Every reader expects a writer to express himself as clearly and directly as he can. Thus, when he encounters language which seems unnecessarily difficult, he should do the following: 1) find out what is said--by use of context, dictionary, and brains; 2) try to restate the meaning in simpler forms without changing any essential ideas. If the reader succeeds in doing these two steps, it means that there is no need for the language to be difficult in order to save space or because the idea is complex. On the other hand, if after a great deal of effort spent on simplifying the language of the passage has failed, it can prove that the difficult wording which the author used was necessary. The only thing the reader could do is to try to understand the author by learning his terminology. But if the author's use of difficult language was not justified, the following inferences may be drawn:

1. The writer's mind does not function clearly and precisely, and his writing reflects this fact.

2. The writer's mind may function properly, but he believes that he can convey his ideas only by the use of big words and roundabout expressions.

3. The writer knows that he should not use words that are too big for his ideas but uses them anyway because he wants to impress his reader.

4. The writer deliberately uses such language to hide something--perhaps his own ignorance or an idea which would not be approved of by his audience if it is to be expressed plainly.

5. The writer who uses an unnecessarily wordy or obscure style may not be sensitive to the beauty of language. Writing that is full of polysyllabic words and clusters of phrases are often offensive to the ear.

One element that causes unnecessarily difficult language is the use of *jargon* which is defined as "talk that is considered both ugly sounding and hard to understand; applied especially to the sectional vocabulary of a science, class, sect, trade, or profession, full of technical terms...and the use of long words, circumlocution, and other clumsiness." (Fowler, *Modern English Usage*). It is a kind of bad writing which tends to use the roundabout expression rather than the direct one. The unnecessary long word is used instead of the short, the high-sounding word preferred over the plain one, the abstract term in place of the concrete, and the noun instead of the verb. Jargon is also familiarly known as "*gobbledygook* ." This term was coined by Congressman Maury Maverick of Texas, who used it to refer specifically to the prose used by government officials. Now this term is applied to all unnecessarily involved language whether in government, business, or in the learned professions.

Jargon:

1 Wordiness

The most obvious form of jargon is "Dead Wood"--words and phrases that add nothing to the meaning of the sentence or that could be simplified. In stead of letting the reader follow the train of thought smoothly, dead wood forces constant and unnecessary detours. "*The condition of* redundancy *that exists* in *such a great number of* themes *produced by* college undergraduates should be eliminated by every means *that lies at the disposal of* the person who teaches them." The words italicized are redundant or unnecessary. When revised, the sentence reads, "The redundancy found in so many college students' themes should be eliminated by every means known to the teacher," which is much improved. Among the most common or most frequently used stereotyped phrases or space-

wasters are *due to* (or *in view of*), *the* fact *that (because*), and *despite the* fact that (although). Instead of saying *The fact* that *he was sick* made him unable to attend class, one can simply say, His *sickness* made him unable to attend class. The following are some clusters of dead wood, together with their simple equivalents:

in the matter of (in respect to)	about
a long period of time	a long time
in the capacity of	as
resembling in nature	like
in many instances	often

Another sort of wordiness is one which uses a whole verb phrase instead of a single verb which would do as well, or better:

make an attempt	try
reach a decision	decide
met with the approval of Jack	Jack approved
signed an agreement providing for	agreed to
announced himself to be in favor of	said he favored
it is the belief of	he believes
will be host to.....at a party	will give a party for
paid a compliment to	complimented
in the process of being	is being
exhibits a tendency	t e n d s

Not much confusion is caused by the use of such roundabout expressions; the trouble is that they waste space and the reader's time unnecessarily.

The jargonist's tendency to use big words where shorter ones would do as well is a more serious matter. Though short words are not always better than long ones, if the longer word conveys the idea more precisely than the shorter, it must be used. However, the jargon-addict is fascinated by the unnecessary polysyllable. Some of the polysyllabic words used instead of the more simple ones are:

activate	form/establish
inactivate	disband/shut down
personnel	employees
procurement	buying something
personnel procurement	hiring new help
personnel counselor	student adviser
directive	order
implement	carry out (an order)
expedite	hurry up
process	attend to
integrate	join/adjust (plans)

Jargon of this kind has clogged communication in business and government for many years. Closely associated with it is a vocabulary of stock words such as *setup* which is conveniently used to fill the gap when one is too busy to *think* of the words *situation , scheme , arrangement , or plan* . Another word is *picture . "Do you* get the *picture* ?"≈ *"Do you* understand?"; "Let me fill *you* in on the over all *picture* ."="Let me give you asummary. "; "What's *the picture* ?"="What's the situation?"

The picture we have here is that in many organizational setups the personnel, particularly at the junior-executive level, tend to act like robots when they are contacting other personnel and treat them as robots, too. The language they use is the language of the machine: standardized and impersonal. It suggests that the human touch has no place in business.

3 Overworked Nouns

Another element of jargon is the overuse of nouns and the accompanying neglect of verbs. Actually, in all written and spoken discourses, verbs furnish the power by which the sentence moves. They function like locomotives which pull along the nouns (cars) which have no power of their own. But sometimes the locomotive is given too heavy a load to pull and so it stalls a bit. "The EFFECT of the OVERUSE of NOUNS in WRITING *is* the PLACING of too much STRAIN upon the inadequate NUMBER of VERBS and the resultant PREVENTION of MOVEMENT of the THOUGHT." Here, you can see that only one verb is used, followed by many nouns and noun phrases. The presence of so many nouns requires one to use many prepositional phrases, especially those beginning with *of* , that a smooth rhythm cannot be achieved. If some of the noun phrases are replaced by clauses, with verbs added, then the load will be evenly shared: "One who overuses nouns in writing places too much strain upon the verbs and thus prevents the thought from moving along."

