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SKU: 9781453374184-SOLUTIONS

Chapter 2
Delivering Your Message

Introductory Exercises

1. Can you match the words to their meaning?

___ 1. phat	A. Weird, strange, unfair or not acceptable
___ 2. dis	B. Something stupid or thoughtless, deserving correction
___ 3. wack	C. Excellent, together, cool
___ 4. smack	D. Old car, generally in poor but servicable condition
___ 5. down	E. Insult, put down, to dishonor, to display disrespect
___ 6. hooptie	F. Get out or leave quickly
___ 7. my bad	G. Cool, very interesting, fantastic or amazing
___ 8. player	H. To be in agreement
___ 9. tight	I. Personal mistake
___ 10. jet	J. Person dating with multiple partners, often unaware of each other

2. Do people use the same language in all settings and contexts? Your first answer might be “sure,” but try this test. For a couple of hours, or even a day, pay attention to how you speak, and how others speak: the words you say, how you say them, the pacing and timing used in each context. For example, at home in the morning, in the coffee shop before work or class, during a break at work with peers or a break between classes with classmates all count as contexts. Observe how and what language is used in each context and to what degree they are the same or different.

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Answers to Exercise #1:

1-C, 2-E, 3-A, 4-B, 5-H, 6-D, 7-I, 8-J, 9-G, 10-F

Getting started

Successful business communication is often associated with writing and speaking well, being articulate or proficient with words. Yet, in the quote above, the famous linguist S. I. Hayakawa wisely observes that meaning lies within us, not in the words we use. Indeed, communication in this text is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning. When you communicate you are sharing meaning with one or more other people – this may include members of your family, your community, your work community, your school, or any group that considers itself a group.

How do you communicate? How do you think? We use language as a system to create and exchange meaning with one another, and the types of words we use influence both our perceptions and others interpretation of our meanings. What kinds of words would you use to describe your thoughts and feelings, your preferences in music, cars, food, or other things that matter to you?

Imagine that you are using written or spoken language to create a bridge over which you hope to transport meaning, much like a gift or package, to your receiver. You hope that your meaning arrives relatively intact, so that your receiver receives something like what you sent. Will the package look the same to them on the receiving end? Will they interpret the package, its wrapping and colors, the way you intended? That depends.

What is certain is that they will interpret it based on their framework of experience. The package represents your words arranged in a pattern that both the source (you) and the receiver (your audience) can interpret. The words as a package try to contain the meaning and deliver it intact, but they themselves are not the meaning. That lies within us.

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So is the package empty? Are the words we use empty? Without us to give them life and meaning, the answer is yes. Knowing what words will correspond to meanings that your audience holds within themselves will help you communicate more effectively. Knowing what meanings lie within you is your door to understanding yourself and other. Learning to listen to what customers say, and more important, what they mean, can help you be more effective.

This chapter discusses the importance of delivering your message in words. It examines how the characteristics of language interact in ways that can both improve and diminish effective business communication. We will examine how language plays a significant role in how you perceive and interact with the world, and how culture, language, education, gender, race and ethnicity all influence this dynamic process. We will look at ways to avoid miscommunication and focus on constructive ways to get your message delivered to your receiver with the meaning you intended.

1. What Is Language?

Learning Objectives

1. Describe and define “language.”
2. Describe the role of language in perception and the communication process.

Section Outline

1. What Is Language?

Key Takeaway

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Language is a system of words used as symbols to convey ideas, and it has rules of syntax, semantics, and context. Words have meaning only when interpreted by the receiver of the message.

Exercises

1. Using a dictionary that gives word origins, such as the *American Heritage College Dictionary*, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, or the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, find at least ten English words borrowed from other languages. Share your findings with your classmates.

2. Visit several English-language Web sites from different countries—for example, Australia, Canada, and the United States. What differences in spelling and word usage do you find? Discuss your results with your classmates.

3. From your viewpoint, how do you think thought influences the use of language? Write a one- to two-page explanation.

4. What is meant by *conditioned* in this statement: "people in Western cultures do not realize the extent to which their racial attitudes have been conditioned since early childhood by the power of words to ennoble or condemn, augment or detract, glorify or demean?" Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.

5. Translations gone wrong can teach us much about words and meaning. Can you think of a word or phrase that just doesn't sound right when it was translated from English into another language, or vice versa? Share it with the class and discuss what a better translation would be.

6. Symbols change meaning over time, and are open to interpretation. Choose a sports team logo that has been the subject of controversy, as in the Washington Redskins, the

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Confederate Flag, or even the Indian symbol used by Stanford University that preceded their Cardinals "tree." Investigate the controversial symbol and share with the class.

7. Pretend you are ready to go home from college for a holiday (Thanksgiving or Christmas, for example) and your instructor was going to join you and your family for a meal. Imagine the conversation around the table and what words or phrases the instructor would not understand. Chose one, write a brief description of its use and meaning, and share with the class.

