5

Elements of Language

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A word is a symbol but, as these authors indicate, it is not a thing. Stop reading for a moment and write down your description for the word "frog." What did you write? A tailless amphibian? A small holder placed in a vase to hold flower stems in position? A hoarseness in your throat? A mass of elastic substance found in the middle of a horse's foot? An ornament for fastening the front of a coat? All these are correct definitions of "frog." It's all in the meaning you had in mind.

Words, in addition to being symbolic, are also arbitrary. They derive their meaning from the people who use them. Linguists Ogden and Richards created the "semantic triangle," or "triangle of meaning," to graphically illustrate this symbolic, arbitrary nature of words:

The symbol (lower left-hand corner) is a word. The apex of the triangle is the thought—the concept you have of an object, idea, or event. The referent (lower right-hand corner) is the actual object or thing being perceived. For example, you see a chair and say "chair." The word you speak is the symbol, the thought is your image of the chair, and the referent is the actual chair. Notice that the line connecting the symbol and the referent is broken.

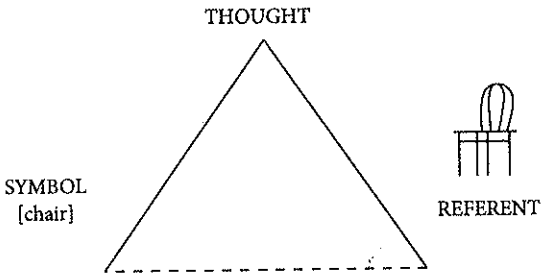

Figure 5-1

This indicates that the symbol and the referent have no connection except that which you make in your mind—in your thoughts.

As language changes rapidly in a technological world, words have migrated into the world of the Internet where they acquire completely new meanings. Consider simple words such as mouse, cookie, or nickname. The Internet has spawned a whole new vocabulary that only certain users understand quite well. Terms related to social media, such as Web 2.0, blog, wiki, tweet, and viral messaging were unknown a few years ago, and remain unknown to certain individuals, especially those with limited access to, or interest in, the Internet. Our language

and behavior is caught up in a groundswell, or "A social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need from each other, rather than from traditional institutions like corporations" (Li & Bernoff, 2008). And this groundswell includes a whole new vocabulary.

In this chapter on language, the authors describe the importance of meaning and how meanings change across time and subgroups. In addition, they suggest ways to speak more clearly and to be sensitive to cultural and gender differences. Excellent guidelines for language use are included. Research on verbal aggression between spouses (Stamp and Sabourin 1995) reveals that men who abuse their wives experience their spouses' verbal aggression as having physical force, such as "It was a real blow." In some cases they responded to this attack with physical force. Other research reveals the negative effects of hostile parent messages on children (Vissing and Baily 1996). Such aggression, often called verbal abuse, includes disparaging terms, insults, belittling, ridiculing, sarcasm, and threats.

On a lighter note, think about the words that are used in everyday language but which derive from the game of poker. For example, you talk about being "passing the buck" and "standing pat" without thinking about the gaming origin of the words. Consider how you use words strategically to affect relationships and how others do the same to you.

Through careful definitions and examination of how words shape meaning depending on culture and context, this chapter looks at communication from a technical standpoint: highlighting uses of grammar, syntax, connotation, and denotation in everyday speech. First illustrating the universal purposes of language, authors Verderber and Verderber describe how someone's use of language can sometimes change or confuse meanings, and they offer strategies for speaking more clearly, precisely, and accurately. As you read this chapter consider the question: How conscious are you of changing your language as you move from one circumstance to another, such as from a classroom to an athletic field or from an office to a family dinner?

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THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

Language is the body of words and the systems for their use that are common to the people of the same language community.

Uses of Language

Although language communities vary in the words that they use and in their grammar and syntax systems, all languages serve the same purposes.

1. *We use language to designate, label, define, and limit.* Thus, when we identify a house as a "Tudor," we are differentiating it from another that may be identified as an "A-frame."
2. *We use language to evaluate.* Through language we give positive or negative slants. For instance, if you see Hal taking more time than others to make a decision, you could describe Hal positively as "thoughtful" or negatively as "dawdling."
3. *We use language to discuss things outside our immediate experience.* Language enables us to speak hypothetically, to talk about past and future events, and to communicate about people and things that are not present. Thus, we can use language to discuss where we hope to be in five years, to analyze a conversation two acquaintances had last week, or to learn about the history that shapes the world we live in.
4. *We can use language to talk about language.* We can use language to discuss how someone phrased a statement and whether better phrasing would have resulted in

a clearer meaning or a more positive response. For instance, if your friend said she would see you "this afternoon," but she didn't arrive until 5 o'clock, when you ask her where she's been, the two of you are likely to discuss the meaning of "this afternoon."

