CHAPTER II

Effective Language
I know that you believe that you understand what you think I said, but I’m not sure that you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.
—Richard Milhous Nixon

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to do the following.

• Show how the spoken word differs from the written word.
• Know the value of language that creates word pictures.
• Explain why using effective oral language is important in professional and social settings.
• Use effective strategies in presentations.
• Understand how using sound devices in language can create musical effects.
• Recognize language that can prevent effective communication.
• Evaluate language effectiveness of speeches.

Chapter Outline

Following are the main sections in this chapter.

1. The Spoken Word Versus the Written Word
2. Creating Word Pictures: Figures of Speech
3. Making Music with Words: Sound Devices
4. Language to Avoid

Speech Vocabulary

In this chapter, you will learn the meanings of the speech terms listed below.

- concrete word
- abstract word
- denotation
- connotation
- imagery
- metaphor
- simile
- allusion
- antithesis
- oxymoron
- irony
- hyperbole
- understatement
- euphemism
- personification
- repetition
- alliteration
- assonance
- consonance
- parallelism
- jargon
- slang

Academic Vocabulary

Expanding your academic vocabulary will help you become a more effective communicator. Listed below are some words appearing in this chapter that you should make part of your vocabulary.

- tangible
- conscience
- picturesque
- crystallize
- exaggerate
- compression
- pervasiveness
- cadence
- emancipation
- demeaning
- braille
Mark Twain told us that the difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug. Indeed, there is a world of difference between the word or phrase that will say exactly what you mean and the word or phrase that is simply “in the ballpark.” Consider these automobile accident reports that people filed with their insurance companies:

- I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.
- An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my vehicle, and vanished.
- I was on my way to the doctor with rear-end trouble when my universal joint gave way, causing me to have an accident.

Even though you might laugh at these reports, they prove a significant point: selecting the wrong word or using unclear phrasing causes confusion. It is important to pick the right words.

No one is exempt from this requirement. It is especially important for political candidates! For example, in the 2008 presidential campaign, Democratic candidate Senator Barack Obama was widely praised for the quality of his speeches. In one speech to Democratic voters in Iowa, Obama explained why he was running for the presidency:

“I am not in this race . . . because I believe it’s somehow owed to me. I never expected to be here, I always knew this journey was improbable. I’ve never been on a journey that wasn’t . . . I am running in this race because of what Dr. King called ‘the fierce urgency of now’ . . . Because I will never forget that the only reason that I’m standing here today is because somebody, somewhere stood up for me when it was risky . . . And because that somebody stood up, a few more stood up. And then a few thousand stood up. And then a few million stood up. And standing up . . . they somehow managed to change the world.”

Soon after that speech, Obama won the Iowa Caucus, an important early contest for the presidential nomination.

However, even the best communicators can make mistakes if they are not careful. In this chapter, you will learn that effective oral communication depends, in part, on accuracy and economy of language. You will examine the figures of speech used to create the language of effective imagery. In addition, you will be introduced to the sound devices that help to produce the “music” heard in language. Finally, you will be warned about specific types of language that should be avoided because they can create communication barriers between you and your audience.
Introduction

Imagine that you are in the circus. As an acrobat you perform high above the ground without a net, and the path you must follow from point A to point B is merely a tightrope. Your steps must be measured and exact. One false step and your career, as well as your life, could be over. You know that your movement must be absolutely precise. Simply being close to the tightrope would likely result in your becoming just a memory in the circus world.

What do you do? You touch, you feel, and you don’t move until you know that the next step is exactly right.

This chapter isn’t about the circus world, but it is about exactness—the exactness of language. Like the tightrope walker, you must painstakingly search—only this time it is for the most effective words and phrases to communicate your ideas. In the job world as well as in social settings, using effective language when you speak can make a sensational impression on your audience.

Earlier chapters compared building a successful speech to building a well-constructed house. We can extend that comparison by saying the successful builder of a speech knows that effective language, along with an effective delivery, is what covers the planks of confidence that were discussed in Chapter 2. Your listeners can’t see your words, but they can certainly hear them. And language that is appropriate, informative, and colorful will establish a communication “open house” that is sure to draw an audience, whether it be at work or with friends.

We now take a look at areas of effective delivery that can help you brighten up your house of oral communication.
You probably have a favorite author. If not, you will someday. Perhaps there is a good book that you like to read over again, an editorial that says exactly what you believe, or a song that contains words that you never grow tired of reexamining. One of the fantastic things about the written word is that you can experience it as often as you like.

The written word has a distinct advantage over the spoken word: It offers language that you are given time to consider, and with time often comes understanding. Think about how often you didn’t understand a reading assignment in school until you had gone over the assignment a second, a third, or even a fourth time.

Studies show, however, that 90 percent of all communication is not written but spoken. Indeed, the word language comes from the Latin word lingua, which means “tongue.” Spoken language must be different from written language if it is to communicate effectively. The audience must “get it” the first time. With the spoken word, you rarely have a second chance to make an impact on your audience.

What must speakers keep in mind regarding language if they want to make the right impression? Good speakers know the value of two key concepts: accuracy and economy.

Accuracy of Language

The average person has a vocabulary of approximately 10,000 words. You might use a certain part of your vocabulary only with your friends, and another, rather different part only with your parents or other adults. Why? Because you realize that certain language is appropriate in some situations but not in others. Despite this realization, however, we may use words that confuse our listeners because those words don’t accurately communicate what we think we are saying. We may be speaking about one thing while our audience is hearing something totally different.

Whether talking with your friends during lunchtime or with your teachers in school, your language needs to be accurate.
If you want to be an effective speaker, regardless of the situation—with your friends at the mall, with your teachers, with colleagues at work—then you need to understand the importance of language accuracy. Accuracy means using words that say exactly what you mean. How can you develop accuracy in your verbal expression? Let’s start by taking a look at concrete words as opposed to abstract ones.

**Concrete and Abstract Words** Concrete words name things we can perceive through sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell. Abstract words, on the other hand, don’t deal with the senses but are names for qualities, attributes, concepts, and the like. Words such as *baseball, car,* and *radio* are concrete words. They name things we can see and hear and touch. Compare this list with the words *recreation, transportation,* and *media.* These words are much more general. As a result, they are open to personal interpretation.

Look at a few lines of a song that you’ve probably heard several times:

> Take me out to the ball game,  
> Take me out with the crowd.  
> Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack,  
> I don’t care if I never get back.

