

# Memo to Members

The newsletter of the Orlando Central Florida Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication



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## May 2012

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# Memo to Members



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To view details about a particular event, hover your mouse over the highlighted date. To RSVP, click on the highlighted date.

Regular Meeting		ADCO Meeting		Special Event		
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
April 2012						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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				1	2	3
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## From the Editor's Desk



Alex Garcia

Hello friends and members of the Orlando Chapter STC!

Welcome to another exciting issue of Memo to Members.

Many of our chapter leaders and members will be traveling to the "Windy City" later this month, to partake in Deep Dish Pizza, Italian Beef Sandwiches, and—of course—Chicago style hot dogs with all the fixin's. Oh and they'll also be there for the 2012 STC Summit (STC's 59th Annual Conference) which takes place May 20–23rd. At the Summit, the Orlando Central Florida Chapter will officially be recognized as a *Community of Distinction*, for a record setting 6th time. If you are traveling to the Summit, I'll be looking for some on-site reports for next month's issue (and you can earn those last-minute Active Member points!). Want the scoop on everything STC Summit? Head on over to: <http://summit.stc.org/>.

This issue, we look back on a very special April Awards Gala, which featured the High School Writing Competition Awards and the Melissa Pellegrin Memorial Scholarship presentation. Speaking of Melissa, we have a very special article written by her, and submitted by her family. Truly a special moment here at Memo to Members. Enjoy!

Are you on Facebook? "Like" the Orlando Chapter STC at: [Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC on Facebook](#)

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Do YOU have an article you'd like to submit for Memo to Members? Don't be shy... email me at [newsletter@stc-orlando.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-orlando.org) You will get an Active Member point for your submission

Until next month,

Alex Garcia

Editor

Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC Memo to Members

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## President's Corner

By Karen Lane  
President  
Orlando Central Florida Chapter  
STC

Today I'll be reviewing recent chapter news and foreshadowing a bit of upcoming information.

Want to post a job opening? You

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### NOT A MEMBER?

Want more information on being an STC Orlando Chapter member? You can contact our Membership Manager, David Coverston, by [clicking here](#). Your first meeting is free!

### ACTIVE MEMBER SHIRTS

Want to be in the running for an Active Member polo shirt? You can contact our Active Members Manager, W.C. Wiese, by [clicking here](#).

### RISING STARS



Want to help our Chapter in support of our educational outreach initiative? You can make a tax-free donation. Just click on the above image for more information.

### STC ORLANDO LOGO ITEMS



Show your STC Orlando pride by purchasing an item imprinted with the STC Orlando logo! Click on the above image to see the catalogue and/or to place an order.

### AMAZON.COM



Karen Lane

As those of you who attend our meetings are aware, our April meeting was devoted to recognizing achievement in several areas. The High School Writing Competition awards, directed by Jon Kessler, were presented; the Pellegrin Memorial Scholarships, overseen by Kelli Pharo, were awarded; and we were very pleased to announce that with pledges and donations in hand the Orlando Central Florida STC Chapter has completed its goal of endowing the scholarship fund in perpetuity. Congratulations to all who worked on the project and a special thank you to all who donated through the years. (Note that High School Writing Competition

judges and Pellegrin Memorial Scholarship judges earned Active Member points, which accrue to earn chapter Active Member shirts! So if you're asked to serve on a judging committee, keep this benefit in mind).

However, the work is not over yet. Now that we have our endowment completed, we still have an 18-month wait before income from the endowment can fund our scholarships. We cannot allow the tradition to falter this coming year. Orlando Central Florida STC Chapter is committed to encouraging, recognizing, and rewarding excellence in educational studies, and we fully expect to continue that commitment in the coming year.

So please: When we ask you for additional donations over the course of the next 18 months and beyond, we hope you will continue to be as generous as you have been in the past. The students—our next generation of technical communicators—deserve no less.

And let us not forget that in addition to our Pellegrin Memorial Fund, we have other educational and professional endeavors that will also need your support. Please help us in the future as you have helped in the past. Know that all support is very appreciated—and tax deductible!