8. Selfie Exercise: From tree selfies to vacation selfies, the images we take of ourselves to share say something about us. Choose a type of selfie and briefly describe it and what it means. Share your results with the class.

9. Words we use today. Choose one word you use today with a group (work, family, or friends for example) what people outside of the group wouldn't understand. Briefly describe it and share its use and meaning with the class.

10. ePortfolio Exercise: Words and symbols represent us, often in our absence. What words and symbols will you feature or highlight in your ePortfolio and why? Share and compare with classmates.

Key Terms

1. Language
   - A system of symbols, words, and/or gestures used to communicate meaning

2. Semantic triangle
   - Three-part model in which a symbol refers to a thought, which in turn refers to the thing it symbolizes

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2. Messages

Learning Objectives

1. Describe three different types of messages and their functions.
2. Describe five different parts of a message and their functions.

Section Outline

2. Messages

- The Primary Message Is Not the Whole Message
- Parts of a Message

Key Takeaway

Messages are primary, secondary, and auxiliary. A message can be divided into a five-part structure composed of an attention statement, introduction, body, conclusion, and residual message. Messages are impacted by the channels we choose to deliver, and receive feedback, from them.

Exercises

1. Choose three examples of communication and identify the primary message. Share and compare with classmates.

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2. Choose three examples of communication and identify the auxiliary message(s). Share and compare with classmates.

3. Think of a time when someone said something like “please take a seat” and you correctly or incorrectly interpreted the message as indicating that you were in trouble and about to be reprimanded. Share and compare with classmates.

4. How does language affect self-concept? Explore and research your answer, finding examples that can serve as case studies.

5. Choose an article or opinion piece from a major newspaper or news Web site. Analyze the piece according to the five-part structure described here. Does the headline serve as a good attention statement? Does the piece conclude with a sense of closure? How are the main points presented and supported? Share your analysis with your classmates. For a further challenge, watch a television commercial and do the same analysis.

6. Role-playing exercise: You've been tasked with either 1) delivering negative news to an employee or 2) addressing a complaint from a significant and long-term customer. Choose three channels to delivery your message, rank them in order of effectiveness, and explain why you selected and ranked them. Share and compare with classmates.

7. ShamWow exercise: Think of an advertisement that got your attention. Consider how it gained your attention and whether it was effective. Share and compare with classmates.

8. When is best to choose a channel that limits the scope of interaction? When is an email better than a face-to-face conversation for delivering a message? Explain your viewpoint.

9. Choose a job description and identify the key messages. For example, what is the core problem that the position addresses and why? Share and compare with classmates.

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10. ePortfolio Exercise: What are the core message(s) in your ePortfolio? How can you best communicate them using which channels and why?

11. Branding Exercise: Choose a brand and identify its core message(s). Explain how you identified the messages and what channels are used by the brand to communicate them. Share and compare with classmates.

Key Terms

1. Primary messages
   - Refer to the intentional content in a message, both verbal and nonverbal

2. Secondary messages
   - Refer to the unintentional content in a message, both verbal and nonverbal

3. Auxiliary messages
   - Refer to the intentional and unintentional ways a primary message is communicated

4. Attention statement
   - The way you focus the audience's attention on you and your speech

5. Introduction
   - Part of a speech that establishes a relationship with your audience and clearly states your topic

6. Body
   - Main content area of a speech

7. Conclusion
   - Part of a speech that provides the audience with a sense of closure by summarizing the main points and relating the points to the overall topic

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8. Residual message
    - Idea or thought that stays with the audience well after the speech

3. Mobile Communication Messages

Learning Objectives

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1. Describe the impact of mobile communication on human interactions.
2. Discuss the explosion of mobile communication as a communication medium.

Section Outline

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3. Mobile Communication Messages

- The Mobile Revolution
- Smartphones as a Communication Platform
- Impact of Mobile Communication on Businesses
- Designing Messages for Mobile Devices
    - Direct Manipulation
- Visual Media for Mobile Devices
- Conclusion

Key Takeaway

Mobile communication impacts and influences how, when, and where we interact with each other. The platform has both strengths and limitations. Effective business messages need to be tailored to both the platform and the audience expectations.

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Exercises

1. Survey your classmates on how many hours a day they interact with the cellphone. Create a graph or chart and share with your class.

2. Create a sample calendar and ask ten classmates when they first interact with their cellphone each day. Present your findings.

3. Find an example of an effective mobile message, in your assessment, and write a brief paragraph on what you find particularly attractive, effective, or remarkable about it.

4. Create a sample mobile message, remembering to stay small (44x44 points is the norm), to keep you icon images clear, and your stacked list (table of contents, for example) easy to interface.

4. Principles of Verbal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Identify and describe five key principles of verbal communication.
2. Explain how the rules of syntax, semantics, and context govern language.
3. Describe how language serves to shape our experience of reality.

Section Outline

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4. Principles of Verbal Communication

- Language Has Rules
- Our Reality Is Shaped by Our Language
- Language Is Arbitrary and Symbolic
- Language Is Abstract
- Language Organizes and Classifies Reality

Key Takeaway

Language is a system governed by rules of syntax, semantics, and context; and we use paradigms to understand the world and frame our communications.

