

LANGUAGE BOOSTER

Dealing with Traffic

BY MA. LUZ C. VILCHES

The worsening traffic conditions in the Philippines have given the word 'traffic' a high profile with a very bad reputation! Actually, the dictionary definition of 'traffic' is simply (a) the passage of people or vehicles along routes of transportation or (b) vehicles or pedestrians in transit. However, the word has come to evoke images of irritated drivers, passengers in a hurry, pollution, and smoke belchers.

Our intimate familiarity with the reality of traffic in modern daily life is shown in the way we use and misuse the word in ordinary communication. We hear, for example, 'matraffic,' (or *matrapic*) 'natraffic' (*natrapic*). The English word has become part of local language. Some Filipino speakers or writers of English (as I notice with students, especially) now say or write: "I was traffic." "It was so traffic." These are transliterations of how they would express themselves in the local language using the word 'matraffic' or 'natraffic.' How, then do we deal with this word 'traffic' in correct English usage?

Instead of saying...	We can say...
I was traffic.	I was caught in traffic.
It was so traffic.	There was so much traffic.
	There was a lot of traffic

Since 'traffic' is an uncountable noun, we don't use an article (*the*, *a* or *an*) to modify it. Hence we use quantifiers as 'so much,' 'plenty,' 'a lot of.'" [*We dealt with non-count nouns in Star Teacher* March 2004—Ed.]

Instead of saying...	We can say...
There was a traffic.	There was traffic.
There was a heavy traffic on the road.	There was heavy traffic on the road.

So, the next time you are caught in traffic, you will know how to deal with it—linguistically, at least!

ABOUT THE WRITER

Ma. Luz C. Vilches holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from Lancaster University, UK. She is the Chair of the English Department at Ateneo de Manila University. Before this, she was Executive Director of the Ateneo Center for English Language Teaching.

I recommend...

Here are books to read just for fun, recommended by SAS teacher-trainers and reading specialists from the International School Manila.

THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

By Tony D. Burton

Recommended by Neni Sta. Romana-Cruz

This fascinating book is quite a pleasure to read—it gives you a peek into some celebrities and famous people's favorite things, and in their own handwriting, too. This concept brings words to life, giving the book more character, personality and soul.

The author asked some well-known figures to share "their favorite things" by jotting them down on their own stationery. Their responses remind us that the things that make our



lives truly special are usually very simple. The celebrities, who include comedian Robin Williams and American President George W. Bush, actually share such an intimate part of themselves, allowing the readers to look into their hearts and minds.

The book works on other levels as well. It's great fun, for example, to try and guess what sorts of things the celebrities will list. This book makes a terrific gift as well, and when shared with friends and family, it can start great conversations about your favorite things—and in so doing, allow you to think about, and appreciate, those things yet again and again! Available at National Bookstore.

CELESTINE, THE TINY BOY

By Giulia Aldovinci with illustrations by Monica Miceli
Translated by Andres R. Arboleda Jr., SSP

Recommended by Dali Soriano

I picked up this book on impulse at Shepherd's Staff, a Christian bookstore in Greenbelt, Makati. What a wonderful surprise it turned out to be!

Within its tiny pages are some of life's greatest lessons. Originally published in Italian as *Celestino Bambino Piccino*, this modern family fable was written for children, but adult readers will certainly enjoy it as well. It's just the kind of book that's meant to be read with a smile before bedtime. And the beautiful illustrations that accompany the text engage the reader all the more.

Celestine was an extraordinarily small boy. He had a matchbox for a bed and a piece of thread as a skipping rope. His parents searched far and wide for a cure to make Celestine grow into the normal size of a boy his age...to no avail. The twist in this children's story reveals the miracle behind Celestine's transformation.

This may be a tiny book about a little boy, but it's certainly big on lessons that can serve as guides as we teachers navigate through our daily rigors of conducting our classes and dealing with hundreds of students. Read it and let it remind you of how you should treat and treasure the many Celestines that you just may find in your own classrooms!

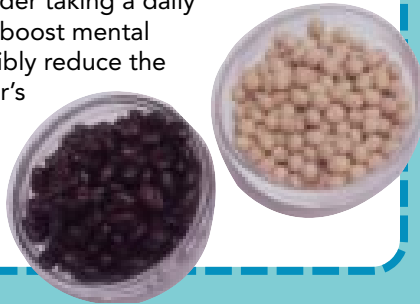
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do things better

Useful news and tips from all over

Prevent Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's is an illness most common in older adults, especially those over the age of 85. This incurable disease makes it hard for people to remember, think, and use language—many older people we refer to as *ulianin* may actually have undiagnosed Alzheimer's. What can you do to prevent this while you're younger? Eat a diet rich in niacin (or vitamin B3), found in lean meat, legumes, nuts and dairy. You should also increase your intake of vitamin C (consider taking a daily supplement) to boost mental ability and possibly reduce the risk of Alzheimer's later in life.



Papaya for skin care

Doctors and scientists are discovering the skin care benefits of papaya. Papaya contains papain, a type of enzyme that breaks down and sloughs off dead skin cells without harming healthy ones. Does papaya soap actually whiten skin? Well, almost. With constant application, your skin will peel slightly and eventually take on the qualities of baby's skin—brighter and smoother. If you find papaya soap too expensive for everyday use, you can apply this home-made beauty mask once a week to experience the effects of papain: Mix one cup of mashed or pureed papaya (green papaya has more papain but ripe papayas work, too) with one to two tablespoons of honey. Apply the mixture to your face, avoiding the eye area. Leave on for about five minutes, rinse and apply moisturizer.

Beware of bank charges

Are you needlessly paying your bank for keeping your money? Know the special charges and penalties that your bank impose, and you will avoid having to pay them, Inq7money.net says. Most banks, for example, charge P10-11 for every withdrawal you make from a machine not owned by them. Calculate the number of times you make withdrawals per month and per year, and this can add up to some serious cash. Banks also charge a monthly fee if your deposit falls below the minimum daily balance requirement at any time during the month. Make sure you know how much this is for your particular account, and don't allow your balance to fall below this amount.

Happy marriages all around

Hanging out with happily married couples will have a positive impact on your own marriage. According to Carol Ummel Lindquist, PhD—a psychologist and author of *Happily Married with Kids: It's Not Just a Fairytale*—you don't just benefit from good advice, but will also catch their energy, happiness, and love for



each other. Double dates and other fun activities with people you like are a great way to de-stress and forget about the occasional burdens that family life or being at home may impose.