In other news, the April meeting was also our election meeting. See our Web site ([www.stc-orlando.org](http://www.stc-orlando.org)) for the list of new officers. Your slate of officers and directors was put together by our Nominating Chair, Kelli Pharo, who ably sent out announcements and conducted the election process. As Kelli will not be serving in this capacity again, we are looking for a qualified volunteer to be the 2012-2013 Nominating Chair. Regular chapter members (i.e., non-student members) are eligible. Serving as a committee chair brings benefits of Active Member points, redeemable for a coveted Active Member shirt at the end of the chapter year.

We are also saying goodbye to our Hospitality Chair, Gail Lippincott, who cheerfully and capably fed and watered us for so many delightful meetings. If you'd like to participate in the refreshments part of our programs, please contact me ([president@stc-orlando.org](mailto:president@stc-orlando.org)). And don't forget that serving as hospitality chair will earn you coveted Active Member points, valued because they add up to earn you an Active Member chapter shirt.

You will learn about our May meeting elsewhere in this issue of *Memo to Members*. I'd like to skip to June to let you know that we're having our annual recognition banquet on Tuesday evening, June 12, 2012, location and exact time to be announced. If you have attended these events in the past, you know that they are a lot of fun and a great way to socialize with your colleagues one last time before the summer break. The event is open to all: members, non-members, friends, and significant others. We serve a full dinner (self-pay), with some goodies provided by the chapter. As we look back on the year's accomplishments, I hope you will be with us to enjoy the occasion. Look for more information on this fun evening in the upcoming weeks. And remember that



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SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (STC)



Mission: STC advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and media so that both businesses and customers benefit from safe, appropriate, and effective use of products, information, and services.

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attendance at our chapter meetings—including this one—earns you valuable Active Member points, good toward the Active Member chapter shirt.

My last event item today is to let you know that the Orlando Central Florida STC Chapter holds an annual Leadership Retreat, which takes place all day on a Saturday in July. Do not be intimidated by the “leadership” in the title: The retreat is open to all chapter members, either in leadership positions or not yet. What this means is that you can attend, see what’s going on, meet the current leaders, and learn about how the chapter operates. We use the time to plan next year’s programs and brainstorm possible future events. It’s always been an educational and sometimes even entertaining day, and those who attend always report being glad they were there.

The specifics of the Leadership Retreat will be announced soon, but just so you can put the event on your calendar, here are a few particulars. The meeting will likely be from 10a.m. until 4p.m. either July 14 or 21. It will be held in the training room at Atkins Global (482 South Keller Road, Orlando). Breakfast, lunch, and snacks will be provided, and there is no charge to attend. We hope that we will have a great turnout, as we have had in previous years. There are always goodies and surprises, too. But wait; there’s more: Attendance at the Leadership Retreat earns you an Active Member point, valuable towards achieving Active Member shirt status at the following year’s June recognition dinner. Such a deal!

So if you’ve been paying attention, you might have noticed a not-so-subtle emphasis on earning Active Member points. This program is one we’ve had for the last 10 years or so, but we probably don’t give it the prominence it deserves. The endeavor is the brainchild of our own past president, past treasurer, and Society past treasurer and director, WC Wiese, and it’s even been picked up by other chapters who have appreciated the value of rewarding active membership. You undoubtedly have noticed some of our members wearing these Active Member shirts at meetings and elsewhere. If you’ve wondered just how active you need to be to earn a shirt for yourself, wonder no further. Attend most of the chapter meetings and do a little extra in terms of volunteering, and before you know it you’ll have a shirt, too. I dream of the day I attend a meeting and every attendee sports an Orlando Central Florida Active Member shirt. Wouldn’t that be something. You can make it happen: just pitch in. I promise you’ll enjoy it while you’re earning your Active Member points.

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## A View From Number Two



Debra Johnson

by Debra Johnson  
Vice President  
Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC

*Debra is currently the Technical Communications Lead Content Strategist at Wyndham Vacation Ownership in Orlando, FL where she is responsible for leading the Technical Communications team within Wyndham's Information Technology department.*

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The Orlando Central Florida Chapter welcomes Dalton Hooper, Immediate Past President, as our speaker this month.