Exercises

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1. Write at least five examples of English sentences with correct syntax. Then rewrite each sentence, using the same words in an order that displays incorrect syntax. Compare your results with those of your classmates.

2. Think of at least five words whose denotative meaning differs from their connotative meaning. Use each word in two sentences, one employing the denotative meaning and the other employing the connotative. Compare your results with those of your classmates.

3. Do you associate meaning with the car someone drives? Does it say something about them? List five cars you observe people you know driving and discuss each one, noting whether you perceive that the car says something about them or not. Share and compare with classmates.

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4. While we know language has rules, we also recognize we break them. Identify one common word or phrase that seems to break standard language rules and share it with the class.

5. Language influences how we perceive our world. For example, if you have never been to New York City, what you know of it may come from the media, a collection of images and words, which may not represent reality. Identify one aspect of where you live that people wouldn't know if they didn't live there and experience it themselves. Share and compare with classmates.

6. Do uniforms and what we wear influence our expectations of each other, and if so, what does it mean when we violate those expectations?

7. What is the dress code where you work and how does it influence customer expectations?

8. Should schools require uniforms to improve performance? Why or why not?

9. Identify one word that is used where you live, or with a group you belong to, that an outsider wouldn't understand. Share and explain it to the class.

10. ePortfolio Exercise: What words do you use in your ePortfolio and why? Do you include profession-specific jargon, or do you avoid the use of jargon? Share and compare.

Key Terms

1. Syntactic rules
   - Govern the order of words in a sentence.

2. Semantic rules

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- Govern the meaning of words and how to interpret them.

3. Contextual rules
   - Govern meaning and word choice according to context and social custom.

4. Paradigm
   - A clear point of view involving theories, laws, and/or generalizations that provide a framework for understanding.

5. Denotative meaning
   - A word's common meaning, often found in the dictionary.

6. Connotative meaning
   - A meaning often not found in the dictionary but in the community of users; it can involve an emotional association, and can be individual or collective, but is not universal.

5. Language Can Be an Obstacle to Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate six ways in which language can be an obstacle or barrier to communication.
2. Explain the differences between clichés, jargon, and slang.
3. Explain the difference between sexist or racist language and legitimate references to gender or race in business communication.

Section Outline

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5. Language Can Be an Obstacle to Communication

- Cliché
- Jargon
- Slang
- Sexist and Racist Language
- Euphemisms
- Doublespeak

Key Takeaway

To avoid obstacles to communication, avoid clichés, jargon, slang, sexist and racist language, euphemisms, and doublespeak.

Exercises

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1. Identify at least five common clichés and look up their origins. Try to understand how and when each phrase became a cliché. Share your findings with your classmates.

2. Using your library's microfilm files or an online database, look through newspaper articles from the 1950s or earlier. Find at least one article that uses sexist or racist language. What makes it racist or sexist? How would a journalist convey the same information today? Share your findings with your class.

3. Identify one slang term and one euphemism you know is used in your community, among your friends, or where you work. Share and compare with classmates.

4. How does language change over time? Interview someone older than you and someone younger than you and identify words that have changed. Pay special attention to jargon and slang words.

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5. Is there ever a justifiable use for doublespeak? Why or why not? Explain your response and give some examples.

6. Can people readily identify the barriers to communication? Survey ten individuals and see if they accurately identify at least one barrier, even if they use a different term or word.

7. When is jargon useful and effective? When is it not? Share and compare your viewpoints.

8. Identify a slang word that is now common. Explain the word or term and share with the class.

9. Identify a slang word that you once used, but now you don't. Explain the term and why you no longer use it.

10. ePortfolio Exercise: Jargon can demonstrate professional proficiency, or create barriers to understanding. Do you use jargon in your ePortfolio? Why or why not?

Key Terms

1. Cliché
   - A once-clever word or phrase that has lost its impact through overuse

2. Jargon
   - An occupation-specific language used by people in a given profession.

3. Slang

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- The use of existing or newly invented words to take the place of standard or traditional words with the intent of adding an unconventional, nonstandard, humorous, or rebellious effect.

4. Sexist language
   - Uses gender as a discriminating factor

5. Racist language
   - Discriminates against members of a given race or ethnic group

6. Euphemism
   - Involves substituting an acceptable word for an offensive, controversial, or unacceptable one that conveys the same or similar meaning

7. Doublespeak
   - The deliberate use of words to disguise, obscure, or change meaning

6. Emphasis Strategies

Learning Objectives

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1. Describe and define four strategies that can give emphasis to your message.
2. Demonstrate the effective use of visuals in an oral or written presentation.
3. Demonstrate the effective use of signposts, internal summaries and foreshadowing, and repetition in an oral or written presentation.

Section Summary

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6. Emphasis Strategies

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- Visual Communication
- Signposts
- Internal Summaries and Foreshadowing
- Repetition

Key Takeaway

Emphasize your message by using visuals, signposts, internal summaries and foreshadowing, and repetition.

