

Daily  
Nebraskan

Editorial Board  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Amy Edwards, Editor, 472-1766  
Lee Rood, Editorial Page Editor  
Jane Hirt, Managing Editor  
Brandon Loomis, Associate News Editor  
Brian Svoboda, Columnist  
Bob Nelson, Columnist  
Jerry Guenther, Senior Reporter

## Quibbles 'n' Bits

Schools report survey results, protests

The Nuprin Pain Report, the first national study on pain in the United States, reported that more people 18-24 suffer from stress and pain than any other adult age group. Findings showed that more young people experience pain than those over 65. The report said college students are among the biggest worriers, and these worries lead to stress, which can manifest itself physically. According to the report, the most common causes of stress for college students include too much to do in too little time, exams, financial worries, relationships and family pressures.

-- The Daily Collegian  
Pennsylvania State University

A former Kansas University student began a hunger strike Nov. 1 because he said the Kansas Civil Rights Commission denied his civil right to file a retaliation complaint against a Lawrence, Kan. corporation.

Fred Markham, 40, who left KU after 1979, said he will continue his hunger strike until the KCRC agrees to accept his complaint.

Markham is a freelance writer who filed an employment discrimination complaint with the KCRC and the Lawrence Human Relations Commission because, he said, he was discriminated against because of his disability. He has cerebral palsy, which causes impaired muscular power and coordination from brain damage.

Markham said he had applied for a job with the Kansas company, but suspected he was being discriminated against when another applicant was chosen for the job. That person, he said, applied for the job past the application deadline.

-- The University Daily Kansan  
University of Kansas

About 30 students at the University of Arizona protested military research on their campus, and demanded it be stopped.

A group called SCAN, Students for Creative Action Now, marched Oct. 25 in front of a science building where they believe Star Wars (Strategic Defense Initiative) research is carried out.

Their demands included: that all Strategic Defense Initiative research be kept off Mount Graham; that the UA declare a moratorium on all military development; and that UA's administration institute a "conflict studies program" that would focus on studying peace.

-- Arizona Daily Wildcat  
University of Arizona

## BMW's top 'tired of' list

This letter is in response to nothing, yet again, to everybody. I'm sick and tired, tired of seeing college kids driving 1987 and newer cars of the BMW, Datsun, Mazda, etc. type. Better call daddy and thank him once again. I'm tired of seeing students wearing \$80 shirts and \$150 jean jackets. Are they still taking applications where you work? I'm tired of jocks in bars who leer and take up space, then urinate on lawns or in the street and laugh. It's not funny. That urine was once your brain. I'm tired of walking into the only bar downtown that carries non-alcoholic beer and being surrounded by pretentious about not being pretentious "intellectuals," all wearing black. And, "yes, blond is the natural color of my hair." And I'm sick and tired of grecks.

I'm sick and tired of grossly overpriced Nebraska Union food with the nutritional value of lard. I'm tired of eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I'm tired of paying bills. I'm tired of having the smallest room in our apartment. And I'm sick and tired of Milli Vanilli, Janet Jackson, Phil

Collins... and the rest of that garbage they play on the far right side of my radio dial.

I'm sick and tired of gay rights! Just what are you clamoring for? I don't care. Just don't include me, thank you. I'm tired of the pro-choice/anti-abortion thing. Just let the woman decide to have he/she, or in many cases, it, not some geriatric, impotent, martini-soaked judge. I'm tired of the drug war. Listen George and Bennett, legalize and advertise then we can all safely pollute our minds. If I were a poor kid, living in the gutter, in the shadow of quarter-million dollar homes, I'd sell crack too instead of mowing Richie's lawn for a fiver. I'm tired of government biggies being arrested, then writing books about the ordeal and making a mint. I'm tired of Joan, Sally Jesse whatever, Geraldo, Phil, Barbara and soon-to-be-fat-again Oprah. And I'm sick and tired of people telling me that Christmas is now called the holidays, not Christmas anymore, HUH?

Kurt Krugerud  
senior  
education



## Definitions vary from mind to mind

Communication doomed from start; misinterpretations inevitable

I'd like to start this column with a little language experiment. I'm going to present to you two pieces of text, each with its own strange, poetic beauty:

1) An eagle flies high; it flies higher than a seagull. But the crow wings rapidly from tree to bush to hedge. The same can be true of life and of death. Sometimes life flies high, sometimes death wings rapidly. Sometimes it is said that death wings from tree to bush to hedge. Sometimes, it does not.

