

Kantonsschule Luzern

Fach	<i>Englisch</i>			
Prüfende Lehrperson	<i>Lehrpersonen der Fachschaft Englisch der KSL</i>			
Klassen	<i>6La 6Lb 6Lc 6Ld 6Ra 6Rb 6Rc 6Rd 6Wa 6Wb 6Wc 6Wd 6Re 6Ka 6Kb 7Sa 7Sb</i>			
Prüfungsdatum	<i>4. Juni 2009</i>			
Prüfungsdauer	<i>3 Stunden</i>			
Erlaubte Hilfsmittel	<i>keine</i>			
Anweisungen zur Lösung der Prüfung	<i>keine</i>			
	<i>Part</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Page</i>
	Reading	~ 15		2
	1 Comprehension	~ 20	40	3
	2 Vocabulary	~ 15	25	5
Anzahl erreichbarer Punkte	3 Essay	~ 60	60	7
	4 Grammar incl. Translation	~ 60	75	7
	Reading over	~ 10		
	Total	180 minutes	200	
Anzahl Seiten (inkl. Titelblatt)	<i>10</i>			

(Reading time: ~ 15 minutes)

Can Gossip be Good?

by Frank T. McAndrew

(adapted from "Scientific American Mind", Vol. 19/5, 2008)

MOST researchers agree that gossiping involves talk about people who are not present and that this talk is relaxed, informal and entertaining. Typically the topic of conversation also concerns information that we can make moral judgments about. Gossip appears to be pretty much the same wherever it takes place; gossip among co-workers is not qualitatively different from that among friends outside of work. Although everyone seems to detest a person who is known as a "gossip" it is an exceedingly unusual individual who can walk away from a juicy story about one of his or her acquaintances.

Why does private information about other people represent such an irresistible temptation for us? The language psychologist Robin Dunbar suggested that gossip is a mechanism for bonding social groups together. Others have proposed that gossip is one of the best tools that we have for comparing ourselves socially with others. The ultimate question, however, is, How did gossip come to serve these functions in the first place?

Is gossip perhaps an evolutionary adaptation? Well, it is not obvious at first glance in what way an individual interested in gossip should have had an advantage over others. Yet if we think in terms of what it would have taken to be successful in our ancestral social environment, the idea may no longer seem quite so far-fetched. Our cave-dweller ancestors lived in relatively small groups and had to cooperate with so-called in-group members for success against out-groups, but they also had to recognize that these same in-group members were their main competitors when it came to dividing limited resources. Living under such conditions, successful individuals needed a social intelligence that helped them remember who was a reliable exchange partner and who was a cheater, knowing who would be a reproductively valuable mate, and so on. Hence people who were fascinated with the lives of others were simply more successful than those who were not, and it is the genes of those individuals that have come down to us through the ages. Like it or not, our inability to forsake gossip and information about other individuals is as much a part of who we are as is our inability to resist doughnuts or sex—and for the same reasons.

A troubling aspect of gossip is that it may serve purely selfish interests at the expense of others. However, this nasty side of gossip overshadows the

more benign ways in which it functions in society. After all, sharing gossip with another person is a sign of deep trust because you are clearly signaling that you believe that this person will not use this sensitive information against you; shared secrets have a way of bonding people together. An individual who is not included in the office gossip network is obviously an outsider who is not trusted or accepted by the group.



There is ample evidence that when it is controlled, gossip can indeed be a positive force in the life of a group. Studies in real-life groups confirm that gossip is used to enforce group norms when an individual fails to live up to the group's expectations. Individuals who violate expectations about sharing resources and meeting responsibilities become frequent targets of gossip and ostracism* which applies pressure on them to become better citizens. Gossip can be an effective means of uncovering "free riders" who are tempted to violate group norms of reciprocity by taking more from the group than they give in return.