Can you identify the concrete words that are used to help create the atmosphere of a baseball game? Can you almost taste the peanuts and Cracker Jack? These tangible objects are being used to communicate a message. It is often highly effective to use concrete words that say clearly what we want our audience to hear. In contrast, using abstract words without clearly defining them means taking the risk of not communicating accurately with the audience. When you use abstract words incorrectly, your language is not working for you. It might even be undermining your intent. Sometimes the most effective language is created when the speaker uses concrete and abstract words together, clearly and accurately.

**Denotation and Connotation** Closely associated with the terms concrete and *abstract* are the terms *denotation* and *connotation.* **Denotation** refers to the basic meaning of a word, which can easily be found in the dictionary. **Connotation** refers to the meaning of a word that goes beyond the dictionary definition; it is whatever meaning we associate with the word.

What about the word *mother,* *Mother* can be defined as “a woman who bears a child,” but many of us would also associate *mother* with ideas such as love, friendship, and family. Suppose you were going to speak on the idea that women should have the same opportunities as men in the job market. It would probably be unwise to say, “I think that women can make excellent contributions to any job and should be paid the same as men. Women shouldn’t be limited to simply being mothers!” Because of connotations associated with the word *mother,* this statement might imply to some people in your audience that you see mothers as relatively low in status, that you are antifamily, or that you think raising children is easy.

Use words that clearly denote a certain meaning. Think through the different connotations that a word might have before you use it in your speech. For example, the words *rebel, loner, eccentric,* and *mediocre* might mean one thing to you but something entirely different to your audience.

Abstract words may have many different connotations. Consider the words *success, failure, family, patriotism,* and *justice.* How might these words be interpreted differently by different people? For example, is success in your eyes the same as it might be in someone else’s?

Don’t think that you must always avoid abstract words because of this difficulty. Abstract words can be powerful. They can inspire us and appeal to our emotions. We must, however, use them with care.

**Economy of Language**

Just as you must be accurate in the words that you select for your speech, you must also be economical in the number of words that you use. Keep in mind that the members of your audience, contrary to what they must do when reading the written word, must remember all that you say. *Economy* means “careful or thrifty use.” Thus, economy of language suggests carefully managing the quantity of words you use to communicate verbally.
The essay “Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau was originally delivered as a lecture in 1848 under the title “Resistance to Civil Government.” It dealt with the role of individual conscience versus the role of state authority. Here is a portion of that speech:

Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man’s shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too. . . . There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher power.

This speech offers a great deal of intellectual content to absorb at one time. In addition, notice the number of words that it takes for Thoreau to say what he thinks. As an essay to be read at one’s leisure, “Civil Disobedience” is a masterpiece because readers can take the time to study the words and ideas in print. As a speech, it would probably be difficult to listen to. Why? If spoken language becomes long and involved, the listener can get lost.

How can we prevent this? Thoreau himself offers us sound advice when he states in his masterpiece Walden, “Simplify, simplify.” Apply his advice to both your spoken words and the organization of your ideas if you wish the audience to march to your drumbeat.

How? First of all, pay attention to the number of words that it takes for you to say something. For instance, see how each of these statements might be shortened:

Original Statement: At the beginning of the day, before I have my breakfast, I always work to keep my blood circulating and my body fit.
Shortened Statement: I like to exercise first thing in the morning.

Original Statement: Because of the way you look and because we have always had so much fun together, you and I might not find it a bad thing to talk and do stuff together.
Shortened Statement: I’d like to spend some time with you.

Original Statement: The way that my math teacher evaluates me in school shows that there are areas in which I can do a lot better.
Shortened Statement: I’m failing algebra.

Notice how words can get in the way and clutter up your message. This clutter can confuse your audience. Remember to avoid unnecessary prepositional phrases (“In the beginning of the story, at the top of the page”). Avoid using too many clauses run together in one sentence (“The main character, who is in his mid-twenties, knows that the sister who is hiding in the closet is innocent, because she wasn’t at the scene of the crime that had taken place earlier”). Avoid repeating the same idea with different wording (“The main character was an excellent student, had received A’s on her report card, and had always done very well in school”).

One effective way to be simple and direct is to use rhetorical questions. As discussed in Chapter 9,
rhetorical questions are questions that you ask the audience but that you don’t really intend the audience to answer out loud. “What do all of these statistics mean?” and “Where is the solution to this problem?” are rhetorical questions. Each could allow you to express with one question what it might have taken you two or three sentences to express otherwise.

The Irish poet and playwright William Butler Yeats once said, “Think like a wise man, but communicate in the language of the people.” If you give priority to accuracy and economy when choosing your language, then you might achieve with your spoken words the spirit of what Yeats is saying. Let’s look at how figures of speech can make your language memorable.

**Recalling the Facts**

1. Research has shown that each person has an average vocabulary of how many words?
2. Words that we can understand through the senses are called ___________ words, while words that express qualities and attributes are called ___________ words.
3. Two terms used in this section are *denotation* and *connotation*. Which one refers to the dictionary definition of a word?
4. This section talked about the economy of language. Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* reinforced this point by stressing the word “__________” when it came to keeping one’s life in order.

**Thinking Critically**

At the beginning of this chapter, you saw a statement by Richard M. Nixon. Here is a statement by another president of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower: “How can we appraise a proposal if the terms hurled at our ears can mean anything or nothing? . . . If our attitudes are muddled, our language is often to blame.” What was Eisenhower saying? He was speaking specifically about the language of government. Can you think of any examples in which governmental language seems to take on different meanings? Can you find any instances in which governmental language is muddled and confusing? What about the language of sports? The language used in your home? The language used in certain professions?

**Taking Charge**

This section discussed abstract words and gave specific examples. Write your own definitions (don’t use the dictionary) for the abstract words *honesty*, *patriotism*, and *friendship*. Talk with a classmate to see what your definitions have in common. What are the differences? Be ready to discuss your findings in class.
Creating Word Pictures: Figures of Speech

You have probably heard stories about how ancient royalty—without the advantages of the printing press, a modern postal service, the telephone, or the Internet—used messengers to communicate from kingdom to kingdom. (You have probably also heard that some of these messengers were put to death for being bearers of ill tidings.) The messengers, similar to the deliverers of singing telegrams today, would often sing the words of the messages, using rhyme and colorful, descriptive language. Using picturesque language, presented musically, undoubtedly made the message easier to remember. It also made a sound pleasing to the ears of listeners. Spoken language is most effective when it creates music for the ear and pictures for the imagination. Language that creates pictures in our minds and excites our senses is called imagery. Figures of speech are specific types of imagery. Here we describe figures of speech in terms of three categories: comparison, contrast, and exaggeration. Understanding figures of speech and then using them effectively will help make your speeches vivid.

