When referring to “economy of language,” typically the idea relates to clear and succinct communication, but we might think of this concept in a completely different way.

What if economy of language had to do with the way language affects the economy?

A link does exist between language and economy — and not just through persuasive professional jargon.

Language represents a basic building block in the educational process.

Consider starting kindergarten with a listening vocabulary of 3,000 words, or starting that same class with a listening vocabulary of 20,000 words — and the difference that would make for a child socially, educationally and emotionally.

Multiple childhood literacy studies substantiate this astounding 17,000-word difference, when comparing the language skills of a child who has not been exposed to books and reading early, with one who has.

There is undisputed evidence that children begin active learning from birth, and teachers are well-placed to gauge the dramatic advantages of reading to young children.

When a kindergartener loves books,
Martin and chairman of The National Academies’ Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21st Century, said, “Anyone who hopes to hold a job in the next several decades should read – if not memorize – this extraordinary report. Hopefully the efforts of the distinguished group that prepared the report will motivate our nation’s leaders to promptly take steps needed to assure that our nation’s citizenry can enjoy a decent quality of life in the years ahead.”

For more information about the report, please see the commission Web site – www.skillscommission.org.

Whittle will discuss what he has discovered about education – how to find and reward excellence, how to promote and disseminate innovation, and how to fund a massive renovation of our education institutions that is necessary if our children are to compete successfully in the global economy. His latest publication, Crash Course – Imagining a Better Future for Public Education, has provided a platform for him to continue his visionary thinking as he reminds us repeatedly of the $400 billion that Americans spend on K-12 education every day.

Mike Edwards, president of the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce and this year’s Summit chairman, says the TBR Education Summit will “prove some hard questions and answers for all of us.”

“Never before have we felt the realities of an education system that is struggling to meet the needs of our economy and community as we do today,” said Edwards. “We are letting the administrators of this system down by not providing them with an updated and more efficient system by which to accomplish the most important job of our time. The question is what are we going to do about it?”

Please make a special effort to attend this important event. We encourage you to bring a business partner, colleague or friend to this year’s Summit. Specific Summit information will be sent out and e-mailed in the next several weeks.

TBR continues to lead the business community preparing our work force for the 21st century, and some important milestones have already been reached. In January, the Tennessee State Board of Education unanimously approved a new high school curriculum with higher standards and increased rigor based on the needs of the Tennessee work force.

Education is the primary vehicle that will secure our economic prosperity and ensure that we will be globally competitive in the future. Business must step up to the plate and make this our highest priority.

Economy of Language

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his teacher can hit the ground running, helping ensure that his reading abilities progress at the intended rate for the grade level. Children who start school unprepared to learn are behind the game and often never catch up. Children who do not read at grade level by the end of third grade have difficulty completing high school.

Employers, military service, colleges and vocational schools are also well-positioned to weigh the value of educational preparedness. Such groups want to receive young adults with skills, and enhance those skills for mutual benefit. The better prepared a young adult is for professional opportunities, the further he can advance through on-the-job training, and the greater service he can provide the organization.

A skilled work force means a strong economy … and that starts with early childhood education.

Dolly Parton has long understood the value of books for children. The Imagination Library began as Dolly’s gift to the children of Sevier County, and today mails a free, age-appropriate, hardback book to enrolled children in all 95 Tennessee counties, every single month from birth until age 5.

By creating the Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation® to expand the program statewide, Governor Phil Bredesen helped spawn an incredible network of dedicated, county-based volunteers to administer the program and raise funds.

Tennessee is the first and only state to offer the Imagination Library to every child under age 5. Currently almost 194,000 children – or 52 percent of our state’s total eligible population – are enrolled to receive their very own library of up to 60 free books.

While the Imagination Library is offered at no cost to the family, many businesses and individuals opt to donate to their county’s program. Monthly book costs are divided equally between a county’s sponsoring organization and the Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation, meaning that each county need raise only $14 per child, per year.

Now that’s economy of language!

For more information on the Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation and Tennessee’s statewide Imagination Library, please call 1 (866) 368-6371 or visit www.GovernorsFoundation.org.
CIVILITY IN GOVERNANCE

Early this year, the Tennessee Business Roundtable, in partnership with the Howard Baker Center for Public Policy and the John Seigenthaler Center, hosted the state’s first forum on “Civility in Governance.” Senators Bob Dole and Tom Daschle, Governor Phil Bredesen and John Seigenthaler discussed the importance of cooperation, inclusion and working together in a civil manner even when there are disagreements. Since then, we have been working with our Civility Task Force to address this issue, examine how the culture of political discourse has changed and determine a substantive way to encourage better conversation.

While civility in American politics sounds like a novel concept, the roots of the discussion go all the way back to our founding fathers. In examining George Washington’s “Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation,” observed by Washington when he was only 16, I was struck by many of the simple rules that apply to civility in governance. For example:

- Use no reproachful language against any one; neither curse nor revile.
- Speak no evil of the absent, for it is unjust.
- Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present.