Language and Meaning

On the surface, the relationship between language and meaning seems perfectly clear: We select the correct word, and people will interpret our meaning correctly. In fact, the relationship between language and meaning is not nearly so simple for two reasons: Language must be learned, and the use of language is a creative act.

First, we are not born knowing a language. Rather, each generation within a language community learns the language anew. We learn much of our language early in life from our families; much more we learn in school. But we do not all learn to use the same words in the same way.

A second reason the relationship between language and meaning is complicated is that even though languages have systems of syntax and grammar each utterance is a creative act. When we speak, we use language to create new sentences that represent our meaning. Although on occasion we repeat other people's sentence constructions to represent what we are thinking or feeling, some of our talk is unique.

A third reason language and meaning is so complicated is that people interpret the meaning of words differently. Words have two kinds of meaning: denotative and connotative. Thus, when Melissa tells Trish that her dog died, what Trish understands Melissa to mean depends on both word denotation and connotation.

Denotation. The direct, explicit meaning a language community formally gives a word is its *denotation.* Word denotation is the meaning found in a dictionary. So, denotatively, when Melissa said her dog died, she meant that her domesticated canine no longer demonstrates physical life. In some situations the denotative meaning of a word may not be clear. Why? First, dictionary definitions reflect current and past practice in the language community; and second, the dictionary uses words to define words. The end result is that words are defined differently in various dictionaries and often include multiple meanings that change over time.

Moreover, meaning may vary depending on the context in which the word is used. For example, the dictionary definition of *gay* includes both having or showing a merry, lively mood and homosexual. Thus, *context,* the position of a word in a sentence and the other words around it, has an important effect on correctly interpreting which denotation of a word is meant. Not only will the other words and the syntax and grammar of a verbal message help us to understand the denotative meaning of certain words, but so will the situation in which they are spoken. Whether the comment "He's really gay" is understood to be a comment on someone's sexual orientation or on his merry mood may depend on the circumstances in which it is said.

Connotation. The feelings or evaluations we associate with a word represent the *connotation* and may be even more important to our understanding of meaning.

C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards (1923) were among the first scholars to consider the misunderstandings resulting from the failure of communicators to realize that their subjective reactions to words are based on their life experiences. For instance, when Melissa tells Trisha that her dog died, Trisha's understanding of the message depends on the extent to which her feelings about pets and death—her connotations of the words—correspond to the feelings that Melissa has about pets and death. Melissa, who sees dogs as truly indispensable friends, may be trying to communicate a true sense of grief, but Trish, who has never had a pet and doesn't particularly care for dogs, may miss the sense of Melissa's statement.

Word denotation and connotation are important because the only message that counts is the message that is understood, regardless of whether it is the message you intended.

Meaning Varies Across Subgroups in the Language Community

As we mentioned earlier, within a larger language community, subgroups with unique cultures are

sometimes formed. These subgroups develop variations on the core language that enable them to share meanings unique to their subcultural experience. People from different subcultures approach the world from different perspectives, so they are likely to experience some difficulty sharing meaning when they talk with each other....

In addition to subgroups based on race, religion, and national origin, there are also subgroup cultures associated with generation, social class, and political interests. The need for awareness and sensitivity in applying our communication skills does not depend on someone's being an immigrant or from a different ethnic background. Rather, the need for being aware of potential language differences is important in every type of communication. Developing our language skills so that the messages we send are clear and sensitive will increase our communication effectiveness in every situation.

SPEAKING MORE CLEARLY

Regardless of whether we are conversing, communicating in groups, or giving speeches, we can speak more clearly by reducing the ambiguity and confusion. Compare these two descriptions of a close call in an automobile: "Some nut almost got me with his car a while ago" versus "An older man in a banged-up Honda Civic crashed the light at Calhoun and Clifton and came within inches of hitting me last week while I was waiting to turn left at the cross street." The differences are in clarity. In the second example, the message used language that was specific, concrete, and precise as well as statements that are dated and indexed.