Exercises

1. Find a news article online or in a newspaper or magazine that uses several visuals. What do the visuals illustrate? Would the article be equally effective without them? Why or why not? Share your findings with your class.

2. Find an article or listen to a presentation that uses signposts. Identify the signposts and explain how they help the audience follow the article or presentation. Share your findings with your class.

3. Find the legend on a map. Pick one symbol and describe its use. Share and compare with the class.

4. Find an example of a visual that does not fit with the words around it and share it with the class.

5. Find an example of a visual that effectively complements the words around it and share it with the class.

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6. Find an example of a signpost visual and share it with the class.

7. Find an example of an internal summary or foreshadowing and share it with the class.

8. Imagine you are tasked with creating an orientation presentation on your job or where you live. What elements would you include in your presentation, what visuals would you feature, and why? Share and compare with classmates.

9. Find one example of a visual that communicates a relationship between two or more ideas. For example, a line graph on foreign currency exchange rates. Share your example with the class.

10. ePortfolio Exercise: How will you present your visual information in your ePortfolio? Will you communicate information and relationships with graphs or charts? Why or why not?

Key Terms

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1. Signposts, or indicators
    - Key words that alert the audience to a change in topic, a tangential explanation, an example, or a conclusion

6. Improving Verbal Communication

Learning Objectives

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1. List and explain the use of six strategies for improving verbal communication.
2. Demonstrate the appropriate use of definitions in an oral or written presentation.
3. Understand how to assess the audience, choose an appropriate tone, and check for understanding and results in an oral or written presentation.

Section Outline

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6. Improving Verbal Communication

- Define Your Terms
- Choose Precise Words
- Consider Your Audience
- Take Control of Your Tone
- Check for Understanding
- Be Results Oriented

Key Takeaway

To improve communication, define your terms, choose precise words, consider your audience, control your tone, check for understanding, and aim for results.

Exercises

---

1. Choose a piece of writing from a profession you are unfamiliar with. For example, if you are studying biology, choose an excerpt from a book on fashion design. Identify several terms you are unfamiliar with, terms that may be considered jargon. How does the

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writer help you understand the meaning of these terms? Could the writer make them easier to understand? Share your findings with your class.

2. In your chosen career field or your college major, identify ten jargon words, define them, and share them with the class.

3. Describe a simple process, from brushing your teeth to opening the top of a bottle, in as precise terms as possible. Present to the class.

4. Think back to a miscommunication and consider what were the key elements of the misunderstanding. Please share and compare with your classmates.

5. How does your tone influence the meaning of the message. Think of an example to share with the class.

6. How can clarifying questions improve customer service? Can you think of an example? Please share with the class.

7. False Advertising! Find an example of words or phrases that were used in marketing or advertising and later found to be false or misleading. Share and compare with classmates.

8. Social media is full of examples of tweets or Facebook posts gone wrong. Find one example of a message in social media that went awry and share it with the class. What can we learn from the mistake?

9. Consider the list in the section on ways to improve verbal communication and add one of your own. Briefly describe why it should be added to the list. Share and compare with classmates.

10. ePortfolio Exercise: Results count - how will you communicate results in your ePortfolio?

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11. When can precision in language be too much information and hinder interactions? Share and compare with classmates.

Key Terms

1. Precise words

- Words that paint as vivid and accurate a mental picture as possible for your audience

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Business Communication for Success

By: Scott McLean

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Chapter 2
Delivering Your Message

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Learning Objectives

- Describe and define “language”
- Describe the role of language in perception and the communication process
- Describe three different types of messages and their functions
- Describe five different parts of a message and their functions
- Describe the impact of mobile communication on human interactions
- Discuss the explosion of mobile communication as a communication medium
- Identify and describe five key principles of verbal communication
- Explain how the rules of syntax, semantics, and context govern language
- Describe how language serves to shape our experience of reality
- Demonstrate six ways in which language can be an obstacle or barrier to communication
- Explain the differences between clichés, jargon, and slang
- Explain the difference between sexist or racist language and legitimate references to gender or race in business communication

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Learning Objectives

- Describe and define four strategies that can give emphasis to your message
- Demonstrate the effective use of visuals in an oral or written presentation
- Demonstrate the effective use of signposts, internal summaries and foreshadowing, and repetition in an oral or written presentation
- List and explain the use of six strategies for improving verbal communication
- Demonstrate the appropriate use of definitions in an oral or written presentation
- Understand how to assess the audience, choose an appropriate tone, and check for understanding and results in an oral or written presentation

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What is language?