He will present “*Why I Didn’t Hire You (for that technical communicator position)*” as a follow up to our very successful March Employment Panel discussion. His presentation and the discussion that follows should help get you through those tough interview questions on the path to getting hired. We ask you send us your toughest interview question or your best response to a tough interview question... We want to know!! This will be a very interactive meeting on interviewing skills...and everyone can use the practice... whether it’s for employment or career advancement!

The chapter will also hold its annual business meeting this month.

“We are always in need of Helpers! We are looking for a few people to assist with refreshment set-up and break-down at our May meeting. Members who attend meetings and help always receive Active Member points. These points can add up towards earning a coveted Active Member chapter shirt.”

#### MEETING INFO

Tuesday, May 15, 2012

Winter Park Civic Center

1050 West Morse Blvd Winter Park FL 32789

Refreshments at 6:30pm

Program begins promptly at 7:00pm

[Regular Meeting Fees](#) apply

Please RSVP to:

[vicepresident@stc-orlando.org](mailto:vicepresident@stc-orlando.org) or [STCOrlandoVP@gmail.com](mailto:STCOrlandoVP@gmail.com)

P.S. Watch for details coming soon about our End of the Year Awards Banquet to be held on June 12<sup>th</sup>.... Mark Your Calendar!

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## If You Missed Last Meeting...



Rachael Blankenbecklor

by Rachael Blankenbecklor  
Secretary  
Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC

...then you missed the chapter's annual banquet to present the awards for the Pellegrin Scholarship and the High School Writing Competition. The Chapter held its annual elections for its 2012-2013 officers:

- President: Karen Lane
- Vice President: Debra Johnson

- Secretary: Rachael Blankenbecklor
- Treasurer: Sarah Baca
- Immediate Past President: Dalton Hooper
- Director: David Coverston
- Director: Erika Higgins

On top of the exciting awards, the chapter was happy to announce that we have reached our goal of \$25,000 in the Pellegrin Fund, allowing the scholarship to be self-sustaining beginning next year. After the announcement, the attendees observed a moment of silence while Melissa's family lit a candle in memory of Melissa.

With the overwhelming number of terrific entrants for the Pellegrin Scholarship, the judges had a tough time deciding on just two winners. In the end, they decided to give out the scholarship to three deserving applicants.

The winners this year were Brittney L. Adams (Senior at UCF), Bethany J. Bowles (Senior at UCF), and Calen J. Crate (Senior at UCF). A big congratulation goes out to our three winners and a big thanks to the judges for volunteering to review all the applicants' entries.

After the Pellegrin Scholarship awards, the High School Writing Competition winners

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were announced. Jon Kessler and Mark Wray announced the winners of the awards to the following students:

- Honorable Mentions
  - Marcus Darby, Winter Springs High School (not present)
  - Yi-Ting Liu, Winter Springs High School (not present)
- Achievement
  - Katie Davis, Winter Springs High School (not present)
  - Annika Norris, Winter Springs High School
  - Jared Russo, Winter Springs High School
  - Austin Suarez, Winter Springs High School (not present)
- Merit
  - Cassidy Hall, Winter Springs High School
- Excellence
  - Jason Keeler, Winter Springs High School

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## Over the Top! After 15 Years, Pellegrin Memorial Scholarship Fund Reaches Full Endowment and is Self-Sustaining



Dan Voss

by Dan Voss  
Mentoring Co-Chair  
Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC

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The STC-Orlando Central Florida Chapter and the University of Central Florida technical communication program celebrated a unique and glorious accomplishment at the April 17 chapter meeting—after 15 years of generous donations from sources too varied to name them all, the STC/UCF Melissa Pellegrin Memorial Scholarship Fund has reached full endowment as a self-sustaining fund within the UCF Foundation!

Melissa's parents, Marge and Fred Flesche, put the fund "over the top" with a \$600 contribution at this year's scholarship and high school writing competition April 17 at the Winter Park Civic Center. The generous donation took the fund over the "magic" \$25,000 mark, officially establishing it as a permanent endowed scholarship within the UCF Foundation.

