6.6: Summary

In this chapter, we have defined language as a code that has rules of syntax, semantics, and context. We have examined how language influences our perception of the world and the verbal principles of communication. We have seen that a message has several parts and can be interpreted on different levels. Building on each of these principles, we examined how cliché, jargon, slang, sexist and racist language, euphemisms, and doublespeak can all be impediments to successful communication. We discussed four strategies for giving emphasis to your message: visuals, signposts, internal summaries and foreshadowing, and repetition. Finally, we discussed six ways to improve communication: defining your terms, choosing precise words, considering your group, controlling your tone, checking for understanding, and focusing on results.

Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions

   1. From your viewpoint, how do you think that thought influences the use of language?
   2. Is there ever a justifiable use for doublespeak? Why or why not? Explain your response and give some examples.
   3. What is meant by *conditioned* in the phrase “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 ennable or condemn, augment or detract, glorify or demean?” Moore, R. (2003). *Racism in the English language*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

2. Application Questions

   1. How does language change over time? Interview someone older than you, and younger than you, and identify words that have changed. Pay special attention to jargon and slang words.
   2. How does language affect self-concept? Explore and research your answer, finding examples that can serve as case studies.
3. 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.