Thus, gossip is a more complicated and socially important phenomenon than we think. When gossip is discussed seriously, the goal usually is to minimize or even do away with it. This tendency, however, overlooks that gossip is an essential part of what makes groups function as well as they do. Perhaps it may be more productive to think of gossip as a social skill rather than as a character flaw, because it is only when we do not do it well that we get into trouble. Successful gossiping is about being a good team player and sharing key information with others in a way that will not be perceived as self-serving and about understanding when to keep your mouth shut.

(700 words)

* exclusion from a social group

1. Text comprehension

(40 points)

1.1 True or false

(10 points)

The following statements are either true or false with respect to the article on gossip by Frank T. McAndrew that you have just read. Mark those that are true with a T, and those that are false with an F.

- 1) McAndrew believes that our attitude towards gossip is ambivalent.
- 2) Gossip is usually about something that can be judged in terms of good and bad.
- 3) According to McAndrew, it is quite obvious that the phenomenon of gossip is a product of evolution.
- 4) Some people have suggested that gossip can effectively be used by individuals for finding out how well they are doing in contrast with others.
- 5) The reason why we are unable to resist gossip is determined by our inability to resist sex and sweet food such as doughnuts.
- 6) Gossip is only a positive force to the extent that it helps to control people.
- 7) Members of a group who do not play by the rules are more liable to become the subject of gossip than those who comply with the rules.
- 8) McAndrew suggests that people skilled in gossiping do not like to discuss gossip seriously.
- 9) McAndrew maintains that a good team player knows intuitively when not to gossip.
- 10) McAndrew claims that gossiping is only self-serving if we do not know when to keep our mouths shut.

1.2 Multiple choice questions

(30 points)

Please circle the letter before the line that **best** completes the sentence according to the text by Frank T. McAndrew.

- 1) According to Robin Dunbar gossip
 - a) is an important evolutionary development
 - b) allows us to see differences and similarities between ourselves and others
 - c) makes moral judgments
 - d) brings people of the same group closer together
- 2) The article does not suggest that
 - a) very few people can resist gossip
 - b) in order to tell somebody a juicy story about an acquaintance, you need to trust him or her
 - c) gossip is an entirely positive phenomenon
 - d) gossip helps keep people in line
- 3) In McAndrew's opinion, gossip made survival easier for cave-dwellers because
 - a) there was fierce competition for food and reproductive partners
 - b) it provided useful information about their main competitors
 - c) gossips had a more fascinating life
 - d) there was no alternative entertainment like doughnuts or sex
- 4) The term "free riders" (line 66) is used here to denote individuals who
 - a) are not accepted in a group
 - b) disappoint a group's expectations
 - c) show selfish, irresponsible behavior
 - d) all of the above

- 5) The author suggests that in-group competition among cave-dwellers
- a) was fiercer than it is today because there were fewer supplies
 - b) required social intelligence
 - c) was toughest among males
 - d) had nothing to do with how gossip functions today
- 6) The article claims that our interest in doughnuts and sex
- a) made our ancestors more successful
 - b) was at the root of our ancestors' in-group competition
 - c) is an outcome of evolution very much in the same way that gossip is
 - d) a) and c) above
- 7) According to the article, if you share sensitive information with another person it means that
- a) you are ambitious
 - b) you are an outsider
 - c) you respect this person
 - d) you trust this person
- 8) McAndrew claims that gossip, in its more benign forms
- a) gives us access to useful secret information
 - b) regulates the life of a group
 - c) helps divide insiders from outsiders
 - d) all of the above
- 9) If your office mates gossip about you, it is likely that
- a) they admire your skills and intelligence
 - b) they want to share doughnuts and have sex with you
 - c) you may be an overachiever
 - d) you are not considered a good colleague
- 10) One of the author's conclusions is that
- a) successful gossips should not be seen as egoistic
 - b) gossiping still has a bad image, undeservedly so
 - c) gossiping is a skill of importance in our society
 - d) all of the above
- 11) Those of our ancestors who had an interest in the lives of others
- a) were likely to have an advantage over their peers
 - b) were more likely to hand down their genes
 - c) had better relations to out-group members
 - d) b) and c) above
- 12) We should change our attitude towards gossip
- a) in order to pay tribute to our cave-dweller ancestors
 - b) because it is more complex and crucial for our lives than we think
 - c) because it is not a character flaw
 - d) because it is the only way to share key information