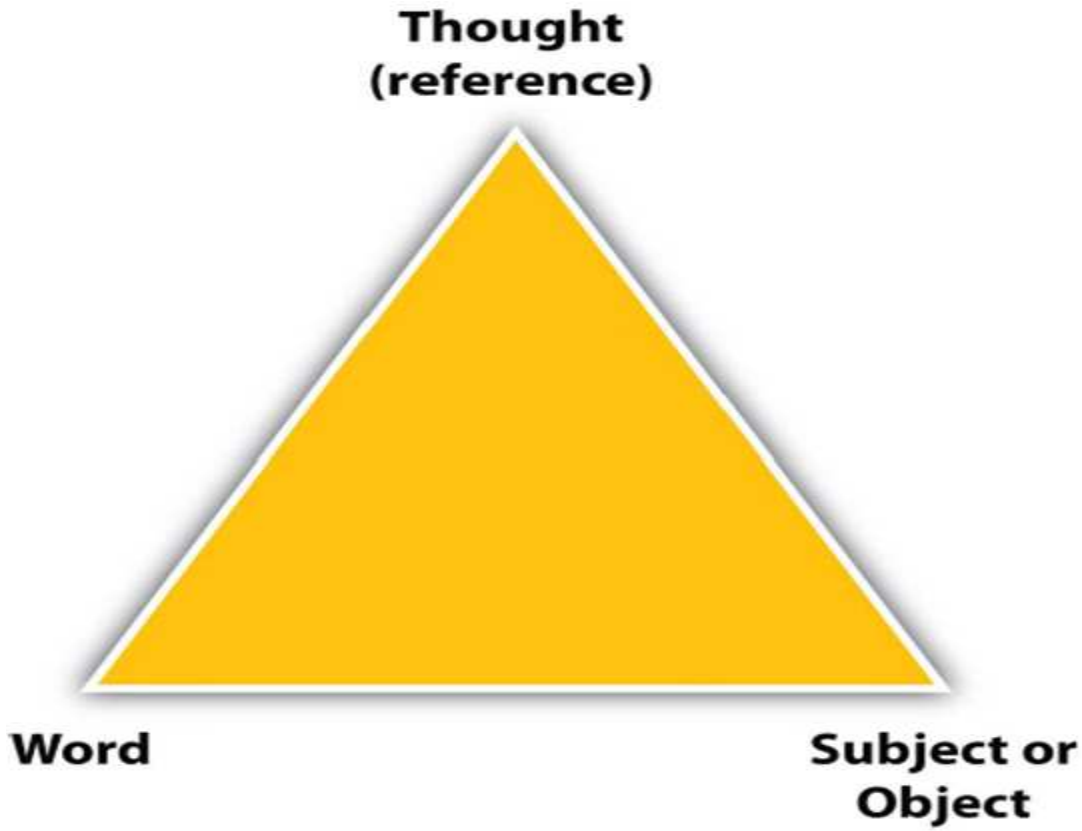
A SYSTEM OF SYMBOLS, WORDS, AND/OR GESTURES USED TO COMMUNICATE MEANING

- Bound by context
- Words don't have meaning without people to interpret them and give them life and purpose

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The Semantic Triangle



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Types of Messages

- Primary messages
  - Intentional content, both verbal and nonverbal
- Secondary messages
  - Unintentional content, both verbal and nonverbal
- Auxiliary messages
  - Intentional and unintentional ways a primary message is communicated

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Functions of messages

MESSAGE	PURPOSE
Primary messages	Express yourself and communicate your message
Secondary messages	Form impressions of your intentional messages
Auxiliary messages	Influence the interpretation or perception of your message

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Parts of a Message

PART	PURPOSE
Attention statement	Captures the attention of your audience
Introduction	Establishes a relationship with your audience
Body	Presents your message in detail
Conclusion	Provides the audience with a sense of closure by summarizing your main points and relating them to the overall topic
Residual message	Stays with the audience after the communication is finished

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Messages are Complex

- Messages can involve verbal and nonverbal aspects, including words, images, and video
- Messages can be delivered across a range of channels, including email, tweets, television, Internet, print, radio, and in person
- The best channel is dependent upon the "bandwidth" of the channel, the message complexity, and the feedback and urgency
- Visual or emotional messages may require other channels, such as a hug or smile

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Mobile Communication Messages

- We choose to communicate electronically, often preferring speed and convenience over the antiquated personal interactions and the time such transactions once required
- Messages need to be tailored to mobile communication media
- Mobile communication is a marketplace in itself

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The Mobile Revolution

- The mobile communication market is huge and growing

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Smartphones as a Communication Platform

- Smartphones receive, process, store, display, and integrate information
- They increase user-ability and ease of access through apps
- They make it difficult to get away from work

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Impact of Mobile Communication on Businesses

- Following the money leads to the mobile environment
- Smartphones, mobile communication, and eCommerce are transforming the modern marketplace.
- As effective business communicators we need to not only recognize the trend but to leverage it to best deliver our message effectively, correctly, as designed for maximum impact.
- We also need to be hyperresponsive to the dynamic online marketplace, where customer reviews, interactions, suggestions and comments make an impact on our brand and its reputation.

