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# Should Bad Grammar Be Banned?

**A**N ANONYMOUS reader sends a note calling attention to a lapse in grammar in this column and suggesting that "bad grammar be banned."

Another who professed to be a teacher of high school journalism dislikes the style of paragraphing used, apparently unaware of imperfections in the writer's letter.

We plead *nolo contendere*. We speak and often write "Oklahomaese"; not purist English. Kent Ruth calls expressions peculiar to this state "Oklahomaisms," but "Oklahomaese" seems to be somewhat more inclusive of our colloquial deviations from precise grammar.

The objective of language is to communicate, and this may be accomplished if words used convey the meaning of the speaker or writer to the listener or reader with reasonable accuracy.

There is, therefore, good reason for idealists to urge perfection in usage of our national language, but these people must feel terribly frustrated nowadays.

Our country has drifted into a po-

lyglot of bilingual schools, black English, profanity and vulgarisms, bureaucratese, trade talk, technological jargon, legalese, peer group slang and other variations from our official language, which is called English.

Such differences are not new. Previously, this nation had a mixture of Old World tongues, Indian tribal languages and regional dialects resulting from blending of words and symbols of settlers.

A recently reported study by the National Center for Educational Statistics in Washington showed that an average of only 95 minutes per day is spent teaching reading in the kindergarten through the fourth grade. This decreases in higher grades.

Apparently, most youngsters spend considerably more time than that watching TV, where pure English may not be the official language used in cartoons, westerns, comedies or dirty movies.

A New Jersey professor, Richard Mitchell, publishes a newsletter, "The Underground Grammarian," in which he attacks misuse of the En-

glish language. He probably has no trouble finding targets.

Mitchell says careless, non-reading, non-comprehending graduates take jobs with power companies, manufacturers and other firms where failure to understand complex directions or to communicate properly may lead to costly mistakes or tragic accidents.

During the New Deal era a politician called bureaucratic verbiage "gobbledegook" but the apt label did little toward eliminating it. The government doled out \$2.4 million in grants last year to improve writing skills but few bureaucrats attended classes.

Business is trying to simplify and clarify communications. Many firms send their executives to special schools or bring in experts to help them write more understandable instructions, reports and letters.

It is important that we Americans speak the same language and understand its meaning. We concur with our critics that "bad grammar should be banned" in favor of greater comprehension.