U	I	C	T	K

Truth Through Punctuation

Add the correct punctuation to the following, to make it both grammatically correct *and* truthful:
[there are twelve letters in this sentence](#)

Special Sentence

Each word of the sentence has one more letter than the previous word.

Puzzling Quotes

Abraham Lincoln

How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg? Four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg.

Dr. Suess

Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

Albert Einstein

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

Sigmund Freud

Analogies, it is true, decide nothing, but they can make one feel more at home.

John F. Kennedy

Man is still the most extraordinary computer of all.

Tri-Bond

All relate to phases of the Moon.

Word Math

$$\begin{array}{r} 653924 \\ + 653924 \\ \hline 1307848 \end{array}$$

Wake Up America

Continued from Page 6

The local taxpayers did not have to hire German-speaking translators to teach him in school (as is done in my school district). He was named John, not Johanne. His older brother was called Charles, not Carl and the youngest Fred, not Gothfred. Diversity was non-existent in his home as the family readily forsook their German culture for the American culture of their adopted country.

Why do so many of today's Americans believe we must kowtow to the assorted cultures and languages of immigrants? A diverse society is a complex, expensive and often antagonistic society. I do not advocate that immigrants from other lands cast aside their cultures. I heartily endorse their enjoyment of homeland traditions, but we should urge and teach them American ways. They did come here to be Americans. I welcome all legal immigrants to America, but I expect them to adopt our American culture and traditions and our English language.

The Nazis are castigated for killing six million Jews – and rightly so. Their actions were despicable. Meanwhile, as reported by Dennis Prager, a renowned, respected radio talk host and syndicated columnist (who is Jewish), more than 100 million people were killed by communists in China, the former Soviet Union and Cambodia. These killings are rarely mentioned, although many times worse than the killings by that dastardly Adolf Hitler. Why do many Americans give communists a free pass?

I will close with a quotation of Alan Keyes, a black, Catholic conservative who ran for president in 2000 and lost the Senate race in Illinois to President Barack Obama: "Obama is a radical communist, and I think it is becoming clear. That is what I told people in Illinois and now everybody realizes it's true. He is going to destroy this country and we are going to stop him or the United States of America is going to cease to exist."

Language of Medicine

By Niru Prasad

Does going to see the doctor cause you anxiety? White washed walls, lots of formidable looking equipment, nurses and staff in uniforms, and having to put your body in the hands of another human being can all be nerve racking. Their explanations about the issue at hand can be even more confusing. Therefore, if you arm yourself with some basic medical terminology when going to see a health care professional you can reduce some of that stress. You will be able to ask more informed questions and feel more comfortable about your visit.

Origins: It is estimated that about three-fourth of our medical terminology is of Greek origin. Since Greeks were the founders of rational medicine in the golden age of Greek civilization in the 5th Century BC, the Hippocratic School and later on GALEN (Greeks from Asia minor who lived in Rome in the 2nd century AD) formulated the theories which dominated medicine up to the beginning of the 18th century. The Hippocrates were the first to describe diseases based on observations and the names given by them to many conditions are still used today. For example arthritis, nephritis, pleuritis – the word “itis” means inflammation. The Greek terms came into the English language through the Latin. The Romans used the Latin alphabet. This generally corresponds to Greek except a few exceptions – for example, Greek “kranion” is translated in English or Latin as “cranium” for skull.

Medical terminology is heard largely in Greek and Latin languages. Some terms are based upon the supposed function of a part. For example, the first cervical vertebra in the neck supporting the head is named as “Atlas” for the famous Greek titan. Latin has accounted for a majority of root words in the English language. Other older roots of medical terminology have their origins in Arabic due to the fact that Arabic scholars were important teachers of medicine. Simplified versions of medical terminology has been derived from Greek, Latin and Arabic for the past half century.