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Designing Messages for Mobile Devices

- The message needs to be appropriate for the platform it is displayed on
- It is important to consider the words and grammar of the message
- Message needs to be consistent
  - Use uniform words, jargon, terminology, titles, and style
  - Icons should mean the same thing
  - An action should do the same thing in different places
  - User interface elements should look and behave the same throughout the app
  - The design language should reflect earlier versions

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Visual Media for Mobile Devices

- Blogs are moving from long text entries to images and video
- Moore's Law: an observation of exponential growth, that states computer power, often measured by processor speed, will double every two years
- Visual images that work best speak for themselves

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Language has Rules

- Syntactic rules
  - Govern the order of words in a sentence
- Semantic rules
  - Govern the meaning of words and how to interpret them
- Contextual rules
  - Govern meaning and word choice according to context and social custom

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Our Reality is Shaped by our Language

- The ever changing and growing nature of your language determines your reality
  - Paradigms may be individual or collective

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Language is Arbitrary and Symbolic

- Words have two types of meanings:
  - Denotative
  - Connotative

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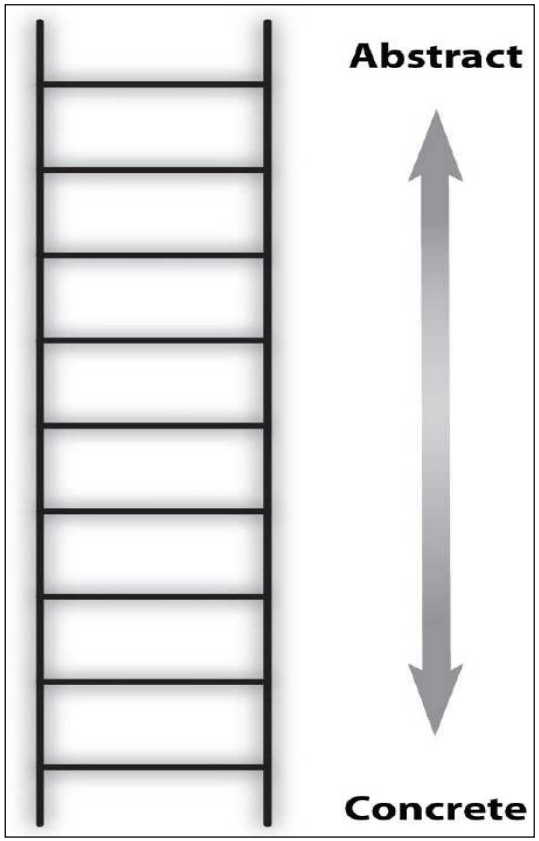
Language is Abstract

- Words represent aspects of our evironment
- They may describe an important idea or concept, but the very act of labeling and invoking a word simplifies and distorts our concept of the thing itself

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Abstraction Ladder



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Language Organizes and Classifies Reality

- We often group words, according to:
  - Their physical proximity or similarity to one another
- Categories become problematic when used to uphold biases and invalid assumptions

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Language can be an Obstacle to Communication

OBSTACLE	DEFINITION
Cliché	A once-clever word/phrase that has lost its impact through overuse
Jargon	An occupation-specific language used by people in a given profession
Slang	Use of existing or newly invented words to take the place of traditional words with the intent of adding an unconventional, non-standard, humorous/rebellious effect
Sexist language	Uses gender as a discriminating factor
Racist language	Discriminates against members of a given race or ethnic group
Euphemism	Involves substituting an acceptable word for an offensive, controversial/unacceptable one that conveys the same/similar meaning
Doublespeak	Deliberate use of words to disguise, obscure, or change meaning

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Emphasis strategies

- Visual communication
- Signposts
- Internal summaries and foreshadowing
- Repetition

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Visual Communication

- Visuals should support your presentation, not take the place of it
  - Should be clearly associated with verbal content
  - Should repeat, reinforce, and extend the scope of your message

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Signposts

- Key words that alert the audience to a(n):
  - Change in topic
  - Tangential explanation
  - Example
  - Conclusion

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Internal Summaries and Foreshadowing

- Help the audience to keep track of where they are in the message
  - Reviews what has been covered
  - Highlights what is coming next
- Reinforces relationships between points, examples, and ideas in the message

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Use of Repetition

- To help your audience retain the key points of the message in their memory

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Strategies for Improving Verbal Communication

- Define your terms
- Choose precise words
- Consider your audience
- Take control of your tone
- Check for understanding
- Be results oriented

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Define Your Terms

- Do not define each and every term in the presentation
- Try defining terms by giving examples

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Choose Precise Words

- Choose precise words that paint as vivid and accurate a mental picture as possible for your audience, to increase their understanding

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Consider your audience

- Give careful attention to contextual clues

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Take Control of Your Tone

- Read your document out loud before you deliver it
- Listen or watch others' presentations that have been described with terms associated with tone
- Seek out and be receptive to feedback

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Check for Understanding

- If the audience doesn't understand, you can see, ask questions, and clarify right away

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Be Results Oriented

- Tasks can be completed if:
  - You have done your preparation
  - You know your assignment goals and desired results
  - You have learned about your audience and tailored the message to their expectations