Comparison Imagery

Which statement in each pair has more impact?

Education is important.
Education is the key that unlocks many of life’s opportunities.

You have to work hard to make a marriage work.
Marriage is like a plant: If you care for it and give it time and attention, it will grow and prosper.

You are not always nice to me.
Why must you act as if you’re Napoleon when we’re together?

The second example in each pair is more dynamic; it presents a more exact picture. The first example in each pair isn’t necessarily wrong; it is simply not as lively.

The second example in each pair uses comparison imagery. Comparison involves showing similarities. As mentioned, imagery refers to word pictures. Consequently, to use comparison imagery means to show similarities by using picturesque language. Let’s look at the three most common forms of comparison imagery: metaphor, simile, and allusion.

Metaphor and Simile  A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things by saying that one thing is the other thing. A simile is like a metaphor, except that it uses a term such as like or as to make the comparison.

For example, if you were talking to your classmates on the value of a high school education and employment, you could say,

A high school diploma can be important in determining the job choices you will have.

Or, you could say,

A high school diploma can be a key to unlocking occupational doors.

The second example uses a metaphor. It compares a diploma to a key that can open doors to a successful future. The comparison shows that even though diplomas and keys are basically different, they are similar, because each is of definite worth. Do you see how a metaphor can help to liven up your language?

If you wanted to stress that our government is spending large amounts of money each day, you could say,

Every day, our government spends extremely large sums of money.
Alternatively, you could say,

Every day, our government spends money as fast as McDonald’s sells hamburgers!

The second sentence is a simile, indicating that Washington is like the fast-food industry when it comes to handing out billions of dollars (rather than millions of hamburgers) each day.

If you used the fast-food simile throughout your speech, you would be creating an analogy, which was discussed in Chapter 10. An analogy, which can also take the form of a story, is the extended use of a metaphor or a simile.

**Allusion** Another way to create an effective word picture is through the use of allusion. An allusion is an indirect reference to a well-known person, place, thing, or idea. Unlike other kinds of reference, an allusion does not specifically identify whom or what it is referring to.

Earlier, a reference was made to Napoleon, showing how someone was comparing a friend to a dictator, implying that the friend was acting very bossy. Obviously not a comparison to be taken literally, the Napoleon reference made the point that one person was not happy with the other’s “I’m in charge” attitude. Had the reference been to “the Little Corporal” instead of to Napoleon, it would have been an allusion—an indirect, and yet potentially more telling, reference. (Napoleon was called this partly because of his small stature.)

Be sure, however, that your audience knows what the allusion means. The most effective allusions tend to be those that can be recognized by just about everyone. They do little good if they leave your audience wondering what you are talking about.

Use good judgment. Effective language involves creative comparisons that stick with your audience. If the comparisons don’t stick, the language hasn’t been effective.

**Contrast Imagery**

Near the conclusion of John F. Kennedy’s 1961 inaugural address are the famous words “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” Kennedy contrasts the ideas of “country” and “you.” *Contrast imagery* is the general term used to describe language that sets up opposition for effect. Contrast imagery often takes the form of antithesis, oxymoron, and irony.

A Meaningful Metaphor

Robert W. Goodman was the father of Andrew Goodman, one of three civil rights workers who were murdered in 1964 in Mississippi. In response to his son’s death, Goodman said, “Our grief, though personal, belongs to the nation. The values that our son expressed in his simple action of going to Mississippi are still the bonds that bind this nation together—its Constitution, its law, its Bill of Rights.”

A diploma could be called the “key to success.” Can you think of other metaphors that emphasize the value of education?
Antithesis One type of imagery, antithesis, is the specific balancing or contrasting of one term with its opposite. Look at these pairs of words: hot-cold, young-old, dry-wet, up-down, small-large, success-failure, love-hate, leader-follower, temporary-permanent. These are a few examples of antithesis. A fair question right now would be, “How can I use antithesis in my speech to make the impression I want?” Speaking to encourage citizens to join a community service club, you could begin by saying, “It doesn’t matter whether you are young or old, experienced or inexperienced, rich or poor; you can make a difference in this organization.” Whether you are attempting to inform, persuade, or motivate your audience, this use of opposites in language can be effective.

Oxymoron Another type of contrast imagery places terms that contradict each other side by side. The result is called an oxymoron. The oxymoron forms a contrast image that often jolts listeners and demands that they think and pay attention. Note the following examples:

She is the momentary love-of-my-life.

My parents want me to have such boring fun.

Because I always fall gracefully, friends say I’m athletically clumsy.

Parents of teenagers often exhibit smiling insecurity.

Why must our society have so many instances of selective equality?

An oxymoron can create not only a quick, clever image for your audience to envision but also some impressive intellectual pictures that you can proudly display.

In his epic poem the Iliad (which was based on stories passed down orally from generation to generation), the ancient Greek poet Homer used an oxymoron in the phrase “the delicate feasting of dogs.” The obvious contrasting of the words delicate and feasting (since dogs do not feast delicately)
formed the image Homer wanted. He was able to crystallize a scene and a message by carefully selecting two words.

Irony Another type of contrast imagery, irony is a figure of speech using words that imply something different from, and often the opposite of, what they seem to say on the surface. When you use irony, you say one thing but mean something entirely different.

Here is a story that shows how irony can be used in “picture making.” You wake up Monday morning to find that your alarm clock hasn’t gone off and that you are going to be late for school. Because you are in a hurry, you pour orange juice on your cereal instead of milk. The bowl tips, spilling its contents onto your Spanish homework. Your mother lets you off at the front door of the school, and you notice that you have two different-colored socks on. As you rush into the building, a friend in the hallway says hello to you and asks how your morning is going. Your response: “Fine! Great! I’m having a tremendous morning.”

What you really mean is, “This is a terrible morning. I wish I had stayed in bed!” It’s obvious here that your words don’t say what you really mean.

Here’s another example. A television news commentator was talking about a man who sued a rock group, claiming that the intense volume of the group’s music at a concert he attended damaged his hearing. Said the news commentator, “Yes, you certainly wouldn’t go to a rock concert thinking that there was going to be loud music, now, would you?”

Did he actually mean those words? Of course not. What he was saying to his television audience was, “How in the world could someone go to a rock concert and not expect loud music? Loud music and rock concerts go together.”