- 13) According to McAndrew, a successful gossip
- a) never has self-serving ends
 - b) strikes the right balance between gossiping and being silent
 - c) often gets into trouble with his peers
 - d) is a good team player because he has no character flaws
- 14) McAndrew suggests that gossip
- a) always makes you a good team player
 - b) is a detestable trait of personality
 - c) is a valuable social skill
 - d) is done best by people with a flawless character
- 15) McAndrew's article says that
- a) gossiping is a remnant of evolution that has lost its initial function
 - b) the function of gossiping has remained very much the same since the age of the cave-dwellers
 - c) being skilled in gossiping was more vital for our forbearers than it is for us today since it helped them to get their fair share of the resources, which were then much more limited
 - d) being skilled in gossiping is more vital for us today than it was for the cave-dwellers even though its social importance is usually underestimated

2. Vocabulary

(25 points)

2.1 Word formation

(10 points)

In the following sentences (1-10), use **one word** that **fits the gap** and belongs to the **same word family** as the word in **CAPITALS**. - There are two examples (0, 00) at the beginning.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 0) <i>Researchers</i> have produced some interesting findings about the social function of gossip. | RESEARCH |
| 00) It was an <i>entertaining</i> speech. | ENTERTAIN |
| 1) This article was concerned with the evolution of language. | ESSENTIAL |
| 2) We should share our secrets only with friends. | TRUST |
| 3) Please, wait for of the test results! | CONFIRM |
| 4) She is hardly with her new wig. | RECOGNIZE |
| 5) After the accident, he lay there, to move. | INABILITY |
| 6) The trains in Italy are notoriously | RELIABLE |
| 7) The spoiled children, instead of sharing, kept all the sweets to themselves. | SELFISH |
| 8) Is it to gossip about someone? | MORAL |
| 9) of human rights happen every day. | VIOLATE |
| 10) A biosphere is an sensitive area. | ENVIRONMENT |

2.2. Synonyms

(10 points)

Underline the word that could **best** replace the word(s) *in italics* in each of the following sentences so that the initial sentence retains its **original meaning**.

- 0) detest (line 9) - Everyone seems to *detest* a person who is known as a "gossip".
a) love b) dislike c) hate d) tease
- 1) irresistible (line 14) - Why does private information about other people represent such an *irresistible* temptation for us?
a) strong b) unbearable c) likable d) unyielding
- 2) far-fetched (line 28) - The idea may no longer seem quite so *far-fetched*.
a) distended b) withdrawn c) unrealistic d) aberrant
- 3) ancestors (line 28) - Our cave-dweller *ancestors* lived in relatively small groups.
a) heirs b) forefathers c) descendants d) inheritors
- 4) come down (line 41) - It is the genes of those individuals that have *come down* to us through the ages.
a) been weakened b) been broken c) lowered d) been transmitted
- 5) forsake (line 42) - Our inability to *forsake* gossip is as much a part of who we are as our inability to resist doughnuts.
a) enjoy b) give up c) resign d) pursue
- 6) benign (line 49) - The nasty side of gossip overshadows the more *benign* ways in which it functions in society.
a) malignant b) harmful c) intricate d) harmless
- 7) live up to (line 61) - Gossip is used to enforce group norms when an individual fails to *live up to* the group's expectations.
a) complete b) cheer up c) satisfy d) abide by
- 8) uncovering (line 66) - Gossip can be an effective means of *uncovering* "free riders".
a) removing b) revealing c) punishing d) rejecting
- 9) reciprocity (line 67) - They are tempted to violate group norms of *reciprocity*.
a) mutuality b) one-sidedness c) distribution d) bias
- 10) perceived (line 80) - Successful gossiping is about sharing key information with others in a way that will not be *perceived* as self-serving.
a) noticed b) understood c) realized d) resented

2.3 Antonyms

(5 points)

Give **one** word that is **opposite in meaning** to the word in italics by supplying the correct **prefix**. One example has been done for you.