Medical Terms: Medical terms have three basic components – the prefix, the root word, and the

suffix. These three basic components can be used in a variety of ways such as:

Bi – two

Cardio – heart

Hemo – blood

Gastro – stomach

Pnea – breathing

Cardiology – study of heart

Cephalalgis – headaches

Appendectomy – appendix removal

Bronchitis – inflammation of bronchus

Dyspnea – difficulty breathing

Aden – gland

Kranion -- skull

Derma – skin

Stoma – mouth

Trauma – wound

Absorb – take up fluid

Adenopathy – enlarged lymph node

Allergic reaction – rash, trouble breathing

Anemia – decreased red blood cells and low blood count

Some new medical terminology as spoken by lay people is as follows:

Blood clogs - nasty little buggers that are treated as Coumadin

Baby daddy – not a father, not a husband, just a sperm donor

Bumps on the cookie box – is it herpes? Is it warts? Or is it just an infected hair follicle?

The more familiar you make yourself with the basic terms used by health care professionals, the less anxious you will feel during your visit. It is impossible to mention the countless lay terms for the language of medicine. However, if you are interested in learning more, please reference the sites below. These sites are not endorsed by the author.

www.webMD.com

www.myelectronicMD.com

www.merck.com

www.NEJM.org

Mental Exercise

Puzzling about Language

By David Beagan

What am I?

You will find me in nothing
 You will find me in everything
 I am the beginning of happiness
 And the end of wrath
 Without me all shame would be the same.

Spacey Sentence

Add or remove spaces from this sentence to make sense of it:
 Is aboard room take overcount downunder way?

Famous Scramble

Consider the letters:

sing no thaw

You can rearrange the letters to spell the name of a famous person.

Washington

Can you find seven more famous (one infamous) people, one in each box?

relith
won ten
looser vet
rose scat
peon loan
girl bend
no side

Think-Do-Ku

Each row, column and 3x3 square contains the letters of "THINKCLUB" exactly once. Can you fill in all of the missing letters?

	K			C			L	
C			I	N			U	T
	T		U					
B		L	C	K	U	T	I	
I								L
	C	T	L	I	N	K		H
					H		N	
K	I			B	C			U
	B			U			T	

Truth Through Punctuation

Add the correct punctuation to the following, to make it both grammatically correct *and* truthful:

There are twelve letters in this sentence

Special Sentence

There is something quite out of the ordinary going on with the following sentence, what is it?

I do not know where family doctors acquired illegibly perplexing handwriting, nevertheless extraordinary pharmaceutical intellectuality counterbalancing indecipherability transcendentalizes intercommunications incomprehensibleness.

Puzzling Quotes

Match each person on the left with the quote on the right.

Abraham Lincoln	Man is still the most extraordinary computer of all.
Dr. Suess	Imagination is more important than knowledge."
Albert Einstein	How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg? Four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg.
Sigmund Freud	Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.
John F. Kennedy	Analogies, it is true, decide nothing, but they can make one feel more at home.

Tri-Bond

What common thing unites each of these three:

1. Waxing Gibbous
2. Waxing Crescent
3. Waning Gibbous

Word Math

Substitute each letter with a digit and make the following summation come out correctly:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{COUPLE} \\
 + \text{COUPLE} \\
 \hline
 \text{QUARTET}
 \end{array}$$

Answers on Page 15

Language of Gesture

By Bala Prasad

Much has been said in this edition about effective communication, and universal languages. But in my opinion there is a universal non-verbal language that everybody understands. The language of touch for example – a slap on the face, without words, conveys anger and contempt in every culture. A hug, by contrast, a soft kiss, a gentle hand on the shoulder – this non-verbal communication tells the recipient, I love you, I understand you, I sympathize with you. And, regardless of the words we speak and the language in which we speak it, all of us, from the moment we are born, understand what it means to be held, kissed, and loved. Even my newest grandson, just nine months, prefers to sit next to me on the sofa, where he feels the warmth of my body, than by himself on the floor.

There is also the language of aroma – smelling fresh flowers, for example, or potpourri (a favorite of my wife), is going to brighten one's day much more than the smell of a skunk. An aroma can also communicate where we are – like at a gas station, or the ocean, or an Italian restaurant. And, in the case of my newest grandson, a smell may communicate when his diaper needs to be changed! Walking into a home filled with the aroma of baking bread will always be more inviting than walking into a home filled with the smell of new paint. This would be true in any culture.