Of course, the speaker’s delivery and body language helped to show everyone watching that he didn’t mean what he was saying. The creative power of contrast allowed his real message to come through to his audience. Irony is most effective when your words and your delivery work together.

Exaggeration Imagery

Our third and final category of figures of speech is exaggeration imagery. To exaggerate means to make something seem greater than it actually is.

What figure of speech would this man be using if he said, “How lucky I am that my car broke down; now I don’t have to wash it this afternoon”? 
Francis Bacon—a seventeenth-century English philosopher, essayist, and statesman—once said that the only people who should be forgiven for exaggeration are those in love. In addition to those in love, Bacon might have included those in public speaking. While exaggeration in some situations—when giving testimony in a courtroom, for example—might not be wise, exaggeration imagery in front of an audience can do wonders to accentuate the words we speak. Two types of exaggeration imagery are hyperbole and understatement.

**Hyperbole** Mark Twain gave us Tom Sawyer. William Shakespeare gave us Falstaff. Both of these authors gave us likable literary characters who exaggerate the truth. Tom Sawyer makes too much of adventure, and Falstaff makes too much of himself. Both humorously overstate their accomplishments. This overstatement is called **hyperbole**, and for speakers it is a method of emphasizing something by saying more than is true.

Have you ever heard statements like these?

*I called you a million times* last night, and the line was always busy!

*I have worked my fingers to the bone* cleaning this house!

*Mom, I don’t have a single thread of clothing to wear to school!*

*I laughed my head off!*

No one actually called a million times, had bare bones for fingers, was totally without clothes, or had his or her head come off. Hyperbole is a form of imagery that blows a picture out of proportion and stretches the audience’s imagination.

It can also add a refreshing touch of humor. For example, a basketball team had lost 17 consecutive games before it finally won one. In its next game, it won again on a last-second shot. The student announcer, who was broadcasting from his school radio station, chanted wildly over the air, “The streak is still alive! The streak is still alive!”

Exaggeration imagery can intensify your message tremendously. You should not, however, exaggerate to the point that no one trusts what you have to say. Use exaggeration to enhance your speech, but be sure to convey your central message in unambiguous language.

**Understatement** Whereas hyperbole makes *more* of something, understatement makes *less* of something. Even though understatement doesn’t exaggerate, it can logically be included in this section because it is the opposite of hyperbole. Understatement uses language that draws the listener in, because it cleverly distorts in its own way and makes us see an absurdity more clearly. Here are examples of understatement:

Families out of work and without a paycheck can experience some economic *discomfort.*
The winner of the basketball Slam Dunk competition can jump a little. Clearly, a family without a paycheck could experience major financial problems, not mere discomfort; and a Slam Dunk champion could probably soar, not just jump a little.

Understatement doesn’t always have the shock power of hyperbole, but it can work as an effective language tool. For instance, a student who was giving a speech on the problems of modern technology offered as an example the radar gun that state troopers use to catch speeders. Trying to show that the devices aren’t always accurate and that, consequently, motorists can be unfairly victimized, he produced evidence showing that a radar gun once mistakenly clocked a tree going more than 30 miles an hour!

He followed this example by saying, “Now isn’t it obvious that the radar gun might show a slight difference in what it registers as your speed and the speed that you’re actually traveling?” The words slight difference were obviously understating what he actually meant (the difference between zero and 30 miles per hour is more than slight). Nevertheless, they created the impact that he was after. The image was powerfully made through reverse exaggeration, or understatement.

**Personification**

Personification is giving human characteristics to nonhuman things. Walt Disney, the cartoonist and moviemaker, thrilled millions of people by making animals and other parts of nature act like humans. People of all ages are fascinated when teapots can talk, when sea creatures can fall in love, or when jungle animals can dance and sing. All of a sudden, these things seem like human beings.

Personification communicates a message through language and pictures that people can easily understand. It can be as effective in speaking as it is in animation, for it allows listeners to visualize in human terms. Look at these examples:
Dealing with Doublespeak

Euphemisms are mild or indirect terms we substitute for terms that may seem harsh or distasteful. Euphemisms can be benign, as when we substitute the term passed away for died to spare the feelings of a friend who has lost a close relative. But euphemisms can also be used to deliberately avoid or hide the truth. Such euphemisms are called doublespeak.

Government officials and agencies often win the Doublespeak Award, which the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) gives yearly to the individuals or groups judged to have done the most outstanding job of using language to “bamboozle and befuddle.”

War is especially tough on words, according to the English teachers. The Gulf War was rich in euphemisms, noted William Lutz, a professor of English at Rutgers University and former chairman of the NCTE’s Committee on Public Doublespeak. In 1991 the NCTE presented the Doublespeak Award to the Pentagon (U.S. Defense Department) for giving us an “armed situation”—not a war—in the Persian Gulf.

Forces led by the United States launched the Iraq War in 2003 with a massive aerial bombardment of Iraqi cities. The Pentagon, which intended the bombardment to encourage Iraqi troops and civilians to quickly surrender, called it “shock and awe.” “I call it terror bombing,” said Lutz. Lutz went on to summarize that the U.S. administration’s term for the military invasion and occupation of Iraq that followed, was “liberation.” To downplay the chaos of the ensuing civil war, the administration labeled the situation an “insurgency” or “sectarian violence.”

“Words have a significant cultural and political function,” war scholar Paul Fussell reminds us. “We’ve become blind to them.”

Questions
1. How could euphemisms or doublespeak potentially lead to a communication breakdown?
2. How does the business world use doublespeak (such as “downsizing” for mass firings to boost profits)?
The eyes of profit can be deceiving.

Don’t allow dishonesty to sneak up on you!

Crime can dress up in many disguises when you are at work.

Profit doesn’t have eyes, dishonesty can’t physically sneak up, and crime can’t dress up. Each example takes something abstract (profit, dishonesty, crime) and gives it a human dimension for emphasis.

Using exaggeration imagery and personification can add color and style to your speaking presentations. Try it. Hyperbole, understatement, and personification can mean the world to your speech content—and to your speaking confidence!

**Recalling the Facts**

1. When you say one thing but mean something entirely different, you are using ____________.
2. Using opposites such as hot and cold and success and failure is known as ____________.
3. An indirect reference to a well-known person, place, thing, or event to create a mental picture is termed an ____________.
4. Using word opposites side by side (“In the workplace, friendly hostility does little to promote a positive work environment”) is called ____________.