- 0) It may serve purely *selfish* interests. (line 47) unselfish
- 1) Most researchers *agree* that gossiping involves talk about people who are not present and that this talk is relaxed, informal and entertaining. (line 1)
- 2) It is not obvious in what way an individual *interested* in gossip should have had an advantage over others. (line 24)
- 3) She is extremely *sensitive* when it comes to the feelings of others. (line 52)
- 4) Gossip can be an *effective* means of uncovering "free riders". (line 65)
- 5) *Successful* gossiping is about being a good team player. (line 78)

3. Essay

(60 points)

Choose **one** of the three following topics for an essay (300-400 words).

- 1) Comment on the following quotation: "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth." (Oscar Wilde)
- 2) Comment on the following quotation: "No one gossips about other people's secret virtues." (Bertrand Russell)
- 3) Imagine that you are a visitor in a society or country where people have no concept or even word for "lying". These people either tell the truth or they remain silent, they seem to feel no urge whatsoever to attempt anything in between. Now write a letter home to a friend here in Western Europe and tell him or her about how strange or fascinating life in that country is.

4 Grammar

(75 points)

4.1 Re-phrasing sentences

(20 points)

Complete the second sentence so that it has **the same meaning** as the first sentence, using the word given. Do **not** change the word given. You must use **between two and seven words**, including the word given. There is an example (0) at the beginning.

- 0) When does the next exam begin?
Couldyou tell me when.... the next exam begins? (tell)
- 1) When the student has to face malicious gossip about himself at school, he panics.
The student panics malicious gossip about himself at school. (faced)
- 2) Self-confident people like Barack Obama don't worry too much about what others think of them.
Self-confident people like Barack Obama to what others think of them. (thought)

- 3) The tabloid photographers were rude but the movie star got her revenge on them in court. (being)
The movie star paid the tabloid photographers rude to her in court.
- 4) I'm disappointed that you didn't back me up when they were telling lies about me. (might)
You me up when they were telling lies about me.
- 5) Britney Spear's reputation was bad two years ago. (used)
Britney Spear's reputation bad.
- 6) I last read the tabloid newspaper "Blick" five years ago. (have)
I 2004.
- 7) I asked her: "Please tell me what she really thinks." (to)
I asked her.....
- 8) I regret having talked about my best friend behind her back. (wish)
I about my best friend behind her back.
- 9) Before her death, Lady Diana demanded action by the police against tabloid photographers. (should)
Lady Diana demanded action against tabloid photographers.
- 10) The ski champion spread a lot of nasty doping rumors about the opponent before the race. (were)
A lot of nasty doping rumors about the opponent before the race .

4.2 Gap-filling

(5 points)

Complete each gap with **one word only**.

Few people can say that they've never participated in gossip (1)..... At the same time, (2)..... would actually say that they enjoy being gossiped about. (3)..... is a difference (4)..... gossip and good-natured social chit chat. For example, gossip usually entails putting someone (5)....., (6)..... good-natured idle talk accentuates positive aspects of someone's personality and deeds. People (7)..... harbour feelings of insecurity, boredom or negativity are more prone to gossiping. (8)....., rumour is not only negative. The rumour mill provides you with information about what your peers think of you and of your plans, ranging from malicious and personal attacks (9)..... harmless chatter. The truth is, gossip will exist (10)..... you take part in it or not.