And what about the language of basic human expression? Laughter is a universal expression of joy, just as tears are a universal expression of deep, deep sorrow. A smile, a frown, eyes open, eyes closed – every facial expression communicates how we feel at that given moment, regardless of what we say. Tone of voice is also a valuable – and universal – way to communicate. If you were to hear a father and son communicate in a different tongue, you would know instantly from their tone of voice whether the father was approving or disapproving of the child's behavior – even if you did not know what the father was saying. Tone of voice can also relay that you are bored, unimpressed, or skeptical, as well as that you are excited or enthusiastic.

Studies reveal that non-verbal communication conveys 93 percent of what you mean to say. In other words, when your expression says one thing and your words another, people believe the body language. We often show our attitudes through non-verbal expression. For example, body posture and walk tell us a lot about a person. Standing straight shows confidence. Slouching shows insecurity. It also shows disrespect – as if you don't care. Crossing your arms over your chest shows you have a

closed mind – that you are uninterested in the opinion of others. It can be viewed as a confrontational stance – as if you are telling the other person, "I don't believe a word you say." It can also mean that you are protecting yourself. Arms at your side show openness. Walking is body posture in motion. Your walk should be different at home than at work. At work, you should walk quickly – like you are ready and eager to work. At home, your walk should be relaxed, maybe even slower. You should not be in a hurry.

In the business world, hand gestures and eye contact are essential forms of non-verbal communication. Nobody wants to do business with a person who has a flimsy handshake. It suggests weakness. Clammy hands might also make you question the person – why are they so sweaty? What makes them so nervous? As for eye contact, looking somebody squarely in the eye will instill trust and confidence even in the absence of words – just as avoiding eye contact with somebody may make you question their sincerity.

There are also body gestures that have universal meaning regardless of language or culture. Shrugging your shoulders tells people you don't know, or you don't care. Rolling your eyes is an even ruder way to convey your apathy without saying a word. Tapping a foot shows impatience. A hand on your hips shows frustration. Of course there are certain body gestures – like crossing oneself or folding one's hands in prayer – which are immediately recognized and understood in every culture.

So, the next time you are in a foreign country or surrounded by people who speak a different language, look for other ways to communicate with them – your handshake, your eye contact, your facial expression. Are you smiling? Do you appear nervous? Stand up straight, look the other person in the eye. If you look confident, people will believe you are confident – without ever speaking a word. However, none is so blind who refuses to see; none is so deaf who refuses to hear and none is so indifferent who refuses to understand these non-verbal languages.

Sincerely,

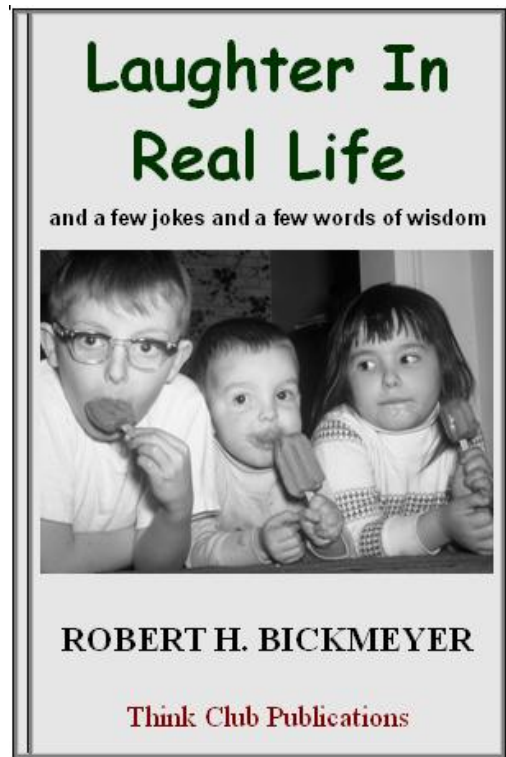
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