Many, many individual donors—including Melissa's family, friends, and coworkers; former scholarship recipients; and many members of the Orlando chapter—as well as a number of corporations (PBSJ, now Atkins, is to be acknowledged for its exceptionally generous support over the years) and the Society for Technical Communication (via a seed grant) all made this wonderful day possible.

And to put the icing on the cake (well, it was actually cupcakes at the ceremony!), official endowment and self-sustaining status came a full year earlier than the 5-year target.

After Melissa's parents presented a ceremonial check to chapter president Karen Lane and Laura Pooser from the UCF Foundation where the fund resides (and now grows), her brother Mark Pellegrin continued a 10-year tradition of lighting a memorial green candle after this year's scholarships were announced.

Only there was a big difference this year—no, a *huge* difference. This time, the green candle burns forever.



Melissa Pellegrin.  
Excellence in Technical  
Communication.

Light green was Melissa's favorite color, as we learned nearly 2 decades ago when, as an honor student in UCF's technical communication program, tassel-turning graduate, and new STC-Orlando chapter member, she joined the Education Committee, of which I was then the chair. The color suited her perfectly: quiet, elegant, classy.

Tragically, Melissa's life candle went out in 1994, when she was just a few short years into a promising career in technical communication (see her published article below). For those of us who knew Melissa, our eyes moisten every year when we honor her memory at the awards banquet in April. But over the years, as the Fund continued to grow, the ceremony has become a quiet celebration of her life as well as a poignant memory. A memory that will now be sustained in perpetuity via a fully endowed fund!

Many scholarship recipients have spoken eloquently of how much the Pellegrin scholarship has meant in their careers, in their lives. A record of their testimonials follows an article concerning the scholarship in the March 2012 *Memo to Members*

(<https://memotomembers.wordpress.com/2012/03/>).

In a riveting address before the 1997 Florida Trends conference when the memorial fund was established, Melissa's dad held us spell-bound. Follow this link to the front page story, "Looking Back, Looking Forward," on page 1 of Vol. 2, No. 2 (October/November 1997) of the chapter newsletter, which was then called *Trends*, like the conference: [http://www.stc-orlando.org/newsletter/1997/techtrends\\_1997\\_10.pdf](http://www.stc-orlando.org/newsletter/1997/techtrends_1997_10.pdf).

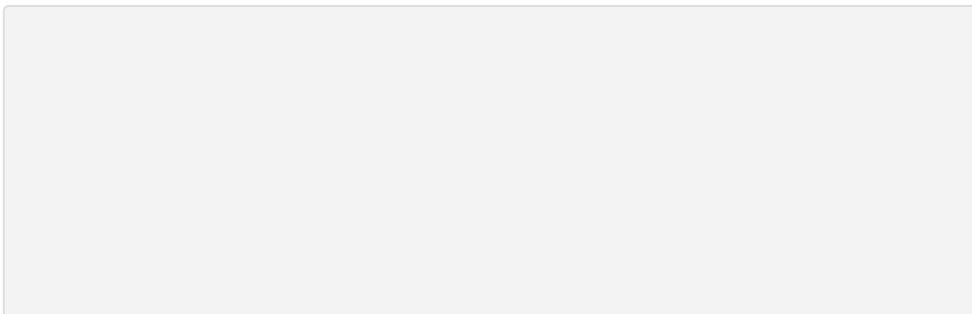
Fifteen years ago, Fred never dreamed the fledgling fund honoring his daughter would grow to become a self-sustaining endowment at her alma mater, generating scholarships for excellence in technical communication annually from this point forward.

Speaking of excellence in technical communication, Mark Pellegrin shared an outstanding article Melissa wrote and published shortly after she graduated from UCF. The text of the article is reproduced in its entirety below. Such talent! Clean, crisp, crystal-clear technical communication at its finest. The article is at the same time inspiring and sad to read. Inspiring because it is truly excellent, and sad because there weren't so many more.

It is at least comforting to know that much more excellence in technical communication will be forthcoming from generations of recipients of the scholarship bearing Melissa's name.

You inspired us then, Melissa.

You still do.