Specificity, Concreteness, and Precision in Language Use

Specific words clarify meaning by narrowing what is understood from a general category to a particular item or group within that category. Thus saying "It's a Honda Civic" is more specific than saying "It's a car." *Concrete words* are sense-related. In effect we can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch concrete words. Thus we can picture that "banged up" Civic. Abstract ideas, such as justice, equality, or fairness, can be made concrete through examples or metaphors. *Precise words* are those that most accurately express meaning—they capture shades of difference. It is more precise to note that the Civic came "within inches of hitting me" than it is to say "some nut almost got me."

Often, as we try to express our thoughts, the first words that come to mind are general, abstract, and imprecise. The ambiguity of these words makes the listener choose from many possible images rather than picturing the single focused image we have in mind. The more listeners are called on to provide their own images, the more likely they are to see meanings different from what we intend....

As we move from general to specific, we also move from abstract to concrete. Consider the word *speak*. This is a general, abstract term. To make it more concrete, we can use words such as *mumble, whisper, bluster, drone, jeer,* or *rant*. Say these words aloud. Notice the different sound of your voice when you say *whisper* as opposed to *bluster, jeer,* or *rant*.

Finally, we seek words that are precise—those that most accurately or correctly capture the sense of what we are saying. In seeking the most precise word to describe Phillip's speech, at first we might say, "Phillip blustered. Well, to be more precise, he ranted." Notice that we are not moving from general to specific; both words are on roughly the same level of abstraction. Nor are we talking about abstract versus concrete; both words are concrete. Rather, we are now concerned with precision in meaning. *Blustering* means talking in a way that is loudly boastful; *ranting* means talking in a way that is noisy or bombastic. So, what we are considering here is shades of meaning: Depending on how the person was talking, *blustering* or *ranting* would be the more precise word....

Although specific, concrete, and precise words enable us to reduce ambiguity and sharpen meaning through individual words, sometimes clarity is best achieved by adding a detail or an example. For instance, Linda might add, "He never criticizes a friend behind her back." By following up her use of the abstract concept of loyalty with a concrete example, Linda makes it easier for her listeners

"ground" their idea of this personal quality in a concrete or "real" experience....

Developing the Ability to Speak More Clearly

Being able to speak more clearly requires us to build our working vocabulary and to brainstorm to generate word choices from our active vocabulary.

Vocabulary building. As a speaker, the larger your vocabulary, the more choices you have from which to select the word you want. As a listener, the larger your vocabulary, the more likely you are to understand the words used by others.

One way to increase your vocabulary is to study one of the many vocabulary building books on the shelves of most any bookstore, such as *Merriam Webster's Vocabulary Builder* (Cornog, 1998). You might also study magazine features such as "Word Power" in the *Reader's Digest.* By completing this monthly quiz and learning the words with which you are not familiar, you could increase your vocabulary by as many as twenty words per month.

A second way to increase your vocabulary is to make note of words that you read or that people use in their conversations with you and look them up. For instance, suppose you read or hear, "I was inundated with phone calls today!" If you wrote inundated down and looked it up in a dictionary later, you would find that "inundated" means *overwhelmed* or *flooded.* If you then say to yourself, "She was inundated—overwhelmed or flooded—with phone calls today," you are likely to remember that meaning and apply it the next time you hear the word. If you follow this practice, you will soon notice the increase in your vocabulary.

Mental brainstorming. Having a larger vocabulary won't help your speaking if you do not have a procedure for using it. One way to practice accessing choices from your memory is to brainstorm during practice sessions and later in conversation. *Brainstorming* is an uncritical, nonevaluative process of generating alternatives. Suppose someone asked you about how well preregistration was working. You might initially say, "Preregistration is awful." If you don't think that *awful* is the right word, you might be able to quickly brainstorm the words *frustrating, demeaning, cumbersome,* and *annoying.* Then you could say, "What I really meant to say is that preregistration is overly cumbersome."...

Dating Information

Because nearly everything changes with time, it is important that we *date* the information we communicate by telling when it was true. Not dating leads to inaccuracies that can be dangerous. For instance, Parker says, "I'm going to be transferred to Henderson City." Laura replies, "Good luck—they've had some real trouble with their schools." On the basis of Laura's statement, Parker may worry about the effect his move will have on his children. What he doesn't know is that Laura's information about this problem in Henderson City is five years old! Henderson City still may have problems, but then, it may not. Had Laura replied, "Five years ago, I know they had some real trouble with their schools. I'm not sure what the situation is now, but you may want to check," Parker would look at the information differently.

