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LANGUAGE

[Language

- » Heartfelt words can mend emotional wounds, restore relationships, and inspire change.

The Nature of Language

- » Many species communicate in one form or another, but we humans are the only creatures on the planet who use language.
- » We are born with verbal ability, but we have to learn the language we use, and like most learned skills, our language abilities improve as we practice and learn about them.
- » Language is a structured system of symbols used for communicating.

Language is Symbolic

- » Each word represents a particular object or idea, but does not constitute the object or idea itself. For example, the word BARN represents a structure often used for storing hay. The word itself is not the structure, but rather symbolizes it.
- » What would you call a barn?
 - English: *barn*
 - Dutch: *schuur*
 - Portuguese: *celeiro*
 - Korean: 헛간
 - Greek: σιταποθήκη

Language is Arbitrary

- » Most words have only an arbitrary connection to their meanings.
- » Words literally mean whatever we—as users of a language—choose for them to mean. For instance, the word CAR. The word doesn't look like a car, or sound like a car, so why do we think of a car?

Language is Governed by Rules

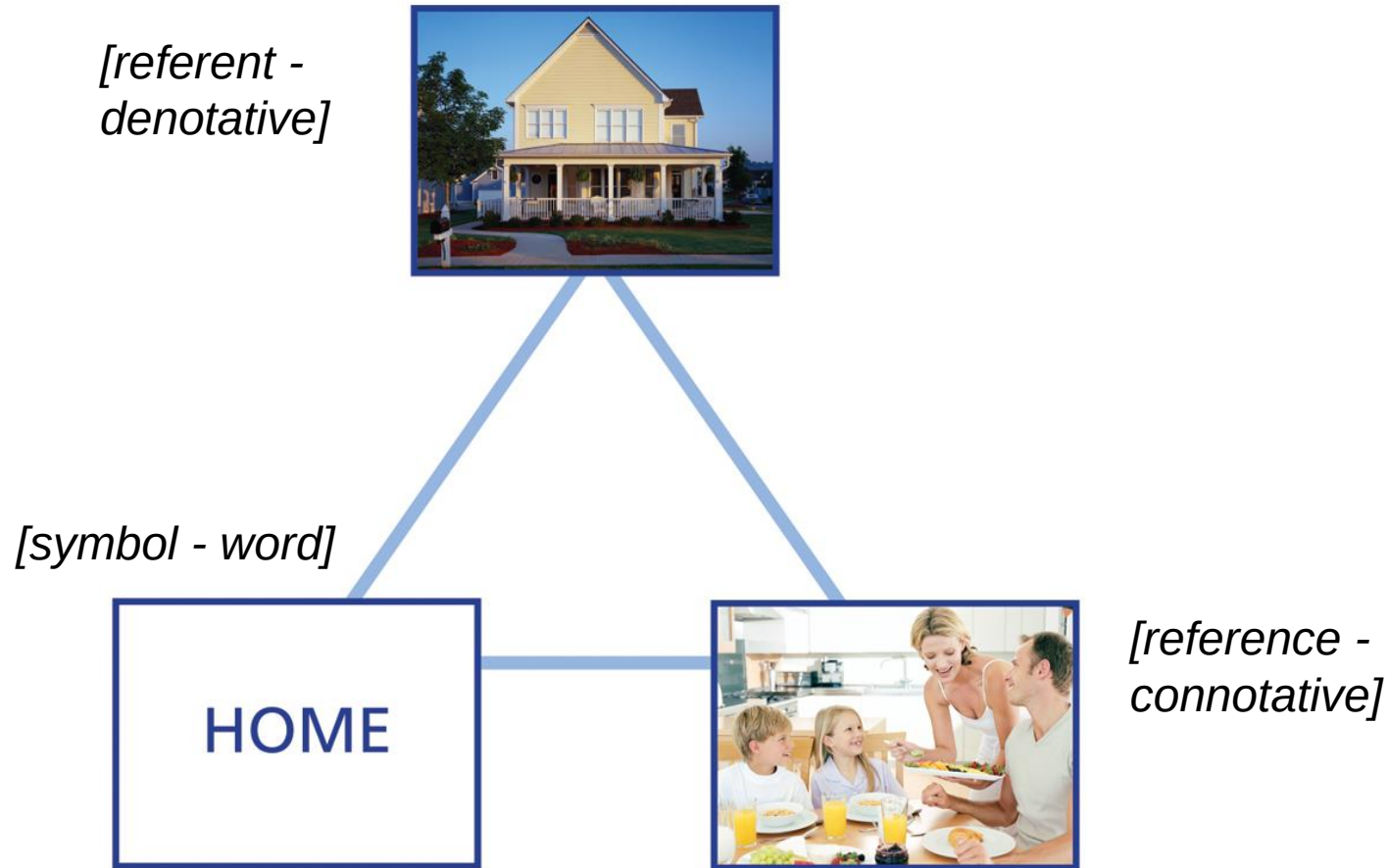
» Language is governed by rules. How do we all understand each other?