**Thinking Critically**

The Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru once said, “A language is something infinitely greater than grammar and philology [literary scholarship]. It is the poetic testament of the genius of a race and culture, and the living embodiment of the thoughts and fancies that have molded them.” Consider what this quotation means. What does Nehru mean by “poetic testament”? Is language greater when it comes from the head? From the heart? From both? Evaluate Nehru’s statement and then explain your response.

**Taking Charge**

You have two tasks:

a. Create your own metaphor or simile for the following: your report card, music, pizza, and money. (Example of a simile: My best friend, Thuy, is like a compass. She always gives me a sense of the direction my life is going in.)

b. Make a list of at least three television or radio advertisements for products or services that use imagery as a sales tactic. Be ready to say what specific figure of speech (such as simile or antithesis) is being used in each and why the advertisement is or is not effective.
The Gettysburg Address

The Gettysburg Address was delivered by President Abraham Lincoln on November 19, 1863, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It was delivered on the field where, four months earlier, one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War had been fought. Lincoln gave the speech to dedicate the site as a graveyard and memorial for the soldiers who had died in the battle.

Although it received little attention at the time, the speech is now acknowledged to be a masterpiece of compression. Its brevity (the speech lasted less than three minutes) contrasted greatly with the two-hour speech of the accomplished orator Edward Everett, who had spoken earlier that day.

The Gettysburg Address was a communication breakthrough because it eloquently put into words the belief that, even for a country torn by civil strife, there was hope for the survival of democracy and the nation.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war; testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Later in this chapter, we will examine the Gettysburg Address further.

Question
What words and phrases make Lincoln’s address so poignant and memorable?
Making Music with Words: Sound Devices

We have discussed the importance of figures of speech and have shown how language can come alive when speakers use imagery to excite the imagination of the audience. Now, what about the sound of the language when spoken? The music of words can combine with the imagery of words to make communication even more effective. Maybe this is why more than 20 million greeting cards are sold every day in the United States. Greeting cards tend to be written in language that speaks in pictures and sounds pleasing to the ear. Most of us are attracted to language like this.

The twentieth-century English playwright Christopher Fry once said, “The pleasure and excitement of words is that they are living and generating things.” Much of the living and generating that Fry spoke of results from well-chosen sound devices, which we can cleverly incorporate into our speaking. Most of the music of language comes from some form of repetition, the act or process of repeating. We can use repetition to make music with words by repeating individual sounds and by repeating words or groups of words.

Repeating Individual Sounds

We can repeat individual sounds in three ways: through alliteration, assonance, and consonance.

Alliteration Say each of the following sentences out loud:

A corporation must care about the consumer.
Parents provide their children with the power to succeed.

Winter winds whip through a windy city as walkers wear their wraps.
The will to win is the combination of a work ethic plus the willingness to dedicate yourself to a worthwhile cause.

As you can see, in each sentence, a sound is noticeably repeated—in the first sentence, the $c$ sound; in the second sentence, the $p$ sound; and in the third sentence, the $w$ sound. All of these sentences exhibit the sound device known as alliteration. Alliteration is the repetition of the initial sound of two or more words that are close together.

All you have to do to see the pervasiveness of alliteration is to watch television or to read the tabloids at the supermarket checkout counter. Weather forecasters might say, “Yes, folks, the winter winds whipped through the Windy City today,” stressing the first $w$ sound in the words winter, winds, whipped, and windy to make their forecast stand out and make people take notice. Similarly, a tabloid headline might read, “My Mother Married a Martian.”

Do you see why alliteration works? It gives special significance to the specific language you choose to speak. In the following passage, the American patriot Benjamin Franklin used alliteration as a key sound device to enhance the impact of his statements regarding the newly drafted Constitution of 1787. Read this speech out loud so that you can better hear the language at work.

Mr. President,

I doubt . . . whether any other convention . . . may be able to make a better constitution; for, you assemble a number of men, [with] all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion. . . . From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does.

He went on to say,

Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution, because I expect no better, and because I am not sure that it is not the best.

The repetition of initial $m$, $p$, and $b$ sounds in nearby words draws attention to Franklin’s statements. Can you hear the musical effect that alliteration produces when you read the words aloud?

**Assonance** Read Franklin’s speech again. What about the words may, able, and make at the beginning of the speech? Notice the long $a$ sound in each word. The repetition of vowel sounds is known as assonance. The vowel sounds can occur anywhere in the words. Thus, the sentence “We believe that peace means a chance for all of the oppressed people of the world,” plays on the long $e$ sound in five words for effect.

**Consonance** In the preceding sentence, examine the words peace, oppressed, and people. Notice that the $p$ sound is repeated not only at the beginning of peace and people but also near the middle of oppressed and people. The sound device used here is known as consonance. Whereas assonance involves repeating vowel sounds, consonance involves repeating consonant sounds anywhere in words.

Let’s look at other examples of the ways to repeat individual sounds, so that all three will be clear:

- I love to leap in the air and to land in the lake. ($l$ sound, alliteration)
- I love to hike high in the mountains and see the sunrise. (long $i$ sound, assonance)
- In dealing with hardships at work, I depend on my friends and family for direction. ($d$ sound, consonance)

Rereading Franklin’s speech should show you that all three of these devices can be used simultaneously. Point out places in the speech where alliteration, assonance, and consonance work together to give the message its music and make the language memorable.
Repeating Words or Groups of Words: Parallel Structure

A student in a high school speech class was talking about his enthusiasm for automobiles: “If you want to be knowledgeable about a car engine, you have to work, work, work!” He later mentioned that he worked on cars “before school in my garage, during school in automotive class, and after school at a friend’s house.” He finally said, “Treat your car with respect. Your car will take care of you only when you take care of your car.”

Whether he knew it or not, the student was using parallel structure to help convey his message. Using parallel structure, also known as parallelism, means using the same grammatical form to express ideas that should be treated equally because they are logically related. Often, parallelism involves repeating words or phrases.

Look at what the student speaker said. Notice how he repeated the word *work* three times for emphasis. He also repeated the word *school* in three successive phrases that are grammatically and logically related. He concluded by stating, “Your car will only take care of you when you take care of your car.” Notice how the two parts of the sentence use the same form and almost the same words. Parallel structure reinforces an idea or a series of ideas. It also creates a musical effect that can help a speaker get the message across to the audience forcefully.