Let's consider two additional examples:

Undated: Professor Powell brings great enthusiasm to her teaching.

Dated: Professor Powell brings great enthusiasm to her teaching—at least she did *last quarter* in communication theory.

Undated: You think Mary's depressed? I'm surprised. She seemed her regular high-spirited self when I talked with her.

Dated: You think Mary's depressed? I'm surprised. She seemed her regular high-spirited self when I talked with her *the day before yesterday.*

To date information, (1) consider or find out when the information was true and (2) verbally acknowledge it. We have no power to prevent change. Yet we can increase the effectiveness of our messages through verbally acknowledging the reality of change if we date the statements we make.

Indexing Generalizations

Generalizing—drawing a conclusion from particulars—enables people to use what they have

learned from one experience and apply it to another. For instance, when Glenda learns that tomatoes and squash grow better if the ground is fertilized, she generalizes that fertilizing will help all of her vegetables grow better. Glenda has used what she learned from one experience and applied it to another.

Indexing generalizations is the mental and verbal practice of acknowledging that individual cases can differ from the general trend while still allowing us to draw on generalization. For instance, we may have a generalized concept of "men." But we must recognize that although Fred, Darnell, and William are all men, they are likely to have individual differences. So, how do we index in ordinary speaking? Let's consider two examples:

Generalization: Because men are stronger than women, Max is stronger than Barbara.

Indexed Statement: In general men are stronger than women, so *Max is probably stronger* than Barbara.

Generalization: Your Chevrolet should go 50,000 miles before you need a brake job; Jerry's did.

Indexed Statement: Your Chevrolet may well go 50,000 miles before you need a brake job; Jerry's did, *but of course, all Chevrolets aren't the same.*

To index, (1) consider whether what you want to say is about a specific object, person, or place, or whether it is a generalization about a class to which the object, person, or place belongs. (2) If what you want to say is a generalization about the class, qualify it appropriately so that your assertion does not go beyond the evidence that supports it. All people generalize at one time or another, but by indexing statements we can avoid the problems that hasty generalization sometimes creates.

Cultural Differences in Verbal Communication

Cultures vary in how much meaning is embedded in the language itself and how much meaning is interpreted from the context in which the communication occurs.

In *low-context cultures*, such as in Northern Europe or the United States, meaning (1) is embedded mainly in the messages transmitted and (2) is presented directly. In low-context cultures, people say what they mean and get right to the point (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996, pp. 29–30). So, in a low-context culture, "Yes" means "Affirmative, I agree with what you have said." In *high-context cultures*, such as Asian or Middle Eastern countries, meaning is interpreted based on the physical, social, and relational context. High-context culture people expect others to use context cues to interpret meaning. As a result, they present meanings indirectly. In a high-context culture, "Yes" may mean "Affirmative, I agree with what you have said," or it may mean "In this setting it would embarrass you if I said 'No,' so I will say 'Yes,' to be polite, but I really don't agree and you should know this, so in the future don't expect me to act as if I have just agreed with what you said." People from high-context cultures expect others to understand unarticulated feelings and subtle nonverbal gestures that people from low-context cultures don't even process. As a result, misunderstandings often occur.

The United States has a low-context national culture, as described previously. But the United States is a country of immigrants, and we know that individual Americans differ in whether they are high or low context in their approach to language. So, although knowing the characteristics of a national culture or culture of origin may be useful, we still need to be aware that people may or may not behave in line with their ethnic cultures (Adamopoulos, 1999, p. 75). Then why mention these differences at all? Because they give us a clue to how and why people and cultures may differ. An essential aspect of communication is being sensitive to needs and differences among us, so we must be aware of what the nature of those differences might be.

Gender Differences in Verbal Communication

Over the last two decades, stirred by such book titles as *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, people have come to believe gender

differences in verbal messages are genetic. Yet research strongly states that differences in gender behaviors are learned rather than biological and that the differences are not nearly as large as portrayed (Wood & Dindia, 1998, pp. 34–36).