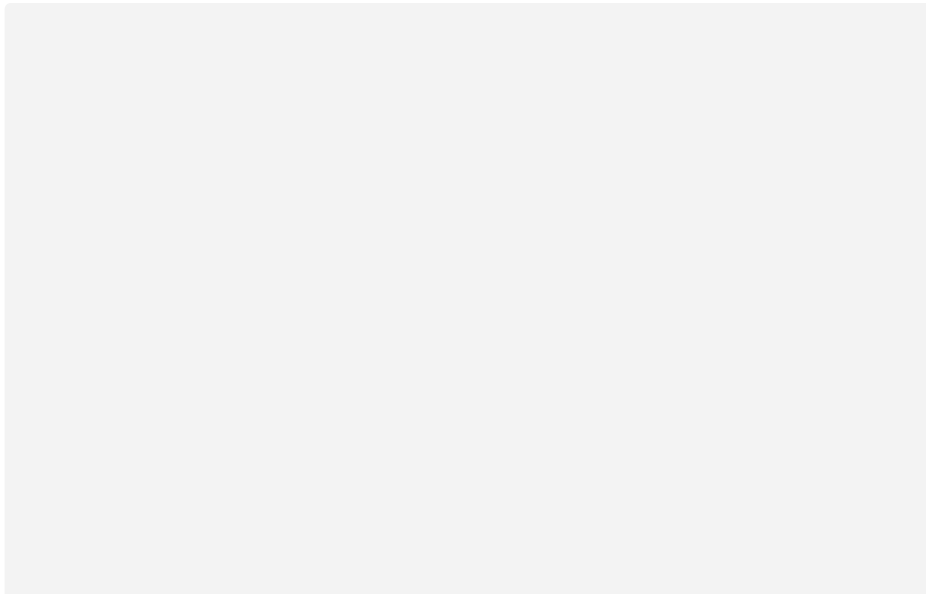




As the memorial candle glows with new intensity, Melissa's parents, Fred (left) and Marge Flesche, and her brother Mark Pellegrin display the symbolic check that put the scholarship fund "over the top." Seated, from left, are this year's recipients: Bethany Bowles, Calen Crate, and Brittney Adams.



Winners in the high school writing competition, their parents and faculty, and chapter members respond as the 2012 Pellegrin Scholarships are awarded.







Mark Pellegrin shares a favorite story during the awards dinner.



Laura Pooser from the UCF Foundation explains how the scholarship fund is now endowed and protected.

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# Special Article by Melissa Pellegrin: “Your Speaking Voice”



Melissa Pellegrin.

*Note from Dan Voss: Mark Pellegrin shared an outstanding article Melissa wrote and published shortly after she graduated from UCF. The text of the article is reproduced in its entirety below.*

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## Your Speaking Voice

By Melissa Pellegrin

Your speaking voice is the product of three basic processes: breathing, phonation, and resonance. Your ability to produce vocal sounds and form them into words that others will recognize is a result of these processes.

### Breathing

We each inhale and exhale thousands of times each day without giving much thought to the process. Unless we climb a flight of stairs quickly or run to catch a bus, we're usually unaware of the muscles and processes involved in breathing. It's only through a controlled inhaling and measured exhaling of breath through the trachea that we're able to produce words and sounds. Breathing when we speak, unlike breathing simply to stay alive, requires controlled exhalation and involves a conscious, voluntary control of our chest and abdominal muscles. The degree to which we're able to control these muscles and our diaphragm (a dome-shaped muscle attached to a central tendon beneath the lungs), is the extent to which we're able to produce a steady flow of air needed to maintain tone, pitch, rate, volume, pacing and all the other essential characteristics of human speech.