Let’s go back to the Gettysburg Address (Communication Breakthrough, page 270) and analyze it for three specific instances in which Abraham Lincoln brilliantly implemented the technique of parallel structure:

1. At the beginning of the third paragraph, Lincoln declares, “But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—

Using alliteration, assonance, consonance, or parallelism can help keep your speeches fresh and lively.
music, in the form of a driving cadence, results from the repetition of the word arrangement introduced by “we can not.”

2. Two sentences later, Lincoln states, “The world will little note . . . what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.” Even though only a few of the words are repeated, the structure of the two parts of this sentence is the same.

3. Lincoln concludes by declaring “that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

The parallel structure of the three prepositional phrases offers a climactic ending to one of the most monumental speeches in American history. In addition, “this nation . . . shall have a new birth of freedom” and “that government . . . shall not perish from the earth” are strikingly similar in construction.

We conclude this section by examining how another speaker of Lincoln’s time, Frederick Douglass, used parallel structure. Douglass was born enslaved in Maryland around 1817 and became a prominent voice in the antislavery movement. A well-educated man, Douglass saw that emancipation was a necessary step in the struggle of blacks for independence. During the Civil War, he helped organize regiments of African American soldiers for the Union army, and later he held numerous government positions. Note that Douglass delivered the following speech, “What the Black Man Wants,” at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in 1865—two years after Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. (Be sure to read the speech out loud.)

Everybody has asked the question . . . “What shall we do with the Negro?” I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played mischief with us. Do nothing with us! If the apples will not remain on the tree of their own strength, if they are worm-eaten at the core, if they are early
ripe and disposed to fall, let them fall! I am not for tying or fastening them on the tree in any way, except by nature’s plan, and if they will not stay there, let them fall. And if the Negro can not stand on his own legs, let him fall also. All I ask is, give him a chance to stand on his own legs! Let him alone! If you see him on his way to school, let him alone—don’t disturb him. If you see him going to the dinner table at a hotel, let him go! If you see him going to the ballot-box, let him alone—don’t disturb him! . . . Let him fall if he can not stand alone! If you will only untie his hands, and give him a chance, I think he will live.

By now, it should be clear that your speaking effectiveness is often only as good as your language effectiveness. But part of language effectiveness involves avoiding certain language pitfalls that can cause both you and your audience to take a communication tumble.

Recalling the Facts
Match each of the numbered examples with the letter choices:
(a) parallel structure (b) alliteration (c) assonance (d) consonance
1. The boss was busy buying merchandise for the display.
2. The product was successful, the workers were confident, and the management was happy. (Analyze the sentence in its entirety.)
3. Applying for the perfect job takes exceptional planning.
4. A complete speech will encourage your audience to believe your message.

Thinking Critically
Reread the speeches by Lincoln and Douglass. Both speeches seem to deal with aspects of (a) life, (b) death, and (c) hope. Analyze each speech and then provide examples of where each topic (a, b, and c) is addressed. Evaluate how each speaker seems to deal with these three topics a little differently. Point out examples.

Taking Charge
In newspaper and magazine headlines, find two examples of effective sound devices (alliteration, assonance, consonance, or parallel structure). Next, apply what you have learned. Find an ordinary headline and rewrite it, creating your own headline. You might want to write a serious headline and then create a humorous one.
The quotation spoken by President Nixon on the first page of this chapter is an excellent example of how not to communicate. Even though eventually you may be able to figure out what the quotation means, who wants to wait? Besides, audiences don’t have time to stop and figure out a confusing statement when a speech is being delivered. The next idea is on its way.

You have already seen one potential communication problem, euphemisms, in the Communication Breakdown on page 268. Euphemisms can cloud clear communication by offering language that is puzzling and distorted. Unfortunately, the losers are usually the listeners.

Here, we take a look at three other kinds of language you should avoid in your speaking: jargon, sexist language, and shocking or obscene language.

Avoid Jargon

Jargon usually refers to the specialized vocabulary of people in the same line of work, such as doctors or computer programmers. Because only a relatively small group of people understand what the language means, it is often unintelligible to most of the general public. In this sense, it is similar to slang—nonstandard words that may also be associated with certain groups, such as teenagers. Like euphemisms, jargon is often heard in government circles, but it can pop up in any discussion.

Suppose you are giving an oral presentation about your job at a computer company and your audience is unaware of certain technical terms. How effective would the communication be if you used the following terms, devised in high-tech circles?

batmobiling—putting up emotional shields (from the retracting armor that covers the batmobile, as in “She started talking marriage and he started batmobiling.”)

generica—fast-food joints, strip malls, subdivisions (as in “We were so lost in generica that I couldn’t remember what city it was.”)

irritainment—annoying but you can’t stop watching (e.g., a celebrity’s criminal trial)

You can see how jargon can be colorfully expressive, yet it is language to avoid when speaking in certain formal professional contexts.

Avoid Sexist Language

Sexist language is language that unfairly groups women—and some would argue, men too—into stereotyped categories. Such stereotyping can be
demeaning. Schools, textbooks, speakers, and even dictionaries now recognize the importance of fair play regarding the language used for men and women.

Society has traditionally associated girl babies with pink blankets and boy babies with blue blankets, girls with dolls and boys with trucks. Similarly, society has tended to stereotype males as tough, take-charge, dominant leaders and females as weak, passive, subservient followers. Is this fair? Your spoken language must show that you believe that both sexes possess and can demonstrate equal abilities and talents and that gender has no relevance to a person’s worth.

Look at these pairs of words: mankind-human-kind, fatherland-homeland, spokesman-spokesperson, congressman-representative, man-hours-working hours, and manmade-synthetic. Do you see how the second word in each pair avoids the sexist connotation that the first word presents?

Don’t think that sexist language applies only to women. How fair is it, for example, to use the term housewives when nowadays it is not uncommon for men to stay at home and contribute to household duties? Why not use the term homemaker, instead, in your speech? Remember, be vigilant to avoid any language that unfairly stereotypes men and women. Always keep in mind that the words you speak should promote the idea that all people have dignity.

Avoid Shocking or Obscene Language

Speakers often try to appeal to their audiences by speaking casually or by using street language. Street language, however, can be shocking to an audience not expecting it. Use good judgment. While shocking language might draw your audience’s attention, it might also quickly turn off most people.

Obscene language is any language that offends by going against common standards of decency. Since what is considered obscene may vary from place to place, speakers must avoid any possibility that their words might be construed as indecent. Recently a canoeist battling a rough river swore loudly and repeatedly about his troubles and was later convicted of using obscene language within earshot of children.

