**Improving Dialogue John Hewitt**

Dialogue is one of the most difficult aspects of writing to master. There are many pitfalls you must try to avoid, such as:

**Stilted language**

Dialogue that does not sound like natural speech.

**Filler**

Dialogue that does not further the scene and does not deepen your understanding of the characters.

**Exposition**

Dialogue that has the character explain the plot or repeat information for the benefit of the audience.

**Naming**

Having one character use another character’s name to establish identity. People almost never say other people’s names back to them, and if they do it is a character trait typical of a used car salesman.

**Overuse of Modifiers**

Too many dialogue modifiers such as *shouted*, *exclaimed*, *cried*, *whispered*, *stammered*, *opined*, *insinuated*, *hedged* and a million others. Modifiers such as this can sometimes be useful, but are often annoying and used as a crutch for poorly designed dialogue.

**Group Task:**

Have 3 people in your group have a conversation about a topic they might enjoy, or at least find “natural” to talk about. One member be the recorder and write down exactly what is said (help the recorder by remembering, and if necessary, repeating what you said). Examine your group’s speech patterns. You don’t have to get every word, but you may find that you say less than you think and that your statements are surprisingly short. You might also find that you rarely speak in complete sentences.

Make some generalizations about the qualities of dialogue to share with everyone afterwards.