There is no evidence to suggest that the differences that have been identified between women's message construction patterns and those of men cause "problems" for either group (Canary & Hause, 1993, p. 141). Nevertheless, a number of specific differences between women's and men's speech patterns have been found, and understanding what has led to them has intrigued scholars. Mulac (1998) notes two differences in language usage between men and women that seem to have the greatest support (pp. 133–134):

1. *Women tend to use both more intensifiers and more hedges than men.* Intensifiers are words that modify other words and serve to strengthen the idea represented by the original word. So, according to studies of the actual speech practices of men and women, women are more likely to use words such as *awfully, quite,* and *so* (as in "It was quite lovely" or "This is so important"). Hedges are modifying words that soften or weaken the meaning of the idea represented by the original word. According to the research, women are likely to make greater use of such words as *somewhat, perhaps,* or *maybe* (as in "It was somewhat interesting that..." or "It may be significant that...").
2. *Women ask questions more frequently than men.* Women are much more likely to include questions like "Do you think so?" and "Are you sure?" In general, women tend to use questions to gain more information, get elaboration, and determine how others feel about the information.

But are these differences really important? Mulac goes on the report that "our research has shown that language used by U.S. women and men is remarkably similar. In fact, it is so indistinguishable that native speakers of American English cannot correctly identify which language examples were produced by women and which were produced by men" (p. 130). If this is so, then why even mention differences? Even though the differences are relatively small, they have judgmental consequences: "Observers perceive the female and male speakers differently based on their language use" (p. 147). Female speakers are rated higher on *socio-intellectual status* and *aesthetic quality.* Thus people perceive women as having high social status, being literate, and being pleasant as a result of perceived language differences. Men rated higher on *dynamism.* That is, people perceive men to be stronger and more aggressive as a result of their language differences. These judgments tend to be the same whether observers are male or female, middle-aged or young (p. 148).

Julia Wood (1997) explains these differences in language usage as resulting from differences in the basic psychological orientation each sex acquires in growing up. Women establish gender identity by seeing themselves as "like" or connected to mother. They learn to use communication as a primary way of establishing and maintaining relationships with others (p. 167). Men establish their gender identity by understanding how they are different or "separate" from mother. Thus they use talk as a way to "exert control, preserve independence, and enhance status" (p. 173).

SPEAKING APPROPRIATELY

During the last few years, we have had frequent discussions and disagreements in the United States about "political correctness." Colleges and universities have been on the forefront of this debate. Although several issues germane to the debate on political correctness go beyond the scope of this chapter, at the heart of this controversy is the question of what language behaviors are appropriate—and what language behaviors are inappropriate.

Speaking appropriately means choosing language and symbols that are adapted to the needs, interests, knowledge, and attitudes of listeners in order to avoid language that alienates them. Through appropriate language, we communicate

our respect and acceptance of those who are different from us. In this section, we discuss specific strategies that will help you craft appropriate verbal messages.

Formality of Language

Language should be appropriately formal for the situation. Thus, in interpersonal settings, we are likely to use more informal language when we are talking with our best friend and more formal language when we are talking with our parents. In a group setting, we are likely to use more informal language when we are talking with a group of our peers and more formal language when we are talking with a group of managers. In a public-speaking setting, we are likely to use more formal language than in either interpersonal or group settings....

Jargon and Slang

Appropriate language should be chosen so that *jargon* (technical terminology) and *slang* (informal, nonstandard vocabulary) do not interfere with understanding. We form language communities as a result of the work we do, our hobbies, and the subcultures with which we identify. But we can forget that people who are not in our same line of work or who do not have the same hobbies or are not from our group may not understand language that seems to be such a part of our daily communication. For instance, when Jenny, who is sophisticated in the use of cyberlanguage, starts talking with her computer-illiterate friend Sarah about "Social MUDs based on fictional universes," Sarah is likely to be totally lost. If, however, Jenny recognizes Sarah's lack of sophistication in cyberlanguage, she can work to make her language appropriate by discussing the concepts in words that her friend understands. In short, when talking with people outside your language community, you need to carefully explain, if not abandon, the technical jargon or slang.

PROFANITY AND VULGAR EXPRESSIONS

Appropriate language does not include profanity or vulgar expression. There was a time when uttering "hell" or "damn" would have resulted in severe punishment for children and social isolation for adults. Today we tend to tolerate commonplace profanities and vulgarities, and there are many subcultures where the use of profanity and vulgarity are commonplace. Under the influence of film and television writers who aim to scintillate and entertain, we have become inoculated to these expressions. In fact, it is common to hear elementary schoolchildren utter strings of "four letter" words in school hallways, lunchrooms, and on playgrounds....

Sensitivity

Language is appropriate when it is sensitive to usages that others perceive as offensive. Some of the mistakes in language that we make result from using expressions that are perceived to be sexist, racist, or otherwise biased—that is, any language that is perceived as belittling any person or group of people by virtue of their sex, race, age, handicap, or other identifying characteristics. Two of the most prevalent linguistic uses that communicate insensitivity are generic language and nonparallel language.