While a startling fact or statistic can work to your communication advantage, using an off-color story or a derogatory term will not. A student once started his speech by walking to the front and saying, “Hello, morons!” To him, this was clever. Granted, some of the students in the audience laughed (perhaps out of shock), but many seemed offended by his introduction and tuned out what he said next.

If you find yourself about to include shocking or obscene language in a speech, ask yourself the following questions: Is a curse word worth the price? Is vulgarity ever worth the sacrifice of effective verbal communication? The answer to each question is no. Your audience deserves better.

Consider the story of Helen Keller, which attests to the power of language. Keller was born in Alabama in 1880. She was diagnosed at 18 months of age with being unable to see, hear, or speak. Doctors early on said that she was mentally handicapped and that she would never be able to function like other human beings. However, when Keller was eight years old, Anne Sullivan, from the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind, began working with her. The two were to be close companions for nearly half a century.
Helen Keller learned from Sullivan what words meant. Sullivan spelled into the palm of Keller’s hand the names of such familiar things as a doll and a puppy. At first slowly, but later rapidly, Keller learned the names of objects. Within a few years, she was reading and writing braille fluently.

When she was ten, Keller pleaded to be taught how to speak. Sullivan discovered that Keller could learn by placing her fingers on the larynx of her teacher’s throat and sensing the vibrations.

The story is told of how Keller was once asked which she would choose if she had the choice—seeing or hearing. She said that she would choose hearing. If she could hear the language used effectively, she said, the speaker could create for her all the things that her eyes could not see. In other words, spoken language would allow her to “see” in her imagination, and she would have the best of both worlds.

**Recalling the Facts**

1. What is the term for a specialized vocabulary understood by only a special few?
2. One of the most moving stories in American culture is that of Helen Keller. She once said that if she had a choice, she would choose being able to hear over being able to see. What was her reason? (Give the exact words from the page.)
3. Teenagers are often said to have a language of their own. These nonstandard words are called ____________, and should be avoided when speaking to a varied audience.

**Thinking Critically**

In Australia teenagers have a language of their own. The statement “She was given the elbow by her boyfriend,” for example, means that she was “dumped” by him. When do you think that it is appropriate to use slang? When is using slang a bad idea? Can slang ever be a problem for your audience—for example, for a group of professional people? What can you do to make sure that it isn’t a problem for you?

**Taking Charge**

Interview a friend, a parent or relative, a teacher, or a community member whose job has a specialized vocabulary. Have the person name and then define for you at least five terms that could be categorized as jargon. Finally, ask the person to explain how jargon can sometimes be beneficial at the workplace. Write down the responses and be prepared to offer a short speech about them to the class.
The arena is set.
The multitudes are hushed in anticipation,
crammed into a coliseum filled with
the stench of sweat,
waiting for the combatants to appear.
Suddenly, without warning,
they emerge, cutting through the
dense humidity in
regal attire, robes of rich hues
and majestic style. As the mighty
enemies slowly lumber toward the center,
their stage and battlefield, the throng
falls into a rhythmic cadence of cheering,
booming voices proclaiming their
allegiance to either side.
Older generations prepare to shelter their young,
for they know
blood will soon be shed.
Achilles and Hector?
No.
Power Women of Wrestling!
Yes, it’s Queen Kong and Lady Godiva, folks, known
for her “pretzel hold” of death. You know, it’s always
been my dream to live a day in the life of Lady Godiva.
However, for many, this dream can become reality with
the help of Larry Sharpe and his New Jersey wrestling
academy, “The Monster Factory.” For just $3,000 and
four to six months of training, Sharpe turns out new
meat-hungry monsters left and right, instilling in them
three basic techniques: (1) make the matches look real,
(2) fake the injuries, and (3) mold the outcome, so that
the audience buys it. However, the tactics of Sharpe’s
Monsters and the Power Women of Wrestling have
unfortunately worked their way beyond the ropes of the
ring and into the arena of the real world. As a result,
we’ve reached the point where if it looks real, we’ll take
it. Whether it is or not is of little priority because we’d
just as soon make it, fake it, or mold it.

It’s been said that sometimes truth is stranger than
fiction. Ironically, sometimes they’re the same thing.
Have you ever taken a road trip with your family and just
couldn’t seem to keep the kids occupied? Well, there’s a
hot new game out in Nebraska called “Fun with Roadkill.”
However, with this game you will not only be relieved of
thinking of a new game to play, but relieved of taking a
vacation at all, because “Fun with Roadkill” is a video.
You can just pop this in at your convenience and not
have to worry about stopping for “potty breaks.” What
could be better?

We can stage vacation; we can stage roadkill; we can
even stage war. Did you know that in the 1980s, CBS
aired four different accounts of what it claimed to be the
war in Afghanistan. However, it was recently revealed
that the scenes were not real, but a mixture of recrea-
tions—scenes of training camps and not actual combat.
It makes you wonder if what you’re seeing on the news
is real anymore. Perhaps the greatest irony lies in the fact
that this particular footage won the most prestigious
award in broadcast journalism. Just what are we reward-
ing? Perhaps this use of deception to get the prepackaged
product that is quick, easy, and ready to use is as far as
we’ll go, but unfortunately it isn’t. We’ll go past the point
of merely making things look real to actually faking it,
when we flat out lie. And that’s our second area.

Finley Peter Dunne once said, “A lie with a purpose is
one of the worst kind, and the most profitable.” Artist
Mark Kostabi certainly agrees, and he’s proud of it. Four
years ago, Mr. Kostabi decided that making deals and
sustaining an image were more important than his origi-
 nal work. As a result, he now pays other artists between
$4.50 and $10.50 an hour to imitate his art and forge his
signature. In one year, he earned over $1 million doing
this. Well, he didn’t exactly earn it. Mark Kostabi may be
a liar, but at least he admits it. In fact, I’d expect that from someone with those values. However, I was surprised when I read that all of Bill Cosby’s books were written by two other men.

Today, anything can be fake. We have fake food, fake fur, fake jewelry, and fake art. Would you believe that due to recent animal rights protesters, we’re now trying to make real fur look like cloth? Ironically, the real product is being made to look like the imitation. Have we reached the point where we don’t know what’s real and what’s not?