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Key Terms

- Language
- Semantic triangle
- Primary messages
- Secondary messages
- Auxiliary messages
- Attention statement
- Introduction

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Key Terms

- Body
- Conclusion
- Residual message
- Syntactic rules
- Semantic rules
- Contextual rules
- Paradigm
- Denotative meaning
- Connotative meaning

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Key Terms

- Cliché
- Jargon
- Slang
- Sexist language
- Racist language
- Euphemism
- Doublespeak
- Signposts, or indicators
- Precise words

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Exercises

- Using a dictionary that gives word origins, such as the *American Heritage College Dictionary, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* or the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, find at least ten English words borrowed from other languages. Share your findings with your classmates.

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Exercises

- Visit several English-language websites from different countries—for example, Australia, Canada, and the United States. What differences in spelling and word usage do you find? Discuss your results with your classmates.

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Exercises

- From your viewpoint, how do you think thought influences the use of language? Write a one- to two- page explanation.

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Exercises

- What is meant by conditioned in this statement: “people in Western cultures do not realize the extent to which their racial attitudes have been conditioned since early childhood by the power of words to ennoble or condemn, augment or detract, glorify or demean?” Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.

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Exercises

- Translations gone wrong can teach us much about words and meaning. Can you think of a word or phrase that just doesn't sound right when it was translated from English into another language, or vice versa? Share it with the class and discuss what a better translation would be.

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Exercises

- Symbols change meaning over time, and are open to interpretation. Choose a sports team logo that has been the subject of controversy, as in the Washington Redskins, the Confederate Flag, or even the Indian symbol used by Stanford University that preceded their Cardinals "tree." Investigate the controversial symbol and share with the class.

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Exercises

- Pretend you are ready to go home from college for a holiday (Thanksgiving or Christmas, for example) and your instructor was going to join you and your family for a meal. Imagine the conversation around the table and what words or phrases the instructor would not understand. Chose one, write a brief description of its use and meaning, and share with the class.

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Exercises

- Selfie Exercise: From tree selfies to vacation selfies, the images we take of ourselves to share say something about us. Choose a type of selfie and briefly describe it and what it means. Share your results with the class.

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Exercises

- Words we use today. Choose one word you use today with a group (work, family, or friends for example) what people outside of the group wouldn't understand. Briefly describe it and share its use and meaning with the class.

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Exercises

- ePortfolio Exercise: Words and symbols represent us, often in our absence. What words and symbols will you feature or highlight in your ePortfolio and why? Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- Choose three examples of communication and identify the primary message. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- Choose three examples of communication and identify the auxiliary message. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- Think of a time where someone said something like “please take a seat” and you correctly or incorrectly interpreted the message as indicating that you were in trouble and about to be reprimanded. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- How does language affect self-concept? Explore and research your answer, finding examples which serve can as case studies.

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Exercises

- How does language affect self-concept? Explore and research your answer, finding examples which serve can as case studies.

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Exercises

- Choose an article or opinion piece from a major newspaper or news website. Analyze the piece according to the five-part structure described here. Does the headline serve as a good attention statement? Does the piece conclude with a sense of closure? How are the main points presented and supported? Share your analysis with your classmates. For a further challenge, watch a television commercial and do the same analysis.

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Exercises

- Role playing exercise: You've been tasked with either 1) delivering negative news to an employee or 2) addressing a complaint from a significant and long-term customer. Choose three channels to delivery your message, rank them in order of effectiveness, and explain why you selected and ranked them. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- ShamWow exercise: Think of an advertisement that got your attention. Consider how it gained your attention and whether it was effective. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- When is best to choose a channel that limits the scope of interaction? When is an e-mail better than a face-to-face conversation for delivering a message? Explain your viewpoint.

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Exercises

- Choose a job description and identify the key messages. For example, what is the core problem that the position addresses and why? Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- ePortfolio Exercise: What are the core message(s) in your ePortfolio? How can you best communicate them using which channels and why?

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Exercises

- Branding Exercise: Choose a brand and identify it's core message(s). Explain how you identified the messages and what channels are used by the brand to communicate them. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- Survey your classmates on how many hours a day they interact with the cellphone. Create a graph or chart and share with your class.

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Exercises

- Create a sample calendar and ask ten classmates when they first interact with their cellphone each day. Present your findings.

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Exercises

- Find an example of an effective mobile message, in your assessment, and write a brief paragraph on what you find particularly attractive, effective, or remarkable about it.

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Exercises

- Create a sample mobile message, remembering to stay small (44x44 points is the norm), to keep you icon images clear, and your stacked list (table of contents, for example) easy to interface.

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Exercises

- Write at least five examples of English sentences with correct syntax. Then rewrite each sentence, using the same words in an order that displays incorrect syntax. Compare your results with those of your classmates.

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Exercises

- Think of at least five words whose denotative meaning differs from their connotative meaning. Use each word in two sentences, one employing the denotative meaning and the other employing the connotative. Compare your results with those of your classmates.