And my personal favorite ...

- Let your conversation be without malice or envy, for ‘tis a sign of a tractable and commendable nature: And in all causes of passion permit reason to govern.

During our public meeting in January, Senator Daschle expressed the importance of the respect for government and putting the institution in front of our own party or agenda. Governor Bredesen compared the relationship between members of Congress and a good marriage. “The members fight, but there are just some things you do not say,” he said.

As complicated as we may try to make it, the rules are pretty simple. Problems arise when people fail to see beyond the matter at hand and to consider the long-range consequences that shape our policy, quality of life and citizenry. I suppose if our founding fathers had suffered from this short-sightedness, we would not have grown to be the great nation that we are today. I admit that civility, as simple as it should be, is hard to define and is similar to Potter Stewart’s definition of obscenity: “I know it when I see it.”

Well, unfortunately, in the last decade, we “know” it a lot better than ever before because we have seen far too much of it.

That’s why the Baker Center is currently working with The Roundtable to deliver a set of Standards and Principles of Civility that could serve as a guideline for political candidates and leaders to observe and embrace. We are also working to build an educational component that will include a video of our winter public meeting accompanied by a lesson plan to send to high school and college history classes encouraging a discussion on the importance of civility.

Please be on the lookout for further discussions and events concerning this important and critical issue.

Sincerely,
Ellen Thornton

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

New Member Profile

Phil Trenary is president and CEO of Pinnacle Airlines Corp., an airline holding company based in Memphis, and the parent company of Pinnacle Airlines, Inc., and Colgan Air, Inc.

Trenary has been in the airline industry for almost 30 years. He joined Pinnacle as president and CEO on April 1, 1997, the same date Northwest Airlines acquired the carrier, then named Express Airlines 1, from private ownership. Prior to that time, he was president and CEO of Lone Star Airlines for 14 years. He has directed the development of Pinnacle Airlines into one of the nation’s premier carriers. Pinnacle was the world’s fastest growing airline in 2004.

Trenary earned a degree in engineering technology from Oklahoma State University. He resides in Memphis with his wife, Bridget, and their children, Justin, Brittnay and Pearce. Trenary is active in civic and industry affairs, including the Federal Reserve Bank’s Transportation Industry Council, Memphis Music Foundation, Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau, Memphis Regional Chamber and Memphis Tomorrow.

Pinnacle Airlines Corp. (Nasdaq: PNCL), an airline holding company, is the parent company of Pinnacle Airlines, Inc., and Colgan Air, Inc. Pinnacle Airlines, Inc., operates a fleet of 138 regional jets in the United States and Canada as Northwest Airlink and Delta Connection. Colgan Air, Inc., operates a fleet of 58 regional turboprops as Continental Connection, United Express and US Airways Express. Pinnacle Airlines Corp. operating units fly more than 1,000 daily flights and transport more than 10 million passengers a year to 140 cities and towns in North America. Visit www.pncl.com for more information.

CONTACT US

Ellen Thornton, Executive Director
Mandy Bagwell, Executive Assistant

Phone (615) 255-5877     Fax (615) 255-5879
530 Church Street, Suite 700
Nashville, TN 37219

E-mail: ethornton@tbroundtable.org
mbagwell@tbroundtable.org
www.tbroundtable.org
Kyle Spurgeon is vice president of corporate relations for the Jackson Energy Authority. The Energy Authority provides electric, water, wastewater, gas and broadband services to the Jackson, Tenn., area. His responsibilities include managing the day-to-day business and economic development, marketing and governmental relations activities of the company.

He has served as marketing director for the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development and as director of Economic Development for the Jackson, Tenn., Chamber of Commerce. He has helped facilitate project locations representing more than $1.7 billion in capital investment.

Spurgeon is recognized by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) as a Certified Economic Developer (CED). He holds a B.S. degree in public relations/marketing from Murray State University. He has frequently testified before state legislative bodies regarding tax incentives and work force issues. He also has conducted strategic planning sessions for a variety of organizations and businesses.

Spurgeon has been an instructor for the Economic Development Institute based in Norman, Okla.

He also presently serves as vice chairman of the Tennessee Board for Economic Growth after being appointed, in November 2003, and then reappointed in 2008, by Governor Phil Bredesen to another term on the board. He also serves as chairman of the Tennessee Building and Finance Commission.

He is a past president of the Tennessee Industrial Development Council and past board member of the Southern Economic Development Council. He is previous board member of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of the Mid-South and the past vice chairman of Economic Development for the Jackson Chamber of Commerce. He was recently inducted into the Jackson-Madison County Sports Hall of Fame for his work in helping to establish the West Tennessee Healthcare Sportsplex.

Spurgeon has three children, Blake (15), Shelby (11) and Matthew (7).