Now, granted, most of us do know that the world of the Power Women of Wrestling is one of orchestrated battles and pseudo-catastrophes. However, when our own world becomes one of “make it” and “fake it,” we end up “molding” things that weren’t meant to be molded, and we can begin with the entire concept of excellence. Three years ago, my high school adopted a statewide honors diploma. After its first year, parents complained that not enough kids received it. As a result, the school broadened the standards and lowered the criteria. Now the exclusiveness is gone. When the rules and criteria become putty in our hands, we’re molding new standards and broadening our scope to the point of cheating. Just what is excellence anymore? You see, if we don’t know what is real, we don’t know what or who is good. The result is that the terms *excellence* and *champion* can be neutered, and originality lost in the process. Bill Laimbeer, of the world championship basketball team the Detroit Pistons, received his world championship ring after the Pistons won. However, after he learned that over 21,000 replicas were given out to fans, he said, “I felt cheated. I worked nine years for this. There shouldn’t be any copies.”

You see, some things just weren’t meant to be faked or copied—the sound of a baby’s first laugh, the first day of school, a first kiss, a real Monet, a live performance of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, a grandparent holding his grandchild for the first time, the wondrous moment of birth. For, in oneness there is beauty, and in beauty we just might find the truth.

The arena awaits once again.

Centered in an amphitheater void of sound
the lights are dim
the clothes drab
but the eyes of the enemies—
exploding with the lust for battle.
This time there will be a winner.
This time not the Power Women of Wrestling
but the Power of Wisdom
and the Promise of What’s Real . . .
The arena is ours.
Looking Back

Listed below are the major ideas discussed in this chapter.

- Choosing the correct words is like walking a tightrope: it must be done with care.
- The spoken word must communicate immediately with the audience, while the written word offers the reader the luxury of time.
- Accuracy of language and economy of language are two qualities that help create a positive speaking impression.
- Concrete words name things that you can perceive through your senses. Abstract words deal with intangible concepts.
- Denotation is the dictionary definition of a word; connotation goes much further, involving all of the meanings that a word might suggest.
- Using figures of speech, or word pictures, can make your speaking come alive.

Speech Vocabulary

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>concrete word</th>
<th>hyperbole</th>
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<td>denotation</td>
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<td>connotation</td>
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<td>allusion</td>
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<td>irony</td>
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1. For each word in the speech vocabulary list, give the definition found in the chapter. Prepare a quiz by listing any ten vocabulary words and numbering them from 1 to 10.

2. Make up ten sentences using a total of at least ten different vocabulary words from the speech vocabulary list. Divide your sentences into the following groups: two sentences with alliteration, two with assonance, two with consonance, two with personification, and two with hyperbole. Have fun making up your sentences, but be sure that they make sense. Be prepared to read your sentences out loud to the rest of the class.

Chapter Review For additional practice and assessment, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GS7800c11.
Academic Vocabulary

tangible  exaggerate  emancipation

conscience  compression  demeaning

picturesque  pervasiveness  braille

crystallize  cadence

Use context clues to write the meaning of each vocabulary word. Then use a print or an online dictionary to check the accuracy of your definition.

To Remember

Answer the following questions based on your reading of the chapter.

1. The term ___________ differs from the term denotation in that it refers to the meaning of a word that goes beyond the dictionary definition.

2. A metaphor compares two unlike things by saying one thing is the other thing, while a ___________ makes a comparison that uses a term such as like or as.

3. Hyperbole exaggerates for effect, saying more than what is true, while its opposite, ___________, makes less of something to get a desired response.

4. The repetition of the sound at the beginning of two or more words that are close together is called ___________.

5. A question that doesn’t really call for a spoken response from the audience is a ___________ question.

6. Language that unfairly stereotypes males or females is called ___________.

7. Referring indirectly to something or someone well known to make a creative comparison is called making an ___________.

8. Giving human characteristics to nonhuman things is called ___________.

To Do

1. Go to a library and find a speech. You can find speeches in books or in periodicals such as Vital Speeches. Analyze your speech by listing the concrete words and the abstract words, the imagery, and the key sound devices used. What is effective to you, and what is unclear or lacks impact? Be specific. In addition, be sure that you can give a complete explanation of your entire speech.

2. Find someone in your school or community who is familiar with sign language or the world of the hearing impaired. Interview the person and discover how the language works.

3. Think of a pleasant experience that you have had. Using a voice recorder, close your eyes and record your memories. Use vivid imagery and descriptive phrasing. Next, play back the recording. Did your language work for you? If not, repeat the task—this time choosing a different experience.

4. Keep a notebook listing the jargon that you hear around school, at your job, at a parent’s workplace, and so on. Include definitions of the terms. Over time, does the jargon seem to change? Why?
To Talk About

1. In Oregon, a newspaper notified readers that it would no longer print news about or recognize any sports teams that have mascots it considered degrading to American Indians. Thus, it would no longer mention team names like the Braves and the Redskins. What is your opinion about this issue? What about a professional women’s basketball team called the Missies or the Babes? Are such names sexist? Why or why not? Where should we draw the line between offensive and inoffensive language? Give logical answers and give evidence whenever possible.

2. Find a copy of Benjamin Franklin’s “The Way to Wealth.” Notice how this collection of maxims (sayings) not only teaches lessons but also communicates through effective language. Give your favorite maxims from the work and explain what images or sound devices they use.

3. Are commercials fair in their language? One television advertisement spoke of the need for romance and the personal touch in viewers’ lives. It invited people to dial a phone number. When people called, however, a recording talked to them. When is the advertiser at fault in such situations? When are we at fault? What language should we especially look out for?

To Write About

1. Forming oxymorons can be fun and challenging. (An example is quiet war.) Write five of your own. Then, create euphemisms for these jobs: dog catcher, window washer, custodian, elementary school teacher, dance chaperone, and person who cuts lawns. (For example, a short person might be called “vertically challenged.”) Have fun, but see that your euphemisms make sense.

2. Write an introduction for a friend in class as if you were going to introduce him or her to your friends at work. Fill your introduction with job jargon. Now rewrite the introduction and replace all of the jargon with standard language. Be prepared to read your introductions out loud.

3. Write a description of how your day has gone so far. Use the following devices: personification, parallel structure, and simile or metaphor. Describe not only what has happened around you but also what has happened inside you.

4. Write about a favorite song of yours. Why are the words to the song important to you? What do they mean? What are your favorite images in the song? What pictures does the song bring to mind? Be specific and give examples.

Related Speech Topics

What goes on in my first-hour class
A day at my job
The best thing about a school dance
“Rush hour” at my house before school
Why I enjoy the beach
If I had only 24 hours to live, I’d . . .
The excitement of a sports event

The day I had to perform for an audience
My first day driving
Equal opportunity in the professional world
Slang
Euphemisms
Sexism
Racism