2) When a sperm and an egg go together to make a baby, they touch at two contact points; they fuse. It's like nuclear fusion except it's human fusion. There is a mass loss of a proton in the form of a heat abstraction. One heat abstraction goes up, and the electron spins around and comes down into the proton to form the mind, and the mind can be reduced to one atom.

One of these passages emanated from the mind of a human being (although a schizophrenic one, mind you). The other from a computer program -- it was constructed in a strict algorithmic fashion. Can you identify the non-human paragraph?

No big deal, really. Both are a bit off the beaten path that the unwashed hordes define as "normal." But it does bring us to the issue of what we term human communication. What is it? Given that we accept the above examples as language, then we must interpret both as an attempt at communication.

Basic form: the passing of an idea from one mind to another. Right. Well, let's talk about that. The idea you wish to impart must go through your own subconscious and conscious filtration process. What happened the last time you tried to share this idea? How do you judge your audience's capacity to accept the words? Should you sacrifice your true intent? Your behavior changes to keep yourself on that socially accepted, whitebread side of life.

OK, so once you figure out the rudimentary language you need to use to share your idea, you put it into words. Since we are in Middle America, it is reasonably safe to assume English. Now, is your idea of a word the same as mine? Not even close.

Language is more complex than that. It is not a static object, it is a

dynamic process, and even the definitions contained within a dictionary are (at best) limited approximations of the concepts that exist in the minds of individuals. We add flavors -- shadings to words -- as we add experiences to our lives.

As a child, love was defined as your favorite cereal. As young adults, hopefully by now it's changed. At any rate, the concepts we carry around in our heads cannot be forced into the neat, tidy packages offered by dictionary definitions.

Pohl  
Longsine



But, more importantly, the words may not carry the same connotations to you. The perfect example of this is "friend." To some, it may mean a close sharing of experiences -- someone for whom you would take a bullet. To others it might mean the person they sit next to in History of American Stupidity 400.

Communication is doomed from the beginning, and I have yet to mention the purposefully deceptive shadings to our language. Not to slam too hard on our political establishment, but they have given us so many. Can you say TAXES? No? Well, then try "revenue enhancements." Or "police action," instead of "Yeah, we're kicking some butt in that little war." (So much more erudite in tone, don't you agree?) The Reagan and Bush administrations have taught us that people don't lie anymore -- they misspeak. Moreover, materialism is "a taste for the finer things," Contras are Freedom Fighters, and even a zygote is a baby.

But, this kind of language-fiddling is not limited to political arenas. And it does not always intimate (that's a verb, plebes -- look it up) criminal intent. If you're caught with a beer in a dorm room (they call them residence halls now), you are "documented" -- not "written up." The labels given to people with handicaps

have evolved to "physically challenged" and now to "differently abled."

Which label do they prefer? The answer to this question lies within the individual -- in their own personal lexicon. Language is deeply personal; the ideas lie within the mind of the speaker.

Or do they? The first passage above seems to contain at least a thread of meaning, but it's all in your head. It was created without the honor of having come from a mind at all. It was generated by a crude artificial intelligence program.

This raises a question: How much of the meaning in what we write lies in the language itself? Or perhaps more importantly: How much lies within the mind of the reader?

All too much, if you ask me. I think that this might be why people are misled so easily. It might even explain why some people can read the convoluted philosophical ramblings of weak thinkers, and leave with a sense of enlightenment.

The deck is stacked against communication taking place between people.

As a columnist, my subject matter is limited to ideas that might not be considered too esoteric. I am encouraged to write about things that the "average" person would like to read. (Think fast: Name something that the apathetic masses care about.) I filter my ideas as they go to the page, trying to avoid using certain words that are beautifully descriptive, but unprintable.

The piece is read by my editors who mutter "discombobulated," and fight the temptation to print Mike Royko, and then the copy editors have the chance to put their grimy little hands all over it.

In the end, it is read and misinterpreted by somebody whose mind filters it on the way in. Then that somebody says, "Oh, look, he ended a sentence with a preposition!"

What this says to me is that attempts at communication seemed to be destined for failure from the outset. Sometimes it seems that there is little point in even trying.

Do you follow me?

Longsine is a senior computer science and mathematics major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.