2.14: The Focus of This Chapter

In this chapter I wanted to focus on how language affects the way we think and argue. The imperfections of communication and influences of language directly impact the way we argue and think.

There were four key aspects of language on critical thinking included in this chapter:

- **We do not argue in a vacuum.** To disagree with others, we need to communicate. And here begins the challenge. It is impossible not to communicate and yet perfect communication is impossible. Expressing our thoughts clearly in a manner others can understand them can be challenging.

- **Both the grammar of the language and our vocabulary guides the structure of our thinking.** As Wittgenstein stated, "Like everything metaphysical the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language."

- **We can use language to manipulate others.** Words have both a specific meaning and an emotional meaning. There may be no difference between a sanitation engineer and a janitor, but doesn’t one sound better than the other? Using words with predictable emotional meanings are very effective manipulative tools.

- **We all have a preferred Communication Style.** Differences in these styles can be a source of conflict. Understanding our styles and the styles of those around us can improve our communication and make sure our conflicts are more substantive not just style.

In this chapter I wanted to focus on how language affects the way we think and argue. The imperfections of communication and influences of language directly impact the way we argue and think.

Critical thinkers have to take the language needs and requirements of their audience into account when trying to persuade them in an argument to adopt a particular point of view.

Understanding the effects of language on the critical thinking and argumentation process reduces the chances of being manipulated by others.