4.3 Verb forms (active and passive voice, participles and infinitives) (20 points)

Complete the following text by placing the words in brackets in correct form and order. **Do not add** any nouns or pronouns.

Rumors are difficult to disprove. Maybe you (1) (notice) this. Even the craziest legends and most outrageous conspiracy theories never (2) (seem/die). Rumors (3) (work) just like the telephone game. After a rumor (4) (tell) a few times, the details (5) (get) lost and the message (6) (grow) simpler. Urban legends are a modern kind of rumor. They (7) (present) in story form, usually as something that (8) (happen) to a friend's friend. A well known story is the one about the wet dog which (9) (allegedly/put) in the microwave to dry.

Many people (10) (still/believe) today that a giant prehistoric monster (11) (haunt) Loch Ness, in spite of the fact that the existence of such a creature (12) (not/prove). Already in the 19th century many eyewitnesses (13) (convince) that they (14) (see) the monster's silhouette in the fog.

Studies on gossip (15) (show) that a rumor which is an outright lie isn't believable. In this case, evidence that something (16) (not /happen) (17) (easily / can / find). But other rumors are more persistent because there (18) (be) some sort of coincidental circumstantial evidence backing them up. For example, during the U.S. presidential campaign some people (19) (think) that Barack Obama (20) (convert) to the Muslim faith as a child.

4.4 Error correction

(10 points)

Some of the sentences are correct and some have one or more mistakes. If a sentence is correct, put a tick (✓) at the end of each line. If the sentence has a word which should not be there, **cross it out**. If a word or a structure is incorrect, **cross it out and correct the mistake** in the space at the end of each line.

- 1) The news was released from the Head of Communications.
- 2) Everyone has already gossiped, hasn't he?
- 3) He could have come with us had he not missed the train.
- 4) The children said they should have built a snowman if it had snowed.
- 5) Englishmen, most of which prefer beer to wine, eat two hot meals a day.
- 6) He always borrowed his library books for a long time when he was a student.
- 7) Because of the terrible road we had to drive much careful than we would have liked.
- 8) I hardly think he was serious when he said that. He must have been joking.
- 9) I'll get in touch with you as soon as I'll arrive at the airport.
- 10) Albert and Alice have had a most amusing time yesterday.

4.5 Translation

(20 points)

Translate the following sentences into idiomatic English. Translate as freely as necessary but as closely as possible.

- 1) Angeblich kommt "gossip" von "go sip". Früher schickten Politiker ihre Assistenten in Bars und befahlen ihnen, ein Bier zu trinken und dem Gespräch der Leute zuzuhören.
- 2) Viele Manager versuchen schon seit langem erfolglos, Klatsch am Arbeitsplatz einzudämmen.
- 3) „Du hättest den anderen nichts über Joannas persönliche Probleme erzählen sollen. Wir dürfen ihre Privatsphäre nicht verletzen.“
- 4) Wenn wir nicht das Verlangen hätten, über andere zu lesen oder zu reden, gäbe es nicht so viele Boulevardzeitungen.
- 5) Man glaubt, dass junge Frauen viel Zeit damit verbringen, triviale Informationen über andere austauschen.
- 6) Als der Richter ihn bat zu erklären, warum er die Geschichte den Medien weitergegeben hatte, stritt er alle Anschuldigungen ab.
- 7) Die meisten Unternehmen werden die momentane Wirtschaftskrise überstehen, vorausgesetzt sie gewinnen das Vertrauen ihrer Investoren wieder.
- 8) Der Autor behauptete, dass es ein Gen für Neugier über andere gebe, was ich bezweifle.
- 9) Man kann sich nicht darauf verlassen, dass er sich auf die Wahrheit beschränkt, er hat einen Hang dazu, die Tatsachen zu beschönigen.
- 10) Eric Foster, der Professor an einer berühmten amerikanischen Universität ist, untersucht seit über zwanzig Jahren Gerüchte und ihre Konsequenzen.