Generic language. Generic language uses words that may apply only to one sex, race, or gender as though they represent both sexes, races, or genders. Such use is a problem because it linguistically excludes part of the group of people it ostensibly includes. Let's consider some examples.

Traditionally, English grammar called for the use of the masculine pronoun *he* to stand for the entire class of humans regardless of sex. So, in the past, standard English called for such usage as, "When a person shops, *he* should have a clear idea of what *he* wants to buy." Even though these statements are gramatically correct, they are now considered sexist because they inherently exclude females. Despite traditional usage, it would be hard to maintain that we picture people of both sexes when we hear the masculine word *he*.

One way to avoid this problem is to recast the sentence using plurals. Instead of "Because a doctor has high status, his views may be believed regardless of topic," you could say "Because doctors have

high status, their views may be believed regardless of topic." Alternatively, you can use both male and female pronouns: "Because a doctor has high status, his or her views may be believed regardless of topic." These changes may seem small, but they may mean the difference between alienating and not alienating the people with whom you are speaking. Stewart, Cooper, Stewart, and Friedly (1998) cite research to show that using "he and she," and to a lesser extent "they," gives rise to listeners' including women in their mental images, thus increasing gender balance in their perceptions (p. 63).

A second problem results from the traditional reliance on the use of the generic *man*. Many words have become a common part of our language that are inherently sexist because they seem to apply to only one gender. Consider the term *manmade*. What this really means is that a product was produced by human beings, but its underlying connotation is that a male human being made the item. Some people try to argue that just because a word has "man" within it does not really affect people's understanding of meaning. But research has demonstrated that people usually visualize men (not women) when they read or hear these words. Moreover, when job titles end in "man," their occupants are assumed to have stereotypically masculine personality traits (Gmelch, 1998, p. 51)....

Nonparallel language. Nonparallel language occurs when terms are changed because of the sex, race, or other characteristic of the individual. Because it treats groups of people differently, nonparallel language is also belittling. Two common forms of nonparallelism are marking and unnecessary association.

Marking means adding sex, race, age, or other designations unnecessarily to a general word. For instance, saying "female" doctor or "black" lawyer would be marking. Marking is offensive to some people because the speaker appears to be trivializing the person's role by emphasizing an irrelevant characteristic. For instance, this usage seems to imply that Jones is a good doctor for a woman or Smith is a good lawyer for a black person. Because you would be very unlikely to ever say "Jones is a good male doctor" and "Smith is a good white lawyer," leave sex, race, age, and other markers out of your labeling.

Another form of nonparallelism is to emphasize one person's association with another when you are not talking about the other person. Very often you will hear a speaker say something like this: "Gladys Thompson, whose husband is CEO of Acme Inc., is the chairperson for this year's United Way campaign." In response to this sentence, you might say that the association of Gladys Thompson with her husband gives further credentials to Gladys Thompson. But using the association may be seen to imply that Gladys Thompson is important not because of her own accomplishment but because of her husband's. If a person has done or said something noteworthy, you should recognize it without making unnecessary associations.

Very few people can escape all unfair language. By monitoring your usage, however, you can guard against frustrating your attempts to communicate by assuming that others will react to your language the same way you do, and you can guard against saying or doing things that offend others and perpetuate outdated sex roles, racial stereotypes, and other biased language.

How can you speak more appropriately? (1) Assess whether the word or phrase used is less appropriate than it should be; (2) pause to mentally brainstorm alternatives; and (3) select a more appropriate word....

SUMMARY

Language is a system of symbols used for communicating. Through language, we designate, label, and define; evaluate; talk about things outside our immediate experience; and talk about language itself.

You will be a more effective communicator if you recognize that language symbols are arbitrary, that language is learned and is creative, and that language and perception are interrelated....

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QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS

1. List as many meanings of the words *fork, contact, burn, cool,* as you can. Compare your list with some of your classmates'. How are the definitions similar? Different? How would those similarities and differences affect communication?
2. What have you learned about adjusting your language across subgroups of peers? Give two examples of adjustments you regularly make.
3. Write a paragraph describing the language choices and use by someone you consider highly skilled in a specialized area. Include two or three examples of that person's effectiveness when talking with other experts and when talking with people unfamiliar with the area.
4. How is the language associated with new media (IM, tweets, etc.) moving into everyday spoken and written language. Give examples.
