

# TV Encourages Sloppy English

In our household we are beginning to talk to ourselves. As the children hear "twenty," "seventy," "gonna," and other horrible TV-ese coming over the television set, they repeat clearly to themselves, "twenty," "seventy," "going to." How else will they grow up to speak correctly? The effect of bad English absorbed from even limited TV or radio listening is insidious.

"DEAR MISS VANDERBILT: I wonder if sometime you could discuss in your column a pet peeve of mine. It concerns the widespread misuse of the little phrase 'I mean.' It is used by highly educated people who seem to think it's smart to throw 'I mean' into every few words they speak.

"I have never seen any criticism on this subject in print and it is high time someone discussed it. Writers put such speech into their stories and it appears on TV plays much too frequently.—J. L., Portland, Ind."

You are right. Often people don't realize that they use this phrase. Children pick it up from radio and television. It helps sometimes for a mother to say—in a very good-humored way—to a child who is an "I meaner," "Why don't you say what you mean." This may shock the child into listening to his own phrases.

If you can train your child or yourself to really listen to words as they are spoken, language can be made more meaningful.

## Teens Best Textbook Is Paper

By VIVIAN BROWN

"I saw Sputnik way up in the sky," bragged a little fellow to his high school baby sister, a while back.

Do you think she understood that kind of baby talk? Perhaps she did. She'd never heard of earth satellites, it turned out, and perhaps doesn't now know that the United States has tossed two of its own into orbit.

How many teenagers live in the little vacuum, passing through this wonderful age without curiosity or awareness? And why hasn't their interest been aroused by parents or teachers?

Time was when the daily newspaper was required reading for high school students, considered essential to keeping up with current events. But maybe Susie, like Johnny, can't read.

### READ NEWSPAPER

The American newspaper is the most rewarding investment that one can make at a price that doesn't even pay for the newsprint. Just test it. Go through the paper from start to finish, and see for yourself.

A newspaper offers diaries of events that history may never record in such detail. These accounts of our times are painless ways to absorb knowledge, step by step, on the educational ladder.

What's in a daily newspaper anyway? There is news—everything you want to know that has happened since the last edition, if it is fit to print.

The newspaper is pure gold for today's science student, acquainting him with the strides being made in the vast scientific world. Book reviews stimulate a literary bent. Theater reviews dissect drama, opera, the stage. And where, I ask you, but in the newspaper can you find a daily vocabulary builder like the challenging crossword puzzle?

### BUYING A MOP

When purchasing a mop, a good method of testing it is to shake it well and see if the strings stand alone and do not mat together. A good quality mop will have strings that hang straight and free from each other.



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And sometimes my readers rightly challenge what I say. Here is a letter from one:

"DEAR MISS VANDERBILT: Doesn't a gentleman's lady know the difference between 'imply' and 'infer.'—W. D., Toledo, Ohio."

Modern journalism uses the words interchangeably. See the Winston Dictionary and the very modern Thorndike-Barnhart Dictionary. Even trusty Fowler's doesn't raise the question. But I am always glad to see so many well-educated people reading my column with lively and critical interest.

"DEAR MISS VANDERBILT: Have you noticed the

'purring' done over the radio? Yesterday morning it was done four times in about five minutes—'purrfection.' Why pro has to be pronounced like 'pur' so much is a pity.—R. E., Pittsburgh, Pa."

"DEAR MISS VANDERBILT: I was delighted to read in your column that you have noted and disapproved of the bad grammar used on television and radio and in every day life by adults who are supposed to know better. I have often wondered why the powers that be in television and radio have allowed the announcers to become so careless. I have written several

times to several different stations suggesting that they establish a department for good grammar, citing the careless way they use 'bring' and 'take.' (Clip the coupon and bring it to your grocer.) Or, bring this letter to the post office and mail it.)

It seems to me we all have a responsibility to future generations of Americans to preserve the language as it was taught in school. By us I mean those of us who are in the 35-50 year age bracket and older. In those days we certainly had more education grammar-wise. Some of the teachers presently employed by our school system, at least, often use bad grammar as the children do.

"They are also neglecting the children's voices. What has become of elocution anyway? My own teenage daughter has a soft, well-modulated voice because I taught her that, but so many harsh voices are allowed to go on and on and no one bothers to correct them. 'I appreciate your column very much. Your advice to teenagers has helped me out of many tight spots. Your advice for them is always very sensible and good. Thank you so much for your interest in our children.—E. K. L., Bloomfield, N. J.'"

Recently I was talking to a television newscaster of considerable stature who, like me, winces at much of the careless pronunciation and grammar on the air.

He mentioned the fact that a young local boy, only 18, now had a job on a local radio station as a disc jockey. He had not, of course, gone to college and had attained his present "eminence" as a result of having been willing to literally open the station in the morning and to close it at night to learn the trade.

He now plays his records, and chats to his audience in a very "professional" way. But as I listened to him as I drove along, and heard the "gonnas," the "tweenies" and all the other common, ugly manglings of our language, I thought how many announcers must have come up more or less this way. This does not, however, excuse the industry's failure to set certain standards of enunciation, pronunciation and grammar for all commentators and announcers and M. C.s to follow. Surely, for those who read their material there should be at least such guidance.

If what you hear grates on your ear, let the networks

## Opening Night Nears



(News Staff Photo by Tom Franklin-Kelly)  
TENSE MOMENT—A broken radio provides some tense moments for the cast of "Radio Rescue," the play to be presented this weekend by the Masque and Wig class of East Mecklenburg High School for the Children's Theater. Rehearsing are, left to right, Wheeler Buff, Jane Lytton and Doris Dierstein. Performances will be at 7:30 p.m. Friday and at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Saturday at Elizabeth School.

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