- **Phonological** rules deal with the correct pronunciation of a word and they vary from language to language.
- **Syntactic** rules govern the ordering of word within phrases.
- **Semantic** rules the meaning of each word.
- **Pragmatic** rules deal with the implications of interpretations of words and how we perceive the meaning.

Language has layers of Meaning

- » Language has layers of meaning and many words imply certain ideas that differ from their literal meanings (the dictionary definition).
- **Denotative** meanings is the literal meaning, or the dictionary meaning.
- **Connotative** meanings is a word's implied or secondary meaning, in addition to the literal meaning.
- The **Semantic Triangle** has three corners: The Symbol (word), the referent (denotative), and reference (connotative).

The Semantic Triangle



Loaded Language

- » Loaded language comprises words with strongly positive or negative connotative meanings
 - » *Cancer*
 - » *Death*
 - » *Marriage*
 - » *Family*
 - » *Money*
 - » *Freedom*
- The denotative meanings of loaded language may be emotionally neutral

Appreciating the Power of Words

Words can literally change a person's day, or a person's life, in a positive or negative way.

Think about how you feel when someone expresses affection to you, or when you listen to a speech by someone you can't stand.

Names Defines and Differentiates Us

- What is something that belongs to you yet it is constantly being used by others?
 - » YOUR NAME
- **Naming and Identity:** A name can give us clues about a person's demographic characteristics. Different parts of the country favor different names. Even nicknames can give you a feeling about a person. When we marry, the women usually takes on the husbands last name.

We Use Words to Persuade

- » Persuasion is the process of moving people to think or act in a certain way. Aristotle describes three forms of persuasion argument: the appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos.
 - Appeals to ethos rely on a speaker's respectability, trustworthiness, and moral character
 - Appeals to pathos rely on listeners' emotions
 - Appeals to logos rely on listeners' ability to reason

We Use Words to Persuade

Some Examples of Emotional Appeals

Suppose you were trying to persuade your aunt to stop smoking. Here are examples of appeals to pathos that you might use.

Type of Appeal	Example Statement
Appeal to fear	Thousands of people die from lung cancer every year; you could be next.
Appeal to guilt	Think about how many innocent children you're hurting every day with secondhand smoke.
Appeal to joy	Imagine how happy you'd be if you were free of your nicotine addiction.
Appeal to disgust	See this charred skin tissue? That's what your lungs look like right now.
Appeal to shame	You're an embarrassment to your family when you smoke.
Appeal to anger	Aren't you sick and tired of nicotine controlling every day of your life?
Appeal to sadness	Imagine saying goodbye to your kids because smoking claimed your life.

Credibility Empowers Us

- » Credibility is the extent to which others perceive us to be competent and trustworthy. Several forms of language can enhance or diminish credibility
 - **Clichés** make you sound as if you are uninformed or out of touch. They are expressions that have been used so much that they have lost their original meaning.
 - » If only these walls could talk The pot calling the kettle black Like a kid in a candy store.
 - **Dialects** that differ can make you sound like an outsider and that might lead to questions about credibility.
 - **Equivocation** is when you disguise your true intentions through strategic ambiguity. It is just vague language.

Credibility Empowers Us

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 - **Weasel** words are used to mislead listeners by implying something that they don't actually say – broad statements or generalizations. Weasel words suck the life out of the words next to them.
 - » Help So Arguably Literally ...
 - **Allness** statements implies that the claim is true without exception.
 - » There is no cure for Cancer.
 - » All teachers are strict.
 - » All cops are racist.
 - » All lawyers are just out for themselves.

Language Expresses Affection and Intimacy



- » Affectionate language can establish and maintain our close relationships
- » In some cases, nonverbal behaviors, such as tone of voice and facial expressions, help to clarify the meaning of affectionate messages.

Words Provide Comfort and Healing

» We use language to comfort those in need.

- Acknowledge the loss
- Express sympathy
- Offer a positive reflection
- Offer Assistance.

» We also use language to comfort ourselves.