As with any other muscles, they can be trained, and they can be made stronger with proper use and practice. They can also be overused, strained and abused. Sales people, customer service representatives, telemarketers and others who must give dozens of speeches, presentations, or talks each day must take great care not to strain or overuse their vocal equipment. During the 1992 U.S. presidential campaign, then-governor Bill Clinton kept up a rigorous speaking schedule that often included six or seven stops a day. Despite a cold, a badly strained set of vocal cords, and prolonged hoarseness, he persisted. The result was a candidate who could barely speak by Election Day. According to Dr. Wilbur J. Gould, the physician who treated Mr. Clinton during the campaign, the only relief for such abuse in most cases is rest.<sup>1</sup>

### Phonation

The second basic process involved in speaking is the vibration of our vocal folds, or phonation. The folds, known as the glottis and epiglottis, are housed in the larynx and serve several important purposes. They not only vibrate to give us our voice, but also act as a valve to keep food and water out of our lungs and to trap air within the lungs. They make it possible to “hold your breath” underwater or to exert strenuous muscular effort. The vocal folds remain relaxed and open during quiet breathing, but when we speak they vibrate horizontally and rapidly, alternately stopping and permitting exhaled breath to escape. These resulting interruptions transform the air stream into sound wave patterns.<sup>2</sup>

## Resonation

As our vocal folds vibrate, they produce sounds of a given frequency and pitch. These sounds acquire their tone through a process known as resonance. As a piano tuner strikes a tuning fork to produce a constant sound of a particular pitch and frequency, you'll hear a more or less "pure" sound, a sound that is essentially unresonated. If the same piano tuner were to strike a piano key, Middle C for example, you would hear a more complex tone, a tone that had been resonated by the tuning board and various cavities of the piano. The same is true of the human voice. Those vocal folds produce a sound that is subsequently resonated by the pharynx, the mouth, and the nose. Our sinus cavities, which help to make the facial bones lighter, also resonate our vocal sounds. And, of course, our thoracic cavity or chest helps to resonate and reinforce the quality of our voices, particularly if our posture is good. Your choirmaster and elementary school teachers told you to sit up and stand proudly for very good reasons. They all help to improve the resonance of your voice.<sup>3</sup>

## Vocal Expressiveness

Writers have a number of devices available to them to convey a sense of expression without using words. These include such things as italics, quotation marks, parentheses, exclamation points, dashes, and so on. Speakers can't use them, of course, but have their own range of devices that permit expressiveness in various ways.

It's easy to sense when a speaker's expression has changed: when a voice is raised in anger or defiance, when the pitch or pace of delivery are raised, or when a voice quivers with fear. When Dick Vitale, a former college and professional basketball coach, gives one of his motivational speeches to business groups across the country, his vocal expressiveness lends power and authority to his words. "I tend to speak a little more softly and slowly as I begin," he said. "I talk about my background, my childhood, and the people who were important to me." But as the speech progresses, he grows more intense, tightening the muscles in his neck, chest, and arms. "As I move into the more emotional portions of the speech," he explained, "I raise my voice, I emphasize key words, and I begin speaking much more rapidly." In speeches that deal with topics he feels very strongly about, such as drug use or alcohol abuse on college campuses, he really winds up. "By the time I reach the conclusion," he says, "I don't need a microphone. I don't need a public address system. They can hear me two blocks down the street."<sup>4</sup>

We often associate "real meaning" with vocal expressiveness, even though the words a speaker uses may intend something else. If you ask a business colleague how she's doing and hear a moderate-pitched, cheery, "Fine, thanks" in return, you tend to believe the words as spoken. But if you get a strident, forceful or loud, "Fine, thanks, just fine!" in response, you may detect anger or frustration in her voice. And, if you hear a choked, sobbing, gasping, "Fine, I'm fine, really," you might conclude that she's despondent, unhappy, or depressed. The way we say it is referred to as paralanguage by nonverbal communication experts. It can tell us much more about the sender's intention and state of mind than the symbols or words being used.

In general, five separate categories of vocal expressiveness help to describe and explain the ways in which we speak. They are quality, pitch, loudness, rate, and pronunciation.