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Exercises

- Do you associate meaning with the car someone drives? Does it say something about them? List five cars you observe people you know driving and discuss each one, noting whether you perceive that the car says something about them or not. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- While we know language has rules, we also recognize we break them. Identify one common word or phrase that seems to break standard language rules and share it with the class.

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Exercises

- Language influences how we perceive our world. For example, if you have never been to New York City, what you know of it may come from the media, a collection of images and words, that may not represent reality. Identify one aspect of where you live that people wouldn't know if they didn't live there and experience it themselves. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- Do uniforms and what we wear influence our expectations of each other, and if so, what does it mean when we violate those expectations?

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Exercises

- What is the dress code where you work and how does it influence customer expectations?

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Exercises

- Should schools require uniforms to improve performance? Why or why not?

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Exercises

- Identify one word that is used where you live, or with a group you belong to, that an outsider wouldn't understand. Share and explain it to the class.

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Exercises

- ePortfolio Exercise: What words do you use in your ePortfolio and why? Do you include profession-specific jargon, or do you avoid the use of jargon? Share and compare.

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Exercises

- Identify at least five common clichés and look up their origins. Try to understand how and when each phrase became a cliché. Share your findings with your classmates.

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Exercises

- Using your library's microfilm files or an online database, look through newspaper articles from the 1950s or earlier. Find at least one article that uses sexist or racist language. What makes it racist or sexist? How would a journalist convey the same information today? Share your findings with your class.

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Exercises

- Identify one slang term and one euphemism you know is used in your community, among your friends, or where you work. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- How does language change over time? Interview someone older than you and someone younger than you and identify words that have changed. Pay special attention to jargon and slang words.

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Exercises

- Is there ever a justifiable use for doublespeak? Why or why not? Explain your response and give some examples.

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Exercises

- Can people readily identify the barriers to communication? Survey ten individuals and see if they accurately identify at least one barrier, even if they use a different term or word.

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Exercises

- When is jargon useful and effective? When is it not? Share and compare your viewpoints.

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Exercises

- Identify a slang word that is now common. Explain the word or term and share with the class.

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Exercises

- Identify a slang word that you once used, but now you don't. Explain the term and why you no longer use it.

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Exercises

- ePortfolio Exercise: Jargon can demonstrate professional proficiency, or create barriers to understanding. Do you use jargon in your ePortfolio? Why or why not?

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Exercises

- Find a news article online or in a newspaper or magazine that uses several visuals. What do the visuals illustrate? Would the article be equally effective without them? Why or why not? Share your findings with your class.

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- Find an article or listen to a presentation that uses signposts. Identify the signposts and explain how they help the audience follow the article or presentation. Share your findings with your class.

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Exercises

- Find the legend on a map. Pick one symbol and describe its use. Share and compare with the class.

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Exercises

- Find an example of a visual that does not fit with the words around it and share it with the class.

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Exercises

- Find an example of a visual that effectively complements the words around it and share it with the class.

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Exercises

- Find an example of a signpost visual and share it with the class.

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Exercises

- Find an example of an internal summary or foreshadowing and share it with the class.

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Exercises

- Imagine you are tasked with creating an orientation presentation on your job or where you live. What elements would you include in your presentation, what visuals would you feature, and why? Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- Find one example of a visual that communicates a relationship between two or more ideas. For example, a line graph on foreign currency exchange rates. Share your example with the class.

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Exercises

- ePortfolio Exercise: How will you present your visual information in your ePortfolio? Will you communicate information and relationships with graphs or charts? Why or why not?

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- Choose a piece of writing from a profession you are unfamiliar with. For example, if you are studying biology, choose an excerpt from a book on fashion design. Identify several terms you are unfamiliar with, terms that may be considered jargon. How does the writer help you understand the meaning of these terms? Could the writer make them easier to understand? Share your findings with your class.

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- In your chosen career field or your college major, identify ten jargon words, define them, and share them with the class.

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Exercises

- Describe a simple process, from brushing your teeth to opening the top of a bottle, in as precise terms as possible. Present to the class.

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- Think back to a miscommunication and consider what were the key elements of the misunderstanding. Please share and compare with your classmates.

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Exercises

- How does your tone influence the meaning of the message. Think of an example to share with the class.

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Exercises

- How can clarifying questions improve customer service? Can you think of an example? Please share with the class.

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Exercises

- False Advertising! Find an example of words or phrases that were used in marketing or advertising and later found to be false or misleading. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- Social media is full of examples of tweets or Facebook posts gone wrong. Find one example of a message in social media that went awry and share it with the class. What can we learn from the mistake?

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Exercises

- Consider the list in the section on ways to improve verbal communication and add one of your own. Briefly describe why it should be added to the list. Share and compare with classmates.

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Exercises

- ePortfolio Exercise: Results count - how will you communicate results in your ePortfolio?

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Exercises

- When can precision in language be too much information and hinder interactions? Share and compare with classmates.

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