Many of the favorite nouns used by businessmen, lawyers, and specialized writers end in *-tion* , *-ity* , *-ment* , *-ness* , and *-ance* . Words ending with these suffixes do not sound too pleasant, and if used to excess they will be hard on the ear.

"Merely to enumerate these five outstanding characteristics of an urban community namely, chaotic stimulation, mechanization,

impersonalization, commercialization, and complexity of organization, suggests many implications for the city school." (From an article in the *Elementary School Journal*, XLIII (1942-1943), 17.)

Another abuse of language is the habit of piling noun upon noun, sometimes intermixed with adjectives, without any preposition to connect them. This kind of usage can be seen in headlines and advertisements: SLUM PROJECT FINANCE PLAN ANSWER SOUGHT (an answer to the finance plan of the slum project is sought) ; the Canning Machinery Manufacturers Industry Advisory Committee of the National Production Authority (the Advisory Committee of the Canning Machinery Manufacturers under the National Production Authority; the Perishable Agricultural Products Processing Equipment Manufacturers Institute (Institute of the Manufacturers of the Processing Equipment of Perishable Products).

4 The Overused Passive

Another prominent aspect of jargon is the overused passive construction. The passive voice is usually less effective than the active. In saying "a letter is dictated" attention is fixed on the act itself, which is difficult to visualize because it is an abstraction. If we say "Mr. Thomas dictates a letter," attention is fixed on the concrete presence of someone who is performing the act. The sentence "The redundancy found in so many college students' themes should be eliminated by every means known to the teacher." can be made more vigorous by getting rid of the weak passive ("eliminate"): "The teacher should use every method he knows to get rid of the redundancy found in so many college students' themes."

However, the passive voice has its uses the same as other grammatical constructions. In particular, it allows one to express ideas without attributing them to a specific personal source. That is why it is so

widely used in government communications since the individual officials do not have to be held responsible for the decisions or opinions expressed because they are presumed to be those of the bureau or agency as a whole. While the use of the passive can be perfectly appropriate according to well-established convention, like in writing of a scientific nature, its indiscriminate use can be a sign of moral weakness. Anyone who does not want to assume personal responsibility for his statements may use it because it is a convenient way out of a tight spot. By writing "It is the opinion of the company" instead of "I think" the writer is suggesting that what he is saying is not his own opinion and thus he is not responsible for it.

5 Professional Jargon

Since every profession has its own special ideas, methods, materials, and tools, it must have a special vocabulary to designate these things. A doctor must use the medical vocabulary which may seem unintelligible to the layman, otherwise he cannot speak concisely and accurately of such things as diagnoses, medicines, symptoms, without wasting time speaking indirectly. Moreover, most medical terms are free from emotional connotations associated with so many of the common words used to describe the parts, functions, and diseases of the body that may involve problems of modesty, taste, and intense repulsion.

Other occupational vocabularies are also necessary. They enable people who work in special fields to think more precisely when working so they can communicate with their fellow workers with the greatest possible exactness. On the other hand, the use of technical language in dealing with a non technical audience is inappropriate and inefficient. Thus, technical language should only be used at times when there is no other way of

concise, exact communication. It should not be used to disguise simple thoughts by those who wish to impress the layman. It is in the fields of sociology and education that technological terms are sometimes used in extreme. Instead of saying plainly that "More and more city people are moving to the suburbs" the sociologist would say "In recent years there has been discernible in the urban population an accelerating tendency toward decentralization into the adjacent semirural areas." Writers for educational journals would speak of "instructional personnel" when they refer to *teachers* , and "homes of low socioeconomic status" when what they really mean is poor *homes .* The following is a classic anecdote on the inappropriate use of technical language:

A foreign-born plumber in New York City wrote to the Federal Bureau of Standards that he had found hydrochloric acid did a good job of cleaning out clogged drains.

The bureauwrote: "The efficacy of hydrochloric acid is indisputable, but the corrosive residue is incompatible with metallic   permanence."

The plumber replied he was glad the bureau agreed.

Again   the   bureau   wrote: "We   cannot   assume responsibility for the production of toxic and noxious residue with hydrochloric acid and suggest you use an alternative procedure."

The plumber was happy again at bureau agreement with his idea.

Then the bureau wrote: "Don't use hydrochloric acid. It eats hell out of the pipes."

Exercise 1

Rewrite the following sentences by substituting the underlined words with more simple words which carry the same meanings.

1. Tom works in that company <u>in the capacity of</u> manager.

_____

2. I have been waiting for you for <u>a long period of time</u>.

_____

3. He said some bad things <u>in respect to</u> his boss.

_____

4. <u>Resembling me in nature</u> , my brother is kind-hearted.

_____

5. <u>In many instances</u> we tend to follow our hearts than our heads.

_____

6. She <u>made an attempt</u> to sew a dress for her sister.

_____

7. Have you <u>reached a decision</u> on that matter?

_____

8. Breakfast is <u>in the process of</u> being prepared.

_____

9. He <u>announced himself to be in favor of</u> the new plan.

_____

10. Jack <u>paid a compliment to</u> the chef.

_____

Exercise 2

Use the passive voice to make the following sentences impersonal.

1. I think this class needs to be more energetic.

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2. I believe Tom is an untrustworthy person.

---

3. I suggest that we move to the next question.

---

4. I declare the story to be untruthful.

5.1 direct that you follow my orders.