The Use and Abuse of Language

Language varies in its purpose. Humor is usually generally positive and can produce all sorts of good outcomes. Other types such as hate speeches, can be devastating and hurt many.

Humor: What's so Funny?

- » Humor violates expectations
- » Humor can enhance communication
 - Putting others at ease
 - Defusing stress and reinforcing intimacy
- » Humor can be harmful
 - Demeaning social or cultural groups
 - Offending or harassing others

Euphemisms: Soft Talk

- » Euphemisms are vague, mild expressions symbolizing something more harsh or blunt. It is also known as “soft talk.”
 - Can provide a way to talk about sensitive topics such as sex, disabilities, and death without having to use uncomfortable language. However, euphemism can also desensitize people to important issues

Slang: Language of Subcultures

- » Slang comprises informal words often understood only by others in a particular group and can differentiate in-group and out-group members. At the same time it can alienate outsiders.
- » You should always take into consideration how your use of slang and jargon might come across to those around you.
- » Examples of Slang ...

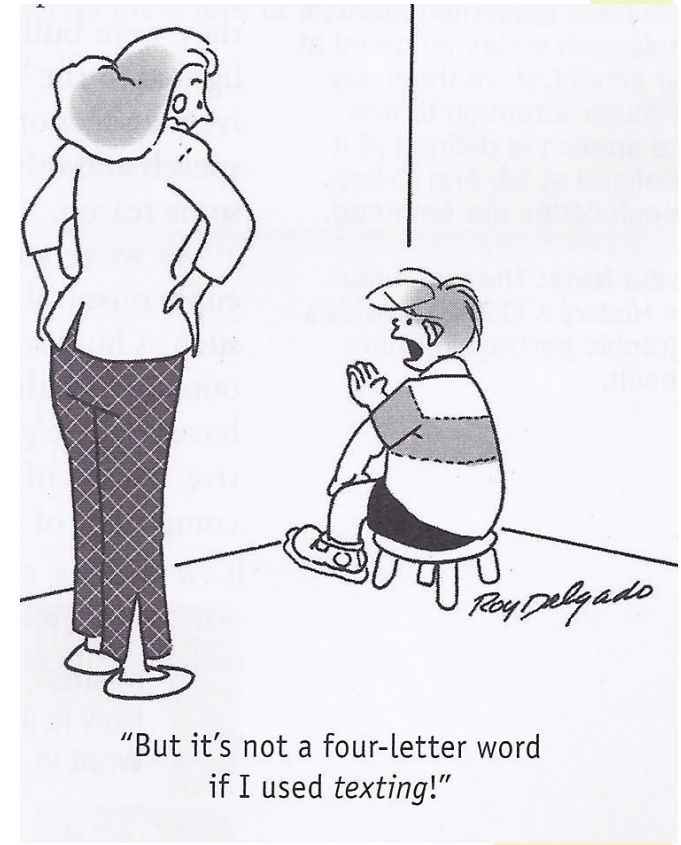
Defamation: Harmful Words

- » Libel and slander are defamatory statements made about others
 - Libel is a defamatory statement made in print or some other fixed medium
 - Slander is a defamatory statement made aloud, within earshot of others

Profanity: Offensive Language

» Profanity is rude or obscene language that is considered vulgar in the context in which it is used.

- Profanity is context-specific – Different cultures may have different meanings.
- Can serve to put people at ease
- Can also serve to insult or degrade others



Hate Speech

- » Hate speech is a form of profanity meant to degrade or intimidate people based on:
 - Sex
 - Ethnicity
 - Religion
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Disability Status
 - Political or Moral views
- » At present, all US States except Wyoming, Arkansas, Indiana, South Carolina, and Georgia have laws prohibiting hate crimes. Many college campuses have codes of conduct that address hate crimes and hate speech.

Improving Your Language Use

- » Consider the effect you wish to create, by avoiding:
 - **Shared knowledge** errors where you presume your listeners have information that they don't have.
 - **Shared opinion** errors occur when you incorrectly assume that your listeners share your opinions.
 - **Monopolization** errors occurs when one speaker inappropriately dominates the conversation.

Improving Your Use of Language

- » Speak at an appropriate level
 - Avoid “talking over people’s heads”
 - Avoid “talking down to people”

Improving Your Use of Language

- » Own your thoughts and feelings
 - I-statements claim ownership of what a communicator is thinking or feeling
 - » “I’ m mad right now”
 - You-statements shift that responsibility to the other person
 - » “You’ re making me mad”