## Quality

While some voices may be described as "too loud" or "too fast," it would be difficult to describe a voice as having "too much quality." Quality is not a characteristic that can be described in quantitative terms. According to speech professor Arthur N. Kruger of Long Island University, "vocal quality is more a matter of kind than degree." It's what helps us differentiate one voice from another. The voice of the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy was high-pitched, nasal, and staccato. At the other extreme, entertainer Barry White has a voice that may be characterized as low-pitched, smooth, and modulated. Common faults of vocal quality include the harsh voice, the hoarse voice, the glottal fry, and the glottal shock.<sup>5</sup>

While harshness or hoarseness may be obvious to most listeners, the latter two faults may need a little explanation. The glottal fry is a strained, low-pitched voice, which

usually occurs along with a drop in pitch as a speaker tries to force phonation without adequate breath support. Glottal shock is a fault that occurs because of the abrupt intonation of a vowel sound. It can be a useful device, helping a speaker separate two vowel sounds, as in “idea of” or “law office,” but its overuse can be hard on the vocal folds and unpleasant to hear.<sup>6</sup>

## Pitch

This characteristic of vocal expression refers to the highness or lowness of a tone and is determined by the length, mass, and tension of the vocal folds. As the length and mass (or thickness) increase, pitch lowers; as the tension increases, pitch rises. This explains why small children have higher voices than women and why most women have voices that are higher pitched than most men. During emotional speaking occasions (anger, fear, excitement, joy, and so on) it’s easy to see why pitch can rise with heightened muscle contractions.

Common problems with pitch include monotone, a narrow pitch range, inappropriate pitch changes, and patterned pitch. We’re all familiar with monotone speakers B they’re the ones with just one pitch level to their voices. It’s rare, indeed, that someone (other than those talking appliances, like bathroom scales) can speak for long using just one tone or pitch level. More likely, the problem with inexperienced or infrequent public speakers is that their pitch range may be too narrow to accommodate the subject and the audience. Inappropriate pitch changes often come from speakers whose native language is other than English. Speakers of Hindi, Mandarin Chinese, and a host of other languages in which meaning can vary with pitch, will often change pitch while speaking English with no apparent motive. The solution for such speakers is simply to listen to more idiomatically correct English and try to imitate it. Finally, patterned pitch is nothing more than the predictable; singsong rhythmic delivery characteristic of memorized speech.<sup>7</sup>

## Loudness

Listeners should be able to hear a speech without straining to do so. Speakers should be able to talk to an audience without having background noise drown out their words as they deliver them. Speakers should be sensitive to the reactions of their audience members, adjusting the loudness of their delivery to suit both the speaking conditions and their intentions as they speak. Loudness can be adjusted upward or downward by a speaker to emphasize a point or convey an emotion. Other terms are sometimes used to describe this characteristic of loudness, including “intensity,” “force,” and “volume.” They mean essentially the same thing.

Common faults of loudness include the too-quiet voice, the overly loud voice, a lack of variety in loudness, and fading. In common business situations, these faults will be attributed to more than a lack of skill in speaking. They may be seen as the result of inadequate social skills, or a lack of self-confidence. In some cases, the fault may be a simple failure on the part of the speaker to adjust to the environmental conditions of the speaking location or equipment being used. In other cases, it may be a lack of breath control or nervousness on the speaker’s part. In either case, sensitivity to the audience and adequate rehearsal will certainly help.<sup>8</sup>

## Rate

The pace, or rate, at which we speak is often determined by the audience, the speaker, the content of the speech, and the words the speaker has chosen to express the content. When we’re dealing with familiar, easy material, it’s not at all unusual for speakers to speed up a bit B the audience won’t have much difficulty following us. When the material is difficult, technical, or unfamiliar to the audience, most speakers find that it’s best to slow down so that the listeners can follow the speech.<sup>9</sup>

What’s an effective or optimal rate? A number of studies have measured college students reading aloud and then tested their audiences to see how well they could follow the speeches. Communication researchers Theodore Hanley and Wayne Thurman found that the middle two-thirds of the students they tested read aloud at a rate of between 155 and 185 words per minute. Fairbanks calls a speaking rate of 160 to 170 “excellent,” with a range of 150 to 180 “acceptable.” You can test yourself by finding a passage in a newspaper, book, or magazine that contains 200 words. Count the words, then read the passage aloud, timing yourself as you go along. Multiply 60

by 200 and divide by the number of seconds it takes you to read the passage. That formula will give you your speaking rate per minute. The best rule to keep in mind is that you must be sensitive to feedback from your audience, adjusting your speaking rate to their needs and interests.<sup>10</sup>

The most common faults of speaking rate are too many or too few words per minute; inappropriately lengthened or shortened pauses or sounds; too many or too few pauses; patterned rhythm; and no rhythm. People have come to expect that public speakers will speak at a rate that is easy for them to follow and understand. They've also come to expect that speakers will pause from time to time B always at appropriate or natural places in the speech B and that they will speak with some rhythm or cadence to their speech.

## Pronunciation

The ways in which we pronounce the words we use to communicate are a measure of several things: first, perhaps, our general level of education. Second, the region of the country or part of the world in which we grew up and acquired our language. Third, our general familiarity with the idioms and argot of the group we're addressing. Certain forms of every language, including American English, are considered "standard," but that's really because the majority of people in society speak that way. So-called "non-standard" forms of pronunciation are common in various regions of the country among various ethnic and geographic groups. "Standard English," in fact, may brand a speaker in Kennebunkport, Maine, or Bayou La Batre, Alabama, as an outsider. President John F. Kennedy frequently referred in speeches, press conferences, and conversations to "the Soviet presence in *Cuba*." His backbay Boston accent transformed the "a" in Cuba into an "er." Regional pronunciations or "accents" are usually no problem at all, unless they somehow interfere with effective communication. Often, a change in speaking rate is all that's needed for speakers to accommodate different expectations in pronunciation patterns.

Not all pronunciation is regarded as correct, though. Some pronunciation patterns, having nothing to do with geography, ethnicity, or enculturation, are regarded by most speakers of the language as incorrect and can interfere with effective communication. The most common faults are *incorrect sounds*, *incorrect stress*, and *excessive assimilation*. For various reasons, some speakers will pronounce a word incorrectly B either because they've never heard it used correctly, or because the correct pronunciation hasn't been called to their attention. The *t* in *often* is silent; "off-ten" is an incorrect pronunciation. There is no *cell* in *cello* and no *revoke* in *irrevocable*. Speakers sometimes add, omit, or transpose sounds, as well. *Athlete* is not pronounced "ath-uh-lete" and *film* does not have a *u*, as in "fil-um." *Extraneous sounds* can transform a word such as *wash* into *warsh*.

*Transposing sounds* can alter pronunciation in such words as *ask* which can become *aks*, or *prescribe*, which becomes *perscribe*. According to Professor Kruger, over-pronounced or pseudo-cultivated sounds used by some speakers as an affectation is less common, but still unacceptable. The reason remains the same: affectations distract attention from ideas by focusing on pronunciation.<sup>11</sup>

*Incorrect stress* is a simple pronunciation fault caused by accenting the wrong syllable in a word, a common error committed by non-native speakers of virtually any language. Even native speakers, though, can shift the accent in a word to stress the wrong syllable. Some words, with identical spellings, can change meaning B from a noun to a verb, for example B with a simple shift in stress. Words such as *pervert*, *rebel*, and *conduct* change meaning according to which syllable is stressed by the speaker. With the emphasis on the first syllable, *conduct* is a noun; with the emphasis or stress on the second, it becomes a verb.

*Excessive assimilation* is a term which refers to a speech sound being influenced by a nearby sound in a sentence or phrase. That usually happens when words used together frequently are difficult to pronounce or don't flow smoothly. Speakers frequently alter the flow of the sentence to make it easier to pronounce. "Jeet yet?" is a quick assimilation of the words "Did you eat yet?" A related fault is *truncation* in which words are shortened, omitted, or letters are dropped, as in "Runnin' across campus."

*Correct pronunciation* is more a matter of adjusting to your audience, your purpose for speaking, and the occasion than a matter of memorizing one "right" way to speak. Just as your teachers would criticize you for dropping sounds, running words together,

or transposing sounds, your friends, teammates, or business associates might regard it as odd if you join them for a game of pick-up basketball, or an informal meeting speaking like a network television news anchor. Speaking a sub-language or talking in patterns and ways that you may have learned as part of a geographic or ethnic group is fine, as long as your use of the language is appropriate to the audience and occasion. You must be able to learn when and how to shift into other, equally appropriate forms of speech, when the occasion or your purpose calls for it, or when your audience expects it.

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